

**Write to Saffron Reporter, 54 High Street,
Saffron Walden, Essex CB10 1EE or e-mail
editor@saffronwalden-reporter.co.uk**

Housing options

RECENT editions of your paper have illustrated that residents right across Uttlesford are concerned with the district's current housing strategy.

The emergence of groups in Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow, Newport and Thaxted, who are against the council's plan to add large numbers of new homes to existing towns and villages, illustrates the unpopularity of this approach to meeting future housing needs.

The big question is – how does the district deliver the housing growth it needs? The options? Either continue to tack more and more housing onto existing towns and villages or focus on a sustainable new settlement now.

As your readers may already know, The Fairfield Partnership has been promoting its landholding to the north-east of Elsenham as the best location for a sustainable new settlement.

Our site was the council's preferred option for growth before the recent change in strategy which has left everyone scratching their heads. We still believe our site has a key role to play going forward and we will be bringing forward plans for new homes, infrastructure and services in the near future.

We believe there is support for a new settlement to take some of the pressure off existing towns and villages. The council's preferred location for a new settlement has always been land to the north-east of Elsenham which was the subject of rigorous and comprehensive assessments.

Great Chesterford and a number of other locations across the district were also assessed as part of this process but were discounted. The clear conclusion was that Elsenham was the only realistic sustainable option and there has been no proper justification for the change in position away from a new settlement by the council.

The district council clearly has a difficult decision to make in light of the public reaction to its current plans. I am sure that, like us, local residents are keen to see what they do.

**Steve Biart
Marchfield Management Services LLP
On behalf of The Fairfield Partnership**

Leadership questions

LIBERAL Democrat group leader councillor David Morson has attacked the process used to formulate the local plan currently under review.

While I agree with his points regarding transparency and community involvement, it is puzzling that Cllr Morson should raise doubts about a process his party supported and was involved in.

At what point did the Lib Dem group decide that the process had failed to take account of community involvement? Did the Lib Dem members of the Local Development Framework working group ever voice any such concerns ahead of the consultation process?

Or was the Lib Dem group criticism of secrecy, accountability and transparency only voiced when they found that

the dispersal of sites for development, which they championed over a single site development, had resulted in broad public unease across the district?

Any plan will face vociferous opposition because few people want to see the countryside built on, including those who have benefited from recent housing development. In an era of austerity and cuts, people are worried that public services will be put under further stress.

Yet, no plan is not an option. As we have seen in recent years, developers will take advantage of a policy vacuum to put houses in places the community objects to and without adequate contributions to infrastructure.

A single site gives the council leverage to ensure adequate infrastructure, but this makes addressing the short-term supply deficit that has arisen due to the council's lack of strategy more difficult to address. Then there is the issue of where housing development should be dispersed and what level of housing growth communities can realistically absorb.

I do not envy those who will make the difficult decisions. But instead of berating them over a process he supported, perhaps Cllr Morson could come up with solutions to the dilemmas of development.

While I congratulate him on his election as Lib Dem group leader, he will need to show far more evidence that he is capable of leadership if his party is to win control in 2014. It is easy to jump on any passing bandwagon and moan all the time, but strength of leadership

is shown in the ability to solve problems and provide convincing answers with integrity.

In that respect, all parties have been found lacking, both locally and nationally.

**Daniel Brett
Spencer Close
Stansted Mountfitchet**

Set the record straight

MR Dean, in his letter of last week ('UDC needs a clean up'), is incorrect in his statement that "no one at Uttlesford told the public during two consultations this year that some sites had already been given at least an amber light".

UDC planning department's literature at its public exhibitions June 19-28, included the statement: "House numbers, 2001/12: 4,600, 2012/2028: 5,100; already built/approved: 6,400, balance to build 3,300".

**Anthony Goodwin
Henham**

Political games

I AM writing in response to Councillor David Morson's (Liberal Democrat Group Leader) letter about the proposed Local Plan. His comments are extraordinary.

This is especially so given that Cllr Morson himself, as vice chairman of the council's Scrutiny Committee, which met on June 12, proposed the

recommendation "to approve a strategy of dispersed development reflecting the existing hierarchy of settlements for the preparation of a Local Plan".

In moving this recommendation Cllr Morson is minuted as saying: "That he appreciated the comments made by Cllr Watson, and felt that there would not be anyone who was entirely happy with the proposed option, but the Local Plan had now benefited from two good discussions and the dispersal option did allow all areas to be considered for housing and also affordable housing.

"There was no dispute that the emergent option was supported by expert reports, which all suggested this option was the most viable in terms of empirical evidence".

It is very difficult to square this with the comments made by Cllr Morson in his letter last week.

It is a shame that the Liberal Democrats see such an important and sensitive issue as an opportunity to play political games, as demonstrated by recent letters from Lib Dem councillors and activists.

The Lib Dem website proclaims their opposition to a new settlement, but their recent comments are opportunistic and contradictory. How can Cllr Morson have forgotten that as recently as June he proposed endorsement of the very plan that he now takes issue with?

**Jim Ketteridge
Leader
Uttlesford District Council**



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