

Report to Council 23rd February 2021

Cllr John Evans, Portfolio Holder for Planning and the Local Plan

Subject: Local Plan

The Council is just over half way through the initial consultation on its Local Plan. This consultation has been split into 9 different themes, with each theme opening with a discussion in public, in the Community Stakeholder Forum. We have also had a specific consultation meeting with Town and Parish Councils and will have a subsequent meeting with them again at the end of March. These discussions are intended to spark a wider conversation and ideas and encourage people to submit representations to the consultation. These meetings are broadcast live and uploaded to the Council's YouTube channel.

This consultation programme is innovative, being run differently from the way consultations on local plans are normally run and is designed to secure very early engagement,. Rather than the Council writing a draft plan and asking for others' views on the draft plan, the public's views are being sought before a single word of draft consultation policies have been written. The open, discursive nature of the consultation is also intended to encourage engagement from those that do not normally get involved in the planning system. Comments received will then be used to help draft the first version of the Council's Local Plan.

The preparatory evidential work and community engagement is being undertaken at a pace conforming to the programme set for it.

In the autumn 2020, the government consulted on changes to the standard housing methodology for calculating housing need. Had these changes been made the Council's housing need would be over 1,200 homes per year. The Council along with others, made representations to the government objecting to this change, these objections were successful and the changes to the calculation of housing need did not impact Uttlesford. The calculation of housing need for Uttlesford results in a need of just over 700 homes per year. The Council will look at this number when developing its Local Plan.

Development Management

The Stansted Airport Inquiry started as planned on 12th January in a virtual format. The 3 Planning Inspectors continue to hear evidence on a range of topics including air quality, noise and climate change matters. The updated programme now indicates that the Inspectors expect the Inquiry to be completed on 9th March with site visits scheduled for 10th March.

Officers continue to deal with the full range of planning applications and pre-application discussions ranging from rear extensions to proposals for major new housing developments. We continue to encourage developers to enter into Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs), which of course generate fees payable to the

Council, so that we can engage local communities in planning proposals before formal applications are submitted. By doing this, we are already finding that developers are hearing what members and local community representatives think about the initial proposals advanced and in many cases, the developers are amending their applications to take on board these initial comments. As part of this early engagement, developers are also encouraged to take their proposals to the Essex Quality Design Panel for an external peer review of their proposals – again with the view to address potential issues, particularly in relation to design, before their planning application is submitted.

Departmental Matters

The 2021/2022 Budget makes additional funding available to promote the Department's growth and increase service levels which will allow for the recruitment of additional personnel and introduction of additional technology into the Department within the next year, further details of which will be reported to Council in due course.