

COMMENTS BY JOHN EVANS
STEBBING NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP
TO UDC PPWG
22 JUNE 2017

LANDSCAPE CAPACITY:

My name is John Evans. I speak on behalf of the Stebbing Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group of which I am a Member.

I wish to address in the short time available, the relevance of the Landscape Assessment and Appraisal dated March 2017 undertaken by The Landscape Partnership on behalf of the Parish of Stebbing, commissioned as part of the evidence base in connection with preparation of its Neighbourhood Plan, and also comment on the Report of Chris Blandford Associates dated 13th June 2017 entitled "Land West of Braintree Landscape and Visual Appraisal" referred to at tonight's Agenda Item 4.

The Landscape Partnership Report runs to 33 pages plus pictorial and mapped Appendices, as well as 41 sheets of individual land parcel appraisals. It was provided to UDC at the beginning of April for their consideration and comments. None have been received. The Landscape Partnership Report has not been considered by the Blandford Report.

The Blandford Report covers land (the "Site") lying both within Braintree DC and Uttlesford DC areas, but does not pay sufficient or due attention to landscape issues affecting Stebbing village and particularly Stebbing Green. No individual parcel appraisals have been made and the Report is of limited application for the following reasons.

While the Blandford Report does refer to National, County and District Landscape Character considerations, it omits to refer to two which are applicable to the Stebbing Parish portion of the Site, namely Landscape Character Assessments

LCA A6: Upper Chelmer River Valley and LCA B11: Lindsell and Bardfield Farmland Plateau.

Accordingly, it fails to take into account all relevant evidence, does not depict the complete picture and is deficient.

Blandford concludes that the Site is of moderate to high landscape sensitivity, varying across the Site, and that there is potential for part of the Site to accommodate development, subject to mitigation. No further details nor particulars are given as to any part lying within UDC's jurisdiction, as opposed to that within Braintree DC's jurisdiction.

The Landscape Partnership has considered each of the identifiable parcels of land lying within Stebbing Parish, including all those within the Uttlesford part of the Site being those immediately adjacent to Stebbing Green and Boxted Wood. They conclude that the latter have "low capacity" for development and state:

"..... it is unlikely that any development, save occasional individual plots in very specific locations, would be appropriate in parcels with a Low landscape capacity. Anything but very localised, small-scale development in parcels with a Medium-Low landscape capacity is likely to have a significant adverse effect on landscape character and/or visual amenity, even with mitigation measures in place. "

A Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire was completed by the Residents of Stebbing in April 2017, to which there were 509 responses. To the question "How Important to you is the Landscape Environment of Stebbing?", 372 responded "Very Important" and 121 responded "Important".

Accordingly, the views of the Residents of Stebbing are very clear on the importance to them of the issue of landscape and the Steering Group will reflect them in their draft Neighbourhood Plan.

The Steering Group considers that the Blandford Report has not been prepared in sufficient detail and requests that the Officers engage with them and The

Landscape Partnership at an early date, in order to consider and review their respective views, taking into express account the significance of national policies, such as the need to protect three ancient woodlands, two registered grade II historic parks and gardens and 4 listed buildings all lying within the site. There are also two scheduled monuments and twenty two listed buildings in the immediate vicinity of the Site, but inexplicably, have not been referred to by Blandford in their Report, despite the study area being stated in their Report to have been within a 2.5 km distance of it.

In this context, Stebbing Parish Council is also commissioning an appraisal of the Heritage Assets of the entire Parish, which are numerous, and a copy will be supplied to the Officers as soon as it is completed so that due consideration may be given to it in the preparation of the Local Plan.

PLACE SERVICES

Finally, I had wished at the last meeting of PPWG to refer to A Sustainability Appraisal commissioned by Braintree, Colchester and Tendring DC from ECC/Place Services, but was unable to do so because of shortage of time.

The Non-Technical Summary of this Appraisal runs to 42 pages and the report itself and annexes to several hundred. However, while UDC is not within the same Housing Market Area as Braintree, Colchester and Tendring DCs, its observations as to landscape matters affecting Stebbing are of considerable importance and relevance

It is important to emphasise to this meeting that a Braintree DC only settlement scores much higher in this Appraisal, than one which potentially encroaches into Uttlesford DC in way of the areas of Stebbing Green, Boxted Wood and Andrewsfield.

CONCLUSION

We submit that any extension of the proposed West of Braintree New Settlement into the UDC area, namely into land lying within the Stebbing Parish, would fly in the face of the Landscape Partnership Appraisal, the AECOM Report to which I referred at the last PPWG meeting, and the North Essex Authorities Sustainability Appraisal to which I have just referred.

It would be perverse, unsound and without evidentiary support if UDC were to take a contrary view in making the final choice of Preferred Options.

Finally, I wish to thank the Chairman and Officers for allowing us a slightly extended opportunity than last time to make my submissions this evening.