

The seriousness of this situation for the council, for local democracy and for those of us who love this district, cannot be underestimated. Since September 2007, when the council was bounced by politics into adopting a new-town strategy for future housing, the council has been living with deception. This has become more corrosive as each month has passed.

The decision to adopt a new town at Elsenham/Henham was misguided, but a hole was dug. The responsible councillors now seem to be trying to fill in the hole without losing face. Another false thread has run through this sorry saga. It was repeatedly claimed by at least one senior councillor that the need for extra homes was no more than a creation of the last government and that with a change of government the need for more homes would evaporate. They even fought elections on this false claim. That is, until we got a new, coalition government that also told the truth like the last one – for many years far too few homes have been built and the social implications of that neglect are unacceptable.

The council wasted four of the past five years planning an inappropriate new town. It wasted our taxes and neglected to plan properly. Instead of coming clean with the public, Uttlesford began a clandestine exercise.

It failed to start a totally transparent dialogue with the public to agree new sites for homes based on evidence. A year ago the council began behind the scenes to encourage some specially selected landowners to submit premature planning applications to plug the second hole they had created by their dithering – a short-term supply of housing land. In Stansted, the district council enticed one owner of employment and commercial land to apply to build what the developer called “an exclusive enclave” of homes. In so doing, Uttlesford threatened the future vitality of the town centre. It actually destroyed local jobs. Despite desperate attempts by the “planning

establishment” to get quick approval for this proposal, the council’s own planning committee twice in the past two months rightly threw out the application.

No one at Uttlesford told the public during two periods of consultation (from January to March and again from June until July) that some sites had already been given at least an amber light for fast-track planning approval. I am also in the dark over how the latest set of proposals for building sites across the district was derived. I was even threatened with disciplinary action for speaking out in public about this lack of transparency. The culture at Uttlesford is rooted in secrecy and authoritarianism. So, where should Uttlesford go next? Those in charge could start by being honest and open about what has been going on – admit their mistakes, start to rebuild trust with the people whom they are supposed to represent. Start an evidence-based approach to planning. Only by taking the residents of Uttlesford with them can the council hope to produce a credible and trusted local plan for the next 15 years.

Royal Bank of Scotland said that it is cleaning-up its past. Will UDC follow RBS’s lead?

**Cllr Alan Dean**  
member for Stansted South  
Uttlesford District Council  
Recreation Ground  
Stansted

## Pair should use their influence

**Sir,** The assertion by Cllrs Rolfe and Ketteridge that ‘Decisions must be made locally’ (*Weekly News*, July 26) is no justification for pushing ahead with the current hare-brained local plan. There is uproar about plans to tack nearly a thousand new houses onto the east side of Saffron Walden (in addition to the 200 or so already consented inside the town). As its architects, they must realise from the public outcry that their proposed local

plan has absolutely no support. The evidence includes more than 2,000 signed letters from locals, the outcome of the consultation exercise, and the resolute opposition from Saffron Walden’s mayor and town council. The dangers of an incomplete local plan do not justify hastily adopting one which is wrong and ill-conceived. UDC had a credible, sound and justifiable strategy for its local plan two years ago – basically, to build a new settlement. But that logical, pragmatic, sustainable and closely argued solution was abandoned for no good reason.

In contrast, the current strategy of ‘dispersal’ has no justification. It simply dumps most of the new housing on to Uttlesford’s two biggest market towns. Instead of distancing themselves, Cllrs Rolfe and Ketteridge should use their influence as Uttlesford Cabinet members (and senior members of its controlling political party) to force a rethink. The evidence, they will find, simply does not support their current strategy.

Otherwise, these two councillors and their party will forever be associated with throwing open the door to developers, ruining Saffron Walden in the process.

**Dr Richard Freeman**  
Museum Street  
Saffron Walden

## I’m appalled at housing plans

**Sir,** As someone who has known Saffron Walden for more than 60 years and used it for school, shopping, leisure and work, I am appalled at the prospect of another 800 homes stuck on its fringes.

It should be accepted that the town has a medieval heart and that significant traffic problems already exist. Recent developments have taken away valuable green ‘breathing space’ from the South Road/Peaslands Road area. I am even more appalled though, at the number of dwellings likely to be

foisted on to Elsenham, where I live. The sewer was installed in 1975 and we have accepted continual development ever since, mostly made up of very small houses with very small gardens coupled with infilling on small plots and with a decreasing number of village facilities.

We are now faced with the construction of 53 more small houses and gardens with inadequate parking – already under way – and a further 155 houses plus an extra-care home with 55 units.

Very recently another development firm has signalled that it wants to put 38 houses behind The Crown pub; access will be via an existing housing estate which will have to have double yellow lines on one side of the spine road to cope with the traffic. These 300 odd dwellings would be on a base of just over 900, an extra 33%.

There are no additional facilities offered, the primary school and the surgery will be stretched severely, and the road/sewer infrastructure will not be able to cope. One bright idea by those wishing to put thousands of houses to link Henham and Elsenham was to close the level crossing at Elsenham Station to all but pedestrians. Many People in Saffron Walden have never used the roads leading to and through Elsenham, and are unaware of the weight, width and height restrictions in place, some cheerfully disregarded.

There are nearly 60 parishes in Uttlesford, and to plunk all the alleged “necessary” housing in Walden, Dunmow and just six villages is ridiculous. Many of the smaller villages could cope with, even need, 10-25 new dwellings, especially as this could allow affordable housing to be distributed within them, thus keeping families together. Even Barnston with its excellent road links to Braintree and Chelmsford could benefit.

Let us, please, have planning for people, not house building for profit by developers.

**Heather Salvadge**  
New Road  
Elsenham

## Allotment land earmarked

ALLOTMENT land that has not been used for 15 years could have houses built on it. Two houses could be constructed on the former allotment gardens off Rose Lane, Great Chesterford, if councillors at Uttlesford District Council agree with the recommendation of planning officers.

Outline proposals have been submitted for two detached houses plus provision for a cart lodge with five parking bays for existing Rose Lane residents, and new pedestrian and vehicle access. Permission is also being sought for change of use from allotment site to residential. The site has not been used as an allotment for about 15 years, however, previously a range of planning applications for dwellings on the site have been refused.

The parish council has objected to the proposals for reasons including problems with large vehicles fitting down the road, disruption caused by construction traffic, and fears the village does not have sufficient amenities. The application is recommended for conditional approval, and will go before the committee on Wednesday.

## Thieves target cars

TWO sat-navs were among a haul of goods worth £650 stolen when three cars were broken into in Thaxted on the same night.

Thieves broke into a black Mitsubishi vehicle in Star Mead and stole a sat-nav worth £150. Two cars in Coopers Place – a VW Golf and Vauxhall Astra – were also targeted and a sat-nav worth £100 taken from the first and an electrical testing device worth £400 from the second. All the thefts took place overnight on Monday, August 6. Anyone with information should call police on 101 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555111.

## Talks to focus on transport

TRANSPORT will be the theme at the next community café in Saffron Walden.

Car sharing and new cycle paths are just some of the ideas that will be explored at Walden in Transition’s Community Café on Saturday in the town hall, Market Place. Visitors can find out more about the community allotment, Walden Local Food, 100% renewable electricity for homeowners, and the Swanlets skills sharing scheme. Homemade cakes and fair trade organic tea and coffee will be available at the café, which runs from 10.30am until 1pm in the town hall’s committee room.

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**Su Matthews - BCPA REP LEVEL 3 PILATES TEACHER**

## PILATES START-UP SESSIONS

I am running 2 relaxed informal start-up workshops in September. These are suitable for those brand new to Pilates or for those wishing to review the basic principles.

*They will include the basics of ALIGNMENT, BREATHING and CENTRING along with CORE STABILITY and SEQUENTIAL SPINAL MOVEMENT.*

**THURSDAY 6TH SEPTEMBER: HORSEHEATH VILLAGE HALL  
10:00-12:00pm**

**FRIDAY 7TH SEPTEMBER: LINTON VILLAGE HALL  
10:00-12:00pm**

**£5 per person**

There are limited spaces available to join existing classes, starting in September.

*All classes are limited to a maximum of 12 people, in line with BCPA (Body Control Pilates Association) Code of Practice. It is also recommended that you attend a 1-1 session prior to starting group classes and a 1-1 session is essential for all clients with any history of recent injury or rehabilitation.*

Private studio available for one-to-one sessions

To book onto a start-up session please contact Su:

Tel: 01223 891768 / 07986 692334

Email: [bodydesignpilates@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:bodydesignpilates@hotmail.co.uk)

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT MY WEBSITE  
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