



## UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

### Felsted & Stebbing Ward

District Councillors Sandi Merifield & John Evans



### DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT: DECEMBER 2022

Cllrs. Sandi Merifield and John Evans are pleased to present their Monthly Report to the Parish Council.

#### PLANNING – FIVE YEARS' HOUSING LAND SUPPLY

One piece of good news will perhaps already have reached you via your Planning Sub-Committee in regard to “the five years numbers”. These are as you know material in the context of consideration of planning applications in our District, there being an absence of an up to date Local Plan. In consequence, it results per the NPPF in a “presumption in favour of sustainable development”, applicable unless five years’ supply can be demonstrated.

This “value” is generally published annually by UDC together with its workings to explain how it was arrived at and last year’s publication, as seen in this link, showed that there was a 3.52 years’ supply as at 1 April 2021:

[https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/media/11219/Housing-Trajectory-and-Five-Year-Land-Supply-1-April-2021-December-2021/pdf/Uttlesford\\_5YLS\\_Statement\\_1\\_April\\_2021\\_Dec\\_2021\\_A.pdf?m=637753570357730000](https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/media/11219/Housing-Trajectory-and-Five-Year-Land-Supply-1-April-2021-December-2021/pdf/Uttlesford_5YLS_Statement_1_April_2021_Dec_2021_A.pdf?m=637753570357730000)

The forthcoming annual publication of these statistics (to be issued later this month) will reveal that the current value is 4.89 years’ supply and thus a touch below 5 years’. While the shortfall remains as such, and thus applicants will argue strongly that the presumption is still applicable but at least it is more than a step in the right direction and is likely to be of considerable assistance in the context of responsive submissions against what might be seen as opportunistic applications.

#### PLANNING APPEALS

We were pleased to note in recent weeks that several planning decisions refusing permission in the Parish were upheld on appeal (heritage and setting generally being the principal reasons as well as road safety).

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That is very gratifying and hopefully will send the message to applicants who might be “chancing their arms” that they will need to demonstrate due and proper compliance with both national and local policy and guidance.

Indeed, also regarding “major applications” (ie those for more than 10 dwellings) there is further good news in that the percentage of appeals overturned on refusal decisions is now standing at 10.4%. This statistic is material in the context of the designation of UDC which led to the Planning Inspectorate being entitled (in the discretion of the applicant) to determine major planning applications instead of UDC. The designation was imposed because the historic percentage had been considerably in excess of the Government threshold set at 10%.

### **THE LOCAL PLAN**

Nothing seems to stay the same for long with planning policy set at Government levels. We have a new Minister in Mr Michael Gove. The Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill is currently before the Commons but it has a considerable focus on planning. You will have read of the amendments proposed by a considerable number of backbench MPs which led to a slight pause in progress of the Bill and on Monday 5 December an announcement was made by Mr Gove which might lead to an amendment in required housing numbers (ours per the standard methodology is as you will recall **701** dwellings pa). The following press release suggests that a figure such as this will no longer be mandatory (as it has been to date – despite one statement uttered to the contrary in the District by some politicians). We shall continue to keep you updated of changes resulting from these and other policy developments including those flowing from a revised NPPF to be published in 2023.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/communities-put-at-heart-of-planning-system-as-government-strengthens-levelling-up-and-regeneration-bill>

### **LOCAL COUNCILS’ LIAISON FORUM – 7 November 2022 @ UDC Little Canfield**

We anticipated in our last report that a meeting was to take place on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022, to be held at the new facilities at Little Canfield. This was very well attended by Parish Councillors from across the District, including by Councillor Richard Freeman. Among the topics discussed was neighbourhood planning including a presentation by Rural Communities Council of Essex and by John. This was in order further to promote the merits of neighbourhood planning and to highlight the challenges involved in making neighbourhood plans. Councillor Freeman provided very helpful input and advice regarding his experience of neighbourhood planning, being current chair of your Planning Sub-Committee but also having been a leading member of the Felsted Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. That contribution was most valuable and much appreciated by us as your Ward Members and the Planning Portfolio Holder.

We look forward to seeing those of your representatives who might be available on the evening – perhaps some will not have had the chance to visit the site before, but as previously advised, it comprises not only

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offices and meeting rooms (where frequently planning appeals are now held), the Depot for UDC refuse vehicles but significantly upgraded large storage/warehouse facilities also, which are to be let out and will be a significant revenue generator and go some way to enabling UDC income to be further supplemented.

### **COUNCIL FINANCES – 2022/23**

We will not go into this issue in any detail at this stage of the financial year but simply to note for your interest that the Quarter 2 Budget figures were reviewed and noted at Cabinet on 1 December 2022 and the details are to be found via this link:

<https://uttlesford.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s30169/Budget%20Forecast%20Outturn%20-%202022.23%20Quarter%202.pdf>

Suffice it to say that expenditure has increased in several areas beyond the levels originally budgeted for and some drawing of reserves will prove necessary. The financial picture for municipal year 2023/24 will be yet more challenging but we will report more fully concerning the outturn for this year and projected budget for that year in we anticipate March 2023, following consideration by Council.

As we all know, UDC is the collecting agent for Essex CC and the Police and Fire Commissioners' as well as the Parish Councils' respective precepts and so of the monthly sums collected from each of us in way of Council Tax, only a small proportion is retained by UDC for its own account. It might be helpful for residents if we were to provide a further summary/reminder of this when we report on financial matters in March 2023.

### **OUR ASSISTANCE AND MEMBERS' INITIATIVE**

We have been pleased to advise since our last report that we have been approached for support by the "Lego Groups", meeting under the auspices of Felsted Parish Church, for some funding, using funds jointly available from our UDC Councillors' Initiative Allocation, which we are able to respond to positively. We thank your Clerk for her help in providing the positive liaison which resulted in this approach. As you know, we are always ready to consider requests for financial support for appropriate projects.

Of course, we are always very happy to hear from any parish councillors and residents and to meet them, whether at our Surgery held immediately before your Parish Council meeting or otherwise, should there be anything they think we can help with or answer any questions.

Finally, we do wish the Council and all Residents a very Happy Christmas and a healthy 2023 and one of hopefully greater economic security and confidence.

Cllr Sandi Merifield

Cllr John Evans

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