

## **Councillor John Evans, Portfolio Holder for Planning and the Local Plan**

### **Report to Full Council: 22 February 2022**

#### **Local Plan**

In November to February, the Local Plan Leadership Group continued to receive the evidence being prepared to inform the emerging Local Plan. This included the Retail Capacity Study; Infrastructure Baseline Report, further Landscape Sensitivity work; flooding and employment evidence.

The group has also endorsed a design document on Shopfronts to inform planning decisions in the district. It is intended that this document will be consulted upon and ultimately adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document. It is an assessment tool that will be used to help raise design quality of new development in the district.

The Council is reviewing the representations received from Town and Parish Councils and the promoters of the sites during the technical consultation on the sites submitted to the call for sites. Representations on the site boundaries and fact checking the analysis will be used to update the assessment of sites.

The Local Plan is now reaching a critical stage, as the Council seeks to draw together the evidence, vision, objectives, and preliminary outline strategy, to develop a draft Local Plan. It is intended to consult on this draft Local Plan in May. Representations received during this consultation will be used to inform and amend the plan before it is prepared to be submitted to the Secretary of State for examination.

#### **Development Management**

The headline issue for Development management this quarter was the formal notification by the Ministry on 8 February to Designate Uttlesford due to it exceeding the 10% threshold on allowed appeals as a proportion of all major applications for the 2018-20 period. The Government has confirmed that designation status will remain open-ended, but for a period of at least one year.

In essence this means that all applicants for major applications have the option to submit any major planning application to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) for determination, in such circumstances UDC would merely be a consultee on any of these applications and will likely be given twenty-one days to respond parallel with other statutory consultees. The team is considering in consultation with the Planning Committee will consider its response in terms of the processing of such consultations which would certainly be through Planning Committee.

It is unclear as to the quantum of applicants that will choose the direct submission to PINS as an option. However, the team are immediately out-reaching to developers,

promoters and applicants that are already engaged with the team through Planning Performance Agreements, Pre-application Submissions or on the radar for submission. Early indications are that developers may still consider reverting to submit applications to the LPA. The team will not rest on its laurels on this point.

The Team continue to progress major planning applications in hand, and finally Section 106s have been completed to allow the issuing of strategic sites. Specific to this is the hybrid application for 450 houses, including land for a primary/secondary school, playing fields and health centre South of Stortford Road in Great Dunmow. This site was significant part of housing and infrastructure delivery within the Great Dunmow Neighbourhood Plan. Meanwhile, the development of land by Barratts and Bellway West of Woodside Way continues at a pace

The Planning Committee now has an established hybrid approach and is working well, although challenging, as the Committee is still required to work under COVID restrictions

Planning Enforcement is specifically recovering from the extended periods of lockdown through to Spring 2021. It has had significant staffing challenges through this quarter. The team are getting to sites and progressing some significantly complex and difficult sites. Sadly, the nature of these cases and Enforcement itself these are not progressed with the speed that the public may wish, We are progressing the relaunching of the Council's Enforcement Development Plan, with specific training for members in March. It is essential that members work with the Planning Enforcement Team as advocates in the community on such matters.

The pandemic has delayed some progress on the delivery of infrastructure from Section 106s. I am pleased to announce that this backlog is beginning to clear, with the delivery of open space on various sites including Elsenham Vale. The de-snagging of other sites is progressing at a pace. In terms of financial contributions, within the period £700K has been drawn down from developers as part of the contribution to Community Facility in Elsenham. The Parish Council are progressing the pre-application consideration of this facility with the team.