

District Councillor's Report to Sampford Parish Council – 27 October 2016

I apologise that I am not able to join you this evening, but unfortunately I have another commitment. However, I thought it would be helpful to give an update on a couple of matters.

Planning Application (UTT/16/2555/OP)

You will be aware that a planning application has been received for a significant housing development at the rear of Watson Close. Not surprisingly, a number of local residents have been in contact with me to express their objections. I am pleased to see that the Parish Council has written to Uttlesford expressing its objections. I have formally requested that should planning officers recommend approval, the application is considered by the full Planning Committee. You will be aware this site has a history of similar planning applications in the recent past, with previous applications refused by Uttlesford and this decision upheld by the Planning Inspector. I believe the very strong reasons why previous planning applications for this site were refused remain unchanged.

Local Plan

I had hoped to be able to report to you progress on developing the Local Plan and to share with you some of its key conclusions. Sadly, this is not possible. It is important to remember the Local Plan has to go through a number of stages and to withstand scrutiny from various different bodies before it is approved. In recent weeks I have attended a number of seminars and workshops on the Local Plan at which the planning officers at Uttlesford have outlined their conclusions and the very detailed supporting evidence. Those of you who have followed the Local Plan process to date will be familiar with the role of the Planning Inspector, who halted his examination of the previous draft plan as he did not feel the evidence supported the assumptions on the number of houses we should be planning for - which is the reason why we are now wrestling with the need to find locations for an additional c.500 houses p.a. across the district.

During the process of scrutiny and challenge by councillors that formed a key part of the programme of workshops and seminars, it became clear that further work needed to be done in support of a number of the conclusions. Slippage in the timetable is not ideal - not least because it has financial implications. Nevertheless, it is essential we go forward with a Plan that is able to withstand the very rigorous challenge it will receive from the Inspector. I hope to be able to update you further at your next meeting.

Other matters

The above are the two main issues I wanted to update you on. In the meantime, I have been kept busy with the more routine, day-to-day business of the Council. I am looking forward to two evenings of presentations in November from the various voluntary and community organisations that Uttlesford part-funds on your behalf, such as Uttlesford Citizens Advice Bureau, Uttlesford Community Travel, Home-Start and Support 4 Sight. These presentations will give me a better understand of how they have spent the grant money previously awarded and how they would plan to spend any future awards.

As always, there are a good number of local issues and concerns to be addressed, not least a couple of problematic local enforcement matters. Enforcement is an area where I have been keen to see Uttlesford being more assertive and we have recently made an additional investment in the resourcing of the enforcement function. I look forward to seeing you at your next meeting.