

**STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 10.00 am on 8 MARCH 2006**

Present:- Councillor P A Wilcock – Chairman.  
Councillors C A Bayley, J F Cheetham, C M Dean, M A Gayler, R T Harris, B M Hughes, S C Jones, A J Ketteridge and J I Loughlin.

Officers in attendance:- A Bovaird, R Chamberlain, S Clarke, R Harborough, M Jones, J Mitchell, P O'Dell and P Snow.

**SDAG46 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Boland, E J Godwin and R M Lemon.

**SDAG47 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2006 were received, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**SDAG48 DEVELOPING A CHALLENGING VISION**

The Chief Executive introduced the discussion by referring to his paper on developing a challenging vision entitled "Uttlesford 2021 – A Provocation". He had drafted this following developments at the last meeting when Members had agreed to effectively scrap the work done to date on identifying indicators for a strategic document. He invited Members to indicate their response to his paper and articulate any thoughts that it had provoked.

Councillor Cheetham thought that a lot of the discussion centred on the number of houses to be built and resolving the contradiction around the officers' preference for larger scale developments and Members' preference for "pepperpotting" within existing settlements.

Councillor Ketteridge expressed concerns about the difficulty of defending the character of the district in terms of the development framework over which the Council had very little control. He said that he would be horrified to see six or seven storey buildings anywhere in the district. The Chairman thought that the levels of development envisaged could be accommodated without destroying the district's character, but it might involve some encroachment into the Green Belt.

Members queried the expected rate of growth. The figure of 85,000 quoted in the Chief Executive's paper was slightly higher than the 80,000 resulting from the district level housing provision in the draft East of England Plan. Although it was acknowledged that birth and house occupancy rates were falling, this was not reflected by a slow down in population increase. Councillor Harris

drew attention to a number of incidences where permissions had been granted, but not taken up.

Councillor Ketteridge expressed his opposition to the idea of a hostel for homeless people being provided outside the district's boundaries. Councillor Hughes wanted the Council to become involved in more partnership working with the private sector. The Chairman said that the biggest challenge facing Uttlesford was the existence of an international airport at Stansted, whether or not the boundaries expanded to incorporate a second runway. Not knowing the outcome of the G2 consultation made it difficult for Members to decide how to plan for the future.

The discussion also considered the effects of the decline in farming. It was felt that if more small-scale farmers were forced out of business, the emphasis might alter towards the provision of subsidy for the management of land no longer in active production.

The point was also made that, with an ageing population, services for the elderly would be likely to shift more towards the provision of cultural and tourism based activities. Concern was expressed about the shortage of water, especially prevalent in the south east of England.

At this stage, the Chief Executive invited Members to split into discussion groups to consider the following broad policy areas:

- The provision of new housing.
- Transport and accessibility.
- Economics, employment, training and education.

Broadly speaking, he invited Members to approach these policy areas to determine "what do we want" and "what can we do about it". Members then broke up into three discussion groups before reporting back.

At the report back stage, the following main points emerged:-

### **Transport and Accessibility**

- A reduction in the use of private cars, but on the basis that public transport must be drastically improved.
- An Uttlesford metro link.
- Tolls on airport roads.
- More subsidised buses.
- Policies within the LDF.
- Incentives for car sharing.

- More co-ordinated linkage between different methods of public transport and more frequent services.

## **Housing**

- The provision of homes for life incorporating the necessary facilities to cater for an ageing population.
- A presumption against high-rise dwellings, but with consideration given to underground parking.
- A pepper pot approach to new development.
- The retention of a principally rural landscape.
- Encouraging the concept of an airport in the countryside sympathetic to the surrounding environment.
- Achieving a proper social mix on new development sites to incorporate sufficient units of affordable housing.

## **Economics and Employment**

- The encouragement and maintenance of a diverse local economy.
- Encouraging the creation of new job opportunities and the continuation of inward and outward movement of labour.
- More home working.
- Incentives to prevent the emigration of 18 – 30 year olds.
- Encourage greater liaison between employers and schools/colleges.
- Encouraging small to medium sized businesses linked to high tech industries.
- The sponsorship of more business parks.

There was general agreement to most of the main discussion points that had emerged from the three discussion groups. The Chief Executive offered to take these away and write a paper that could be used as the basis for the 2021 vision statement. He agreed to prepare a draft document to show to members of the Advisory Group prior to the scheduled meeting on 19 April 2006 when it was hoped a final vision statement could be recommended to the Council.

The Planning Policy and Conservation Manager referred to the process for adopting a core strategy on the LDF by 2008. The timetable for this required that the Council would have to consult on a draft strategy by May or June of this year and would then have to agree a preferred option by Autumn 2006. Members agreed that the vision statement would have to be robust enough to

withstand the possibility of different outcomes at Stansted Airport incorporating the full operation of a second runway, a second runway agreed but not yet constructed, and a policy of constrained growth.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the development of a strategic vision for 2021 would have to be built into the LDF process. Finally, Members expressed their thanks to the Chief Executive for re-energising the work being done towards the production of a vision statement as a result of his thought provoking paper.

The meeting ended at 12.05 pm.