

**PLANNING POLICY WORKING GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 16 DECEMBER 2015 at
7.00pm**

Present: Councillor H Rolfe – Chairman
Councillor S Barker, A Dean, J Lodge, J Loughlin, A Mills, E
Oliver and J Parry.

Officers in attendance: M Cox (Democratic Services Officer), R Fox
(Planning Policy Team Leader), S Nicholas (Senior Planning
Policy Officer) and A Taylor (Assistant Director Planning and
Building Control).

PP34 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Oliver.

PP35 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2015 were signed by the
Chairman as a correct record.

PP36 BUSINESS ARISING

- i) Minute PP37 – Council response to the PAS review of the Local
Plan submission

Officers were looking for an appropriate date to hold the all member
workshop on the criteria for the evaluation of sites, and this date
would be confirmed in due course.

- ii) Minute PP40 – Economic Evidence – Stansted Scenarios

It was confirmed that ORS Consultants would be invited to a
workshop to explain the methodology and assumptions behind the
SHMA. They would also explain the projected growth figures for
Stansted Airport that had been used in the employment projections.
These figures had been subject to public questions at the last
meeting and Members would consider whether the information gave
cause to challenge these assumptions.

- iii) Minute PP42 – Housing Trajectory and Five Year Land Supply
Statement

Councillor Lodge asked whether the council had consulted properly
and on the correct figures in the recent Issues and Options
Consultation. He was concerned that several housing delivery
figures had been quoted and the Inspector might question the

discrepancy. It was explained that the consultation had not been on the housing number but was looking at a range of scenarios based on a higher and lower range of growth. However, the Planning Policy Team Leader said he would revisit the document and check that the figures quoted in the consultation document had been accurate.

Members discussed the council's strategic approach and the timetable for completing the various studies and how this related to decisions yet to be taken on the distribution strategy and the single settlement option. The working group was advised that this was an extremely complex situation and officers would need to make sense of the various studies and their relationship in order to establish an overall direction of travel.

The Local Development Scheme (LDS) would be presented to the next meeting, which would provide a high-level timetable. However, Members said it would be useful to have details of the studies to be completed and to understand how all the different elements would fit together in the Local Plan preparation timetable.

Action: Officers to prepare a flowchart to explain the various stages in the Local Plan preparation.

PP37

GREEN BELT REVIEW

The Chairman welcomed Chris Tunnell and Andy Barron from ARUP, the consultants appointed to carry out the Green Belt Review.

Chris Tunnell said that the study was part of the evidence base for the Local Plan and would show how the various areas performed against the green belt purposes set out in national policy. The revision could consider expansion or retraction of parts of the green belt or conclude that no changes were appropriate.

Andy Barron said that stage 1 of the review was to update the relevant evidence in order to make informed decisions going forward. He explained the methodology used for this part of the study. Any areas identified as being able to accommodate change would be considered in more detail during part 2 of the review. The District Council would take the final decision on any changes.

Members asked a number of questions. It was confirmed that sites visits would be made to all the identified parcels of land and the scope would extend to all settlements in the vicinity. The study could consider new green belt designations but these would be on the edges of the existing green belt area.

The report was noted.

CALL FOR SITES AND STRATEGIC LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT

The working group was informed that details of the sites submitted through the call for sites in April/May 2015 had recently been published on the council's website. Officers would now conduct an interim assessment of each site based on the criteria set out in the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) Methodology. The results would be published early in 2016. All sites would be subject to the same methodology although additional supporting information would be required for the larger sites.

In answer to a question, officers said that although new sites were no longer being accepted through the call for sites process they could still come forward through other channels. It was also confirmed that the landowner's information was required to be included on the submission form.

There was concern that Members had not been aware of the publishing date for the call for site information, although the Leader said this date had been mentioned in previous papers to the group. Members asked why the call for sites had been published before the Issues and Options consultation responses had been considered as this added to the public perception that the process was developer led.

Members highlighted the importance of community engagement throughout this process and were concerned that there was no replacement for the area forums. It was noted that there had been a positive response to the recent consultation on the Local Council Tax Scheme (LCTS) and officers were asked to look at the methodology that had been used in this case.

Action: to present a revised Statement of Community Involvement to the next meeting of the group.

The next stage in the assessment was to evaluate the sites on objective criteria and dismiss those that were unsuitable. However, the final evidence could point to a number of different options, and at that stage, a political decision would be required. Members said it would be helpful to understand the sequence of events, how the various pieces of evidence came together and when the important decisions would need to be taken.

Action: A timetable for the key decisions to be included in the flowchart.

ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION

The working group was informed that the Issues and Options consultation had closed on Friday 4 December 2015. The comments were being posted on the consultation portal. The replies would be summarised and analysed and the report of representations would be presented to the working group early in the New Year.

Mr Goldman spoke to the meeting regarding a suggestion for a new housing site.

Two written question was submitted by Mr Buhaenko-Smith.

Copies of these statements and the council's response are attached as an appendix to these minutes.

PP40

EVIDENCE BASE REVIEW AND WORK PLAN

The working group received a report on the status of the various evidence base studies for the Local Plan.

In relation to the transport study, it was reported that there would be an inception meeting with the appointed consultants early in the New Year. Members asked to receive details of the parameters of this review.

Agreed: to provide a progress report on the Transport Assessment to the next meeting of the working group.

The report outlined the results of the commercial workspace review. This had made a number of recommendations, which the council would need to take account of later, when considering employment land allocation in the new Local Plan.

Members asked whether the review of the Countryside Protection Zone (CPZ) would take into account the new flight path technology, which had recently been introduced at Stansted Airport. Officers replied that this did not affect the CPZ which was concerned with protecting the countryside from the spread of the airport.

PP41

DUTY TO COOPERATE UPDATE

The working group received an update on recent Duty to Cooperate work.

Members said that the minutes of the various DTC meetings included a lot of information and it would be helpful if they could be guided to the decisions that had a positive or negative impact on Uttlesford. Officers replied that the minutes were included as an audit trail for the Inspector and provided a narrative around the discussions and evidence that all parties had agreed to the decisions taken.

The working group was reminded of the tight timescale for producing the new plan and the limited resources of the Planning Policy team. However, it was agreed that members would be made aware of important decisions arising from Duty to Cooperate meetings.

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm

Public Statements and Questions

Mr Goldman

I would like to propose not only a new bypass /relief road to the M11 but also a new community development to be built on the existing site of the vast area of abandoned airfield at Debden.

When you cast your eye over the area map of the 'sickle' as I call it – owing to its curvature towards the M11. This would link both the new development and south Saffron Walden.

Added to the myriad planning problems, Government's ruling will only approve new roads if 1000 homes are built to every 1 mile of new road construction. In this proposal approx. 4 miles of the Sickle would equate to 4,000 new homes.

To relieve frequent congestion in Saffron Walden, I believe a compromise with the Government has to be negotiated. I feel if you the Planning Committee agree to the new development and the bypass the Government may well agree to the sale of the airport. However, this would be subject to a survey of the area of up to 4000 possible dwellings?

Benefits of a new community

- 1 If the Government/MOD agrees to the sale of Debden airfield. The monies would help towards the construction of the sickle.
- 2 I suggest that the new development would comprise of mostly compact dwellings for first time buyers/ buy to let. In honour of the combatants of the second world war the estate could be called remembrance.
- 3 The new housing development would be far enough away from Saffron Walden as to not affect the towns over construction but would benefit from extra commerce from the new residents' visits.
- 4 Another improvement would be a more direct link with Carver Barracks to and from the Sickle avoiding narrow country roads.

If approval is eventually given by Government/MOD for the sale of Debden airfield, then a vote by Uttlesford residents at the next local election may be debated.

Nicholas Buhaenko-Smith

"First of all, I would like to apologise for not being able to be here in person. As a resident of Uttlesford, along with many people in the district, I work in London. Living in the south-east section of the district means that unless the meeting is held in Dunmow, I am unable to get to Saffron Walden in time.

My questions are relating to section 4.1: Scenarios A to D (580 dwellings per year) in the latest Local Plan consultation.

Question 1 Why wasn't an option put forward for distribution across all hierarchies and no new settlement?

Response :- The preamble to paragraph 4.1 makes it clear that the scenarios are not the only possible combination of options from amongst the areas of search. The second set of scenarios with a higher growth rate does include an option (F) of distributing development across all hierarchies with no new settlement.

Question 2 In Scenario D, many residents commenting would have thought that a new settlement of 500 units is too small to provide a contribution of critical resources to the district, apart from supporting housing numbers. As such, could I ask the council to re-assure Uttlesford residents that if Scenario D was selected, the purpose of the new small settlement is NOT to be the site of a much larger development to be developed at a later stage. Were this to be the case, there is a significant risk that the small site would be developed without any the appropriate planning for a much larger settlement. Something I believe has happened in the past. However more importantly, Uttlesford residents may perceive this as a significant breach in UDC's ethos regarding "transparency".

Response :- Option D is explicit in that 500 dwellings are proposed in the plan period then more after 2033. (See also Item 5 paragraph 4.14 of 27 July PPWG report)