

LOCAL PLAN LEADERSHIP GROUP held at ZOOM - [HTTPS://ZOOM.US/](https://zoom.us/), on THURSDAY, 29 JULY 2021 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor G Bagnall (Chair)
Councillors M Caton, P Lees, M Lemon, B Light, S Merifield,
R Pavitt (Vice-Chair), M Sutton and M Tayler

Guest (non-voting): Councillor J Evans

Officers in attendance: J Bennett (New Communities Principal Urban Design Officer),
L Bowser (Principal Community Infrastructure Planner),
G Glenday (Assistant Director - Planning), J Hill (Planning Policy Officer), S Miles (Local Plans and New Communities Manager),
L Mills (New Communities Senior Planning Officer) and
C Shanley-Grozavu (Democratic Services Officer)

1 PUBLIC SPEAKERS

Dr Graham Mott addressed the meeting on behalf of Elsenham Parish Council.

A copy of their statement has been appended to these minutes.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Freeman and Reeve.

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Caton requested clarification on whether care home numbers would be included in the local plan housing numbers. Officers confirmed that they would be, as this is a relatively new change to planning policy.

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

4 LOCAL PLAN PRELIMINARY OUTLINE STRATEGY

The Local Plan and New Communities Manager presented a report on the Preliminary Outline Strategy (POST) for the emerging Local Plan. They clarified that this was a developing document, as much of the evidence would not be available until the Autumn.

Members reviewed the draft Preliminary Outline Strategy and requested that the following changes be considered:

- Additional wording be included in the section about the green belt to incorporate the need to protect the Countryside Protection Zone.
- The Settlement Facilities 2020 Appendix be updated in line with recent boundary changes between the parishes of Birchanger and Stansted. Members also requested for the population estimates to be reviewed and updated and an additional column be included for the number of permissions given.
- The wording in point 8 be reconsidered to reflect the additional infrastructure projects, such on the M11, which will be implemented during the duration of the Local Plan. Officers were careful in ensuring that new road infrastructure addresses the Council's zero carbon targets, rather than encouraging more car trips.
- When considering the links between villages to towns, alternative options to cycling and walking, such as an on-demand, electric bus should be sought, as traditional methods would not be viable.

Members requested further clarity around the approach of the spatial strategy. Officers explained that any new settlements had not been ruled out at this stage and in April 2020, the council had committed to garden community principles for all new developments. They said that priority would be given to existing towns and smaller sites which would resolve the inspectors' comments in the withdrawn local plan around flexibility in addressing the housing need. However, they were unable to specify any details, including the number of development sites needed for their approach.

In response to further questions, officers explained that the new national policy requirement for local plans to look 30 years ahead would have an impact on the implementation of the new local plan, and if one or more developments meet the criteria, they will have to look beyond the plan's 2040 expiry date. They said that they have a well-resources team to think aspirationally and set out high targets in the plan's vision and objectives.

Officers also clarified that consultants were looking both at the current infrastructure deficit, as well as the new infrastructure required to meet housing need, through engagements with providers. The new local plan's approach to infrastructure would be to consider it on a case-by-case basis as addressing the current infrastructure deficit is difficult to achieve, given that it would be unreasonable to ask new developers to fix existing problems. Members suggested that Parish Council's also be consulted for their insight into local infrastructure deficit.

AGREED: to recommend that Cabinet agrees the Preliminary Outline Strategy (POST), subject to the amendments requested in the meeting.

5 **EMPLOYMENT INTERIM REPORT**

The Planning Policy Officer presented a report on the current progress of the employment study which will inform the new Local Plan on economic growth and employment needs.

Members discussed the findings of the report, and the following was noted:

- The report had not mention Stansted Mountfitchet as a significant community with an independent economic role to the district, but did mention Dunmow, Saffron Walden and Thaxted. The Chair said that there should be a strategy for the whole district.
- Members raised concerns around the background papers used, which predated both Britain's exit from the European Union and the Covid-19 pandemic. Officers explained that evidence is not readily available as the impact of these are ongoing, however the consultants undertaking the study were factoring this into their research. They highlighted that the interim report did include some up-to-date evidence, such as the study by Cambridge Econometrics which was drafted in July 2021.
- Members suggested not concentrating life sciences employment opportunities in the Chesterfords and encouraging them to be placed in other communities, perhaps along the railway.
- The report aimed to look at all different types of work in the district, from the rural economy to microbusinesses, as well as the skills of the working age population. Officers had noted that the research suggested that there was a high level of highly skilled employees within the district.
- Members highlighted that the visitor economy was the second most important economic strand in the district but was undervalued. In the report, all 3 Grade 1 attractions in Thaxted had been omitted. The Planning Policy Officer confirmed that a culture, creative and art strategy was being developed which will assist in expanding the visitor economy further.
- A policy decision had not yet been made on whether all activity at Stansted Airport would be airport related. Members emphasised that this would impact on land allocation for areas such as logistics and semi-industry.

The Chair requested that members contact officers outside the meeting with any specific points of clarification.

The Group noted the report.

6

SUSTAINABLE DENSITY

The New Communities Principal Urban Design Officer presented a report which considered the development of a policy in the emerging Local Plan to deliver sustainable levels of density. As the Regulation 18 Local Plan is being prepared, density specifications will be required to inform the spatial strategy and a density policy would assist in planning to address climate change, reduce the amount of land being developed and implement good design principles.

Members discussed the schemes outlined within the report, including the concept of Velo villages, and debated the impact of high-density developments on the district. Some members highlighted that Uttlesford is historically made up of smaller communities, so they would welcome high density, smaller and linked communities to keep with the character. However, other members emphasised the need for a lower density development to achieve open space and suggested

there be a minimum standard for green space, such as a ratio of bedrooms to green space. Officers agreed that there was a need for much varied, accessible, and well-maintained green space and they are advised by guidance from Fields in Trust.

It was confirmed that Uttlesford District Council had their own parking standards, which was a top-up to the Essex parking standards by adding a requirement for further spaces to larger properties

AGREED: to endorse the development of a policy in the emerging Local Plan to deliver sustainable levels of density.

Meeting ended at 20:48

Appendix: Statement from Dr Graham Mott (Chairman, Elsenham Parish Council)

I speak, Sir, on behalf of Elsenham Parish Council, of which I am the Chairman.

The previous Local Plan expired in 2011. It happens that 2011 was also a census year; the number of households in Elsenham at that time is recorded as 980. During the ten years since then, approval has been granted for a further 1,147 new dwellings, an increase of 117% - that's 1-1-7%. Not 17%, which might be thought a touch on the high side - no: one hundred and seventeen per cent, more than doubling the size of the village in ten years, and that, surely, Sir, is wholly excessive.

In granting one of three planning appeals last year, the Inspector referred to Elsenham as a 'town'. We felt he had missed the point entirely. Elsenham is a village, and a village does not become a town simply by adding more and more houses to its periphery with no increase in amenities, as a comparison of the limited range of our four local shops with a real town centre will confirm. There is inadequate parking at the shops, and at the heavily-oversubscribed local surgery. There is inadequate outdoor recreation and indoor meeting space. Road_links are hopelessly inadequate - to mention just a few of our problems. Furthermore, in September an Appeal Inquiry is to be heard for yet another 220 dwellings on the edge of the village; if that is granted, the percentage increase since 2011 will rise to 139%.

Other parishes have seen large increases since 2011. My request tonight, Sir, is simple: it is that when the results of the Call for Sites exercise are appraised, allowance should be made for the number of dwellings which have been approved since the last Local Plan expired in 2011.

I conclude, Sir, with a brief reminder of three numbers. 980: the number of dwellings in Elsenham in 2011; 1,147: the number of new dwellings approved since 2011; 117%: the approved percentage increase in Elsenham since 2011.

Thank you, Sir, for giving me the chance to speak tonight.