

Statement from Gareth Bevans

Regulation 18 consultation – new town in Great Chesterford village - statement from Great Chesterford Parish Council

The draft Local Plan, the choices made and the process followed is not supported by the published evidence base.

Highways – insufficient testing has been completed, and acknowledged by the Councils comments, to fully assess the impact of a new town in Great Chesterford. It is not acceptable to say that a full Traffic Impact Assessment will be carried out at the planning application stage. This assessment must be completed now, and when it has been it will be evident that the existing road structure and local junctions cannot cope and there are no established plans in place to overcome the significant issues. The proposed new town would not be able to mitigate the impact created. The local railway station does not have capacity for additional passengers and no space for car park provision.

Heritage – the Council’s study is flawed. The nationally important Scheduled Ancient Monuments have not been assessed and the proposed new town would have a significant impact on the Monuments and degrade their setting and significance. It is not possible to mitigate this harm through ground investigation and recording or in landscaping – this is accepted by the land owners own heritage report.

Landscape – siting a new town on the top of a hill which due to the local topography will be visible from miles around is professionally, politically and morally inexcusable. The desecration of the local landscape is not something which can be mitigated by new planting or bunding due to the heights and views involved. The new town location fails to follow and of the traditional settlement pattern locations and it would detrimentally impact on the wider character and landscape value of the local area.

Infrastructure – the new town would need to provide all its own social, retail and economic infrastructure from day one. There is no local capacity for primary or secondary education, no capacity on the local doctor network. The draft policy indicates that the new town would not have its own sufficient retail provision but would need to rely on Saffron Walden - this does not create a sustainable settlement.

Location – the location fails to respond to the evidence base of the Council nor on its stated joint working with East Herts, Epping and Harlow Councils. The new town does not fall within the Strategic Housing Market Area and does not supply housing for the Uttlesford housing market. The new town location is contrary to the jointly produced Sustainability Appraisal of Strategic Spatial Options for the West Essex and East Hertfordshire Housing Market Area by AECOM. This is published as part of the evidence base and supports the published plans of East Herts and Epping Councils.

Duty to Cooperate – given the AECOM report and the joint working on the Strategic Housing Market Assessment to proposed development contrary to this joint working is a failure by UDC of the Duty to Cooperate. It is also evident that UDC has failed in the Duty to Cooperate through insufficient and incomplete working with South Cambs District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council. This failure cannot be rectified post plan making and results in the draft plan being unsound.

Garden City Principles – the draft Plan and Councillors talk a great deal about the TCPA principles but as drafted the plan will not deliver a development in accordance with the principles. Neither the landowner or developer promoting the site, are committed to delivering anything other than a 'normal S106 site'.

Conclusion – the new town has been proposed through political expediency, professional omissions and with a failure of the Duty to Cooperate and proposer public engagement. The plan is unsound.