

COMMENTS BY JOHN EVANS

STEBBING NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP

TO UDC PPWG

29 JUNE 2017

LANDSCAPE CAPACITY:

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

I brought to the attention of PPWG at their last two meetings the significance of the Stebbing Landscape Assessment and Appraisal prepared by The Landscape Partnership.

It had been expected by us with justification that this Appraisal would have been considered by the Officers of UDC prior to conclusion of the Regulation 18 draft Local Plan. Such consideration was requested by us, but that request has been ignored. No explanation has been given.

No reference to the Appraisal was made in the Report of Chris Blandford Associates, which now serves in the draft Plan as the basis of applicable landscape issues affecting Stebbing. For the reasons I stated last week, the Blandford report is deficient and falls to be struck down. It will of course be the subject of vigorous challenge at the draft Plan consultation stage.

The draft Plan was released by UDC after close of business last Friday evening, less than 24 hours after conclusion of the last PPWG. It is obvious, given its length, appendices and complexity that it was written weeks, if not months, prior to its release. Its release in this fashion can only be described as being in cynical disregard of the views of the residents of Uttlesford as well as the attendees of these meetings.

It appears to me that UDC's officers and the Members of this Working Group had already made up their minds as to the justification for the proposed garden community in the so called area "West of Braintree" a very long time ago. This idee fixe does no intellectual or other justice to any of the Officers of UDC, nor with respect to the members of this Working Group, when its basis has not taken into due account fundamental matters such as landscape issues affecting the Parish of Stebbing, quite apart from other general issues too, as to which I am not speaking this evening. They are however, reserved.

Landscape sensitivity matters are very close indeed to the hearts and minds of the residents of Stebbing, as is apparent from their responses in this respect to the Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire which I quoted last week.

The residents of Stebbing could be forgiven for asking:

"What is the point of communicating with UDC and sharing with it the Landscape and Capacity Appraisal when it is utterly ignored by UDC. Why have our own views been ignored too?"

No justifiable answers can be given by UDC to these questions and regrettably, what has to be said is that UDC has not met its own standards of consultation in respect of the landscape Appraisal affecting Stebbing, as set out in its Statements of Community Involvement.

Reliance must also be had to the findings of the AECOM Report and the North Essex Authorities Sustainability Appraisal to which I have referred at prior PPWG meetings but have to date been ignored by UDC.

The recommendations in the current draft Plan to a garden community West of Braintree are perverse, unsound and without sustainable evidentiary support.