



UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Felsted & Stebbing Ward

District Councillors John Evans & Richard Silcock



DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT: NOVEMBER 2025

Please find below our monthly Report to the Parish Council.

POTENTIAL FOR NEIGHBOURING LARGE DEVELOPMENT ALLOCATIONS - ANDREWSFIELD

It might be thought that this subject had limited relevance to the Parish of Felsted, and indeed it does in many respects and is some distance from the southern portion of the Parish, but against the background of the possible development of a solar farm in the north eastern quadrant of Felsted and that few residents are likely to keep abreast of what might transpire in an adjacent local authority area, we nonetheless felt that it is appropriate to provide a further update.

Last month, we reported that Braintree DC is currently reviewing and updating its Local Plan, determining its spatial strategy, and for that purpose is undertaking site allocations across its district. As part of that exercise, its Local Plan Committee has been assessing appropriate land areas to meet required large scale development during the review period ie until 2041 (incidentally the same period to which the Uttlesford Local Plan is planning for).

Braintree's Local Plan and housing allocation/requirement is being rushed at since they are attempting to have their reviewed Local Plan examined under the "old" NPPF housing numbers rather than the latest higher set. Even so, after deduction of the current Local Plan provision (9,047), the additional housing required to be planned for in the period is some 5,000, a gross figure of 1,264 dwellings pa.

Last month, we advised that Braintree DC were considering the possible allocation of a very large tract of land around Rayne and Andrewsfield as being suitable for the development of some 7,000 dwellings during the plan period. Their Local Plan Committee met on 1st October as part of a series of meetings when they considered on a District wide basis possible allocation sites. At that meeting, the Committee resolved by majority to reject Andrewsfield and surrounds as a suitable location for allocation. However, subsequently, following further meetings, the Committee was faced with the dilemma of having failed to allocate sufficient locations across the board during their various meetings and the consequence was that would lead to a shortfall of some 1,100 dwellings overall. As a result, matters have gone back to the drawing board and Braintree's officers are reviewing the entire process again with a view to submitting

updated recommendations to their Members. This means that the possibility of an allocation at Rayne/Andrewsfield might once again be resurrected.

We will continue to monitor matters as any allocation for such large scale development on the borders of both the Parishes of Felsted and Stebbing would bring about radical change not only to our countryside and landscape but also lead to yet further very substantial increases in overall traffic levels, rat running through our smaller/village roads and bring about very substantial change at large to the nature and character of the entire Ward.

In this general context, we think you would wish to know that the Office of National Statistics last week published its latest population statistics and which projected the population of Uttlesford to grow yet further (per the last census in 2021 it grew $\geq 15\%$) namely by **13.2%** to 2032, giving a projected population of 104,867 and by 2047 of 119,000. This is the consequence of net internal migration; as we know already, most inward migration occurs on the part of new residents relocating to the District from the outer northern and eastern London Boroughs, whose own population growth, not surprisingly, is very modest – at most in line with the **national average** of around **6%**.

These growth projections are likely to be of considerable influence in future when (irrespective of what transpires as to the creation/form of the future unitary councils in Essex) strategic growth decisions will be taken by the to be elected Mayor of Essex. It will be that person (not as the existing District Councils presently nor the unitary councils to be created in future) who will determine strategic planning policies, such as large scale development opportunities – both residential and commercial – and major highway schemes. They will be bound to have regard to the population projections just set out above.

So, the Planning Committees of our Parish Councils will in future be well advised to keep a weather eye open for the strategic planning changes then to be introduced as they will be very likely to affect our Residents to their perceived detriment. The risk is high, in our opinion, given the Parishes' proximity to the major arterial road network provided by A120/M11 as well of course as to Stansted Airport.

UTTLESFORD LOCAL PLAN

The consultation upon the proposed Major Modifications to the Local Plan, before they are further considered by The Planning Inspectorate ("PINS"), was concluded last week. These are now being considered by UDC Officers before they respond/comment upon them to PINS, whereafter a letter expressing their final opinion as to soundness of the entire draft Local Plan, including Major Modifications, will be released by the Inspectors. Thus, subject to Members' views in Full Council, we are still on track for adoption by Council (if members agree!) in March/April 2026.

However, it is the case that a number of development applications have been submitted both in Felsted and Stebbing Parishes, as well as across the District, by applicants eager to secure their permissions as soon as possible on sites which have been allocated in draft and yet also on those which have not. These applicants are not waiting for the Local Plan to be adopted, perhaps hoping to secure permissions which

are not entirely in conformity with the draft Local Plan concepts or its ambitious policies (for example in way of carbon, Biodiversity Net Gain and housing standards) and even seeking to anticipate matters before the prospective introduction of Community Infrastructure Levy obligations.

Residents might see these actions as inconsistent with the orderly making of a long overdue updated Local Plan. Indeed, we have some considerable sympathy with that viewpoint, but the Planning legislation and Rules permit such an approach. However, it will be recalled that once the draft Local Plan with Major Modifications has been the subject of a final opinion letter from PINS (perhaps to be anticipated in December/early January), it becomes a material consideration and weight can indeed be afforded to it, even prior to its adoption by Council, in the development management process. So, the UDC Planning Committee can thereafter begin to have regard to the emerging Local Plan Policies and have cause to apply them in their determinations.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

We take this opportunity of bringing to the attention of the Parish Council a Planning Decision made on Appeal last week concerning a potential development in Stebbing (land west of the High Street).

The Application (first formally submitted in 2023 subsequent to extensive pre application processes, including a reference to the Essex Quality Review Panel) was a full application for permission to develop 28 dwellings and a commercial building on land opposite the Primary School and on The Downs but outside the village development limits. UDC officers recommended it for approval (largely because of the public benefits perceived to be attracted by an offering of 50% affordable housing and against the lack of a five year housing land supply) but the Planning Committee refused it in September 2024 on the grounds that otherwise it was in their opinion, non policy compliant.

The applicants thereafter pursued matters by way of section 62A ie a direct application to PINS, which was available to them because of the planning designation status then applicable to UDC. Under that fast track procedure, however, PINS in June 2025 refused the application. Notwithstanding, the applicants also pursued an Appeal against UDC's Planning Committee refusal but PINS in the event have now upheld that refusal and the Appeal was dismissed. The PINS Inspector did so on the basis both of the policies contained in the Stebbing Neighbourhood Plan 2022 and because of the adverse impact on Stebbing's Conservation Area and other heritage assets of the highest status.

We think this serves as a useful reminder once again of the importance of Neighbourhood Plans and the value of keeping their policies refreshed and current.

HEDGEHOG SOLAR

We shall attend the next Community Liaison Group and learn of the further preparatory work undertaken by TOTAL ENERGIES in anticipation of the planning applications to be submitted by them to UDC and Braintree DC, anticipated to be early in 2026. Meanwhile, we are sure that residents will continue to be

exercised at the prospect of the further erosion and loss of good quality arable land (Best and Most Versatile = “BMV”).

As to this, Lincolnshire and Essex are in the van with 3,345 MegaWatt (“MW”) and 2,194 MW of solar power currently being generated in those Counties. This latter figure might be noted and placed in context against the background of Hedgehog’s intended 98 MW generative capacity.

Research has been undertaken and was published last week by SolarQ, a group of “citizen led scientists” one of whose leading lights is Professor David Rogers, Emeritus Professor of Ecology, University of Oxford) who is quoted in a parliamentary submission as observing:

“SolarQ’s analysis reveals that ground-mounted solar installations will cover more than seven times more land than the widely quoted solar industry estimate. Despite there being three times more lower-quality farmland than high-quality, solar farms are occupying twenty times more high-quality land - land that is vital for food production. This expansion has occurred without a national spatial strategy to guide solar development, raising serious concerns about the long-term balance between renewable energy and food security.”

Their summary report made may be found here <https://www.solarq.org/repdanalysis>, where they state that as of April 2025, there was 9.77 GigaWatt (“GW”) of operational solar capacity in UK but there is 65.7 GW in the pipeline against the Government’s maximum target of 47 GW. We think that their Report is worth considering when representations come to be made by residents in the context of perceived “overconcentration” of solar schemes and impact on BMV in our District.

Incidentally, SolarQ calculate **2.07%** of the land area of the North West Essex Parliamentary Constituency (ie within the current constituency boundary and thus excluding Felsted and Stebbing) is taken up with ground mounted solar schemes - see Map 6 on p 12 of the SolarQ Report and the link to the report, data and mapping is here which may well be of assistance to members of your Planning Committee in their deliberations:

<https://www.solarq.org/s/UK-ground-based-solar-by-County-and-Constituency-REPDJan2024v2rsWeb.pdf>

It is to be noted that the three large constituencies whose land areas are most affected in England by solar PV are Gainsborough (2.81% solar PhotoVoltaic coverage), Grantham & Bourne (2.12%) and North-West Essex (2.07%).

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION (“LGR”)

County Councillor Martin Foley has very helpfully reported to you on the latest stage of LGR seen from his perspective as our County Councillor and we will not repeat the very useful observations provided by him.

You will perhaps have also read of the most recent actions taken by the Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government (“MHCLG”) in this area which were published last week and relate to LGR in the County of Surrey. Contrary to the preferences of the majority of the District Councils in Surrey, MHCLG has determined that Surrey will be reorganised in the form of only two unitary authorities (divided in a vertical axis of west and east). Surrey contains two districts which have incurred very substantial (but largely under secured) debts with the aim of supporting future development/revenue generation. As part of MHCLG’s LGR process, it has now decided to take over a large proportion of this debt upon central government’s own resources.

How MHCLG will regard the competing plans for LGR in Essex remains anyone’s guess but it is illuminating that it seems to have proceeded with its LGR policy plans along the “larger the better”. As to this, John attended a Planning Conference in Lincoln’s Inn last month hosted by leading barristers at which a KC expressed the view (having himself been involved in legal challenges to LGR elsewhere in the country) that MHCLG were likely to maintain their policy objective of securing new unitary authorities having a minimum population of $\geq 500,000$.

MHCLG will be consulting the public on the Essex wide unitary proposals and the UDC Administration has suggested that the District’s Parish Councils be expressly consulted on the various options on the table and you will expect to hear accordingly within the next month.

There is a dedicated page on the UDC website which will be kept up to date and which interested Members and residents may well wish to bookmark:

[Devolution and local government reorganisation - Uttlesford District Council](#)

STANSTED AIRPORT - PLANNED EXPANSION

Members will recall that Manchester Airports Group/Stansted Airport Ltd have applied to UDC for planning permission to increase the numbers of passengers that it is permitted to accommodate at Stansted from the current maximum of 43 m pa to 51 m pa. Full details are to be found under planning Application reference - UTT/25/1542/FUL and through this link:

<https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/article/9839/Stansted-Airport-planning-application-to-increase-passenger-numbers>

The Application will be coming to the UDC Planning Committee for determination at their November meeting.

OUR WARD ACTIVITY

As will be imagined, most of our representative work within the Community is made up of correspondence, receiving and responding to questions and concerns raised by residents as well as by your Clerk on behalf of individuals or bodies who have been in contact with her. We are very pleased of course to attend many local events of course and from time to time are honoured to be invited to attend an “Opening” or other celebratory event.

In this context, we were present last month in support of the Trustees of the Felsted Community Trust, the Parish Council and members of the Felsted Neighbourhood Plan when the first ground work to mark the laying of the foundations of the forthcoming Health Centre on Station Road was celebrated. The event was organised by the developers, Mulberry Homes, in support of the medical Practice at John Tasker House, Great Dunmow who will provide the professional and other GP facilities at the Centre. The Chair of Uttlesford District Council, Cllr Chris Criscione (who is also the Member for Flitch Green and Little Dunmow) and Mr Nigel Brown, the UDC Development Management Manager were also present. It is very pleasing to see the project move towards its final stage and which will now lead to a much improved level of GP service for the patients of John Tasker House and we congratulate all concerned.

As to other matters, we have been very active in reviewing once again the position regarding the maintenance and repair obligations concerning the road surface at Chaffix. Some residents have raised concerns as to the potholed state of the road and asked as to the maintenance regime applicable to it. This was a question first raised in 2019/2020 whereafter maintenance was undertaken but there has been deterioration in the surface since.

The road is not adopted by ECC, having been dedicated as a private estate road when the housing was originally built by Dunmow Rural District Council. Since the "Right to Buy" legislation was introduced, some of the housing is now in private ownership and thus UDC (as successor to Dunmow RDC) while owning the road is not accountable for the entire cost of its maintenance. Those residents who own their homes are obliged to pay their proportion of relevant maintenance costs

We continue to assist in seeing to it that the necessary repairs are undertaken by UDC while ensuring that all concerned do pay their due share of costs to be incurred.

WARD MEMBER'S INITIATIVE

We are very happy to consider requests for financial support, utilising our Members' Initiative Grant as appropriate and which can be made available to community groups for suitable purposes. We draw to your attention however, as previously reported by us to you, that this will be the last year (2025/2026) that the grant will be available.

DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' AND CONSTITUENTS' SURGERY

We will be holding our usual monthly surgery in the URC Hall at 1730 immediately prior to your PC Meeting.

We are always, of course, pleased to meet up by appointment, as required, with any resident who wishes to discuss a matter of concern or indeed anything we have commented upon in our Monthly Reports.

If any resident would like to receive a personal copy of our Monthly Reports, we shall be pleased to send one directly to them by e mail but do remind all concerned that they are published and included by way of a link in each Month's Parish Council Minutes. Back Editions commencing as far ago as June 2019 are available additionally on request !

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