

FOCUS

on Birchanger



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Edited by Cllr Alan Dean and Cllr Peter Wilcock

www.saffronwaldenlibdems.org.uk

Government and County Slam Tory New Town Plan

Lib Dems Demand Complete Re-Think And Proper Consultation

Essex County Council has delivered a stunning rebuttal of the controversial housing plans being promoted by Uttlesford District Council's ruling Conservative councillors. The County Council says that there is insufficient evidence to support the choice of 'Helshenham' new town between Elsenham and Henham.

Cllr Peter Wilcock commented "Uttlesford Conservatives' new town plan is unlikely to stand up in court or at a public inquiry. The Council must go back to the drawing board, start again, and do it properly next time."

What the County Council Says

- The justification for the preferred Option 4 at Elsenham/Henham is not transparent.
- The Council won't be able to show planning inspectors that reasonable alternatives have been considered.
- Option 4 at Elsenham will deny affordable homes for people who want to live in other parts of the district
- A 3,000 home settlement is not big enough to support local services
- Road access to the Elsenham and Henham area from Stansted and Takeley is constrained and 'substantial infrastructure investment would be necessary'.
- Uttlesford's documents should have said that a new secondary school at Elsenham would mean relocating Stansted's Mountfitchet Mathematics and Computing College.

At the meeting of Uttlesford's environment committee on March 11th, a final decision was postponed until early next year. Conservative councillors finally admitted that the rush at the end of 2007 to meet a 'fixed, Government timetable', which led to the unsatisfactory consultation over Christmas, was unnecessary.

Restore Trust

Lib Dem Cllr. Alan Dean suggested a review of the scheme of public involvement that has been used to date. He suggested involving the public in the improvement review itself in an attempt to restore public trust and confidence. This offer of help was dismissed without discussion by the Conservatives.

The problem seems to be that the Conservatives are now so afraid of their own ideas that they no longer appear willing to talk to anybody about the future. It would be a tragedy for Uttlesford if political paralysis has indeed set in - allowing developers to run wild in our district.

The Lib Dems remain ready to help untangle the mess that the Conservatives have made of Uttlesford District Council's housing plans.

Go back to the drawing board

If consultation counts for anything with Uttlesford's Conservative councillors then it is now surely crystal clear that they must rethink their plans for 4,200 homes in the district.

If they won't listen to the people of Henham and Elsenham, then they must take heed of the harsh criticism meted out by fellow Tories at Essex County Council, who have demolished their proposals for 3,000 houses on a single site between the two villages. The cost of a High Court challenge should also be a sobering thought for an authority already in desperate financial straits.

- Herts & Essex Observer editorial, 17th. February

Wicken House: Conservatives Let Down Our Area Yet Again

The attitude of Essex County Council to children and parents, to school teachers, to their own employees and to their paying clients over the now closed Wicken House residential centre at Wicken Bonhunt has shamed the reputation of local government.

It all started with a sham consultation that made no mention of closure of one of the most loved of children's facilities in Essex.

A complaint has been made by a group of parents and teachers to the Local Government Ombudsman. Using a cache of documents released to it as a result of a Freedom of Information enquiry, the Save Wicken House Campaign alleges that Essex County Council issued misleading and inaccurate statements in what it believes was an attempt to justify the closure decision.

Overleaf: More Potholes With The Tories

Here to Help You



Cllr Alan Dean
 ☎ 01279 813579
 Chair of Scrutiny
 Committee
 cllrdean@
 uttlesford.gov.uk

**Cllr Peter
 Wilcock**
 ☎ 01279 850198
 Leader of the
 Opposition
 cllrwilcock@
 uttlesford.gov.uk



**Andrew Duff
 MEP**
 ☎ 01223 566700
 mep@
 andruffmep.org



Liberal Democrats

Airport Update



The new Conservative-led District Council appears to be less than enthusiastic about updating www.stanstedexplained.info, the community information web site, but the findings of the public enquiry will be made public soon and BAA's application for a second runway has recently been submitted. The Lib Dems continue to be opposed to the expansion of Stansted and other airports in the South East because aviation has a terrible effect on local communities, the local environment and the global climate.

£10 Million Highways Overspend: Bigger Potholes With The Tories

Get used to seeing bigger potholes for longer - that is the message from Conservatives at County Hall in Chelmsford, as the party's failure to finance highways properly continues. Just a few weeks ago, the Conservatives announced a £10 million overspend on the highways budget.

The latest proposals seem to be to wait until damage to road surfaces is really bad before the Council will even consider making repairs. In some cases, for example where there is a kerb that doesn't align with the road, the Tories have dropped any commitment to carry out repairs.

For residents in this area, it will be inconvenient, hazardous and frustrating, with no relief in sight.



"Yes, but I'm afraid it still doesn't meet the new criteria for repair."

Sign our on-line petition against cuts in road repairs at:
ourcampaign.org.uk/potholes

Radical NHS Plans Unveiled

The Liberal Democrat Spring Conference backed plans to transform the NHS into a 'people's health service' by empowering individuals and giving control to local communities.

The measures will set the NHS free from central government control, make it accountable to the people it serves through elected health boards and deliver high quality services to all, guaranteed in a 'Patient's Contract'.

The proposals put clinical need ahead of government targets. Patients would be entitled to be treated in a private hospital at the NHS's expense if their wait breached a defined period, giving the NHS a real incentive to treat patients on time.



Putting Patients First

- Every citizen guaranteed access to a high standard of core healthcare entitlements within maximum waiting times in a 'Patient's Contract'.
- A 'Care Guarantee' for all elderly people requiring care, based on need - not ability to pay.
- Unaccountable Primary Care Trusts replaced with local Health Boards, the majority of whose members are directly elected.
- Direct payments and individual budgets for people with chronic, long-term conditions and mental health services.



Can We Help You?

My comment/issue/problem/eyesore is:

Name(s):
 Address:
 Tel.:
 E-mail:

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

Can You Help Us?

- I will be voting Lib Dem next time.
- I'd like to join the Lib Dems to help with their campaigns. Please contact me.
- I'd like a postal vote. Please contact me.
- I will display a garden/window poster at election time.
- I can deliver 50 or so leaflets. Please contact me.

Join on-line at www.libdems.org.uk/join

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