

Councillor Geoff Bagnall

I found it disappointing to look at the agenda for this evening's meeting to see that there were no papers to be discussed or topics to be addressed. I should not have been surprised, as that's been the way things have developed over the last 6 months or so.

Here we are again waiting for things to be presented, no doubt with a promise that everything will be delivered just in time for a vote on the Regulation 19 Plan.

When we started on this journey, the LPLG made it clear that we would be evidence led and that we felt one new community may well work for this district, so ask yourself the question, why have we not undertaken any work at all in looking at a new community and the infrastructure that this would provide.

I don't understand why there has been no work at all on looking at a 'new Community'. It may well be that the officers did not feel they had the time to do that, however that is not good enough reason and certainly should not have prevented them from making a request of the major site promoters to undertake this exercise, on their behalf, by producing a Masterplan for their particular site, along with all the relevant constraints. This could have been provided using the same process as the work for the draft Regulation 18 Plan, carried out in the same way that the consultants have drawn up plans for the extensions to the existing towns and villages.

I am concerned that, with existing commitments already adding up to over 7500 new homes, relying only on the Towns and villages for our plan numbers is a mistake that will see the district suffer even more. The time is right to do something different for the second half of this plan period and think more strategically to prevent further harmful impacts on our towns and villages.

There is so much missing evidence and evidence that has to be re-worked. Where is the evidence regarding the work that needs to be undertaken, following the feedback from Essex County Council. Where are all the responses to the residents' concerns that we should now be able to see.

At the last meeting it was stated that all the responses will be published in July. Surely, we must see all those responses before then to assess how that might change things and lead to different conclusions. If answers have been developed they must be shared as soon as they are available, not wait until the end of the process.

Sadly, it appears that we are sleepwalking into a similar situation that we encountered with the vote at the Reg18 stage where all the evidence was delivered at the last minute and no time was given to either digest or challenge that evidence by the then LPLG or, indeed, at Scrutiny or Full Council.

We cannot allow the officers to dictate in this way again as that would mean the members have had no say in this process at all, other than voting on a plan for which they have had no input.

We must make sure we get the best plan for the sake of the residents that currently live in the district.

It pains me to think that as a 'Resident Party', we are not producing something to take away all the harmful impacts on our already beleaguered towns and villages. I fear this will lead to the ruination of this district.

I hope you think about what has been said and question yourself whether we are doing enough and if we are really heading in the right direction.

I certainly don't think we are.