



FELSTED PARISH COUNCIL

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28 July 2017

Dear Sirs

RE: BDC LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION

Felsted Parish Council continue to object to the principle of the West of Braintree Garden Community for the reasons we have previously stated and which are clearly explained in the attached letter sent on behalf of all local Parish Councils, ourselves included.

We are particularly concerned about the potential impact of through traffic on the Parish of Felsted and that on public services in the area.

At the recent public meeting in Great Saling, a Felsted Councillor was told that “at present only the overarching principles of selecting locations for new communities are being considered, rather than any detail” and that the principle of a new community could not be halted “by small points such as traffic in nearby villages”. From this (and the lack of any feedback indicating that concerns raised thus far have been considered) it is difficult to see the Consultation Process which seeks specific input, as having any meaningful impact on the Braintree Plan process of selecting locations for new towns.

Yours faithfully,

Diane Smith
Clerk to Felsted Parish Council

Open letter to Uttlesford Planning Policy Working Group: 19 June 2017

Dear Councillor

We, the Parish Councils of Stebbing, Felsted, Great Saling, Rayne, Great Bardfield and Shalford, wish to update our firm belief and stress again, the area identified as “West of Braintree” is unsuitable, unsustainable and undeliverable as a New Settlement and would be found unsound by Planning Inspectors.

Our concerns, which are strengthened by the London-Stansted-Cambridge Corridor, the Government White Paper on Housing, the Kerslake Report and the Duty for District Councils to Co-operate can be summarised as below:

- **Transport Infrastructure and Roads** – the site is remote from any major motorway and railway station and situated among small country roads and lanes. The final estimated population is over 30,000. Lord Kerslake’s report recognises significant investment in road & rail infrastructure would be necessary should this development go ahead. Uttlesford DC has no plans other than improvements at Junction 8, M11 and eventually, one additional roundabout onto A120 from the site. UDC claim research shows A120 can cope with the additional weight of traffic. We question the criteria of this study as the outcome lacks credibility and we ask you to publish the research evidence supporting your statement.

At the recent Chelmsford City Local plan consultation event in Gt Leighs, a Felsted Parish Councillor was told, due to the increased traffic from proposed development heading into Chelmsford, Chelmsford City would require a contribution towards building a North Chelmsford bypass. It was suggested this would necessitate Uttlesford & Braintree DCs paying a substantial proportion of the £270m cost. Would similar demands be made by East Herts regarding Junction 8 and Bishop’s Stortford? These costs and infrastructure requirements must be considered in the development viability.

- **Community engagement and social cohesion** – Uttlesford District Council has failed to carry out any meaningful engagement with residents. The proposal is not supported by them. The recent Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire for Stebbing gives a 93% response of Very Bad or Bad to a “West of Braintree” development. Indications are that neighbouring villages say the same.
- **Mineral Extraction** – part of the proposed site and within Braintree DC’s remit, has been allocated within Essex County Council’s Minerals Local Plan as a ‘preferred site’ for sand and gravel extraction for 15years. This quarry will compound the issues for Uttlesford DC in building on adjacent land.

- **Noise, Light & Air Pollution** – the site is directly under the Stansted airport runway 4 Clacton route. Noise complaints to Stansted Airport have increased since the route was introduced, with 155 from February – April from Stebbing residents alone.

This is an area of dark night skies with a rich habitat for all kinds of plants and wildlife. Its destruction will breach garden city principles if light & air pollution are introduced to the area.

- **Conservation** – This area has a high concentration of wildlife, cultural, and heritage assets, including five ancient woodlands, all currently being promoted by Government to enjoy increased legal status in line with AONB and SSSI sites.

Boxted Wood; an ancient woodland, falls under the remit of Local Plan Policy ENV7: 'The Protection of the Natural Environment - Designated Sites'. Any development in this area would have significant adverse effects on the historic integrity of the villages of Stebbing, Gt Saling and Bardfield Saling, their development, the setting of listed buildings, plus the attractive views and vistas that are available from many points within Stebbing and the Salings.

- **Community Assets and loss of Agricultural Land** – The loss of Andrewsfield Airfield, the first American Airforce Base in England in World War II and a non-scheduled monument to allied airmen from WWII, would have a detrimental effect on social history for the United Kingdom and USA.

Andrewsfield remains a functioning airfield, being a private light aircraft facility. It is part of the UK's national airport infrastructure and pilots and flying instructors are trained here.

Development on this agricultural site with the loss of Grade 2 agricultural land is foolhardy. We already import over 51% of the country's food and in the UK's current situation, we have no guarantee supplies will always be plentiful. The reckless destruction of such land supplies when brown field sites are readily available, is irresponsible.

Quote UDC Planning Dept: *Planning application UTT/16/0287/OP Land to the South of Braintree Road, Felsted, outline planning application for up to 55 dwellings. Permission was refused on 28 July 2016. Reasons stated included "...a disproportional loss of this best and most versatile agricultural land contrary to policy ENV5 of the Uttlesford District local Plan as Adopted (2005) and the National Planning Policy Framework."*

- **Utilities** – A proposed 30,000 population addition would overwhelm current utilities. This is especially relevant to the supply of water and the treatment of waste water as Affinity Water expect a shortfall of 170million litres of water per day by 2040.

Stebbing is regarded as an arid zone. Felsted is already suffering from low water pressure. A recent Uttlesford DC WCS study stated a new sewage treatment works would be required if “West of Braintree” goes ahead. It must be pointed out this assessment was based on numbers of houses to the end of the 2005 Local Plan and does not cater for an additional 30,000+ residents.

- **London- Stansted- Cambridge Corridor** – Much Government investment is centred on the A11/M11 corridor and it is the hub for the UK’s Life Sciences, Biotech and IT & Digital industries. Uttlesford District Council, in purchasing a 50% share in Chesterford Research Park endorses the importance of this area for the future prosperity of Uttlesford. This is the area where development should be focussed with its direct access to M11/M25, A11, A14 and railway stations providing a fast, efficient service to London, Cambridge, Birmingham and the North.
- **Lack of Transparency in the process and Duty to Co-operate** - On too many occasions at Planning Policy Working Group meetings, Councillors have complained about the lack of transparency in consultation and a few councillors’ unilateral assumption that all development will be in South Uttlesford. These concerns are shared by Parish Councils.

At the **Duty to Co-operate Meeting between South Cambridge and Uttlesford D.Cs**, held 13 January 2017, Minutes were recorded by South Cambs Council. The London-Stansted-Cambridge Consortium says “The M11/M25, plus A10 and North Circular means the area is a major hub for logistics and distribution, with excellent road links to the UK’s ports and the north.” Roads A14, A1, M6, M5 are also mentioned.

It appears S.Cambs Councillors are prepared to work with companies and central government on opening the East of England and Norfolk to innovative technologies. Sadly, Uttlesford’s representatives on this Duty to Co-operate team seem less enthused.

The S.Cambs Director of Planning asked about Uttlesford’s strategy for their plan. Cllr Barker replied “The focus is on the A120 corridor as a priority with some developmentin villages and Saffron Walden” The Council Leader; Cllr Rolfe endorsed her reply by explaining the need for the development along the A120 being Stansted related. Local statistics show over 80% of people working at Stansted Airport travel from B. Stortford, Harlow and villages and towns north/south. All on the M11 corridor.

If the West of Braintree option is selected, it will depend on Braintree District Council developing adjoining land and this is by no means a certainty.

We ask you to consider our deep-felt concerns very carefully, otherwise we shall find families stranded in the open countryside without schools, transport, medical and social support, as has happened twice already in the Dunmow district.

Yours faithfully,

J. Kingdom

Jacqueline Kingdom, Stebbing Parish Council on behalf of:

Stebbing Parish Council (clerk@stebbingparishcouncil.org.uk)

Felsted Parish Council

Great Saling Parish Council

Shalford Parish Council

Rayne Parish Council