

Uttlesford Local Plan Inquiry Update

Janet Martin, and myself attended the Matter 7 & 8 hearings on 16th & 17th July and Tony Orgee also attended on 17th. We spoke on traffic, transport in general, the lack of any coordinated plan cross border planning with Wellcome and the other proposed and permitted developments in SCDC and potential flooding .

There was a long and passionate statement from Heritage England concerning archaeology and landscape. Much discussion centred on the Roman Temple site and the need to preserve its setting as well as the actual remains. The point was made that much of the NUGC site had still not been investigated. Preliminary evidence suggested that these chalk uplands had been crossed by prehistoric trackways . The possibility that further significant archaeological finds might be discovered could significantly affect the layout of a putative development and could restrict the number of dwellings which might be delivered. Concern was also expressed about the eighteenth century deer park. This was not specifically protected, but constituted an important feature of the historical landscape.

The ability of local planners and developers to deliver the very challenging timescale for delivery was questioned. The proposed timeline for delivery had been revised several times and the latest version did not envisage first occupations until 2025/6, building up to a delivery rate of 275 completions a year for the last three years of the plan period. It was noted that this trajectory did not include any completions of communal establishments. Even this revised trajectory would be very demanding and Uttlesford had recruited 2-3 extra planning staff to facilitate the processing of applications for NUGC and the other two proposed garden communities. It was also noted that very extensive infrastructure works would be needed on this virgin site before the construction of housing could commence and the achievability of this timeline was challenged strongly by one of the rival developers.

Complaints were received about evidence documents being uploaded shortly before the hearings they related to and a further batch was uploaded in late August. Among them is a continuing challenge to the process on the grounds that the Local Plan was submitted to the Inspectors before the expiration of the six week Regulation 19 consultation period. This enables the Local Plan to be considered under the transitional arrangements by which conformity with the 2012 NPPF is required, not the revised 2018 version. Under the 2018 housing delivery formula Uttlesford would be required to deliver an average of 715 dwellings pa over the 15 year period from 2018-2033 as opposed to an average of 681 in the present trajectory.

We raised the issue of transport provision, pointing out that the reliance on Whittlesford as the main access to the railway system would have the effect of putting yet more traffic onto the A1301. It was also unsound to rely on the proposed GCP Cambridge South East Transport proposals for a rapid transit system to a park and ride hub at Fourwentways. Plans for this were still at an early stage and were subject to further public consultation and the identification of funding. No consideration had been given to the Wellcome or Agritech proposals and the increase in traffic generation by the recently approved Unity Campus

development in Pampisford and the development of the former Spicers site by Huawei had not been fully factored into the traffic survey. The traffic survey was already out of date.

We queried the water management evidence, pointing out that no study appeared to have been carried out which covered the whole of the upper Cam/Ouse catchment. This statement was queried by UDC officers, but papers subsequently supplied by them confirm that the surveys were limited to the Uttlesford District Boundary and therefore do not include most of the Eastern tributary of the Cam which flows through Linton, just outside the UDC boundary. Flows in this tributary are likely to have been increased by several significant developments in Linton, approved in the last three years. There is therefore a concern that flood risk at the confluence of the two main tributaries near the Sawston/Stapleford/Little Shelford boundary could increase. This is a recognised flood risk area and flooding here can block the A1301 and the cycleway. Climate change predictions of 'milder, wetter, Winters' are, even without significant further development upstream, likely to make these incidents more frequent.

The Matter 8 Session which covered all three garden communities was scheduled to be completed on 17th July. Due to the late submission of additional documentation and the extent of the evidence, it was necessary to schedule an extra half day. The resumption of hearings after the Summer break, which should have started in mid September has been delayed and at the time of writing (16/09/2019), no timetable for the Autumn hearings has been issued.

David Bard

Janet Martin.