

FOCUS

on Stansted Mountfitchet



February 2008

Edited by Cllr Alan Dean, Cllr Geoffrey Sell & Cllr John Hudson

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's response to the consultation that ended on 11 January says there is insufficient evidence to support the choice of 'Helshenham' new town between Elsenham and Henham and that more technical work and further public consultation are needed before Uttlesford can put its plans to the government.

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.

Cllr Alan Dean said: "This bombshell from planning experts only confirms what many of us having been saying since September. The plans steamrolled through the council by the Tories in a fit of arrogance are not credible. Well over £50,000 has been squandered on a flawed consultation at a time when money is in very short supply. Judicial reviews are looming and would involve expensive legal fees. The fitness of Uttlesford Conservatives to lead our council is in serious doubt."

Hammer Blow

The Conservative plans have also been slated by GO-East, the Government Office for the East of England.

Commenting on the Tory new town plan, GO-East said "However, from the information provided it isn't fully clear how this was arrived at as the preferred option, as there is little information provided on this.....".

Cllr Geoffrey Sell summed up "The Council's consultation was badly organised and its proposals are poorly thought out. They are 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."

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

Conservatives Bring Chaos to Council

The muddle over new homes planning may get worse after Uttlesford District Council's senior management abandoned ship.

When the Conservatives took control in May they brought in a climate of blame and fear, which has led to management paralysis. The only policies introduced since May have been the disastrous Elsenham new town idea and the replacement of the Uttlesford flag with the Union Jack at the Saffron Walden offices. Each week thousands of pounds are being wasted by officers going round in circles because they no longer know what they are supposed to be doing.

The Conservatives had a plan to destroy what they didn't like but have no plan to rebuild the council. The Liberal Democrats would have managed the Council's financial shortages in a professional way and would not have brought the Council virtually to its knees in the way that the Conservatives have. The Lib Dems would not have made Stansted vulnerable to housing and airport developers who will try to exploit the chaos created by the Conservatives.

Overleaf: More Potholes With The Tories

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 Liberal Democrats

£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 Stansted, it will be inconvenient, hazardous and frustrating, with no relief in sight.



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

Clegg Is New Leader

Nick Clegg MP has been elected as the new Leader of the Lib Dems.

Nick said: "This is an exciting time to be Leader of the Liberal Democrats. The Labour Government is no longer trusted to protect vital services like our NHS, or to take the real action needed to cut crime - and the Tories don't stand for anything anymore. The Liberal Democrats will stand up for people and offer real change."

Nick has put forward plans to liberate schools from excessive state interference and guarantee hospital treatment to patients within a set time. With sleaze returning to haunt the Conservatives, Nick has called for an end to the "unseemly spectacle" of MPs voting for their own pay rises.

Cllr John Hudson commented: "Nick is in touch with modern Britain. The Liberal Democrats will be putting people first and fighting to protect vital local services."



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 imminent closure of 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. The Conservative-controlled county council has been unwilling to be open about the finances and has made spurious claims about the reason for closure.

Local Conservatives' promise to sell off this part of the 'county family silver' and to use the proceeds to replace the Wicken House facilities elsewhere have been undermined by their County colleagues.



When Cllr Alan Dean met leading Conservative county councillors in December, the Tory county councillor responsible for Wicken House said she had no interest in replicating the indoor artistic, cultural and the environmental education facilities of Wicken House at another centre. She was only intending to enhance facilities for outdoor activities such as climbing frames and boating.



Your Liberal Democrat councillors are asking residents to list the worst three eyesores in Stansted that they would like to get rid of.

We can't promise to sort out everything, but knowing what they are is the first step to tidying up the village. Please use the form below or contact us using the details above.



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.

The Liberal Democrats may contact you from time to time to keep you informed on issues we think you may find of interest. Please let us know if you do not wish the information below to be used for this purpose.
Printed by HLPs, 26 Riverside Court, Harlow. Published and promoted by Alan Dean, 49 Recreation Ground, Stansted, Essex CM24 8BD.

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