

**SOUTH WEST AREA PANEL held at THE MOUNTFITCHET
MATHEMATICS AND COMPUTING COLLEGE at 7.00 pm on
7 JANUARY 2008**

Present:- Councillor D M Jones – Chairman
Councillors K R Artus, A Dean, C Dean, E J Godwin,
J E Hudson, R M Lemon, J I Loughlin, D J Morson, J Salmon
and G Sell.

Parish Council and public representatives:- as noted on a separate
attendance list.

Officers in attendance:- G Bradley, S Hayden, P Snow, R Procter,
J Mitchell and R Harborough

The Chairman said that as Councillor C Dean had requested that the
proposed closure of Post Offices be heard as an additional item to the
agenda, he would allow this to be heard under any other urgent business.

SWAP33 PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

Ken McDonald asked as a resident of Stansted Mountfitchet, whether any risk
assessment had been carried out in relation to the four options under
consideration in the Local Development Framework, and if so what risks had
been identified. He was also concerned, in the light of the Council's financial
problems, that whichever option is chosen should result in a sustainable
community, and questioned whether the Council was in a position to make an
informed decision. The Chairman said that officers would respond to all
questions together.

John Segar spoke as a resident of Elsenham about his concern at the impact
the proposed housing development would have on access to Elsenham,
bearing in mind the fact that the level crossing already had 92 daily traffic
movements and the gates were closed for significant periods. He also noted
that there were weight restrictions on alternative roads.

Peter Johnson, speaking as a resident of Elsenham, sought assurance that
attachments to e-mailed consultation responses would be acknowledged and
taken into account.

Mr C Collins stated as a resident of Stansted Mounfitchet that the balance of
development in the district was not evenly spread but was skewed to the
south area. He asked that the Council review this balance.

Nick Baker spoke as a resident of Henham, seeking clarification of the basis
on which the Council had calculated the additional housing figures imposed
by Government, and asking for a review of those figures.

Ray Woodcock made a statement as a resident of Stansted Mountfitchet. He
claimed that the 3000 houses proposal could not be separated from BAA's
application for a second runway. He asked whether any objection had been

made to Government about the imposition of additional housing. He expressed concerns about management of water resources, electricity supply, and impact on roads and local employment if there was increased reliance on the airport as an employer, and questioned the development of agricultural rather than non-agricultural land, particularly in view of possible future needs for biofuel production.

Charles Biss as a resident of Stansted questioned the effect on Hall Road if the second runway application succeeded.

Norman Mead of Great Hallingbury Parish Council asked for assurance that there would be proper enforcement of policies in the district plan, and that the Council's successful enforcement of parking at the airport would be maintained.

Mark Stannard as a resident of Clavering commented that people would support the Council if they made objections to government about the development. The Chairman said that a delegation had already visited the Secretary of State, Hazel Blears, to put representations opposing the level of housing required under the LDF.

Stewart Pimblett of Elsenham Parish Council was concerned that a coherent approach should be taken in terms of CO2 emissions, jobs, roads and the airport proposals.

Petrina Lees of Elsenham Parish Council had been contacted by four people claiming that their consultation responses had been incorrectly entered on the Limehouse system. The Chairman asked for details to be provided to officers.

Godfrey Hall of Elsenham advised the Council to take care not to become responsible for "a third airport slum".

As most questions related to the Local Development Framework, the Director of Development stated that he would respond to these at item 4 on the agenda, along with the report on this matter. Regarding questions as to whether there were resources available for planning enforcement, he confirmed that this was so.

SWAP34

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J F Cheetham and E C Abrahams.

Councillor Godwin declared a non-prejudicial interest as a member of SSE and Birchanger Parish Council.

Councillor C M Dean declared a non-prejudicial interest as a member of SSE.

Councillor A Dean declared a non-prejudicial interest as a member of SSE.

Councillor R M Lemon declared a non-prejudicial interest as a member of Hatfield Heath Parish Council.

Councillor J Hudson declared a non-prejudicial interest as a member of SSE.

SWAP35 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following addition:

“Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Abrahams, Cheetham, A Dean, C Dean, Godwin and Wells.”

It was noted that the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held on 2 October 2007 had not been circulated for approval at this meeting. The Chairman said that although they had been circulated separately and were available on the Council’s website, these could not be considered today. [Note: minutes of the meeting of 2 October were circulated at the meeting on 16 October but were deferred to the next meeting as there was insufficient time to consider them in full. Consequently the Minutes should have been included on the agenda for tonight’s meeting. However they had been circulated and were available in the usual way, and would be circulated for approval at the next Area Panel meeting.]

SWAP36 **BUSINESS ARISING**

(i) **Minute SWAP 28 (i) – Local Development Framework**

Councillor Loughlin asked whether the workshop referred to in the first paragraph had taken place. The Director of Development stated that a Member workshop was planned for the end of February in order to report to Environment Committee. Councillor A Dean wished the panel to consider the request first made in March 2007 to address the results of the current consultation in more detail and with other stakeholders, to help improve the perception of how the Council worked. Councillor Jones said that it would be right for the Council itself to respond to that point, since this matter affected the whole district and not just this Area Panel. Councillor Sell supported holding a workshop which he said ideally would also be for stakeholders such as parish councils, as well as Members, and commented that as most of the development under the LDF fell within this Panel area it was most important for such a workshop to be held. Councillor A Dean proposed that the Panel formally requested that the Council organise a consultation and debate on the lines requested last year. The proposal was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED that the Panel’s request for such an exercise to be undertaken before the Council reached a conclusion on the Core Strategy be noted.

An objection was made to the way in which last week’s consultation meeting in Stansted had been arranged, giving rise to discussion of the process. The Chairman recommended that complaints should be taken up outside the present meeting, and advised that the main method for engaging in the LDF consultation was the current route. Copies of the consultation document were also available tonight.

Objections were voiced to the use of the Council's website to communicate matters of importance to the community, and the Chairman noted that concern, although commenting that the Council was not required to publish everything. The Chairman said that other sources of information on published documents were libraries and Councillors themselves.

SWAP37

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK – CORE STRATEGY CONSULTATION

The Director of Development acknowledged the extent of opposition to the proposal for Elsenham and Henham, and said that any views not already heard would be helpful. He provided an outline of the consultation process, which would conclude with a report to full council in March, explaining that the LDF was intended to streamline the local planning process, and the core strategy covered the next 15 years; it must be consistent with the East of England plan, and also with the Council's own strategies. Work on the process started in early 2006 when workshops were held, as a result of which nine options were identified in June 2007, which were narrowed down to four options. The Council considered the options, and then adopted the preferred option. The scheme of community engagement started on 30 November, although the matter was in the public domain beforehand. He added that the Chairman of the Community Committee had confirmed that responses received within a reasonable time after closure of the consultation period would be considered.

The Director of Development then gave a brief outline of subsequent stages, which if the Council adopted a core strategy, would require this strategy to be submitted to the Secretary of State. It would then, if appropriate, be assessed for soundness by a planning inspector. If no core strategy was agreed, then another round of consultation would take place.

Councillor Morson wished to know how it could be guaranteed that views of those consulted would be represented, as he questioned how the Council's preferred option had emerged, since it had originally been rated eighth out of nine options.

In response to this question first, the Head of Housing and Planning Policy said that the single settlement options put forward were not exactly the same, because as the process moved forward certain concerns would be identified, providing opportunities to address such concerns by adding to earlier proposals. He then turned to the various questions put forward. On the matter of risk assessment, he said that although there was no guidance for local authorities other than for flood strategies, there were underlying similarities to the way in which a sustainability appraisal would be carried out.

He went on to confirm that comments regarding access to Elsenham over the level crossing would be taken into account. Attachments to e-mailed responses would be acknowledged and taken into account. Regarding concerns that there was a bias towards development in the south of the district, he responded that part of the function of the core strategy was to lead infrastructure into development. In reply to the assertion that the Council has

increased the minimum housing development level without legal basis, he said he did not accept this, as the target was a minimum requirement and it was standard practice not simply to meet it, but to exceed it.

As regards making objections to government, the Head of Housing and Planning Policy referred to the Chairman's earlier reply that a meeting had taken place recently with Hazel Blears, who would respond in writing. In reply to the question relating to the implications for Hall Road if there were to be a second runway, he said that although the road would be severed, there would be a new junction at Junction 8 connecting to Elsenham. Regarding concerns that issues such as housing, jobs and roads be dealt with together, he responded that the aim of the core strategy was to achieve this approach.

In answer to claims of mistakes made in entering consultation responses on the Limehouse system, whilst every effort was made to avoid spelling mistakes, there was a great deal of copy typing, and that errors of substance would be checked. In reply to comments that we should avoid building a "third airport slum", through consultation the Council hoped to achieve a high quality development. Regarding concerns over water resources, Three Valleys Water had given assurances that such resources would be available, and had since confirmed that the Council's preferred option would suit it best.

An objection was made that questions were not being answered fully, and in answer to this complaint, the Chairman said that tonight's meeting was not intended to be a consultation meeting and that full replies to questions would be made at a later stage.

The Head of Housing and Planning Policy then responded to questions about the involvement of other agencies such as EDF and Highways, confirming that they had been consulted and those responses were still awaited. Concern was expressed that responses had not yet been received. In answer to this point, the Head of Housing and Planning Policy said that the consultation was a gradual process, but that ultimately all aspects of the process would be addressed. The core strategy was intended to guide investment towards the development from other agencies and suppliers, who would respond with their proposals for capital investment to support the structures.

Regarding the use of agricultural land as opposed to "brownfield" land, in Uttlesford this was inevitable as we do not have the scale of available non-agricultural land.

In reply to the issue of unemployment, the housing requirement stemmed from the East of England Plan, which based need for extra housing on economic growth.

Councillor Loughlin wished to know how late any responses received after the close of consultation would be accepted, as there was no discretion to vary the six week consultation period. The Head of Housing and Planning Policy replied that those issues identified in responses received up to the close of consultation would be taken into account and that due to time constraints, those received after that would not be acknowledged or assessed in the same

detail. The Director of Development added that representations on any additional issues identified in late responses would be put to Members, so they would go into the public domain.

Councillor A Dean asked whether Highways had made any representations, and officers replied that none had been yet received but that there would be ongoing submissions in relation to both Essex County Council and the Highways Agency.

Councillor G Sell asked what consultations had been held with One Railway and what would be the implications for the Mountfitchet College of Mathematics and Computing under options 3 and 4. In reply, officers stated that One Railway had been consulted and that a response was awaited. In reply to Councillor Sell's second question, they had directly consulted the local education authority, which had not yet responded.

Councillor C Dean referred to confusion around whether the status of the proposed new development would be an "eco-community", and wished to know what would be the implications if a developer such as Fairfield succeeded in a bid to build an eco-town. The Head of Housing and Planning Policy replied that government would announce funding outcomes for eco-town bids in the spring, that bids were not obliged to be revealed, and that proposals would still need to go through the planning process.

Councillor Lemon commented that people in this area were against turning it into another Crawley, and questioned why all development seemed to be in the south of the district. He acknowledged that Stansted would grow, despite people's wishes, but asked all Councillors to take note of option 4 and recognise that it was going to overload the south of the district.

Councillor Morson wished to know how people could be assured that the 3000 houses mentioned in option 4 would not increase beyond that number. If the development was to be an eco-town, what would be the consultation process? Councillor Morson also referred to the proposal for government to award £1,500 for the erection of each new home in an eco-town. The Director of Development said that this was currently merely a proposal, as government was consulting on different strands by which funding for local authorities could be awarded under a Housing Development Grant, as incentives to Councils to enable the provision of housing. In reply to a question from Councillor Loughlin, as to whether people would be put before money, the Director of Development agreed that people would take priority.

In response to Councillor Morson's questions, the Head of Housing and Planning Policy said that housing documents under the East of England Plan had been planned to 2024, and inevitably would be reviewed periodically.

Councillor Godwin made a statement regarding the proposed development. She said that she had joined the visit to Hazel Blears, and had made it clear that it would be difficult to accommodate this number of houses anywhere without affecting the nature of the district, which she believed should be valued and preserved for what it is. Councillor Godwin said she had had experience of various problems caused by development in Birchanger, where

development had been imposed, and she expressed sympathy for the people now facing this proposed development. She advised people to write to Hazel Blears, as individual views would be taken into account, whereas a protest group would be counted as only one voice.

Councillor A Dean asked officers to clarify whether an eco-town would be in addition to the housing we had to locate, and said that surprise had been expressed at the regional assembly that Uttlesford aimed to put a large settlement in a relatively inaccessible part of the district. He questioned whether the new settlement would protect Saffron Walden and Dunmow from further growth.

Councillor Morson asked whether officers could guarantee that 3000 was the definitive figure, and that further reviews should the developer wish to extend the settlement would not allow additional houses.

In reply to Councillor Morson, the Head of Housing and Planning Policy said that no response had been received yet from Fairfield, and that scale was a matter for the Council to determine.

Responding to Councillor A Dean's question, the Director of Development said that it was very unlikely that Uttlesford would have a full-blown eco town. Basic criteria were absent for such a development, such as commitment from the local authority and partners.

Councillor Hudson asked whether Fairfield could be approached for another option regarding road usage if the airport did not grow. Officers replied that traffic systems would be looked at under different scenarios and that they were awaiting views from Highways.

Councillor Sell asked whether despite the lack of responses from other agencies officers could give an assurance that there was a robust planning case. The Head of Housing and Planning Policy said that the consultation process was partly about testing robustness. Responses from other consultees were often received at the end of the process, and we had the option to return to them.

Councillor A Dean made a statement to sum up his view, which was that none of the options was acceptable as currently proposed; that option 2 was probably the best in principle, but the numbers were not right; that the proposed location was not right; and the numbers for Elsenham were too large. He suggested the Council look again at Saffron Walden and Dunmow's housing needs, and added that transportation was key.

Councillor Howard Rolfe spoke from the floor at this point to object to Councillor A Dean's statement. He referred to the obligation imposed by government, the continuing consultation process and the lack of an adequate alternative.

A question arose as to how people would be able to inform themselves about both the report to be made to Council and the report to be sent to the Secretary of State. The Director of Development advised that the report

would be made available before the meeting of full council, at council offices, by means of public notices, and via responses to all who had made representations.

The Chairman then brought this item to a close.

SWAP38 UPDATE ON STANSTED AIRPORT

The Director of Development gave an update on BAA's G1 application. He said that the appeal outcome was not yet known. Regarding G2, he was expecting this application during the current financial year. It would be far larger than the G1 application, and would comprise both outline and full applications for areas across the whole airport, including roads, junctions and the railway. At the airport itself there would be three or four applications which were expected to be outline applications for the buildings and terminal, and full applications for operational areas. Detailed design and access statements would accompany each one, along with reports on matters such as sustainability, health, etc. There would also be landscaping applications for areas surrounding the airport itself. It was expected that there would be applications for the demolition of barns and about 13 listed buildings, some of which would be re-erected elsewhere. There would be an application relating to an aviation fuel pipeline to Tilty. There would also be an application to replace common land in Molehill Green. In conclusion, the Director of Development said there would be 40 to 50 planning applications, representing substantial work for the Council. Notice would have to be served on landowners, including public notices for those that could not be identified.

A question was put regarding what consideration had been given to the workload this would place on planning officers. Councillor C Dean agreed that the applications would be a burden for the Council. She said that for G1 BAA had given the council some extra money to deal with the application, although it was now asking for costs. She asked officers how much money BAA would pay for the second application, and whether they would be asked for further money. The Director of Development replied that there would be a cross-authority team working on the application, that it was anticipated that the Secretary of State would call-in the application and a public inquiry would be held by the end of 2008. No additional resources were available, but the application fee would be a six-figure sum.

SWAP39 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT

The report attached to the agenda was noted, and Councillor Sell invited the panel to join him in expressing thanks to the Lead Officer for her work in securing a Lottery grant for this project. He said it would be a great advantage for the residents of Mountfitchet Green. The approach set out in the report to promote greater community capacity was accordingly endorsed.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS – POST OFFICE CLOSURES

The Chairman invited members of the panel to mention any items to be considered at this point, and no further matters being raised, agreed that the item of proposed Post Office Closures could now be heard. The Lead Officer explained that a final decision had been received on the closure of four Post Offices in Uttlesford. These were Little Hallingbury, Molehill Green, Quendon and Rowntree Way, Saffron Walden. However, there had been a further proposal to close the Post Office in Henham, and a six-week consultation period had been allowed, with a closing date of 14 February 2008. Councillor Morson asked the Panel to support opposition to this closure, which in his view represented another act of decimation of a village community. He believed that the proposed closure of Henham Post Office had been caused by the reprieve of another Post Office, and accordingly considered the consultation to be a farce as a decision seemed already to have been reached. He added that the cost of maintaining Henham's Post Office would be minimal as it was part of a community shop, and was run by volunteers, which was a good example of community cohesion. Councillor Morson also feared for the future viability of the shop itself should the Post Office be closed, and referred to a letter from Chris Swain, chair of the management committee, asserting the importance of the Post Office in drawing in customers. In conclusion, Councillor Morson said the proposed closure should be opposed on the grounds that it was undemocratic, not for financial reasons, and would undermine community cohesion.

Councillor C Dean said that whilst it was too late to save the other four, it seemed that two other Post Offices in Essex had been reprieved, so she was very concerned that selection of Henham may have taken place as an alternative, and without awareness of the implications to the village shop. She then proposed that a letter be sent on behalf of the Area Panel opposing the proposal to close the Post Office in Henham as it would have a detrimental effect on the village shop where it was situated. Members of the Panel endorsed this approach and resolved accordingly.

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm.