

TO ALL UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

Dear Councillor

On Thursday 30 April you will, as a collective, be tasked with making a decision that will have ramifications affecting the growth of Uttlesford for many years.

The Local Plan is a key instrument in guiding the shaping of our communities in terms of how and where we, and those who follow us, live.

A roof over your head is the one basic element of life that no one should be denied.

Withdrawing the 2019 plan may not be something you signed up to do or imagined you might have to do however the advice you are receiving from your planning team officers and from external advisers is just that.

Do not be afraid to make that decision.

However I would ask that you do think most carefully about the expectations that will arise from a decision to withdraw the plan and to start anew.

Some of the expectations will be falsely based on a belief that the numbers of new houses will be dramatically less than previously advertised, some expectations will be centred on the belief that a particular area will not see any further development schemes coming forward.

The Council's local plan team have a wealth of information that has been submitted by land owners and promoters over the years as a result of various calls for sites.

They will need to re-assess the suitability of those sites to meet the demand and be guided by the Inspectors expressed views that the previously selected sites for Garden Communities may not, for a variety of reasons, provide the solutions that been the focus for delivery of the 2019 plan.

A Garden Community should, according to theory, provide for housing, employment, leisure and shopping as a cohesive whole.

However that is not going to be possible, I would submit, in one place as hoped and I would imagine that a careful selection of some of the attributes of previously rejected sites could, within a general locality be combined and be able to provide the majority of the capacity and facilities required without introducing long travel distances. It could be that some special facilities may require travel from one end of the district to the other for those wishing to avail themselves of the service.

You will need to be aware that within the report the Council recommend that Parishes and Towns will be expected to absorb development when in the past they have resisted. Provided that the Council put in place the policies that adequately control such schemes so that they provide as much local benefit as can be reasonable expected, and I anticipate that a selection of various CIL rates need to be agreed for that to be acceptable, then in that event there should be no fear of accepting small schemes locally.

In respect of larger schemes, I believe it should be possible for the Council to engage with the landowners and promoters, alongside Essex County Council and other stakeholders, in forming the Local Development Corporations that are suggested within the report you are considering.

There will be cost to the Council but it should be seen as an investment and the dividend for that investment could well, among other things, be the affordable housing that is so badly needed in the district.

I am sure that a plan can come together that will be, in the final analysis, acceptable and able to become adoptable. There will be, of course, some to whom any plan would never be acceptable.

Please do not be one of those. Have the courage to make the decision and allow your officers to work afresh under the new directions indicated by the Plan Inspectors, along the lines they have drawn up in their recommendation to you.

I wish you good fortune.

Yours sincerely

Vic Ranger