

**PLANNING POLICY WORKING GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 23 MARCH 2016 at 7.00pm**

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

Also present: Councillor J Davey.

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

PP64

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Davies, and J Loughlin.

Councillor Barker declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of ECC.

PP65

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2016 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the following

Minute PP60

- i) 2nd para, 2nd line - change 'not satisfied' to 'very unsatisfied' to reflect the level of Members' concern at the lack of a detailed project plan.
- ii) To include reference to questions raised about CIL and when this would be considered by the working group.

Councillor Dean asked for a paper copy of the agenda pack for the PPWG meetings. He said this was important because of the size of the documents and the need to make notes and refer to them at the meeting, which wasn't possible on the iPad. He said if this could not be provided he would have to consider his future membership of the group. A number of members agreed with his concerns.

PP66

BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Minute PP57 – Public Speaking

Councillor Dean mentioned the ongoing debate in relation to the SHMA figures and said he would like to have clarity on this matter. The Chairman said there was an ongoing email exchange around this issue.

Councillor Lodge was concerned that the SHMA proposed housing growth of 37% for Uttlesford, which was high in comparison to other districts. He asked for a clear explanation of the figures, particularly in relation to the Stansted Airport effect. In reply, the Chairman said that the council had accepted the consultant's process and figures. At the examination in public, the Inspector had quoted 580 dwellings per year, and whilst this was a somewhat arbitrary figure, it did give a steer as to the expected level of growth. It was also clear that the Cambridge London corridor was a particularly high growth area.

The Chairman said that working group would be provided with the relevant information. If the working group still had questions the consultants could be brought back to a future meeting as it was important that Members had confidence in the process.

Action: The Planning Policy Team Leader to circulate the information regarding the SHMA figures that had been sent to Mr McDonald.

(ii) Minute PP59 – Issues and Options consultation summary of representations

Councillor Dean asked about the future role of the working group. He said meetings were currently concerned with noting and commenting on the evidence base, but the group was not yet involved in shaping the content of the Plan. He questioned whether the two hourly meetings once a month would be sufficient for the detailed discussion required and thought that additional member meetings/workshops might be required.

Councillor Lodge agreed that members should be advised of proposals at an early stage to prevent anything unexpected coming forward.

The Chairman said the working group would be making recommendations, for example in relation to the Green Belt report on tonight's agenda. In the summer, there would then be an opportunity for members to consider the development strategy and the officer's recommendation. This would be followed by the consideration of the site specific options. There would probably be a need for Member workshops at these key stages, although it was important that the process was open and transparent and the working group's discussions were held in public.

(iii) Minute PP59 (ii) – Local Development Scheme

Councillor Lodge asked whether there should be guidelines for the operation of the PPWG as the council's procedure rules did not apply to working groups.

(iv) Minute PP60 - Local Plan Indicative Work Programme

In answer to questions about the progress of various studies, it was reported that the highway strategy was at the modelling stage and was

expected to be received at the end of spring. Work on the employment study was ongoing and it was confirmed that its remit would be wider than the existing dispersal option. The infrastructure delivery plan would be considered in August when the group was looking at specific sites. The CIL option was a mechanism for delivery of the infrastructure plan and would be considered at that time.

Councillor Harris reported that she and Councillor Mills had met with officers to discuss the project plan for the Local Plan. She hoped to report to the next meeting.

PP67

GREEN BELT REVIEW

The Chairman welcomed Chris Tunnel and Andy Barron, consultants from ARUP to present the Green Belt Review and its conclusions on whether the Green Belt was justified in terms of the Green Belt policy.

The district's Green Belt had been assessed against five (NPPF) purposes.

- 1) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
- 2) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another
- 3) To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
- 4) To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns
- 5) To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other land

The study considered the relative performance of the 31 identified parcels. It found that the Uttlesford Green Belt was meeting both national policy requirements and its function as a Green Belt. 30 of the areas were found to be strong Green Belt (meeting at least one purpose strongly), there was one moderate area and no areas of weak Green Belt.

The review recommended that none of the whole Green Belt parcels should be released.

However, it had identified a number of boundary anomalies and had suggested amendments to align the Green Belt boundaries with natural boundaries, or in some cases to take account of new developments in the district.

The working group considered the proposals and AGREED

- 1 To support the report's recommendation that no whole Green Belt parcels should be released.
- 2 In relation to the boundary anomalies:
 - i) To amend the following boundaries

General Area 21 – road verges along A1060 (Hatfield Heath)
General Area 4 – new development (Elms Farm, Stansted Mountfitchet).

General Area 17 – new development (Broomfields, Hatfield Heath)
An additional area – Long Hide, Leaden Roding

- ii) To retain the following boundary

General areas 24 ,25, 26 and 29 land north of A1060.

The Planning Policy Team Leader said the results of the review would give a strong steer on the areas of search. At this stage a new settlement in the Green Belt appeared unlikely but other studies would also need to be considered.

PP68

ECC WASTE REPLACEMENT PLAN

The working group considered the pre submission draft of the replacement Waste Local Plan. The plan set out the key principles and policies to guide the future management of waste in the plan area up to 2032. This was the final opportunity to comment, on matters of soundness, before it was considered by the Inspector. There were five sites proposed within Uttlesford.

In answer to a question, it was explained that there was a detailed plan for each of the sites, which set out the proposed protection and mitigation measures.

Councillor Barker said that all the sites were still subject to planning permission being obtained.

The working group AGREED that it had no objections to the plan on matters of soundness.

PP69

GREAT DUNMOW NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN CONSULTATION

The working group was invited to comment on the Great Dunmow Neighbourhood Plan, which had been published for a six-week consultation on 1 March 2016.

Officers had raised four areas of concern, mainly around compliance with national requirements and policy. Members discussed these points and suggested that the comments in relation para 13 policy DS15 (the figures used for local housing need) should be rephrased to add clarity.

The plan would now go before an independent examiner and then to a referendum, probably in the summer. Members said this was a good example document for other parishes who were undertaking this process.

AGREED that the comments set out in the report (with the rewording of para 13) be sent to the Examiner as the Council's response to the Great Dunmow Neighbourhood Plan Submission Consultation 2016.

ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION – SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

The working group received the second part of the summary of representations to the recent Issues and Options consultation

Mr McDonald read a statement expressing concern at the poor quality of analysis of the responses to the consultation. He also repeated his concerns at the conclusions reached in the SMHA document. A full copy of his statement is attached to these minutes.

Members referred to the statement and said that Great Chesterford parish council had raised similar concerns. The Chairman said he understood these sentiments but it was a question of balance, to give members sufficient information from the large number of representations received. However, officers had read all the responses and these were available in full on the council's website.

Councillor Dean said it was important that this was not just a tick box exercise and the responses should be properly considered . The Planning Policy Team Leader said the comments would be used to add value to the process, to reflect the study findings or provide insight into areas not looked at in the evidence base.

Members referred to the issues raised in the responses and in particular, the frequent reference to the need for appropriate infrastructure. The Chairman said the council was committed to ensuring this was provided. Councillor Dean said that in terms of infrastructure, the council should be looking at what it wanted to achieve in the district and not using the plan as a mitigation measure.

Councillor Lodge mentioned issues that had been raised by the statutory consultees. The Chairman said these came under the umbrella of 'maintaining the character of the district' and this highlighted the need for sympathetic development.

The working group NOTED the report.

TECHNICAL CONSULTATION ON IMPLMETATION OF PLANNING CHANGES

The Planning Policy Team Leader presented a report on the council's proposed response to the Government consultation on its approach to implementing the measures in the Housing and Planning Bill. The consultation set out the criteria that would inform the Government's decision on whether to intervene to put in place a local plan. It also included changes to the rules for preparing a neighbourhood plan.

Officers had suggested a response and the working group agreed with the comments made.

AGREED that the working group approve the response set out in the report and submit any additional comments to the Planning Policy Team Leader by 15 April 2016.

PP72 **DUTY TO COOPERATE**

Members received an update on recent duty to cooperate work.

Members were advised that the Memorandum of Understanding for the authorities in the SHMA area was a key part of this process and the draft memorandum was currently being drafted.

The report was noted.

PP73 **PLANNING POLICY WORKING GROUP – FORWARD PLAN**

The working group received a list of the key studies and reports to be considered by the working group over the next few months.

The following actions were noted

1. To include project plan/documentation in the list of items to be considered at the meeting on 26 April.
2. To confirm the dates for the public exhibitions/meetings.

Members were reminded that future working group dates had been agreed as follows – 9 June, 19 July, 23 August, 13 September, 25 October and 28 November 2016.

PP74 **CHAIRMANS ANOUNCEMENT**

The Chairman said that Andrew Taylor, the Assistant Director Planning and Building Control would shortly be leaving the council. On behalf of the PPWG he thanked Mr Taylor for all he had done over the past 5 years and wished him every success in his new venture.

The meeting ended at 9.30pm

Public Speaker - statement

Good evening. My name is Ken McDonald. I have lived in Uttlesford for 35 years.

I have no loyalty or leaning to any political party. I wish to see Uttlesford develop a sound plan that passes inspection and does not destroy the character of our district.

Today you are being asked to consider representations received in response to the Issues and Options Consultation – more specifically, to “note the responses and use them to inform the local plan process”.

You may recall that nobody was consulted on the SHMA, yet I stepped forward to tell you that it was not sound, and was especially lacking in evidence and audit trails. Besides addressing this meeting for three minutes, I used the Issues and Options consultation to set out my concerns in a more thorough, evidence-based way. I am most disappointed to see that my considered response was reduced to just three words in the summary of responses – **“SHMA poorly evidenced”**.

I cannot decide whether this is a deliberate head-in-the-sand cover-up or whether the task of summarising responses has simply been handled badly. I’m inclined to think the latter, with the complex task having been delegated to a relatively inexperienced officer without proper guidance or review. Other aspects of the report also suggest a lack of experience and oversight – if you have read any of it, you will understand what I mean. I don’t blame the author, but the process that led to the report being produced in this style.

I can only wonder what you had in mind when you set the consultation questions. Did you expect a serious analysis and summation of points raised, or did you expect a 200 page listing whose volume defied anyone wishing to extract key messages? Was it your intention to generate an impenetrable smoke-screen as long as you obtained a tick in the box? Or, did you anticipate a meaningful analysis of responses that will, indeed, be capable of informing your decision-making process?

As for the other 730 people and organisations who took time to respond, do you think they will be satisfied to have had their comments emasculated, like mine, and simply noted?

If you did expect a meaningful analysis of responses, I hope you will refer this report back to officers rather than simply accept the smoke-screen and the worthless tick that you have been offered.

I have now flagged up two significant weaknesses in the evidence base for the local plan – the soundness of the SHMA and the poor quality of the consultation analysis. **The SHMA’s unsoundness has the capacity to repeat a fundamental reason for the failure of the 2014 plan. I have already suggested that you seek an informed and independent review. Now, I am suggesting the need for additional resource to mitigate the risk of failing to complete a proper consultation process.**