

Officer Note on Public Speaker Comments of the Local Plan Panel Meeting of 20 June 2024

At the last meeting of the LPP a number of points were raised by four speakers and one speaker statement. As part of the council's commitment to fully consider and respond to those interested in LPP business and the local plan, officer consideration of those comments is set out below.

- Firstly, Ms Jane Sharp spoke about affordable housing. Ms Sharp outlined the high cost of homes in the district and the need for affordable housing, with examples. She questioned the proposal to set local plan affordable housing policy at 35% rather than the 40% set out in the 2005 plan. Ms Sharp noted the high volume of planning applications made in Uttlesford, raised points about developer viability, and advocated rented affordable housing as a priority.

Affordable Housing (AH) is one the key policy areas of the local plan and clearly important to Members (see 8 February 2024 meeting of LPP where the emerging policy was discussed). Uttlesford's Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA) sets out the need for AH over the plan period. Due to the high housing costs Ms Sharp outlined (far above national averages), it is a challenge to provide AH that is genuinely affordable for residents on low to average incomes. AH such as 'Intermediate rented housing' is anything 20% below market value – this is still out of reach for a number of households in Uttlesford. 'Shared Ownership', where the home is sold at a discount of 20%, is similarly so. Social rented housing is around 50% of market rent, but essentially costs more to deliver as the returns are much lower. The LHNA and Officers' advice is that the Council should promote social rented housing (i.e. agrees with Ms Sharp's suggestion). However, this comes with a cost. The Local Plan must be shown to be viable for an Inspector to accept it. The viability work undertaken suggests that a requirement of 40% AH with the promotion of more social rented housing, plus the various infrastructure needs required in the Local Plan (schools, transport improvements, parks) is not viable. On this basis, a 35% AH policy, that favours social rented housing, is more likely to be able to be justified.

The council may be able to achieve a figure closer to 40% overall however, this would likely have to be at the expense of some public infrastructure and/or promoting more shared ownership or intermediate-type AH within the 40%; affordable housing that many households in need of housing will still find unaffordable. Officers recommend a headline figure of 35% with a focus on social rents in order to genuinely address the district's housing need.

Officers note that since 2021 the council has achieved around 28% of all homes consented / built as 'affordable'.

- Parish Cllr Jeremy Fuller (Lt. Canfield) spoke on development pressures in and around Takeley and Dunmow and along the B1256. He spoke about the need for the CPZ and the need for school places.

There has been significant development pressure in the south of the district, and various permissions granted (some on appeal) in recent years. Cllr Fuller is correct that the consented replacement school at Dunmow (south of the B1256) is not likely to increase

Appendix 1

school place capacity. As such, provision is being proposed for a new co-located primary and secondary at Takeley / Lt. Canfield.

Points about the CPZ were discussed at the LPP of 8 May and officer comments provided within the papers for the 20 June meeting of LPP.

- Parish Cllr Jackie Cheetham (Takeley) questioned the sustainability of housing at Takeley in light of the Airport's comments on the use of the Airport Rail Station as a transport hub. Cllr Cheetham also raised concerns with proposed employment allocations in Takeley and the boundary of the CPZ with regards areas of the Flitch Way.

Takeley is classified as a 'Local Rural Centre' which represents the second highest level of services and facilities amongst our settlements and provides an opportunity to support sustainable development, which can help to boost the sustainability of the area. With potential for transport improvements between the Takeley and the Airport Station, plus proposals for a new local centre / community facilities, open space and school, it offers a good opportunity for a 'garden community'-type, strategically planned development. Up until now the area has been subject to much piecemeal development and significant development pressure due to its location to transport routes.

The evidence base identifies need for employment uses in the vicinity of Stansted Airport and along the A120. The council must seek to provide for the district's employment needs up to 2041. The two sites proposed at Takeley and Lt Canfield have been modelled for transport / traffic impacts and mitigations included.

The CPZ study was discussed at the LPP of 8 May. The CPZ is being proposed in order to prevent the rural character around the airport being lost. It makes little sense to keep major developed sites within the CPZ. Adding areas to the CPZ that are beyond the built up areas of Takeley / Lt Canfield would not prevent coalescence being that major developed areas would already exist between it and the airport. A careful balance has been struck, taking on board various comments received during the Reg18 consultation and the LPP meeting held on the subject. The policy must pass muster at EiP. Areas of open countryside are protected from development. The Local Plan's Spatial Strategy states that "development in the open countryside will not be permitted unless consistent with the exception policies in this plan or within national policy".

- Mr Adam Davies from Ceres Property spoke about a site known as Land at Elms Farm in Stansted Mountfichet. Mr Davies outlined some of the potential benefits the site could provide, including land for a cemetery extension, allotments, playing fields, and that it was by a key settlement which is a sustainable location. The site is in the greenbelt.

Being that the Local Plan process has identified sufficient sites to meet housing needs outside of the greenbelt, there is not a need to review the district's green belt. Officers do not consider there is a case of exceptional circumstances to warrant a green belt review. Cemetery, allotment and playing field uses may be acceptable in the greenbelt (para.154 NPPF).

An advanced draft of the Green Belt evidence paper was provided to the LPP on 28 June.

Appendix 1

- Ms Anna Bell provided a written statement which concerned the adoption and future maintenance of common areas on new developments. Ms Bell outlines that if areas are not adopted they are given over to management companies who charge new residents maintenance costs. Ms Bell referred to a report by the Competition and Markets Authority which notes such costs are unregulated. Ms Bell asks that this issue be covered in the Local Plan.

Officers agree with Ms Bell, and this is a point that has been raised with officers in recent months. As such, a new policy has been researched and drafted for LPP consideration (see Core Policy 67a). This proposes a 'cascade' approach whereby new communal spaces must be first offered to the parish / town or district council with a commuted sum for maintenance for 30 years. Only if this route cannot be taken should it be given over to a management company.