

## Great Chesterford Village Meeting

### Held on Thursday 12th July at 8pm in Chesterfords Community Centre

#### Present

Neil Gregory, Gareth Bevens, David Hall, Penny McCullough, Mike Mitchell, Tom Newcombe and Sharon Tricerri.

Amanda Lindsell and 28 members of the public.

#### Welcome

Neil Gregory welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### Update on Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan.

David Hall reminded the meeting of actions the Parish Council have taken so far, including;  
Sept 17 - detailed comments submitted highly critical of the Transport Plan Reg 18 is based on. No response was received.

Jan 18 - Chesterford put forward as new settlement site. PC have met 3 times subsequently with UDC and all discussions have related to NUGC as if it is a done deal. The PC have had 2 meetings with Grosvenor who have been exceptionally helpful and open about their vision statement.

6 weeks preceding publication of Reg 19 UDC started producing copies of evidence they say supports proposals in Reg 19 including 2570 pages relating to sustainability assessments, transport study, waste study, infrastructure delivery plan and more, who's contents do nothing to convince the reader of sustainability.

As it stands, over the next 17 years 3000 houses will be accommodated on the existing road structure, and there after road improvements would be implemented.

#### What can the Parish Council do?

Tom Newcombe thanked David for wading through the extreme amount of correspondence and for his tiresome work on behalf of the parish.

Tom then detailed three options;

1. **Do nothing.** The PC have tried to negotiate with UDC and have had some success with the implementation of their "red lines", although some have been watered down and some ignored.
2. **Fight it hard.** This would probably end up with a public enquiry in Spring 2019. Put resources into getting representation.
2. **Take High Court action.** Challenge UDC's decision making in getting to this point by judicial review. This would cost at least £20K and require a lot of work and the PC don't necessarily have all the information available to prove UDC's decision making was improper. Even if successful UDC would probably just have to react and so the action would only achieve a delay, which could work against the PC.

Neil Gregory confirmed that the Parish Council believe that option 2 is the best option.

**13th August** is the deadline for responses to UDC for everyone. There is a lot of work to be done, the PC have resolved to commit funds to engage Transport Consultants to review the updated transport survey in Reg 19. The PC will not currently be engaging other consultants due to limited funds, the PC's confidence in Cllr Hall's ability and knowledge and belief that transport is the issue the Council needs advice on. The council are trying to also secure free legal advice from a local barrister to advise on the PC submission and highlight any gaps.

Neil **advised all residents to submit comments to UDC** in response to Reg 19. It is essential that the residents of GC are the loudest voice at this consultation. The Action Group are doing a brilliant job, but individuals need to comment on the council website.

Once the August 13th deadline has passed, UDC have to review submissions and submit a statement detailing how and if they have taken the submissions into account. It is unlikely there will be further consultation, and it will probably be submitted to the inspector by the end of 2018, who will review and feedback some comments to UDC, who then have a period to deal with the inspector's comments.

**Everyone who has made representations during the plan process has the right to attend the enquiry.**

The inspector will close the enquiry approx May 2019 and produce further recommendations to UDC such as minor modifications/pause/ recommendation to withdraw. UDC do not have to act on these recommendations.

The plan then goes to full council for a vote.

*Julie Redfern arrived.*

The council decision is judicially reviewable. The PC could challenge the inspector's plan to put the plan forward.

### Questions from residents

1. **If PC do not challenge at the high court is the process scrutinised by the inspector later?**

Not as far as decision making, the inspector will be looking at planning law and policy.

2. **If there are 3 Development Plan Documents (DPDs) within the Local Plan, when all the details are in the DPDs is this not an open cheque book?**

Tom confirmed that although UDC are parking much of the detail in the DPDs, it is arguable that to obtain the level of detail the public wants is not feasible at this point.

3. **Can the PC response to Reg 19 be made available on the website to help others decide how to comment?**

David confirmed that he is happy to share the response but that it is very detailed and constantly evolving.

Neil confirmed that the PC will circulate key issues to highlight.

4. **Is it possible for Tom to publish a timetable/timeline of events?**

Julie confirmed that the anticipated amended plan will go to the inspector in March 2019.

5. **At the Village Meeting in May Kemi Badenoch was asked to investigate funding for the Parish Council to compete with developers and allow a fair and level playing field for local communities. Has there been any action ?**

Gareth confirmed that he has chased Kemi three times for a response and that the PC are very disappointed with her lack of engagement. Kemi confirmed that she contacted Rishi Sunak MP as the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State responsible for local government policy & finance to ask what can be done to address this, given the statutory role parishes have, but no further information has been forthcoming.

6. **Is it too early to ask if sharing a fighting fund with Ickleton would be an option?**

The PC confirmed that there is not realistically time to coordinate this for the August deadline. That decision needs to be made in the lead up to the planning enquiry, although the flip side is that it would reduce the number of people attending the enquiry and arguments being made.

7. **Is it politically naive to think about working with other garden village sites?**

It was confirmed that there are umbrella groups of support available, not generally offering financial support but vital moral support is available. Julie explained that the local battle should be the most important, some of the plan has to happen and that residents should focus on what is happening locally, with a view to buddying up with neighbouring parishes to fight Reg 19 on fact and evidence.

Neil summarised that the Parish Council is obliged to act lawfully, reflect the views of the village and engage with the process. PC position so far has been based on opposition to The Plan;

- i. Demonstrate why Great Chesterford is the right place.
- ii. Where is the suitable infrastructure?
- iii. Red lines.

To date UDC have failed on all 3 criteria. The PC believe that NUGC is the least viable of the 3 proposed garden villages and that all challenge should be focussed on evidence and inspection.

The PC believe that they need to find an additional £50K funds over 6/9 weeks to cover representation costs and are focussed on submitting a detailed response to the Reg 19 consultation.

Village Vote on Action

All residents present voted in favour of option 2.

Neighbourhood Plan

Tom explained that the current Village Plan has no statutory status and that a Neighbourhood Plan offers more power, although is required to conform with and is superseded by the Local Plan, and must be pro development.

Due to the limited PC resources volunteers are required, Mike Mitchell is leading this community project, which doesn't have to be complicated. UDC have agreed that the NUGC site can be ring fenced as under proposal that is not supported. More engagement is required from the village, including identification of sites suitable for development, although a lot of leg work has already been completed.

The PC are appealing for everyone to get involved and are thankful to UDC for their support.

It is entirely possible to highlight areas that would never be considered for development, alongside areas considered possible and areas identified as requiring protection. Feedback is required from residents to detail these priorities. UDC will scrutinise the plan and feedback and there will then be a village referendum. The PC need to prove that they have genuinely engaged with the community.

A vote of thanks was given to David and Tom for their exceptional dedication and professional analysis.