

**PLANNING POLICY WORKING GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES  
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 17 OCTOBER 2017 at 7.00pm**

Present: Councillor H Rolfe – Chairman  
Councillors S Barker, P Davies, A Dean, P Lees, J Loughlin, A Mills.

Officers in attendance: A Bochel (Democratic Services Officer), P Bylo (Planning Policy Manager), G Glenday (Assistant Director – Planning), S Miles (Planning Policy Team Leader) and S Payne (Project Manager – Planning Policy).

Also Present: C Berry (Planning Policy Consultant – Troy Planning).

Public speakers: J Grey, S Merrifield and F Wilkinson.

**PP1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lodge and Oliver.

Councillor Barker declared an interest as a member of Essex County Council.

Councillor Dean declared an interest because his wife was a volunteer at, and a member of, the Trustees of the Gardens of Easton Lodge.

**PP2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting on 29 June 2017 were signed and approved as a correct record.

**PP3 UTTLESFORD LOCAL PLAN REGULATION 18 DRAFT PLAN  
CONSULTATION RESPONSES – PLANNING AUTHORITIES AND OTHER  
BODIES**

The Planning Policy Team Leader introduced the report. The regulation 18 consultation on the Local Plan had received just under 6000 representations. The purpose had been to ask for the views of the community, and it was important to note the plan was not a finished document. Because of the small period of time officers had had to review representations made, the selection of representations being brought before the working group were those from statutory consultees and other public bodies. The remaining representations would be reported at the next meeting of the group.

The Planning Policy Consultant said the report summarised the responses by bodies listed in the Duty to Cooperate and gave an overview of the representations made.

The Chairman thanked those who had responded to the consultation.

In response to a statement by Jane Grey, the Chairman said there was cross-party support for the provision of sports facilities and they would be key features of planned garden communities. The Planning Policy Team Leader said work had been commissioned to address the concerns of Sport England that the draft plan lacked a robust evidence base.

In response to statements read out by Fiona Wilkinson, the Chairman said if planning on potential new developments did not meet garden city principles then they would not get planning permission. The Council would not be rushed, and would take as long as was necessary for the regulation 19 consultation and submission for inspection. Transport was a big issue. The local plan would help to mitigate traffic problems, including those outside the area, in South Cambridgeshire. The Council was in close contact with the relevant bodies. The published evidence base would be continually updated, and the potential impact of traffic over time would be taken into consideration. It was unfair to expect all new development to happen in South Uttlesford.

The Planning Policy Officer said the Council was looking to commission further work on subjects such as archaeology and heritage, with the aim of resolving issues raised by public bodies.

Councillor Dean said it was reassuring to know work was ongoing and that it was not necessary to have all the answers now.

The Planning Policy Officer said the regulation 18 local plan was not meant to result in a finished document, and undertaking further work prior to the next round of consultation was not unusual. Both the Council and the inspector had to be convinced the final plan was sound. Representations submitted had raised significant issues, but the additional work was looking to resolve these issues.

In response to a question from Councillor Loughlin regarding how unmet housing need in other areas might affect Uttlesford's local plan, Councillor Barker said a paper responding to the government consultation on housing numbers was being put to Cabinet on 18 October. The draft Council response said the draft plan had been devised based on figures that the Council was advised to use, and that any alteration of these figures would require the Council to review its evidence base and would delay the production of the Local Plan.

The Chairman said the potential new formula for distributing houses which had been proposed by the government would increase pressure to build in the South East, and would considerably alter many of the original targets. He hoped this formula would be amended in due course.

In response to a question from Councillor Loughlin regarding comments in the report which proposed building on the green belt, Councillor Barker said Uttlesford had completed reviews of both the green belt and the countryside protection zone and deemed them fit for purpose. The Council was looking to preserve them, not to build on them.

In response to Councillor Dean's statement that sports planning should not be examined purely within the proposed new developments, the Chairman said sport would be looked at holistically and the Council were in communication with Active Essex.

Councillor Barker said sports centres and other facilities within schools in the district had not been well-used in the past. It was important to share such facilities in order to provide amenities for every community.

Councillor Dean said it was important to make a strong statement that the Council was prepared to make sure the developments happened in line with garden city principles. He had been on a tour of garden city developments and had come away with knowledge and inspiration for creating communities. Social infrastructure was important and it would be good to reassure parish councils. Councillor Lees said all members of the group were on the same page on this issue.

The Chairman said a possible issue could be what was considered to be good design. The Council would be working with experts to ensure good design was a factor in potential new developments.

In response to a point about the lack of specificity in more recent planning policy, the Assistant Director – Planning said he would take this away to look into further. Councillor Mills said he believed part of this policy had changed due to national legislation.

In response to a question from Councillor Dean, Councillor Barker said public transport in the Great Dunmow area was being examined, including to Stansted Airport and Bishops Stortford.

In response to questions from Councillor Lees regarding water provision and sewage, Councillor Barker said a new study had been commissioned and the policy on water in the final local plan had to be found to be sound. The Planning Policy Consultant said the Environment Agency had to be satisfied with the plans to ensure money would be released for new infrastructure. The Council was aiming to have a robust planning policy, taking into account the long-term needs of the communities in Uttlesford.

In response to a question from Councillor Lees, the Chairman said the Council had sufficient resources to do work on the plan.

Members said it was important to liaise with existing communities about potential new communities. It was important to try to anticipate the future.

The Chairman reaffirmed that all parties were committed to enforcing garden city principles in new developments.

*Jane Grey and Fiona Wilkinson spoke on this issue. Gareth Bevans had been due to speak at the meeting but was unexpectedly detained. His statement was read out by Fiona Wilkinson. Copies of these statements are appended to these minutes*

The Project Manager - Planning Policy said the report would be considered at Cabinet on 18 October, recommending approval to carry out a public consultation between November and January on a draft Issues and Options document for the proposed Garden Community. The document provided information on how the proposed new settlement would be developed around garden city principles. The Council would not accept poor quality design and was committed to achieve the principles. The result of the consultation would be reported back to the Working Group after consideration of representations on the Regulation 18 Local Plan. The consultation would in no way fetter the District Council on deciding its response to the Regulation 18 Local Plan, which was the primary planning document.

In response to a statement by Sandi Merrifield, the Project Manager – Planning Policy said it was important to get the document out for consultation. This was because Braintree District Council shared responsibility for the document, and it was important to the local plan process that consultation on the Issues and Options document had been completed before the start of the examination of the Braintree Local Plan which was expected in January 2018 .

In response to a question by Councillor Dean, the Project Manager – Planning Policy said he would strengthen wording to make it clear that the Council currently only supported the proposed Garden Community in principle, and he would ensure page 202 of the agenda pack included the objective of safety.

In response to the statement by Sandi Merrifield, members agreed to recommend to Cabinet that the fourth bullet point in question 13, on page 239 of the agenda pack, be deleted.

*Sandi Merrifield spoke on this item. A copy of this statement is appended to these minutes.*

The meeting ended at 9:00pm