

**LOCAL PLAN PANEL held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES,
LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on MONDAY, 15 JULY
2024 at 7.00 pm**

Present: Councillor R Freeman (Chair)
Councillors C Criscione, J Emanuel, J Evans, R Gooding,
R Pavitt (Vice-Chair), N Reeve, G Sell and M Tayler

Officers in attendance: D Hermitage (Strategic Director of Planning), P Holt (Chief Executive), A Maxted (Interim Planning Policy Manager) and C Shanley-Grozavu (Democratic Services Officer)

6 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no apologies for absence or declarations of interest.

7 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a correct record.

8 PUBLIC SPEAKERS

The following individuals addressed the Panel. Copies of their statements have been appended to the minutes of the meeting:

- Mr William Critchley
- Dr Jean Johnson
- Councillor Geoff Bagnall
- Mrs Allison Evans
- Councillor Jackie Cheetham (on behalf of Takeley Parish Council)
- Councillor Bianca Donald
- Councillor Alex Armstrong

Late submissions were also received by Councillor Mark Coletta and Mr Byran Pinchback which were circulated to the Panel for noting.

In response to comments made by the Public Speakers, Officers explained that the Council had departed from the “new community” approach which had been used in the strategy of previous withdrawn plans.

They said that the Larger Villages within the Settlement Hierarchy had been amended, following feedback from the Regulation 18 consultation which suggested that the category should reflect the district’s settlements, rather parishes.

They acknowledged that not everything was right within the draft Regulation 18 plan, and the team had reviewed the 1742 responses received and made

various changes for Regulation 19, including to the proposed Countryside Protection Zone and site allocations within Thaxted and Newport. However, the overall strategy remained the same; namely sites of different sizes in existing settlements where new infrastructure would be a benefit new and existing residents as it would seek to address the current deficit caused by speculative development.

The Chair said that there had been several attempts at Local Plan since 2005 and the latest draft was streets ahead of the old one. It was not possible to have a perfect plan, but it was important to have a working plan which created a foundation for an ongoing process of plan setting.

The Strategic Director of Planning confirmed that a full written response to all the statements would be provided in due course.

9

LOCAL PLAN PROGRESS UPDATE

The Strategic Director of Planning provided a general update on Local Plan progress since the last meeting of the Local Plan Panel.

They noted that there was no requirement for a detailed proposal at Regulation 18, and many organisations choose to have an “issues and proposals” consultation which is compliant. The Council had chosen to go above and beyond and released a full plan in order to have a meaningful consultation.

In response to questions from members, the following was clarified:

- Despite the recent change of government, the Council’s view was that nothing had yet to come out of Whitehall to suggest there should be a delay or interruption to the current timetable, despite the new government’s declared intention to encourage development. Therefore, Officers would continue to work to their deadlines in order to meet the transitional timetable previously set.
- Previous government targets required the Council to have a Local Plan in place by June 2025, however Officer’s have not spoken to DLUHC yet to confirm that this requirement was still in place. The Labour manifesto did highlight that sanctions would be imposed for local authorities that didn’t progress with their plan.
- It was likely that choosing not to progress with the plan would not only result in sanctions, but a higher housing allocation figure imposed on the district to meet the new government’s targets.
- If the Council were to submit the plan by December 2024, as planned, they would be “at the top of the list” for consideration by the Inspector, as there would be many other Council’s trying to reach the June 2025 deadline imposed by the previous government administration.
- Since April 2021, over 8,500 properties have received planning permission in the district. Any delay to the process would see even more speculative development without any needed infrastructure with it.
- The Plan needed to take more consideration of sites already consented and the significance of this, as a lot of growth had already been approved. Members noted that the consented site on the Masterplans were outlined in grey in order to provide context to the new allocations.

- The housing numbers had been calculated, based on commitments up to 31st March 2024. Any developments after this date would have not been considered and were not included in the Plan.
- The NPPF required a proportionate, strategic plan, backed up evidence, rather than individual Planning applications. At this point, the evidence was more comprehensive than needed and all the studies updated since Regulation 18 to reflect the new thinking.
- Members noted the concerns raised by the speakers regarding the concentration of housing allocations in the south of the district, but felt that it was currently a subjective process. The Plan needed to be assessed by the Inspector and if the evidence didn't stack up to support the proposed development, then this would be challenged and potentially rejected.
- The Affordable Housing policy within Regulation 19 stipulated that any new residential development of 10 or more self-contained units, should have an allocation of 35% as affordable dwellings. Of this allocation 70% will be social and rented, as oppose to intermediate products such as shared ownership which were not genuinely affordable. Due to the number of committed sites already in the plan, it would equate to 24.5%, roughly 1 in 4, of affordable houses genuinely being affordable. This was in line with the housing need of the district, however officers expected to be flexible in the event that the Inspector did not completely support the proposal.

The update was noted.

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UTTLESFORD LOCAL PLAN 2021 - 2041 (REGULATION 19) SUBMISSION VERSION

The Strategic Director of Planning presented the Uttlesford Local Plan 2021 – 2041 (Regulation 19). He highlighted that the plan proposed 3,738 additional homes on strategic sites and 900 through non-strategic allocations, alongside a raft of policies to address the district's current housing need alongside various other issues such as climate change, water resources and affordable housing.

Members commended the work which Officers had put in to produce the Regulation 19 Local Plan, particularly highlighting the robust evidence base which had been updated and provided to them.

Members discussed the plan, and the following was noted:

- The justification for allocating the provision of employment land within Takeley, despite the granted permissions at Stansted Northside, was that it was in a critical location with a close proximity to the strategic highways network and the airport. Further information could be found within the updated employment study.
- Members were reassured that the responses from Regulation 18 had been taken into account in producing the Regulation 19 plan and welcomed the commitment for an early review to start a frequent, continuous process of plan making. This would ensure any new changes to government policy would be taken into account in the Council's development policies.

- The district did not have the infrastructure to support the growth expectations which had been imposed on them within the government-calculated figures, however the local plan did try to achieve what it could. Members hoped that there would be bigger proposals for infrastructure in the next plan, in order to address to existing deficit further from years of speculative development.
- The Plan did not need to make everybody happy, and it was clear that the site allocation had caused the greatest contention, despite the understanding that areas which missed out in this plan would likely see development in the next plan. However, it was supported by evidence and an opportunity was needed for it to be challenged by the experts at the Planning Inspectorate.
- It was critical to have a sound, robust plan in place now with good policies that would set the development framework of the district. There were a number of solid, forward-thinking policies within the plan. For example, the would the only local authority in England to had a decommissioning requirement for solar farms.
- Green policies were the forefronts of the plan and there were many which had the opportunity to make a positive difference in future; the included the requirement for the Development proposals to demonstrate a minimum of 20% Biodiversity Net Gain and carbon positive building.
- The implications of not having an up-to-date Local Plan extended into areas beyond the remit of the District Council. For example, the NHS and local education authority were unable to strategically plan for the infrastructure required to deliver effective services and facilities as they were uninformed as to where homes would be built in the future.
- Timelines would be useful as to the delivery of infrastructure as this would assist with the understanding on when different aspect would be delivered and affect the existing and new population. For example, a new bus service would be required sooner than the opening of a school.
- Work would commence from August on the Community Infrastructure Levy. Once complete, this would sit alongside the Local Plan and assist with ensuring that the needed infrastructure provisions are allocated into the right areas.

Members debated the Officers recommendations and discussed whether there was a need to reword them in order to put greater emphasis on the vote at Full Council.

The Chief Executive advised that it was within the gift of the Local Plan Panel amend the recommendation, however members should consider whether they wished to go forward in the governance process supportive of the Plan or take a neutral stance.

Councillor Freeman proposed approval of the recommendations, as drafted. This was seconded by Councillor Pavitt.

RESOLVED: That the Local Plan Panel

- i. Recommend to Cabinet that the Uttlesford Local Plan 2021 – 2041 (Regulation 19) document is published for eight weeks consultation 8 August to 3 October 2024.
- ii. Recommend to Cabinet that thereafter, the Uttlesford Local Plan 2021 – 2041 (Regulation 19) document is submitted to government / PINS for examination.
- iii. Provide delegated authority for the Strategic Director of Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to make any minor corrections prior to consultation, including for typographical and formatting purposes.
- iv. Note the technical supporting evidence in preparation for publication alongside the Draft Uttlesford Local Plan 2021 – 2041 consultation.

Meeting ended at 21:12