

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE – 4 SEPTEMBER 2007

E18

**LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK – CORE STRATEGY
POLICY CHOICES AND OPTIONS FOR GROWTH**

The Director of Development summarised a comprehensive report on the results of the consultation on the policy choices and options for growth which had taken place in January 2007. He said that the total development requirement for the district was 9,672 dwellings and 5,466 were either built or were existing commitments. Therefore, the Council needed to provide an additional 4,206 dwellings for the period up to 2024.

The report put forward the following three options:-

- Option 1 - would involve distributing development between the District's main three settlements.
- Option 2 – would involve distributing the development across a hierarchy of settlements. The settlements identified were considered key service centres as defined in the East of England Plan.
- Option 3 – would involve distributing development across a similar hierarchy of settlements with significantly less development at Little Canfield and a significant increase in development at Elsenham as the start of a new settlement.

Prior to considering the options for growth, Members considered the following policies:-

1 Employment Growth

The proposed vision statement, which attracted overall support, stated that by 2021 "Facilities exist for companies to grow without leaving Uttlesford". This implied a focus on the needs of companies already in the district and not on capitalising the potential to attract inward investment, as sought in some representations. An alternative vision statement was "Facilities exist for companies to grow in Uttlesford." Officers' recommendation was that the latter was preferred as providing a better fit with the East of England Plan.

2 Core Strategy Policy E2 Employment Strategy

There was a choice to be made between allowing the relocation and growth of firms to take place on sites beyond development limits where justified and assessed against sustainability policy criteria, or specifically allocating sites for relocation and growth. Officers' recommendation was that a combination of both approaches should be the preferred option as this was the most likely way of achieving the vision statement.

Councillor Gayler said that the East Area Panel had resolved that development should be allied to the availability of employment land and the plan should require developers to provide employment opportunities adjacent to their housing developments. Councillor A Dean reiterated that the dialogue with the business community had not been adequate to know whether the proposals would meet their needs. The Head of Housing and Planning Policy said that there had been a workshop for businesses as part of the Issues and Options Consultation and representations had been received from the East of England Development Agency and the East of England Investment Agency urging that there should be potential for more job growth.

Councillor Yarwood pointed out that the proposals appeared to have omitted the need for the provision of transport to education.

3 Development in Villages

Development in villages could be planned for in one of two ways. Officer's recommended the first method.

1. A policy listing the criteria by which applications for minor residential development would be judged including the level of existing services available.
2. Policies listing specific villages based on the level of services in the village and the indicative scale of development which would be allowed. For example
 - Group Villages (Residential development & redevelopment up to an indicative maximum scheme size of a group of 10 dwellings)
 - Infill Villages (infill development – redevelopment or subdivision of not more than 2 dwellings (indicative max)).

RESOLVED that Option 1 be agreed.

4 Affordable Housing

Current policy was to require housing development of 15 units or over or 0.5 ha and over to provide 40% affordable housing. This policy was justified by the Council's Housing Needs Survey. Officers' recommendation was that there was no change to this policy until studies show otherwise.

RESOLVED that 40% affordable housing remain the target unless studies identified otherwise

5 Infrastructure

There was an in principle choice between a "roof tax" approach and specifying on a site by site basis infrastructure funding contributions. At present, the emerging core strategy assumed the latter route. Infrastructure planning work on the options that progress to the next stage would inform this issue.

Members agreed that a mix and match solution could be appropriate and it was important to remain innovative and they asked for further work to be undertaken.

6 Stansted Airport

There were three alternative approaches: a) plan for the delivery of the Air Transport White Paper policies; b) plan on the basis of the current planning consent or c) ensure that the core strategy was consistent with a two runway airport whilst making it clear that the Council continues to object to the government's policy. Officers' recommendation was that the core strategy cannot proceed on the basis of the current planning consent.

Following further discussion, Members

RESOLVED that a statement should be included that "this Council recognises the growth of Stansted Airport".

7 Retail Strategy

There was a choice to be made between accepting that there were limited opportunities for new shops to be built in any of the town centres and that expenditure would be lost to larger shopping centres outside the District or to

allow shops on the edge of town or expansion of edge of town supermarkets.

RESOLVED that the words “with appropriate consultation” be added at the end of this policy.

8 Countryside Protection Zone

The current extent of the Countryside Protection Zone was inconsistent with national policy as expressed in the Air Transport White Paper. If a CPZ was to feature in the core strategy it would need to reflect an airport boundary related to a wide spaced two runway layout.

Councillor Cheetham said that the Countryside Protection Zone had been a successful policy at appeals and should be maintained.

RESOLVED that the following wording be included:-

“the Countryside Protection Zone recognises the boundary of Stansted Airport”.

9 Housing Provision

Members then considered the officers recommended three options for growth for the period 2001 – 2024.

The District Council will make provision for 9672 new homes in Uttlesford during the period 2001 to 2024 in locations in the following order of preference.		
Option 1	Option 2 or 3	1. Committed urban/settlement expansion at Rochford Nurseries Birchanger/Stansted Mountfitchet; Priors Green, Takeley/Little Canfield; Woodlands Park, Great Dunmow; and Oakwood Park (Flitch Green), Little Dunmow
		2. Committed and proposed redevelopment sites within Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow and Stansted Mountfitchet.
		3. On the edge of Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow
		4. On the edge of Key Service Centres of Elsenham; Great Chesterford; Newport; Stansted Mountfitchet and Thaxted
		5. In other villages

Councillor Ketteridge said that the points raised by Paul Garland at the start of the meeting were important and he put forward the following proposal which he considered would meet these criteria. He suggested that four growth options should go to consultation for further consideration and moved the following motion:-

“To approve the three growth options as outlined in the paper and to add the fourth option of 3,000 dwellings in a new settlement to the north east of Elsenham.

750 dwellings in larger towns.

250 dwellings in villages.

And to identify option 4 as this Council's preferred spatial strategy.”

Councillor Godwin said that it was important to meet the sustainability demands and she said that the existing secondary schools were at capacity in land terms and much more consultation was required.

She declared a non prejudicial interest as chairman of the Board of Governors of Birchanger Primary School.

Councillor C Dean said that, whilst she was in favour of eco developments, this option had been presented at tonight's meeting without any rationale. She said that the roads were inadequate in Elsenham and the infrastructure needed could give the green light to a second runway. She said that it was essential that other options were investigated.

Councillor A Dean said that the Council had asked for an open and informed debate on the pros and cons of the options so that an informed decision could be taken. He added that it was necessary to discuss principles before getting down to numbers and no background work had been carried out on the implications for the locations now put forward. He said that there was potential for the Mountfitchet School to grow and concluded that providing development close to a railway station would create more dormitory accommodation. He then moved the following amendment:-

“No decision is taken on choosing options for consultation and supporting evidence until clearer rationale have been produced for the impacts (positive and negative) on existing Uttlesford communities.

The committee declines to get into details of numbers for housing and location debate until the principles have been clearly established and communicated with the public.

This committee, wishes to maintain a quality process and not to rush forward with a flawed process for Uttlesford's LDF that could be subject to external review".

Councillor Gayler reiterated that the recommendation of the East Area Panel was for more work to be undertaken before decisions were taken on preferred options. He said that an analysis was required to ascertain where affordable housing was needed and what impact the proposals would have on communities. The Chairman said that a lot of the detail was already included within the document and more information would be provided during the consultation process. Councillor Cheetham said that the time had now been reached where the Council needed to move onto the next stage of the consultation and provide more detail for the community.

The amendment was then put to the vote and was lost.

Councillor Godwin then moved a further amendment as follows:

“to approve the three growth options as outlined in the paper and that a new settlement be looked at within the district”

The amendment was put to the vote and on the casting vote of the Chairman was lost. The original motion proposed by Councillor Ketteridge was then put to the vote and was carried.

It was therefore

RESOLVED to approve the three growth options as outlined in the paper and to add the fourth option of 3,000 dwellings in a new settlement to the north east of Elsenham.

750 dwellings in larger towns.

250 dwellings in villages.

And to identify option 4 as this Council's preferred spatial strategy.