

Report of Alan Storah to Little Bardfield Parish Council

9th September 2019

1. Local Plan

As a consequence of the change in administration of the council and that 'Residents for Uttlesford' made representations about the plan, the Inspectors had written to the Council asking for clarification of its position. They considered that, if the Council no longer supports key aspects of the plan it has submitted, the appropriate action would be to consider withdrawing that plan from examination. It was considered that the best option would be for the plan to continue to inspection. This was on the basis that:-

- Delays in preparing the plan cost £millions;
- Every time there is a delay the number of new houses the government requires Uttlesford to provide goes up. (Since 2011 the government's requirement has doubled to more than 700 new homes a year, every year);
- The council may lose all control over the plan as the government has said they may step in to dictate where houses go where plans fail; and
- The current developer-free-for-all will continue because the district does not have a 5 year housing land supply which means that the decision-making process tips in favour of development. That situation would change immediately that an up-to-date local plan is in place.

The examination commenced on Tuesday 2 July 2019. The hearing sessions are scheduled to take place in two stages. Stage 1 is not completed and dealt with legal and procedural matters, the 'duty to cooperate', objectively assessed needs for housing and employment land, the spatial strategy, strategic infrastructure and London Stansted Airport and the proposed garden communities. If, following those Stage 1 hearing sessions, the Inspectors are satisfied that the relevant legal duty has been met and they consider the Plan is legally compliant and capable of being found sound on the matters considered at Stage 1 the examination will move on to Stage 2. Stage 2 will consider development management type policies and the site allocations.

The Inspectors will consider everything put to them by all parties and then write to the Council with their initial findings and advice on the next steps in the examination. Following the close of the Local Plan hearings, the Inspectors invited comments from participants at the hearing sessions on selected documents submitted to the hearing sessions. The Inspectors have now extended this consultation period to 11 September, extended the list of documents comments are invited upon and opened up the consultation to all people who made a representation to the Local Plan at the Regulation 19 stage.

The Inspectors confirmed at the end of the Stage 1 hearing sessions that they would be writing to the Council with their initial findings. The Programme Officer has now advised that as a result of this extended consultation, the Inspectors' letter will be delayed by a few

weeks as the Inspectors will be taking full account of the responses received to the consultation before finalising their letter to the Council. That letter is now anticipated in mid-October but that is only the council's 'best estimate' and is not a timescale to which the Inspectors are committed.

2. Stansted Airport

At the Extraordinary Council meeting on Friday 28th June the original motion, which follows, "To instruct the Chief Executive and fellow officers not to issue the Planning Decision Notice for planning application UTT/18/0460/FUL until members have had an opportunity to review and obtain independent legal corroboration that the legal advice provided to officers, including the QC opinion referred to by the Leader of the Council on 9th April 2019, confirms that the proposed Section 106 Agreement with Stansted Airport Limited fully complies with the Resolution approved by the Planning Committee on 14 November 2018 such that officers re lawfully empowered to conclude and seal the Agreement without further reference to the Planning Committee."

was replaced with the following motion which was agreed

"In accordance with Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 143(2) of the Localism Act 2011 to instruct the Chief Executive and fellow officers not to issue a Planning Decision Notice for planning application UTT/18/0460/FUL unless and until the Council's Planning Committee have had a sufficient opportunity to consider in detail, as timely as possible:

- (i) the adequacy of the proposed Section 106 Agreement between UDC and Stansted Airport Ltd, having regard to the Heads of Terms contained in the resolution approved by the Council's Planning Committee on 14th November 2018;
- (ii) any new material considerations and/or changes in circumstances since 14 November 2018 to which weight may now be given in striking the planning balance or which would reasonably justify attaching a different weight to relevant factors previously considered;

And thereafter ask the Planning Committee to determine the authorisation of the issue of a Planning Decision Notice."

When the matter goes back to the Planning Committee has not yet been determined.

3. Changes to Planning Committee processes

An informal Working Group, comprising of six members of the Planning Committee with two officers, has been set up. The purpose of the group is to consider the review of Planning Committee procedures specifically around public speaking and site visits. The formal adoption of the 'Actions' from the group's first meeting will require a change to the Council's Constitution for site visits and speaking at Planning Committee (as set out in Part 5 of the Constitution (para 5-53 to 5-56)). Hence these will need to be formally considered by the Governance, Audit & Performance Committee (GAP). However, it is quite appropriate for the Committee Chairman to implement the proposals on a trial period.

At its meeting of 21st August 2019, the Planning Committee confirmed the Chairman as being able to use her discretion to implement the following proposals on a trial basis pending a report to the Governance, Audit & Performance Committee on formal changes to the Council's Constitution:

1. Parish Council representatives speaking at committee
 - Extension of maximum period of time allowed for town / parish council representatives to five minutes (to match that for district councillors).
 - Still only 1 parish council representative.
2. Parish Council comments on applicant's/agent's presentation
 - Town/parish council representatives will be allowed to comment on statements made by applicants/agents/developers through the chair inviting any factual clarification (not statements) before committee goes into discussion.
3. Parish Council representatives on site visits
 - 2 representatives to be permitted to attend, and participate in, site visits.
4. Public speakers at committee
 - Extension of maximum period of time allowed for public speakers to 4 minutes whilst still allowing a little leeway to finish.
 - Retain limit of 10 on number of public speakers.
 - Current limit of 5 for and 5 against to be removed.
 - For those people who are unable to attend, written representations can be submitted and will be read out.
 - Major applications or controversial ones will be considered on an individual basis.

The changes as to the extent to which Parish Councils and residents may make submissions to the Planning Committee have not yet been finalised as it appears that some will need to be ratified by committee.

4. Uttlesford Community Travel

I have been approached by Uttlesford Community Travel (UCT) who wish to publicise their services. Whilst canvassing, it became apparent that public transport and 'rural isolation' is an important issue in this Ward and I intend to examine the issue with a view to improving the situation if at all possible. UCT would be an integral part of the services available. I therefore wonder to what extent the council is aware of them and whether their services could be publicised. The following paragraph summarises who they are and what they offer.

Uttlesford Community Travel (UCT) is a charity offering subsidised safe travel either on their own buses or hospital cars. They provide services to the residents of Uttlesford who find it difficult to access normal public transport, the over 60's, the disabled and those who are

rurally isolated. The services include taking people shopping, to the hairdressers, to visit friends, garden centres, just about anywhere, as well as all types of medical appointments. All UCT minibuses are wheelchair accessible and all drivers are fully trained and checked.

5. Public Transport

I have been asked by my group's lead Member on transport to ask parish councils about any bus services that operate in your parish, the frequency, the operator, how well used the service(s) are whether there's any threat of withdrawal and, if there isn't a bus service, would the parish like one.

Your response would be welcomed. However, as will be apparent from the previous item, I was looking to do something similar on the basis of what I had discovered about the ward whilst canvassing. Suffice it to say that my colleague and I will have to liaise in order to ensure that we don't duplicate and secure the optimum outcome for the parish, the ward and the rural parts of the whole district.

6. Traffic schemes

Suggestions for any county-funded traffic schemes in the parish would be welcomed.

The process for making requests to the Uttlesford Local Highways Panel (LHP) has been amended. Any Parishes or Councillors wishing to make a submission for the Uttlesford LHP to consider funding will need to complete the relevant form and send it to the representing County Member in the first instance. If your County Member is in support of your scheme then s/he will submit it to me as the Uttlesford Highway Liaison Officer to put through the validation process and this will then appear as a request on the 'schemes awaiting funding' list which is discussed at the quarterly LHP meetings. Without the support of the County Members then a scheme cannot progress to this stage so please do keep your County Members involved in all scheme-related discussions.

7. Ward Councillors' Initiative

All District Councillors are each allocated £2,000 to spend on good causes within their ward. I would there be pleased to know if this Council has any suggestions although, as you will appreciate, I will also be posing the same question to the three other parish councils.

Potentially suitable community projects and/or causes include, for example:

- Grant to the town/parish council for a specific project/activity
- Grant to a voluntary organisation or local charity
- Grant to a community organisation e.g. village hall
- Grant to a sports or social club (subject to appropriate rules on membership)
- Grant to a local school, church, doctors' surgery, hospital etc
- Grant to local scouts, cubs or guides etc
- Funding a community event or celebration.

The £2,000 may be allocated across different items. There is no minimum value on any payment. Any suggestions from the Parish Council would be welcomed.