

# Saffron Walden Reporter

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Thursday, August 02, 2012

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## A message to Uttlesford District Council about the housing plan: Look at objections and listen to our questions!

AFTER a wave of public backlash over Uttlesford District Council's 15-year housing plan, the Reporter is echoing the views of its readers in challenging the authority to either answer the questions on everyone's lips or go back to the drawing board to produce an evidence-based and sustainable solution.

It comes in support of an estimated 3,000 objections to the draft Local Development Framework, the united opposition of councils in Saffron Walden, Newport and Dunmow and the various campaign groups which have sprung up across the district.

If the council ploughs ahead with its proposal it will go against David Cameron's vision of devolving power to the people and make a mockery of the public consultations that have taken place so far.

An action group which launched a campaign to oppose the plan has also vowed to fight the district council all the way to the Planning Inspector – and if victorious, which members are confident it will be – it would lead to a huge waste of public

time and money.

Saffron Walden-based WeAreResidents.org collected 2,150 responses from residents against the plan in little over a fortnight which, according to the district council, amounted to just under half of the total comments received.

Spokesman Dan Starr said: "We will win this campaign. The number of responses we had from people against the proposal was nearly double the votes the leader of Uttlesford District Council, Jim Ketteridge, had at the last local election – and that was in just two weeks. We could easily have got 10,000 opponents with more time."

"We will write to the Planning Inspector and point out all of the evidence in the public consultation and how town and parish councils, and the views of residents, are being ignored."

The Reporter would like the council to explain, in detail, their answers to the following questions:

- Is the council willing to start again following the weight of public opposition and instead come up with a plan which is backed by sound evidence-based studies with explanations on how it is sustainable for the district?
- Can UDC explain how the decision was taken to adopt a dispersal strategy approach in favour of a single settlement when all the evidence in the last five years points to it being the least sustainable solution?
- Was the change in strategy a political or officer-led decision and will the council release minutes of the private meetings which took place in the lead up to the new approach?
- No evidence and no opinion is

**"We will point out all the evidence in the consultation and how town and parish councils and the views of residents are being ignored"**

Dan Starr

included in the plan about how the district council is planning to address the transport and pollution issues created by further development in Saffron Walden. What explanations and studies exist now to back up the addition of 880 homes to the east of the town, considering it likely means an additional 1,000 cars travelling through the centre?

Although highways matters fall under the remit of Essex Highways, does UDC not think it appropriate to play a more active role in finding solutions to these issues prior to the plan being ratified?

Where is the evidence to suggest that jobs will be created as part of future development bearing in mind the plan is led by this assumption?

If there is to be 40 per cent affordable housing, where are the 900 affordable and sustainable jobs within five miles of Saffron Walden going to come from?

The Reporter is more than happy to publish UDC's response to these issues.

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Uttlesford's Olympian Chloe Rogers on her 'crazy evening' at the opening ceremony.

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