

FOCUS

on *Birchanger*



Winter 2007/2008

Edited by Cllr Alan Dean & Cllr Peter Wilcock

www.saffronwaldenlibdems.org.uk

Say No to Tory Housing Plans

Don't Open The Flood Gates To Thousands More Houses

Conservative-controlled Uttlesford District Council has launched a public consultation on where to put the 4,200 new houses that the Labour government is forcing on our District.

The Conservatives want to put most of these houses in a new town between Elsenham and Henham, but the consequences of doing so are likely to be felt across the entire district of Uttlesford, destabilising transport links and schools.

The town would become a commuter dormitory served by the London Liverpool Street to Cambridge railway line, which is already overloaded. The existing road system would also be unable to cope with the extra traffic, without the new roads provided by a second runway at Stansted.

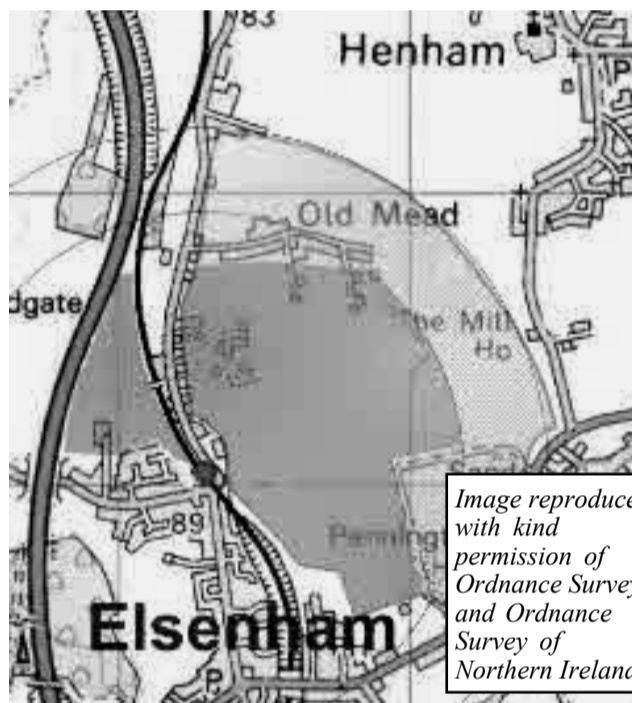


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"Eco-towns must be new settlements, separate and distinct from existing towns but well linked to them. They need to be additional to existing plans, with a minimum target of 5,000-10,000 homes;"

- The government's "Eco-towns Prospectus"

- Uttlesford Conservatives' plans for a 3,000-home "eco-town" between Elsenham and Henham are likely to lead to a new town of at least double that size, according to government policy.

Consensus Wrecked

The plans were railroaded through the council by the Conservatives without any discussion with Lib Dem and Independent councillors; wrecking years of consensus amongst all parties on dealing with housing and airport threats. Three months after the plans first emerged, the Tories have failed to provide any evidence to justify their proposal.

No Proper Investigation

The Conservatives voted down a proposal from Liberal Democrat councillors to have a proper, detailed investigation by the council's officers into where to put the 4,200 additional new homes.

School Under Threat

Existing secondary schools do not have enough spare spaces to accommodate pupils from the Conservatives' proposed new town, so they have said a new one would be built there. Essex County Council's Planning and Admission Department have said that they would prefer to close Mountfitchet Mathematics and Computing College in Stansted, moving it to the new town's school. This would throw the future of Stansted Romeera Leisure Centre into doubt and create chaos on local roads at busy times.

The viability of Newport Free Grammar might also be called into question if the new town's school goes ahead.

"Conservative Councillor Sue Barker has been cast as Scrooge this week after pressing ahead with consultation over Christmas on a controversial plan for 3,000 new homes."

"She told outraged residents: 'Oh well, you'll have a week off to think about it'."

- Herts & Essex Observer, 8th. November

Make Your Voice Heard!

Only about 200 people responded to Uttlesford's last consultation on where to locate future housing. These residents voted a new town eighth out of the nine options on offer.

The next stage in the consultation will be a leaflet delivered in November. The consultation ends on January 11th.

The document looks pretty, with lots of chocolate box photos, but there is not a single map and nothing about the need for, or the scale of, affordable houses. What's more, there is no mention of closing or moving Stansted's secondary school and no plan for dealing with the traffic that would be generated in both directions at Grove Hill in Stansted. The Lib Dems have demanded an exhibition about the plans.

Overleaf: How The Lib Dems Would Do It Better

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Putting The Housing In The Right Places

Liberal Democrats want the allocation of new housing in Uttlesford to be based on evidence and a proper consultation of local residents, parish councils and other interested organisations.

The Lib Dems want Uttlesford District Council to do a full appraisal of the ability of our communities to cope with more housing, and to establish what additional infrastructure would be required to support the additional housing. Only then should the Council be looking at detailed options allocating specific numbers of houses to different parts of the district. When planning any new houses, we need to ensure that as many houses as possible are affordable to satisfy local need, which is high because of house price inflation.

The Lib Dem Plan

Preferred option: distribute the new houses across a list of larger settlements and smaller villages. Do not allocate numbers of houses against places until Council officers have produced evidence to show how many houses each place can take with existing roads, schools, doctors etc.

Proper consultation: consult local residents, parish councils and other organisations on the preferred option, and a range of other options, all supported by factual evidence.

Make evidence-based decisions.

Exhibition Called For

Liberal Democrat councillors are insisting that Uttlesford District Council puts on an exhibition before Christmas to show villagers the impact of the proposed Elsenham/Henham new town.

The Lib Dems want local residents to be told about the likely effects of the new town on local road traffic, schools, shops, medical facilities and other public amenities.

Meaningful Responses

This information must be disclosed upfront if residents are to make meaningful responses in the consultation which starts at the end of November. There is no point asking people to make choices if they aren't told the likely implications of all housing growth being in one place or being carefully distributed in several locations.



● You can receive electronic updates on Conservative plans for a new town. Just send an e-mail to thinkagain@saffronwaldenlibdems.org.uk with the subject line: **Sign up to campaign news**

An Open Letter To Our MP

Dear Sir Alan,

Uttlesford's Conservative leadership under Jim Ketteridge and Howard Rolfe has spearheaded the 3,000 homes eco-town between Elsenham and Henham. Yet housing minister Yvette Cooper requires eco-towns to be 'small new towns of at least 5-20,000 homes'.

Careful extensions of existing towns and villages can be carried out gradually. An eco-town must grow quickly to become sustainable with schools, shops, medical and other amenities. So 'Elsenham' would probably exceed 5,000 homes well before 2020 and continue to grow rapidly. 3,000 homes between now and 2024 would not be enough to meet the minister's criteria.

You have offered to arrange a meeting with Yvette Cooper to reduce Uttlesford's housing allocation. But will Cllr Ketteridge and the Conservative team instead be telling Yvette Cooper they want far more to make their eco-town work?

We have been waiting since July to discuss a more sensible approach to housing needs and the planning challenge it presents. Would you be able to facilitate these local discussions?

Yours truly

The Liberal Democrat Group at
Uttlesford District Council

Think Again!

To: Cllr. Jim Ketteridge, Leader of Uttlesford District Council and Leader of Uttlesford District Council's ruling Conservative councillors.

I/We call upon the Conservative councillors who are responsible for running Uttlesford District Council to reconsider their preferred option of a 3,000-home new town between Elsenham and Henham, or any large-scale developments options until there are proper studies on the impact on these communities.

The Elsenham new town would be bigger than Stansted Mountfitchet is today and would rely on roads planned for a second runway at Stansted Airport. Large housing numbers added to any community in Uttlesford would be too much of a burden on our existing infrastructure.

The Council should think again and plan properly where Uttlesford's new housing should be located.

Name:

Address:

E-mail:

Please return to:
Liberal Democrats
FREEPOST CL2702
Stansted CM24 8BR.



Ask your friends to sign the petition:
<http://campaigns.libdems.org.uk/thinkagain>

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