

Great Chesterford Parish Council (GCPC)
Comments (17 May 2017) to PPWG re Transport issues

In relation to any major development at Great Chesterford, the transport infrastructure has always been a key consideration. In its 2010 Core Strategy document, UDC stated that development at Great Chesterford "...would require further assessment of the capacity of the A1301/A505, M11 Junctions 9 (Stump Cross) and 10 (Duxford) as well as the B184 to consider any mitigation measures required" [paragraph 11.25, Uttlesford Core Strategy – Comparative Sustainability Assessment, January 2010].

We are now told in Agenda Item 4 that the possible range of mitigation works will be directed at the M11, Junction 10, the A505/A1301 roundabout and the A11/A1307 Four Wentways roundabout; it is stated that these changes will accommodate proposed growth in Uttlesford. All such improvements, if achieved, may well ameliorate the traffic position in South Cambs, but they contribute nothing to the substantial increase in traffic that any major development in Great Chesterford will generate as regards roads in Uttlesford, in particular the B184 and the B1383. No mitigation improvement to Junction 9 now appear to be proposed, merely that Junction 9a East (there is no access West) has "been tested" – whatever that may mean – and we know from Highways England's response to UDC's 2015 Consultation that the funding of improvements to the Strategic Road Network cannot be assumed unless schemes have already been committed to by it. As of today, the "robust transport evidence base" demanded by Highways England remains to be provided. The assertion in Agenda Item 4 regarding Junction 9a that "none of the scenarios resulted in unacceptable increased traffic flows" flies in the face of any rational conclusion.

Yet the promoters of the North Uttlesford Garden Village themselves told UDC at their presentation on 27 March 2017 that "There will be some transport capacity constraints that will need to be further reviewed and ultimately solutions will need to be found..." [paragraph 2.4.3, A Prospectus for Delivery]. All Agenda Item 4 tells us is that "No roads within the [Uttlesford] district are exceeding or approaching capacity" – a view which GCPC strongly contests, having over several years repeatedly raised concerns with the planning authorities about the volume and speed of local traffic, particularly along the B184. GCPC's concerns about local traffic levels are additionally increased by the prospect of major developments flagged by Wellcome Genome at its campus site, and the substantial Agrihub development adjacent to Hinxton that is proposed.

Turning to Great Chesterford's much vaunted railway station, the promoters assert that the Garden Village will be ideally located to the rail link serving Bishops Stortford/London and Cambridge; they have told UDC that many of the employment sites to be served – the vast majority of which are located in South Cambs rather than Uttlesford – will be accessible by walking, cycling, rail and public and private bus services. Yet, as Essex County Council pointed out to UDC in relation to the now abandoned Elsenham proposal, "Rail services from Elsenham are less frequent than other stations in the area including Stansted Airport, making travel from this station less attractive. The proximity of the station to the new settlement, convenient access routes and frequency of train services are all crucial matters requiring further

information. The ability to secure enhanced rail access will be important in determining sustainability” [paragraph 11.2, Uttlesford Core Strategy etc, January 2010] (the same point was repeated by ECC in its response to UDC’s 2015 Consultation). By parity of reasoning, exactly the same considerations apply in relation to Great Chesterford. As a commuting Great Chesterford resident since 1972, I can assure you that the service frequency to London from Great Chesterford, and the travel time involved, necessitated driving to Audley End or Whittlesford in order to catch the fast trains, and exactly the same outcome can be expected in the event of the proposed development at Great Chesterford, so further clogging up the roads with peak time traffic. And the risk of drivers from the Settlement using the roads through Great Chesterford as a rat-run when driving to and from Great Chesterford station is obvious – in exactly the same way as the Chesterford Park taxi does today when ferrying visitors to- and- fro between the station and the Science Park.

A final remark about the present road structure. The promoters make much in their presentations about the ideal location of Great Chesterford in relation to the market town of Saffron Walden, which is only 6 kilometres from the centre of the proposed development site. No-one should be fooled into thinking that that the proposed Garden Village will have anything other than massive access implications for Saffron Walden as the obvious local shopping and cultural centre of choice, with all the implications that this will have as regards significantly increased traffic on the B184 and B1383, and the junctions at Saffron Walden that are “experiencing stress” to which the Agenda paper refers.

In sum, GCPC wishes to record its astonishment at the continued lack, even at this late stage, of any relevant or detailed transport infrastructure information, or identification of the solutions required to satisfy the transport capacity constraints to which the local roads are already subject. GCPC therefore strongly opposes development of a settlement at Great Chesterford as unsustainable on transport and other grounds.

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