

**PLANNING POLICY WORKING GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 28 NOVEMBER 2016 at 7.00pm**

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

Officers in attendance: M Cox (Democratic Services Officer), R Fox (Planning Policy Team Leader), G Glenday (Assistant Director Planning), S Nicholas (Senior Planning Officer) and R Harborough (Director of Public Services).

PP33 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Davies, Harris and Mills.

Councillor Barker declared her interest as a member of ECC.

PP34 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2016 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

PP35 BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Minute PP26 – Air Quality Action Plan

It was confirmed that the AQAP would be reported to members once the final piece of work from ECC had been received.

(ii) Minute PP27 – Letter to Cllr Lodge

Councillor Lodge was concerned that the reply to his letter appeared somewhat incomplete. He had recently submitted a letter raising further issues and would address both points later in the meeting.

iii) Minute PP28 – Feedback from Member workshop

Councillor Dean referred to the SWOT analysis for potential new developments that had been considered at the September workshop. He had subsequently carried out his own analysis and had identified a number of inconsistencies, which had not yet been discussed. The key piece of work was around the new settlements and he was not yet satisfied that there had been the necessary discussions to work through the information. He asked if there was a timetable for bringing this matter forward.

Cllr Rolfe said the Local Plan had been paused to consider, in particular the total housing numbers, new settlements in the south of the district, Saffron Walden and Great Chesterford. The work on these areas was underway, but as much of the information was dependent on outside bodies it would be a mistake to set a timetable at this stage. However, the most important thing was for the study to be sufficiently comprehensive for everyone to be confident in the work that had been done.

The Director of Public Services said the project board was monitoring progress against the project plan. In due course the working group would receive a number of topic papers with a narrative and justification for the emerging strategy.

Councillor Dean hoped that the narrative would provide members with a description of the proposals and the opportunity to discuss these before coming to a conclusion on which site might be suitable. He felt that a different approach was required, as the summaries to date had not been very useful.

In reply, Councillor Barker said there had been presentations from officers on the merits and demerits of various sites and members already had access to the relevant information for them to come to their own conclusions.

The Chairman reported a further letter from Cllr Lodge, which had been circulated to the working group and is attached to these minutes. The Director of Public Services answered the points raised as follows:

The spatial strategy

The number of permutations of options drawn from the call for sites has to remain manageable. The starting point is the identification of a number of distinctive scenarios. There is no point in assessing alternatives that are similar from a strategic perspective. A filtering process is applied progressively to rule out some scenarios. This filtering is done on the basis of a limited number of key considerations: the sustainability appraisal and strategic environmental assessment and strategic transport assessment. It therefore should not be a surprise that some of the scenarios were ruled out in a first cut as unrealistic. This included the scenario of accommodating all new allocations in new settlements, which had been advocated in some quarters. The scale of development in Dunmow reflects the neighbourhood plan proposals. In Saffron Walden, the eastern expansion reflects the findings of the inspector who examined the withdrawn plan that this was "strategically sound". The scale of development in key villages is informed by the capacity of suitable available sites. The balance is planned to be met in new settlements. The selection of new settlements sites has been explained to members.

Options were discarded because of conflict with green belt objectives, the CPZ, and the strategic transport assessment leaving three: west of Braintree, Easton Park and Great Chesterford. The selection of allocation site(s) from these is subject to ongoing testing.

It is planned to produce topic papers setting out in this sort of narrative style the justification for the draft plan.

Duty to Cooperate

The extent of discussion and integration is expected to be greatest with other local authorities within the housing market area. For Uttlesford, this has meant that the most developed mechanism has been with East Herts, Epping Forest and Harlow rather than Braintree and South Cambs.

The duty is not limited to cooperation between planning authorities. It includes cooperation with other public bodies. Two key agencies are Highways England and Essex County Council as highway authority, for example. They have been involved in the SHMA officer working group and with the transport assessment through discussions with our consultants WYG.

Saffron Walden Transport update

The document to which the letter refers is not the Report of the study but an interim progress report which was intended for internal briefing purposes

"Lack of evidence"

It is not the function of a local plan to set out a schools organisation plan. Demand for places at a particular school is not only affected by the number of pupils likely to be living within an area, but also OFSTED ratings, admissions policies of academy schools, parental choice, and school transport charging policy. A local plan needs to include mechanisms for the provision of additional capacity and the council cooperates with the county council to achieve this.

A district wide air quality study for the district is unnecessary as it is only in Saffron Walden town centre where AQ monitoring suggests that there is the possibility of receptors being exposed to levels of oxides of nitrogen close to or in excess of national air quality objectives

Project Plan

The reasons for the pause have been explained to all members. . We are not yet in a position to publish a new project plan, not least because we need to understand the risks and/or consequences of alternative target dates on which to submit the plan.

CIL

Viability assessment work is being carried out on spatial options. It would be impractical to prepare various alternative versions of the draft plan and associated CIL charging schedules. Plan preparation has to involve a filtering down to the final draft proposals.

In relation to his earlier letter, Cllr Lodge said he had asked for member involvement in setting the terms of reference for the studies associated with the sustainability appraisal but had been told this was a technical officer matter. Officers said initial Member ratification was likely to slow down the process, but it was agreed that members would be provided with the terms of reference once the work had been commissioned.

Cllr Lodge was concerned that the agenda for this meeting was very light. He said Members had received a lot of information but very little time had yet been given to discussing the spatial strategy.

The Chairman said the Plan had been paused to reappraise the options and once the results of the commissioned studies had been received, the working

group would be very busy. Members would have the opportunity to discuss each possibility in detail and recommend options to Cabinet.

PP36

GREAT DUNMOW NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The working group was informed that the Referendum on the Great Dunmow Neighbourhood Plan had been held on 3 November 2016. The result had overwhelmingly supported the plan and its use in helping to decide planning applications in the Uttlesford area.

Following the outcome of the Referendum the council was required to formally 'make' the neighbourhood plan so that it formally became part of the development plan for the Uttlesford District.

Members congratulated Great Dunmow Town Council for delivering the first neighbourhood plan for the district.

AGREED to recommend to Cabinet and Council that the Great Dunmow Neighbourhood Plan is formally 'made' as part of the statutory development plan for the district.

PP37

THAXTED NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Members received two documents, a Heritage and Landscape assessment, which had been commissioned by the Thaxted Neighbourhood Plan Group as part of the preparation of the Thaxted Neighbourhood Plan. The group had asked the council to include these reports as part of the council's Local Plan evidence.

Mr Richard Haynes a member of the Neighbourhood Plan project team, updated progress on the plan preparation. He said the group was trying to develop a detailed understanding of the area, and had commissioned the studies to consider the impact of the potential sites on the landscape setting and heritage assets of Thaxted and to consider the capacity for development.

The Neighbourhood Plan Group was also collecting detailed information about the centre itself and identifying areas for improvement and small scale development opportunities.

Members welcomed the reports, which appeared to be taking a balanced approach toward future development.

In answer to a question, Mr Haynes said the terms of reference for the study had been subject to detailed discussion, had been included in the submission and were available on the Neighbourhood Plan website.

AGREED to note the documents and include them as part of the Local Plan evidence base.

LOCAL PLAN EVIDENCE BASE

The working group received an update on the Local Plan evidence base, which set out the progress of the ongoing studies and gave details of the additional studies, which had been commissioned since the Local Plan pause.

Four recently completed studies were attached to the report, the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA), The Economic Viability Assessment studies for new settlement and for residential allocations in towns and villages and the Uttlesford Water Cycle Study interim technical note.

Chris Hundley (Little Easton PC), Sandi Merifield (Stebbing PC), Wendy Barron (Great Dunmow TC) and Mrs Buhaenko – Smith (SERCLE) spoke to the meeting in relation to the single settlement sites. Copies of their statements are attached to these minutes.

The Chairman said he understood the comments of the speakers. However, the council was required to provide new houses in the district, so it was likely that some or all of these sites would take at least some level of development. The role of the council was to ensure that the houses went in the most appropriate place in line with the available evidence.

In relation to the Economic Viability Study, officers explained that although the council had identified three potential single settlement sites, the study had considered all the submitted sites to ensure they were treated the same. The study criteria had been agreed with the developers as a way to establish the viability of the submitted sites. The delivery mechanisms for new settlements on garden settlement principles would be separate from the assessment of their viability.

Cllr Lodge said he hoped the council would progress the Garden City option. The Chairman said there were different scenarios for implementation, and a lot of investment would be required, but the council did support the principle of a Garden City development.

In answer to a question, it was confirmed that the transport study would look at road network to the north of the district and the impact of the roads within Cambridgeshire. Meetings were taking place with South Cambs to discuss these issues and particularly in relation to the potential for a new development at Great Chesterford.

Councillor Dean spoke about inward and outward commuting for employment and its relationship with housing provision in the district. He asked if this matter would be addressed in the Employment Strategy. Officers said the purpose of the study was to consider the provision of land for employment within the district. The effect of commuting was a separate issue.

The working group noted the update report and looked forward to receiving further studies in due course.

PP29

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on Tuesday 10 January 2017.

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Cllr John Lodge
Leader R4U

25th November 2016

Dear Gordon,

Planning Policy Working Group 28 November 2016

The agenda only went up during the course of 22 November 2016 – I don't know why it was late - and contains only 3 items of business – the Thaxted and Great Dunmow Local Plans and an update on the “Evidence Base” for the Local Plan, the report for which wasn't available until 23 November, and even then not all of the appendices are available.

Given the amount of work that needs to be done on the Local Plan, and the cancellation of the October 2016 PPWG meeting, I find this most surprising. There is a huge amount of business which should be coming before the PPWG, and yet there is only one item which relates directly to the preparation of the Local Plan. The “Evidence base – update” also raises its own issues on the process which UDC has followed which I refer to below.

I wrote ahead of the August 2016 meeting setting out my concerns at the plan process, the lack of evidence and the apparent pre-determination of the spatial strategy in July of this year, well before the bulk of the evidence base had been received. All of those concerns still remain, and indeed they have been heightened by the evidence that is now emerging, the fact that a lot of evidence is still to come, the lack of any proper engagement with neighbouring authorities on housing sites and the complete lack of any strategic plan or work schedule for completion of the Local Plan.

In particular I would like to discuss the following matters:

Spatial Strategy

I have asked repeatedly for evidence of the process by which the Spatial Strategy notified to town and parish councils on 27 July 2016 and re-affirmed to UDC councillors in the presentation given by officers on 11 October 2016 was arrived at, what reasonable alternatives were considered and where is the evidence base to justify the Spatial Strategy which is now being pursued.

In response to my letter tabled at the PPWG meeting on 23 August 2016 and discussed at the 13 September PPWG meeting, there has still been no proper explanation. In the response from Cllr Rolfe, he claimed that:

- The draft Strategy was only indicative. This appears not to be the case –
- this draft Strategy appears still to be the only Strategy being contemplated. Although it is of course not final until adopted by the Council, I am unaware that any other Spatial Strategies are being contemplated – certainly none have been presented to the PPWG or to Councillors, and I am unaware of the existence of any. It was distributed widely on 27 July and re-affirmed on 11 October, and further re-affirmed to the press on 7 November;
- the evidence base documents have clearly been commissioned on the assumption that only this strategy will be adopted. I refer to the new documents published by UDC on 23 November below, but for example the Transport Assessment puts this forward in 3 of the only 4 realistic strategies; the updated Water Cycle Study which appeared only on 23 November (although dated 16 October 2016) has been prepared on the basis of this Spatial Strategy alone. I should be grateful for an

explanation of when these instructions were given, and why only one Spatial Strategy is being considered?

- *“There will be a full inclusive discussion and debate of all potential allocations and the new settlement at PPWG, Cabinet and Council.”* – this response was given in August and yet despite repeated questioning and requests for information, there has been absolutely no information given on alternative spatial strategies;
- *“None of this can possibly be construed as predetermining housing distribution across the District”* – I don’t see what other conclusion one can reach however? There are no other proposals; nothing is being presented to this group or to Council. Moreover I am aware of Cllr Rolfe’s e-mails to Saffron Walden Town Council, which raised similar concerns, confirming that there is no Comparative Sustainability Assessment but that it would follow in due course – this is exactly the process of the evidence following the decisions already taken that I am so concerned about.

I note the responses set out in the draft minutes of the 13 September 2016 meeting, and in particular:

- Cllr Rolfe notes the need for the distribution strategy to include an element of dispersal. I fully accept this. However his response completely ignores the fact that there are some 9200 new homes still to be built during the Plan Period of which 4600 have already been allocated and every single one of those is dispersed. Even if every single one of the 4600 remaining new homes was allocated to a new settlement, the Local Plan strategy would still be a hybrid between dispersal and new settlement. There is a clear 5 year land supply going forwards because of the permissions already given, and no evidence has been produced to this group to indicate likely development profiles going forwards under any reasonable alternative spatial strategies. His response does not remotely justify the proposed spatial strategy;
- The Planning Policy Team Leader is quoted as saying that the 60/30/10 split proposed (although these percentages don’t seem to reflect the allocations presented to us) was logical and reasonable. That is not however the legal requirement. I should remind you again that the Council’s obligation is to identify the most sustainable spatial strategy having considered all reasonable alternatives, and based on the evidence – this has clearly not been done. There is no indication of what if any reasonable alternatives have been considered, and nor is much of the evidence available;
- Cllr Rolfe states that there is a need for affordable housing in Saffron Walden, but this is true of every part of the district. It also ignores the fact that 600 new homes have been approved in Saffron Walden but are unbuilt and that these should provide some 240 affordable homes;
- Finally Cllr Rolfe claims that Saffron Walden has taken a low percentage of housing than other parts of the district. I’m not sure whether or not this is correct, but it should be utterly irrelevant to the current process - this claim exemplifies one of the many faults of the process. Cllr Rolfe has for a long time said that Saffron Walden must take a large number of new homes, and Cllr Barker recently said that it must take “its fair share” – both of them have pre-decided the issue regardless of the evidence.

In my letter prior to the 23 August 2016 PPWG meeting, I expressed surprise that this strategy was proposed despite many of the key Evidence Studies being uncompleted, and indeed some of the key documents, such as the overall Transport Assessments, being at a very early stage of preparation.

In August I made the following request, to be: “provided with a list of reasonable alternative spatial strategy scenarios, a detailed assessment of each, and details of which will be the subject of comparative sustainability assessments, and why, and the timescale for their production.” No proper response was given. I also presented a number of alternative spatial strategies and said “Clearly I could come up with other perfectly reasonable alternative scenarios. My aim is not to give an exhaustive list but to demonstrate that no such alternatives have ever been considered by the PPWG, no comparative sustainability work has ever been published, and as far as I am aware no alternatives have even been prepared. If I am wrong in any of this, I should be grateful if the Planning Team would provide the documents to me as a matter of urgency; I have copied Mr Fox into this letter, and would ask him to provide me with any such documents, or confirmation that no such analysis has yet been performed. If any such analysis has been prepared, please also provide the associated assessments of related impacts on, for example, education, health and transport impact and employment strategy.” I have received no response at all to this request.

Lack of consultation with neighbouring authorities in relation to potential new settlement sites

As far as I am aware, there are only 3 realistic sites for the proposed new settlement(s) – Great Easton, west of Braintree and north of Great Chesterford. The latter two sites obviously raise cross-border issues with, respectively, Braintree and South Cambs districts, and as part of the Local Plan process this council should have been having frequent discussions with both Braintree and South Cambs district councils to identify the issues, the opportunities and the potential solutions raised by each of the sites.

Over the last year, Cllr Parry and I have regularly questioned the lack of information on the duty to co-operate that was presented to the PPWG, and expressed concern that this council appears to be completely failing in its duty to co-operate. We have requested details of the work that UDC has done with other councils, as have other councillors and local residents, but no positive response has been received. You will be aware that a recent EIR request for the relevant information was refused on the basis that the information was still in draft form. South Cambridgeshire District Council were however entirely happy to respond to a similar EIR request, and their response demonstrates the complete failure of this council to co-operate.

We do not know what the DTC discussions have been with Braintree, but given the lack of information presented to the PPWG, I rather assume they are lacking substance, and I assume exactly the same comments apply to the sites west of Braintree. The impression we have been given for the current delay in the plan process may well be attributed by issues with the relationship with Braintree District Council. I should be grateful therefore if you would confirm what discussions have been held and give us firm evidence of the work which has been carried out and the conclusions reached. I recently attended as the only UDC member a meeting held by Braintree DC to liaise with affected residents in West of Braintree area and it was most obvious that proper discussions had not taken place between BDC and UDC.

The South Cambs response also shows that their views were misrepresented to councillors here. We were expressly told that South Cambs had objected to the potential development north of Great Chesterford however from the documents supplied, it is clear that that is not the case; rather they have raised issues that need to be resolved, and have expressly offered to co-operate on the development of proposals.

The South Cambs response shows that co-operation has been effectively non-existent. The total co-operation consists of:

- An unminuted meeting between UDC and South Cambs officers on 24 November 2015;

- A response from South Cambs on 4 December 2015 to the UDC Issues and Options consultation. This noted that the site north of Great Chesterford raised issues, especially around transport capacity, which needed to be discussed, and welcomed such a discussion. No response at all was made by UDC, and no discussions have ever been held;
- On 7 October 2016, in response to a call from a UDC officer, South Cambs wrote noting the same need to talk and discuss issues that they had raised in December 2015;
- On 7 October 2016 South Cambs received a transport consultation request from UDC. I don't know what this consultation is as it has never been presented to the PPWG or indeed to the councillors, or as far as I am aware mentioned as part of any of the officer presentations. I should be grateful if you would supply me with a copy of the consultation request.

That appears to be the sum total of UDC's efforts to determine whether or not the land north of Great Chesterford should be a preferred site for the Local Plan. Given the lack of evidence, it is obviously impossible to come to any conclusions on its strengths or weaknesses, and it is amazing that officers felt they could prepare a points-based analysis of it in comparison with the other sites.

I note that the agenda for the 28 November 2016 meeting does not even include any discussions on the DTC or what discussions the Council should be having with neighbouring authorities!

Side-lining of the PPWG

I complained in my August 2016 letter at the side-lining of the PPWG, and yet nothing has changed – indeed the immediate response was to cancel the October 2016 meeting. Can you explain what role you actually believe the PPWG has been constituted to perform, as it appears to be being side-lined from the role I had understood it should perform. I should repeat my statement from the recent Extraordinary Council Meeting that in the PPWG we have spent not one single minute in discussing the spatial strategy for the district; particularly the location of new settlements or the expansions of the major towns in the district. **YET A CLEAR PROPOSAL WAS PUBLISHED IN THE LOCAL PRESS. THIS IS A TRAVESTY OF THE PPWG PROCESS.**

The evidence base appears to be following the Spatial Strategy not being prepared in accordance with the NPPF requirements to allow an assessment of different spatial strategies

I have repeatedly pointed out the lack of the evidence base. Some evidence is now being produced, but with the apparent aim of justifying a Spatial Strategy which has already been decided on rather than forming the basis of the choice on which the Spatial Strategy was made.

As just one example of this I have now seen the WYG Transportation Assessment, although it appears still not to be publicly available. I had asked that it should examine the various options open to the Council and assess the strengths and weaknesses and be of a state that could inform any Spatial Strategy. Instead, it looks only at certain very limited options. In total it considers 12 options; of these 4 are rejected almost immediately as they look at what would happen if UDC built 2 or 3 times the number of houses required; a further 4 are also rejected immediately as being unrealistic as they assume not a single further new home is approved in any existing settlement for the next 15 years. That leaves only 4 scenarios which are considered – all 4 essentially assume 750 new homes built in Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow, limited building in the villages and some 2,600 new homes in one or more new settlements (3 of the 4 scenarios) or in Takeley and spread around other settlements (the fourth).

Despite the clear issues identified by the Plan Inspector in 2014, there is not a single scenario which does not assume large-scale house-building in Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow. I have asked who instructed WYG just to look at these scenarios and never received a response. Again, the sole purpose of this report appears to be to justify a pre-determined Spatial Strategy.

As a result, whilst the report looks at the effect of congestion on the wider highway network, it completely ignores, for example, the comparative effect of further development on congestion in the existing settlements (where congestions is already at its worst).

The officer response to my question claims that the term of reference were a technical officer matter only, but I don't see how this can be the case, when the report which has been produced is predicated entirely on certain very limited spatial strategy assumptions.

Exactly the same issue arises on the Water Cycle Study – in fact even worse since only one spatial strategy has been presented.

I asked before the August 2016 PPWG meeting where the evidence was to underpin the Spatial Strategy, and I ask again, where is it? There is nothing that I have seen which allows anyone to choose the best of a reasonable range of Spatial Strategies. Cllr Rolfe completely ignored the question when he replied to my August letter, and no answer has been received by Saffron Walden Town Council when they have asked a similar question of Cllr Rolfe and then of Mr Glenday when he presented to them on 17 November 2016.

Not only that, but the evidence base being assembled doesn't even appear relevant or appropriate. I have seen that a brief update to the 2013 Saffron Walden Highways Mitigation Assessment appeared on the website during the course of 22 November 2016, without having been commissioned by the PPWG or seen by it, and without any input from the PPWG, but was then taken down. More fundamentally however, it is prepared on a completely outdated basis. The rejected 2014 Plan assumed that 880 new homes would be built during the Plan Period, of which 80 had been approved and 800 were proposed. Since then a total of 600 new homes have been approved, and the current draft Spatial Strategy assumes a further 750 will be allocated to Saffron Walden, or 1,350 in total. Despite the increase in the number of new homes proposed from 880 to 1350, the update is prepared on the assumption that only 880 new homes will be built in the Plan Period.

Issues raised by the documents to be produced at the PPWG meeting

I should like to have answers please to the following issues at the 28 November meeting. I am raising them now so officers can collate the necessary evidence.

- In relation to the Saffron Walden Transport Update:
 - When will we see an update that considers the 1350 new homes proposed rather than just 880?
 - The Update is very brief but nevertheless raises grave issues about the traffic congestion in Saffron Walden, and as far as I can see makes it absolutely clear that further large-scale house-building to the east of Saffron Walden is completely unsustainable;
 - In particular, you will be aware that the Manor Oak development which was given outline planning permission has a lay-out without a suitable link road. As the Update says (on p9): “The eastern link road is a key element for delivering these measures, particularly in encouraging traffic to circumnavigate the town centre. The town centre, including the Radwinter Rd/Thaxted Rd junction is an AQMA, and the ability to address some of the

congestion issues which could exacerbate the air quality would be compromised if the eastern link road is not of sufficient standard to encourage traffic to use it.

The Essex Design Guide states:

Within new residential areas, vehicular movement should be convenient, safe and pleasant, but vehicular access is to be provided for in such a way as to be consistent with the achievement of an attractive environment and the needs of the pedestrian or cyclist who have to share the same space. Through traffic is to be excluded from new residential areas, and the layout and attractiveness of the environment should be such as to discourage the use of the car for local trips and encourage walking and cycling. To achieve these aims, the environmental requirements of the urban space within which each road is located should determine the width and speed of alignment of the road. This means that the character and pleasantness of the space takes precedence over the speed and throughput of traffic to be carried by the road contained within it. By 'calming' traffic in residential areas in this way, there should be a corresponding benefit in increased pedestrian safety and thus the pleasantness and usefulness of the environment to the pedestrian.

The ECC Development Management Policies document provides guidance on the categorisation of routes and their functions. It would be expected that the eastern link road would fulfil the function of a Secondary Distributor Route, PR2, to accord with the existing function of Thaxted Road; Radwinter Road is a Radial Feeder, PR1. Traffic volumes in excess of 3,000 vehicles per day, including HGVs are, as per the Essex Design Guide, unsuitable for residential roads of the type being proposed by the site promoters.

Therefore, for the reasons set out above, it is recommended that the eastern link road is routed appropriately around the Manor Oaks development and routed sensitively through or around the LP sites to the south. It should be of a standard that will attract traffic to reassign to it, should not compromise the environment of the residential development, and should enable other highway mitigation measures to be implemented across the town."

- The Update is clear therefore that the proposed road layout is not suitable, but also that the whole Manor Oak site is unsuitable for a link road. As the Update says, "*Through traffic is to be excluded from residential areas*". Even if it were acceptable to the Manor Oak developer, a link road cannot therefore be put through the residential development. The traffic Update appears therefore to rule out further development to the east of Saffron Walden unless further land becomes available to the north to permit a link road to the north of the Manor Oak site – what is the Council's position on this?
- The Update concludes (on p.10):
"Whilst we still await the final analysis of traffic routeing, from the work that we have done so far, we are reasonably confident that the estimated level of traffic using the eastern link road would be at least as much as the earlier work assumed, which lends weight to our recommendation that the link road should be direct and not traverse the centre of the development.
If this is not reconcilable then we would not recommend further development in the east of Saffron Walden as it would not be possible to improve the existing road network within the town to accommodate the additional traffic."
- The Update considers only the link road and the Radwinter Road / Thaxted Road junction. As you will be aware the base 2013 Assessment concluded that with 880 new homes to be built over the Plan Period, 5 of the 11 principal junctions in Saffron Walden would be over capacity by 2026 even with a fully functioning link road and all mitigation measures. The Update notes that in fact current traffic levels are worse than predicted in 2013, but does not include any update to cover any of the other junctions. When will this information be available?

- Assuming that the Update is further updated to include predictions for the full 1350 homes proposed and analysed all of the junctions, I fail to see how it could in any case allow one to compare the sustainability of different Spatial Strategies. How are you proposing this is done?
- The Economic Viability Study states at Appendix C that the secondary school children from the 800 homes stated (again, I'm not clear why 800 rather than the 600 approved or the 1350 in total proposed – perhaps you can explain?) will need to go to school at the Joyce Franklin Academy in Newport. Is this really intended? It's completely unsustainable to build new homes in Saffron Walden if the children will have to travel to Newport to be educated. I complained in my August letter at the lack of any education strategy, and refer to it again below, but this shows how vital an education strategy is to the Sustainability analysis – you can't just treat it as an ECC problem as the officers response proposes

Continuing lack of evidence

I complained in my August letter at the continuing lack of evidence. The following is still outstanding:

- an Air Quality study for the district, and an updated study in relation to the unlawful pollution levels in Saffron Walden modelling the effects of the draft Spatial Strategy
- There is still no Infrastructure Assessment or Plan. As far as I am aware, there has been no consideration whatsoever of necessary or desirable infrastructure in connection with any new Local Plan. Nor was there any proper infrastructure plan with the failed draft Local Plan, so we have nothing even as a starting point. In Cllr Rolfe's response to my August 2016 letter he said that a full Infrastructure Plan has been commissioned. We have no information on whom that was commissioned by, on what basis, why the terms weren't tabled at the PPWG or when it is scheduled to appear, in draft and in final form. Can we please table both the terms of reference for it and the timetable for its presentation?
- There is no education strategy. In his response to my letter Cllr Rolfe claimed that the Council had consulted ECC "*on all potential site allocations to ascertain if there are any school capacity issues*". Quite clearly that is not an education strategy. The evidence and feedback from ECC Education has never been presented to the PPWG or otherwise published as far as I am aware. Where is the evidence of the effect of the current draft Spatial Strategy on school provision and need and where need will be accommodated? Again, how can you have a draft Spatial Strategy without this? If it exists, please table it to the PPWG so we can discuss it. The officer response seems to imply that it is regarded as a purely ECC matter, but it is impossible for us to decide on the comparative sustainability of different strategies without knowing how far children will have to go to school. The Saffron Walden County High is for example already full with a large shortfall of places even without further development allocations. If 750 new homes are built in Saffron Walden, where would the children go to school? Exactly the same question applies to any other proposed allocation;

There are no Sustainability Assessments at all on any proposed spatial strategies. Indeed there are not even any reasonable alternatives to the 27 June draft spatial strategy on which to prepare a Sustainability Assessment. I asked this before, and was referred to the December 2015 site assessments. These were very superficial in any case, being internally inconsistent and providing no basis on which to make a comparative decision, but the response completely fails to address the

question – where are the Comparative Sustainability Assessments which are required to be prepared on all reasonable spatial strategy alternatives? They appear to not even exist.

Project Planning

Various councillors have requested a proper project plan – a draft was presented in September, with an action to update it. I have seen no update and no Project Plan is being presented to the meeting. Why not? Can we please table this as a regular item.

I also asked to be given a detailed list of the evidence base which will support the Local Plan, with a description of which documents already exist, what evidence is still to be prepared, and the dates on which such evidence is expected to be received. The response was that this evidence could be given to me, but it still hasn't been.

In my August letter I pointed out how far behind everything was, and the need for a proper Project Plan – the response was that everything was on course. It of course wasn't, and the process came to a juddering halt on 7 November for reasons which have still not been explained.

Community Infrastructure Levy

In my August letter, I said that "I have repeatedly asked for a CIL timetable, consistently this has been delayed and at the last meeting the PPWG referred to historic UDC policy to retain a s.106 approach. Given that s.106 has been made consistently less attractive as the Government seeks to push councils to adopting CIL, and given that the NPPF specifically requires that where practicable (and in our case it presumably is), a CIL costing be prepared in conjunction with the draft Plan. I would have assumed that at least an outline CIL costing would have been an essential part of each alternative spatial strategy, so we can see what associated level of infrastructure could be provided. As we are all too well aware, the current spatial strategy has resulted in very little new infrastructure, and changes to s.106 have made the position worse".

No response at all was given; there is still no discussion of the CIL on the agenda, and no information whatsoever about it. The Council appears to have pre-determined that it will not adopt a CIL. Can you please confirm what is happening in this regard?

I look forward to discussing these issues

John

Statements from Public Speakers

Councillor Merifield – Stebbing Parish Council

Re Site Bosted Wood (4,500 dwellings) & Andrewsfield (7,500 dwellings) = 12,000 dwellings.

Our first thought is WHY? According to *Dept for Communities & Local Government*: I am paraphrasing “..... we will want to see evidence of attractive, well designed places with local support”. There is no local support as is evidenced in the written comments of the issues and options consultation. **Therefore where is this council’s evidence of this local support?**

Improvement to the road system is dependent on number of houses built, the report states that there will have to be “Up to occupation of 1,000 dwellings” for any improvement to the A120 adjacent to the site and “Up to occupation of 400 dwellings” for a signalized junction to B1256. This means the local roads will be at breaking point before any work is carried out e.g. using local roads as rat runs.

There is also no reference to the inadequacy of local rail services. It is essential for a new town of this size to have close access to a main line station. None exists with this site. Braintree station is some 4 miles away. It is already inadequate for parking. In 2014 -2015 almost 900,000 passengers used Braintree station and it is considered to be already operating over capacity.

Q. What evidence is there that Braintree station could cope with the potential numbers of passengers from this new town?

There is no real evidence of Bus travel, which for sustainability surely should be included. It would appear that bus companies would be asked to develop routes according to demand, however once people use their cars this demand is reduced.

Q. Therefore not contributing to sustainability at all or does it?!

The study states that a high proportion of the dwellings are social housing. There is evidence that many residents leave behind extended family and familiar support networks. If this scheme were to go ahead, it would be essential all services for health, mental health, health visitors and family support groups be in place before the first people move in. This clearly would not happen, resulting in problems for the residents and existing local support agencies and charities.

Q. It was stated previously by Cllr Barker that the NHS services would have to be left up to the NHS however surely it is grossly irresponsible to go ahead with New Towns such as this without the assurance of all the necessary Health Services that a community needs?

Re site Great Chesterford/North Uttlesford Garden Village (c.5,000 dwellings)

SPC are concerned for the council in that they seem to have been short changed in this part of the study as it is so scant on detail and viability!! It may be questioned by the Inspector as to

why its viability study showed less.

The BBC reported that Chesterford Park (Oct 2016) had 14 jobs per applicant in a wide range of areas. This is growth area with jobs waiting to be filled. If a new settlement is not built here to help service these jobs, will this cause chaos in local development planning with serious questions asked as to why the local council did not meet demand for housing close to employment. It is not logical that settlements elsewhere would furnish the employment need of Chesterford Park.

Both Audley End Station (4 miles) and Great Chesterford Station (3 miles) provide a regular half hourly service to both London Liverpool Street and Cambridge stations. This is a direct Quote from recruitment advertisement by Chesterford Research Park. The viability study states an expansion of the station in 1-3yrs and which is not dependent on building targets. Which is certainly not the case at Braintree Station

Costs appear lower than other sites. There is a concentration on cycleways, better infrastructure and the closeness to an existing very good rail service, make it an attractive option in a Government led growth area.

Q. Finally all of the proposed new settlements are on “Garden Settlement Principles” which we were lead to believe have everything planned and in place from the start especially infrastructure, so, where is the evidence in this case and why are there S106 agreements?

Mr Buhenko - Smith

Three topics I would like to touch upon, which SERCLE believes highlight some of the risks related to the West of Braintree development.

AECOM Workshop

Last week the consultants AECOM held a workshop for campaign groups, parish councils and representatives from UDC and BDC councils.

The objective was to engage with the community to set out a design for the master plan for the West of Braintree.

Felsted and Stebbing PC did not attend as they thought it was premature to engage

- Whereas the PC that did attend – Shalford, Great Saling, Bardfield Saling, and Rayne
- UDC official was Richard Fox

The meeting was in two parts however after some robust discussion during the part one, it was decided that local resident’s involvement in part two could not be justified.

The issues were:

- Lack of data – what was the site boundary, how many houses etc
- Lack of consultation before the choice of sites?
- What seemed to be pre-determination i.e. the site has ben chosen even before Braintree’s local plan has been issued for consultation?

- Lack of interest relating to the impact to current residents outside of the ambiguous proposed site boundary
- Independence of AECOM? They are also representing one of the landowners selling land for WoB site
- A programme of work driven by Colchester council
- Ambiguous and what seemed inappropriate questions being asked of the participants in part two

However, what came across from SERCLE's conversations with the PC's afterwards was a complete lack of trust with the councils. The session ended with a polite thank you however I suspect that all trust and local support from the PCs and campaign groups has been lost.

Andrewsfield

- It has been reported that Andrewsfield has been submitted as a "defunct" airfield run for a few privileged people. Last week we were lucky to have James Cleverly MP for Braintree come along to the club and see what really occurs.
- He was informed that Andrewsfield is believed to be the last remaining public aerodrome in Uttlesford and could be one of the few remaining in the Braintree district.
- It is not only a club but a flying school that is qualified to train both future commercial pilots and flying instructors. Many of the pilots have gone to obtain airline qualifications and now fly commercial jets including from Stansted. If Stansted is to grow then it needs pilots.
- It also has commercial links with an airfield Naples American where Andrewsfield staff provides training.
- It also has a MET weather station which would have to be closed down.
- It serves not only the local residents but visitors who enjoy the club facilities. Visitors include charity days, motorcycle groups, cycle groups, walkers and family days out.
- It is a non-scheduled monument to the US, Polish and UK pilots who flew from there in the WWII
- Should UDC proceed with WoB, SERCLE suspects a very good justification will be needed for various stakeholders and government bodies, why they are supporting the closure of part of the UK's aviation infrastructure, which is contrary to UK aviation policy, when other potentially better sites are available?
- We have issued an invite to UDC officers to come to the airfield and we look forward to their response.

5 Year Land Supply

UDC have worked hard to maintain their 5-year land supply and appreciate the consequences of not having that in place.

It may or may not have come to UDC's attention that Braintree DC are not only unable to prove a 5-year land supply (as confirmed a recent planning appeal where the inspector noted and Braintree confirmed that BDC do not have a 5 year land supply) but over the last three years they have been building only an average of 371 houses when their target is close to 850. And at a recent planning meeting, the councillors were unable to show any future projections.

SERCLE believes BDC's housing strategy both short and long term is starting to fail due to their insistence on rejecting smaller sites for long term new towns.

I would like to leave you with this question –
“Does UDC want to risk its own local plan by affiliating itself with a district council whose 5year land supply is at significant risk?”

Chris Hindley

My name is Chris Hindley and I am a Little Easton Parish Councillor. The views expressed by me are on behalf of the community I represent, regarding the evidence base for your choice on a single settlement.

The Parish Council worked closely with neighbouring councils and the District Council's consultants against the Land Securities' appeal on the previous Easton Park proposal. For these reasons, we hope that you will respect that our views are balanced and with the benefit of local knowledge and experience.

We ask that you look very carefully at the opportunity to build a new settlement in the north of the district. It does not make economic sense to ignore the major investment in science, technology and engineering in the Cambridge area and in Uttlesford, at the Chesterford Research Park. Our research from employment websites show that there are in excess of 10,000 job opportunities in the Cambridge area.

We are told that a new town that will eventually have 10,000 houses and will have more than one ^{at C&S} road in and out, not just onto the A120. We have already challenged [^] and won the argument against Land Securities on the harm any other routes would have on the character and sustainability of our villages.

The Easton Park option is based on Land Securities' prospectus for a new Garden Settlement. On page 44 of that document, they state,

"One of the key advantages of Easton Park is its location and access to the strategic transport network being very close to Stansted airport (likely to be the major jobs growth location in the surrounding area) ..."

It appears that too much emphasis has been given to the possible employment opportunities and housing needs generated by Stansted Airport. Most airport workers commute from the Tottenham and Harlow areas and there are less than 100 job vacancies currently (Nov 2016) advertised at Stansted.

12 years ago, the airport operator proposed a second runway and in doing so, they purchased hundreds of homes surrounding the airport. Now there is no possibility now of a second runway, these houses are being sold.

We know that Mr Ken McDonald has sent you data to challenge your own forecasts of future airport employment. He has had no feedback from you and we would like to know if you have amended your own data. After all, it was his data that helped to dismiss BAA's plans for a second runway. Can the District Council please tell us how many Stansted Airport jobs are in your assessment?

We would like the Planning Policy working group to clearly explain to us what steps they have taken to evaluate the merits of a settlement to the north of the district. We would expect the assessment to compare like-for-like with other options, with regard to the transport links, housing demand and high quality employment opportunities and how these compare with Easton Park?

Cllr Wendy Barron

Great Dunmow Town Council thanks your officers for recommending the making of the Neighbourhood Plan, which will bring it into the legal planning system. The Neighbourhood Plan was written over a four year period by local people, for local people and will be seen as a vital piece of evidence informing the District's Local Plan. Amongst other things it sets a development limit around the town. The Call For Sites has identified four locations which are outside of this limit. These are: Land west of Buttleys Lane, The Yard Stortford Road, Land adjoining Dunmow Park and Bardfield House Church End. We would now expect UDC to have regard to the Neighbourhood Plan and not progress these four locations in the Local Plan process.

The Neighbourhood Plan identifies Great Dunmow as a historic market town whose inhabitants value the quality of the town's setting, landscape and character. Extensive consultation with local people revealed a strong desire to see our distinctive boundaries and sweeping countryside buffers maintained and enhanced, and a prevention of urban sprawl.

Easton Park is being shortlisted for development of up to 10,000 houses. What evidence is there to justify the best location for such development as being just 100 yards away from the town of Great Dunmow?

There is a need for an independent assessment on the impact of such a development on Great Dunmow. We need to know how it would affect the character, prosperity, transport and employment of the town. Is a study being undertaken? If not, would the District Council commission one as soon as possible? If there are benefits, we need to know what they are. If Easton Park is being chosen as the preferred location, we need to know why.

What we see and fear right now is a developer-led, vast housing estate extension to Great Dunmow.

We are already concerned about the A120 and the fact that traffic backs up along it at peak times. What is being done to prevent gridlock on this and Junction 8 of the M11 from traffic generated by development in the south of the district?

Speaking on behalf of residents, we feel that there is a lack of clear evidence to support the location of this or any of the proposed new garden settlements.

We ask that our District Councillors engage with us. Please involve your towns and parishes in these decisions. We are willing, able, and eager to be involved. Whatever the outcome, we must work together to get the best for Great Dunmow and for Uttlesford.