

# concerns'

flood risk, transport, school provision, spreading affordable housing across the district (there is demand in many locations) and several more criteria. One of the key reasons is that the dispersal strategy would ensure new homes, including affordable ones, are built more quickly than under the single settlement option, meaning demand for homes can be met sooner. This is something the Government has placed greater emphasis on in recent years.

**Q** 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?

**A** The council has a cabinet system which involves portfolio holders leading on the development of policy and making recommendations to the cabinet. Officers present a range of options but the choice of which option to choose is a political decision. Ultimately a majority decision of the council as a whole is required to adopt a plan so its proposals need to be able to command majority support. The minutes of the Local Development Framework Working Group, which is a sounding board for issues, are published, and have been since it was set up in May 2006. All political groups are represented on the Working Group, and the Leader of the Council who chairs the group has extended an invitation to every member of the council to attend.

**Q** No evidence and no opinion is 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?

**A** The draft policies do in fact include required transport improvements. The land proposed to the east of the town for 800 homes carries a requirement for a new link road between Thaxted Road and Radwinter Road, junction improvements at both ends and provision of a cycle/footway between Saffron Walden and Audley End station. There will inevitably be other highway works required which will be identified through the Transport Assessment which is underway. This is a major piece of work and we, with the county council, will take the time necessary to get it right. The outcome of the Transport Assessment will be an important consideration in the further development of the plan.

**Q** 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?

**A** There is a mutual duty to cooperate between the council as local planning authority, and the county council as the authority responsible for highways and ensuring adequate school places. School journeys are a significant factor in generating traffic on the town's road network. The question suggests this cooperation is not happening when in fact it already is, and will continue to do so. Additional technical studies are jointly being carried out and there will be opportunity for the public to have their say on these in due course.

**Q** 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?

**A** The East of England Economic Forecasting model indicates the potential for the number of jobs in the district to grow by 4,000 over the next 20 years. The National Planning Policy Framework's starting point is that plans "should do everything they can to support sustainable economic growth. Councils should plan proactively to meet the needs of businesses and support an economy fit for the 21st century".

**Q** 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?

**A** The plan period runs to 2028, which should see an extra 3,600 jobs in Uttlesford as a whole taking into account the representation of different industrial sectors in the district and their respective prospects for growth and contraction. There is no requirement for them to be apportioned so as to be within five miles of Saffron Walden or any other settlement. In Uttlesford, a lot of the jobs growth will be in the service sector. A growing proportion of households will also be people in older age groups who have retired, notwithstanding the expectation that people will retire later in life than at present. Part of the housing need arises from meeting the requirements of older age groups for affordable housing.

We hope these answers will both help people understand the complexity of the process and reassure them that Uttlesford District Council is listening to concerns. We would like to thank everyone who has taken time to respond to the consultations so far and encourage them, and others, to continue to have their say during the remainder of the process.

## Blueprints being drawn up for track sites

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schools in the area, as well as the hockey, rugby and football club amongst others.

Mr Jones also said the initiative had the backing of Olympic champion Jessica Ennis, who had the facilities at her disposal when she took up the heptathlon at the age of 15.

"I met her inside the Olympic Stadium on Tuesday and she told me how important it was for youngsters to have a multitude of sports facilities in their area – it is something she is a great believer in," he added.

One of the ideas is to build a running track around the pitch at Saffron Walden Town Football Club's Catons Lane ground.

Chairman Cliff Treadwell, who is also a town councillor and has been

involved in the athletics track project for a while, said he was excited by the suggestion.

"There is a proposal to consider putting a running track around the football pitch at Catons Lane but there are a lot of issues associated with it," he said. "We are in the process of drawing up a blueprint to see if it could possibly happen but the thought of the ground becoming a 21st century sporting facility is very exciting.

"It fits nicely with the club's ambition to be a community benefits society which everybody can enjoy and, who knows, with a bit of forward thinking the dream could become a reality in five or 10 years time."

Another possible site identified as part of the ongoing Local Develop-

ment Framework consultation is an area of land near to the Lord Butler Leisure Centre.

But Mr Jones is eager to have a short-term solution inside five years rather than having to wait a decade for facilities to materialise in tandem with a large housing development.

"With it being an Olympic year, the funding is there to be snapped up if everybody in the town gets behind the project. There are a number of options – including Sport England's Legacy fund – and applications for grants from between £500,000 and £3m open again in October, with the lower end of that spectrum more than capable of providing a state-of-the-art athletics facility for the people of Saffron Walden," he added.

News of the gathering momentum for the running track plans comes as the Reporter launches its campaign to get people in the area to take up sport on the back of the success of the London 2012 Games. Full story page 11.



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