



Good evening-my name is Jane Gray – I am a member of the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and also an Ashdon Parish councillor.

We strongly object to the draft Local Plan categorising Ashdon as a “Larger Village”.

We welcome that this draft Local Plan recognises the importance of NPs sitting alongside the Local Plan and both should be used to inform planning allocations across the district. However, the categorisation of Ashdon as a “Larger Village” undermines our NP with its detailed Ashdon specific policies. This categorisation means that we might as well tear up our recently completed NP, which local residents worked so hard to complete in close collaboration with Uttlesford officers.

A mere nine months ago this Council formally ‘made’ the Ashdon NP part of the statutory development plan for Uttlesford. At that meeting the plan was commended for being a detailed, well-informed document.

Our NP was evidence-led and the Independent Examiner concluded that it was an exceptionally good example of a NP - seeking to bring forward positive and sustainable development in Ashdon, strongly underpinned by community support and engagement, and evidence led.

Where is your evidence to support the classification of Ashdon as a “Larger Village” ?

Councillors, if you look at your own Settlement Hierarchy in the proposed draft Local Plan:

“Core Policy 3 defines the settlements across Uttlesford into four tiers based on an assessment of their population size, the number and range of facilities and services, their characteristics, accessibility, local employment opportunities and their functional relationship with their surrounding areas. Each tier of settlement has a different strategic role as defined by Core Policy 3.” (para 4.23 of draft Local Plan).

The draft Plan states: “Larger Villages are defined as larger and more sustainable villages that offer a wider range of services and are more well connected”. We fail to see how any of this applies to Ashdon, I will explain why.

1. A ‘Larger Village’ classification completely ignores the unique settlement pattern of Ashdon – it is not one village - it has 2 historic cores, Ashdon village and the smaller separate Church End, plus

other smaller hamlets – eg Water End and Steventon End and the ‘Ashdon’ population is dispersed across these different settlements in the Parish.

2. Ashdon has very limited facilities. Although we still have a primary school and a pub, there is no shop and the residents have to go into Saffron Walden for doctors, dentists, cash dispensers, library and all the other needs of residents.

3. Thirdly, we have limited employment opportunities.

4. Finally, although Walden is five miles away, there is sparse public transport and the road to Walden is winding and hilly and with the traffic nowadays it is certainly not safe for cyclists. With no effective public transport, living in Ashdon, makes residents virtually completely car dependent. We have poor connectivity on minor roads and fast traffic is ever-increasing.

Much of the main village is historically situated along the River Bourne valley and our professional NP Landscape Appraisal rated highly the views and the rural topography. Building on the upper reaches of the river valley and the road entrances was to be deplored and it concluded that large single developments would not be appropriate in Ashdon Parish.

We request, as part of this process, that Ashdon be reclassified as a smaller village to more appropriately reflect its population, its services and poor connectivity on rural roads, and lack of public or other sustainable transport options. There is no evidence to support a “Larger Village” classification and we refer you to our very detailed NP for evidence in support of a “Smaller Village” classification.

Please do not let this settlement categorisation undermine our very positive NP of Ashdon. The classification of Ashdon as a “Larger Village” is at odds with the core policies of the Local Plan on sustainable development and will make the Plan ‘unsound’.

Thank you for your time.