

Uttlesford Planning Policy Working Group meeting 20 November 2018
Statement by Ken McDonald, 2 Greenfields, Stansted Mountfitchet, CM24 8AH.

Good evening. My name is Ken McDonald.

In my response to the Regulation 19 consultation I stated that the Local Plan has not been properly prepared because UDC failed to properly consider responses to its so-called consultations.

Now, this incredibly damning report by AECOM seems to support my conclusions: that UDC has, far too readily, taken at face value, and almost without question, the reports of developers and consultants. This aspect of the AECOM report mirrors the conclusions expressed last week by Stop Stansted Expansion in respect of the recent airport planning application.

I recognise that this Council has a relatively small budget with which to tackle complex issues, but the principles of sound management should still be applied. By all means delegate to subordinates and consultants, but such delegation does not remove responsibility.

The work of officers and consultants, the forecasts by employers and developers with vested interests, all must be reviewed, especially in the light of challenges by those who have taken the trouble to put together a considered, albeit inconvenient, point of view.

I have long been saying that this Local Plan is based on population and job forecasts that are highly questionable. An aspect that I failed to appreciate is what I think AECOM have now said: that the location of planned development should respond to the location of need.

This latest commissioning of consultants offers an opportunity to work from the ground upward, evidence-based and founded on sustainability. At last, there seems to be an opportunity to review the housing and employment forecasts, taking into account the issues that I and Mike Young, and others, have been raising persistently for more than three years.

This new piece of commissioned work must not be yet another sticking plaster to paper over the cracks, another exercise to find evidence to support a predetermined conclusion. We have had too much sticking plaster.

The officer's recommendation is that the PPWG "notes the findings of the Sustainability Assessment review and the actions taken by officers to address these findings." There has been far too much Noting. I hope you will do much more.

I urge you to bring about a change in the culture that regards delegation of a task as delegation of responsibility.

This committee is responsible – and must take responsibility - for what has been happening and for what is to come.