

**Committee: Scrutiny**

**Agenda Item**

**Date: 3 September 2013**

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**Title: Highways Planning Consultation**

**Author: Richard Auty, Assistant Director Corporate Services**    Item for decision

### **Summary**

1. This report provides the Scrutiny Committee with an update from the Planning Department on the responses they receive from Essex County Highways when consulting on planning applications.

### **Recommendations**

2. For information only.

### **Financial Implications**

3. None.

### **Background Papers**

4. None

### **Impact**

Communication/Consultation	None
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	None

## Situation

5. Essex County Council's Highways Department is consulted on most planning applications. The responses received are incorporated into the planning officers' report.
6. In some cases within the planning officers' report it will state that Highways has raised 'no objection' but in the past there has been no evidence to support this response.
7. The Planning Committee therefore requested that in responding to consultations on planning applications, Highways expanded on the reasons why it raised no objections.
8. The Highways Department responded by providing workshops, which guided members through the process and procedures that Highways officers follow when responding to consultation.
9. Members of the Planning Committee suggested that the Scrutiny Committee should consider looking at the issue to ensure that sufficient information was being provided.
10. Senior managers in Uttlesford's Planning Department are content that the Highways Department is providing good quality information on its decisions and they have taken steps to ensure this information always reaches the Planning Committee. The crux of the matter is that although Highways had previously provided relevant information, it had been presented in a format which would not necessarily mean a Planning Officer would identify it and ensure its inclusion in the relevant report. Andrew Taylor (Assistant Director of Planning and Building Control) and Nigel Brown (Development Manager) have provided the following explanation to aid the Scrutiny Committee's understanding:
  - § On major cases and ones they view as contentious, the Highway Officer does include a commentary of what they considered in reaching a conclusion to raise no objection. Sometimes these additional comments have not been included within the Committee reports. It should be added the lack of their inclusion in the reports is not down to County Highways. It is being stressed to Planning Officers to include these additional commentaries that are provided by County Highways in Committee Reports. Where cases have caused public interest which could not have been predicted by County Highways, it is the responsibility of the case officer to seek further information or clarification from the Highway Officer. we can confirm that this beginning to happen and the Highway Officer has been responsive to this.
  - § Essex County Highways have proven to be very timely in their responses to planning consultations. Their responses are also complete and do provide a corporate response from across the

Highway process. It should also be added that during times of considerable development pressures within Uttlesford, the Highway Team at ECC have been responsive to the needs of this Council and have provided good officer coverage include presence at Planning Committee where required and requested.