

Number of homes earmarked for south of district sparks 'outrage'

By Emma Doyle

Local Democracy Reporter

A NEW housing blueprint for Uttlesford has led residents to expressing "dismay and outrage" over urban sprawl and "disproportionate" housing allocations.

Uttlesford District Council's (UDC) new draft Local Plan for the years 2021-2041 was presented last week, prior to a consultation period.

Emphasis was placed on the large number of new homes proposed for sites in Great Dunmow and Takeley to the south of the district.

In total, the updated housing need for the period up to 2041 covered by the plan was placed at 13,680 homes. Almost 870 of these have been allocated within Great Dunmow, and over 1,600 in the parishes of Takeley and Little Canfield.

This is in addition to 30 out of a total of 33 hectares of 'employment' land being allocated to Takeley and Little Canfield, which will largely lend itself to industrial use.

One resident speaking at last week's meeting told councillors how she was "compelled to express dismay and disappointment" over the volume of houses proposed for the south of the district in the draft plan, saying developers had "taken advantage" of the lack of an adopted Local Plan by pushing through



Councillors Geoff Bagnall (above left) and John Evans both spoke at the meeting

Images: Uttlesford District Council

windfall projects which have done little to serve the community.

Fellow resident Dr Jean Johnson said: "Without requisite infrastructure in place, the plan as it stands is unsustainable.

"The required level of infrastruc-

ture simply cannot happen within the time frame of this document."

Making representations for both Takeley and Little Canfield parish councils, Councillor Maggie Sutton noted that a number of applications previously refused on appeals logged

with the Planning Inspectorate were bookmarked for large-scale housing development within the draft plan.

Interim planning policy manager Andrew Maxted said that although it is important for the council to "take notes" on the advice given by the Plan-

ning Inspectorate regarding rejected applications and appeals previously, any rejection would have been made simply on "technical" grounds.

He said a rejection by the inspectorate does not rule out the potential for development in any circumstances, it just means that the reasons for refusal need to have been adequately addressed.

"If we try to make the consultation perfect, we'll use up more and more time which will actually make the value of the consultation less," he said.

"All the time we still don't have an adopted Local Plan, development will happen over which the council has little control."

Chairing the meeting, Geoff Bagnall argued that without seeing any evidence to support the housing and development allocations included in the draft plan, the council would be "forced to blindly support" the work of the officers who wrote the submitted draft.

But Councillor John Evans supported Mr Maxted's insistence that time is of the essence.

He said: "It is essential that we remember we are not professional planners - we are very keen amateurs.

"We need to rely on the quality and raft of material that's been assembled in the draft plan.

"Time is now upon us to get on with it."