



UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Felsted & Stebbing Ward

District Councillors John Evans & Richard Silcock



DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT: APRIL 2024

Please find attached below our monthly Report to the Parish Council.

OUR IMMEDIATE AND CURRENT LOCAL WORK

Since our last report, a very substantial volume (a very large tipper lorry load indeed) of what appeared to be processed building rubble was deposited on the road/driveway leading to Grandcourts. This is very accessible to the A120 and is the second occasion when it has been used for large volume deposits under cover of darkness and which blocked off access entirely to what is actually the northern extremity of the bridleway leading from French's Green. We were able to arrange for its prompt clearance by UDC. Separately, we continue to be following up the practicalities involved in the removal of a long abandoned vehicle upon the Fritch Way (also in the area of Grandcourts) but have raised the question as to whose responsibility it might actually be (that of UDC or ECC) since as will be recalled, the Fritch Way is owned by ECC and it seems to us that not being Highway, it falls to ECC to remove it, just as would be the case for material deposited on land in any other private ownership.

Issues regarding flooding at Causeway End and Stevens Lane continue to be of major concern and we continue to be supportive of County Councillor Foley regarding intervention with his colleagues and officers at ECC, given their joint roles as Lead Local Flood Authority and Highways Authority. We will report in detail as to the outcomes achieved in our next Report.

THE DRAFT LOCAL PLAN – AN UPDATE

The work of the Local Plan Panel (successor to the Local Plan Leadership Group) continues and a series of further meetings will be taking place in the coming months to consider the responses received to the Regulation 18 consultation which were very substantial (as we reported last month) namely from about 1,700 respondents who provided some 5,000 individual comments on the draft policies, including the

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proposed “allocations” (ie suggested areas for strategic development within the District for economic and residential purposes).

For Parish purposes however, both Felsted and Stebbing are regarded as “larger villages” and development over the local plan period (ie to 2041) is to be supplied via neighbourhood planning, which means we support. Given that each of Felsted and Stebbing have established neighbourhood planning steering groups and have experienced the benefits of neighbourhood planning in recent years and which allows for a greater degree of local participation and awareness in planning policy than historically was the case, we are optimistic that the contributions expected to be made by our parishes towards the new Local Plan will be seen to be positive and not regressive. Communities in the rural areas need to be supported in terms of facilities for the future and we think that the level of local planning to be provided by this means will assist in the long term. Development (like it or not) is required by central government so as to assist in meeting the housing need and, it goes without saying, our district and parishes are especially vulnerable to development pressure given their proximity to centres of employment and very easy road access to north and east London.

A workshop was held by members of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (and those from other Larger Villages also) together with UDC planning policy officers on 20th March when the means of their proposed contributions was discussed and explained, whereby the new/updated neighbourhood plans would be expected to be drafted from early 2026 onwards when it is anticipated the Local Plan might be adopted (assuming the draft local plan is first approved by District Councillors to proceed onwards, in July 2024).

UDC is proposing to allow two years for the Neighbourhood Plan to be prepared from the date of the Adoption of the Local Plan (assumed to be c. Easter 2026) so the larger villages will have until c. Easter 2028 to have their Neighbourhood Plan actually made. On that basis, there is no immediate requirement for them to progress with undue speed. The Local Plan policy team proposes having a follow up conversation with the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Groups once the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan is published in July this year.

The basis for the housing numbers expected of the Parish was explained at the workshop and also confirmed in a subsequent letter to the Parish Council. The final housing requirement figure in the finally Adopted Local Plan may be less than current proposals however, as it will take account of any housing commitments granted up to April 2025 and thereafter any other factors that may subsequently change during the Local Plan Examination process.

As was explained at the workshop, once the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan is published, (anticipated as we say, if approved, by the Council in July 2024), UDC should be able to “demonstrate an up-to-date land supply” (as the NPPF terminology goes) and so this should start to afford our Parishes

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more protection against speculative development going forwards during the Local Plan examination process, pending its later adoption post examination.

It is essential that the Local Plan process continues to the present timetable. The Department for Local Government Housing and Communities continues to express a particular and very detailed interest in the District's progress towards making a Local Plan and our Director of Planning remains in close contact with them accordingly. UDC is not unique in this regard however, as all local planning authorities with veteran (putting it politely!) local plans are being subjected to the same level of critical demands – you will have read of the strictures expressed recently of St Alban's Council and several others. UDC's local plan, as will be recalled, is over 19 years of age and is among the oldest in England and Wales, which accounts for the demands imposed upon it centrally.

We were pleased to attend the drop-in meeting arranged by Felsted Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group at the Memorial Hall concerning the forthcoming review of the Felsted NP which will of course now take into account the draft Local Plan housing requirements proposed for the Parish, as mentioned above.

STANSTED AIRPORT AND NIGHT FLIGHTS

We referred in our last monthly Report to the impending consultation by Department for Transport regarding the regime permitting night flights at the London airports with effect from October 2025, when the current arrangements come to an end. Members of Stansted Airport Watch (the group formerly known as Stop Stansted Expansion) will have received a circular concerning this subject and expressing their views upon it.

We confirm that the consultation will be considered by UDC's Stansted Airport Advisory Panel (John and County Councillor Foley are Chair and Deputy Chair of this body) which is a working group of Cabinet. Responses to the consultation will be submitted to DfT by the applicable date in May.

As we have remarked previously, it is UDC's policy to seek a night flight ban but that aim might be regarded as too aspirational in the present climate, given current Governmental policy support for the aviation industry and the perceived economic benefits derived. It has to be said however that some airports in Europe have secured such restrictions. However, meanwhile, UDC will seek to limit the scope of and exemptions from night flight restrictions which should certainly not be further liberalised.

In particular, the "heavy" and noisy (as they are fitted with older technology engines) cargo freighters should be subject to encouraged phase out – by the setting of discouraging landing and ground charges pricing if no other means are available. John has sought to raise this issue with the Managing Director of Stansted Airport Ltd in the interim. We shall report next month with the UDC response to the Consultation once submitted.

Your and residents' attention is thus drawn to the consultation exercise meanwhile in case you and/or individual residents might wish to participate in it:

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UTTLESFORD REFUSE SERVICE

As previously reported, work continues to be undertaken by the UDC Scrutiny Committee (Task and Finish Group) as to the causes of the temporary “grounding” of the UDC refuse fleet, lessons learned and also steps to be taken to secure future resilience of the service. We understand that it will be reporting in the middle of April and we shall provide you with further details in our net monthly Report.

REFUSE AND RECYCLING INITIATIVES GENERALLY

We have previously mentioned that as part of the UDC review of its refuse service, as well as the ECC county wide recycling drive, further advice and publicity would be provided to the community in coming months concerning the economic and ecological benefits to be derived from better and more extensive refuse recycling activities. We hope that these benefits will (if it is not already the case) be universally understood and accepted.

Pending such further advices, several residents might have heard (on Maundy Thursday) some interesting information given on Radio 4 as to steps which are already open to them for the recycling of “electrical waste” (including redundant devices and wiring). A charity (whose costs are funded by compulsory levy on the suppliers of electrical equipment) called **Material Focus** supports and promotes the recycling of electrical wires and smaller components which do of course contain precious and other metals. Its managing director was interviewed and we thought that you and residents would be interested to learn more of its purpose and work. In this regard, there are already local facilities which receive such items for recycling, including at the Co-op at Flich Green and Tesco at Great Dunmow.

Currently, so much of these items are sent to general recycling where the high value metals are more difficult or impossible to recover, while if they were the subject of specific segregated deposit at designated facilities which already exist, so much more of the valuable metal and components present would be recovered – all of course, at no cost to the consumer. Further information concerning this organisation and its work may be read here:

<https://www.materialfocus.org.uk/>

For further detailed information on the state of the electrical recycling industry and relevant statistics (it is very detailed!), some readers might like to know of their recent report/publication:

<https://www.materialfocus.org.uk/download/23492/?tmstv=1712053669>

MAY ELECTIONS

We do not of course have any district nor parish related elections this year, but the election for the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner again comes up on Thursday 2 May. Anyone already registered to vote will receive advice of the forthcoming election directly but those not registered and wishing to vote will need to register to vote by 2359H on Thursday 16 April. The deadline to request a postal vote is 1700 on Wednesday 17 April. All the necessary details in these respects are to be found on the UDC website at:

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[Voting in person, postal and proxy voting - Uttlesford District Council](#)

ENFORCEMENT MATTERS

Questions have been raised with us in the past regarding enforcement issues (both as regards compliance with planning conditions and other breaches of environmental regulations) and so, it might be of interest to you to receive the relevant UDC statistics regarding planning enforcement matters. At the end of March 2023 there were 266 active planning enforcement cases district wide, while at the end of December 2023 this figure was 279. Over the last municipal year, 204 cases have been closed and for the most part (83), no breach was found. In 65 of the cases raised, compliance was achieved (either with or without formal notices) but 31 were considered “non-expedient” (ie de minimis or the cost was likely to be disproportionate for it to be pursued). The remainder either gained retrospective permission (21) or were combined with another case (4).

ANCIENT TREES

We know that there is considerable awareness of and appreciation given to ancient trees by you, other parish organisations as well as many residents but some might not be aware of the existence of an on line inventory and map of ancient and veteran trees which is maintained by the well-known charity, The Woodland Trust. We all appreciate the importance of such natural assets and the contribution they make as homes to wildlife species, their contribution to local landscape and “carbon capture”. It is important to maintain a record of these trees (those subject to TPOs are of course recorded individually at district level and taken into account for planning permission purposes) but adding to the inventory is to be very much encouraged so that the level of local information can be updated and improved. We were surprised ourselves, on looking at the map, to see how few ancient trees in our two Parishes have been recorded to date.

So, we would very much encourage this activity, being so beneficial to the public community as well as to planners, ecologists and developers and the relevant links to the national inventory is here:

<https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk/tree-search/>

It is easy to add particulars of a qualifying tree by this link:

<https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk/add-a-tree/>

DISTRICT COUNCILLORS’ AND CONSTITUENTS’ SURGERY

We will hold our usual monthly surgery in the URC Hall at 1730, immediately prior to the Parish Council meeting.

We are always, in addition, pleased to meet up elsewhere, by appointment as required, with any resident who wishes to discuss a matter of concern or indeed anything we have commented upon in our Monthly Reports.

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If any resident would like to receive a personal copy of our Monthly Reports, we shall be pleased to send one directly to them by e mail.

Finally, we remain very happy to consider requests for financial support, utilising our Members' Initiative Grant as appropriate and which can be made available to community groups for suitable purposes.

Cllr John Evans

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Cllr Richard Silcock

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