
DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

25 SEPTEMBER 2013

Present -

MEMBERS:

Councillor P Hearn (Mayor). Councillors; Adeleke, Adshead, Anderson, Mrs Bassadone, Bhinder, Mrs G Chapman, Clark, Collins, Conway, Douris, Elliott, Fantham, Flint, Mrs Green, Griffiths, Mrs Guest, Harden, Harris, N Hollinghurst, R Hollinghurst, Killen, Laws, Lawson, Link, Marshall, McLean, Organ, Peter, Mrs Rance, Reay, Ryan, G Sutton, R Sutton, Taylor, Tindall, Whitman, Williams, Wood, C Wyatt-Lowe and W Wyatt-Lowe (41).

OFFICERS:

The Chief Executive, The Corporate Director (Finance & Governance), The Corporate Director (Housing & Regeneration), The Assistant Director (Legal Democratic & Regulatory), The Assistant Director (Planning, Development & Regeneration), The Group Manager (Democratic Services), Leida Smith, M Anderson and L Collins.

The meeting began at 7.30pm.

18. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2013 were agreed by the Members present and were then signed by the Mayor.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

20. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Question from Kathryn Reilly to the Leader of the Council – read out by the Leader of the Council on behalf of Ms Reilly

‘I would like to know why the very logical proposal put forward by Mike Penning, whereby houses are built in the spare land near the M1 in conjunction with St Alban's council, hasn't been considered before - and will it now be looked into properly?’

The site you have proposed is unsuitable morally, ecologically and logistically.’

Answer:

This land falls within St Alban's administrative area and is owned by the Crown Estate. The Crown Estate has been promoting what they term the ‘Gorhambury

Concept' – in effect an extension to Hemel Hempstead - on their land for many years and have met with both Dacorum and St Albans Councils to discuss their proposals.

As part of work to inform its Core Strategy the Council has looked at the potential of this land, as this was originally contained in the East of England Regional Plan, which has now been abolished.

In 2009 Dacorum Council, with input from St Albans Council and Herts County Council published a technical document entitled 'Assessment of Alternative Growth Scenarios for Hemel Hempstead.' This document looked at 3 growth options for the town – northern, eastern and dispersed. These options ignored administrative boundaries.

The Council cannot however plan for development on the Gorhambury land as this falls outside of the Dacorum area.

All 3 options included development at West Hemel Hempstead – the lower level was 1200 in the Eastern Option, and LA3 proposes less.

The Gorhambury proposal was however considered at the Examination into the Core Strategy (held in Oct 2012) – where it was promoted by agents representing the Crown Estate.

The Inspector who presided over this Examination has found Dacorum's Core Strategy 'sound' without the inclusion of this land.

As St Albans DC has not yet prepared a Core Strategy or Local Plan, discussions have not been able to progress at the current time. However, as one of the Main Modifications to its Core Strategy required by the Planning Inspector, the Council has agreed to carry out an early partial review. Through this partial review of the Core Strategy the Council will look again at a number of housing related issues. This includes (quote) *'The role that effective co-operation with local planning authorities could play in meeting any housing need arising from Dacorum. This element will include St Albans district and relevant areas lying beyond the Green Belt.'* (para 29.10)

This work has already commenced with St Albans and Dacorum Councils (together with Welwyn Hatfield Council) commissioning a joint Green Belt review. The results of the Stage 1 study are due later this autumn. Further discussions will continue with St Albans as part of DBC's responsibilities under the 'duty to co-operate'.

So in summary:

- The Council has given serious consideration to the Gorhambury land to which she refers;
- There have already been discussions with St Albans Council in whose area this land falls and these discussions are ongoing;

The land will be reconsidered as part of the partial review of the Core Strategy.

Question from Lee Royal (Chair of West Hemel Action Group) to the Leader of the Council:

'On behalf of the West Hemel Action Group (WHAG), please find as follows, two questions that we would like to submit for the Council Meeting on the 25th September 2013, in relation to the review and potential adoption of the Dacorum Core Strategy and resultant potential development at LA3:

1. Dacorum Borough Council have previously engaged a consultant to carry out traffic modelling & produce a report on this modelling for the impact of the proposed developments at Western Hemel, as contained in the proposed new Core Strategy. Based upon our own assessment of the traffic modelling carried out (see attached, provided as supplementary information to this question), we have been able to establish that the model calculations show that less than 1 in 3 cars would leave the proposed LA3 development at peak morning hours. Do Dacorum Borough Council consider this 1 in 3 ratio to actually be realistic considering the very likely commuter nature of the residents that would populate a development at LA3.

2. Can you please confirm that Appendix F of the Sustainability Appraisal Report that accompanied the Pre-Submission Core Strategy 2011 is still valid? If not, what subsequent assessments have there been, and how and when were the findings of these new assessments communicated to the public? If the 2011 Sustainability Appraisal Report is still valid with regard to West Hemel Hempstead, how, in the case of LA3, has the principle of sustainable development been reconciled with the report, according to which West Hemel Hempstead passes only three out of 20 sustainability appraisal objectives?'

Answer:

Question 1:

Hertfordshire County Council is the local highway authority for the Dacorum area and the Borough Council looks to them for specialist advice regarding highway matters.

The County Council, with the support of the Borough Council, commissioned specialist transport consultants to develop a transport model for Hemel Hempstead. The conclusions from the baseline highway modelling work for the town were published in 2009. Both the detailed validation report (which sets out assumptions that are fed into the model) and the output report itself (which highlights where any highway capacity issues are expected to arise and how they can be mitigated) are published on the Council's website as part of the Core Strategy evidence base. Another run of the Transport model followed in 2010 which factored in the development at West Hemel Hempstead and the two other Local Allocations within the Town. Information about this model run is also available on the website.

The traffic modelling work included assumptions about the number of trips generated by LA3 at peak times. These assumptions were agreed between the transport consultants and Hertfordshire County Council and based on information provided for another proposed development in Hemel Hempstead. The ratio stated by WHAG for traffic leaving during the weekday morning peak hour is correct.

The Council has asked Hertfordshire County Council to update its traffic model and this work is currently underway. The principal reason for the update is to ensure the new town centre supermarket (the Morrisons proposal) is included in the model. We understand that as part of this new model run the County Council will review the appropriateness of the previous trip generation assumptions.

The results for this traffic model update will be published later this autumn. Any highway issues raised, and any necessary mitigation measures, such as local junction improvements, will be considered further through the masterplanning work that is already underway.

Question 2:

The Council has taken an iterative approach to sustainability appraisal of the Core Strategy. This means that consultants C4S have been employed by the Council to provide independent advice on the performance of potential development sites, draft policies and the overall development strategy right from the start of work on the Core Strategy. This advice has helped refine the content of the document. The sustainability assessment process is based upon a number of sustainability criteria that cover social, economic and environmental factors.

A Sustainability Report was prepared by consultants C4S to accompany the Council's Pre-Submission Core Strategy. Appendix F to which Mr Royal refers is the detailed assessment of how the Local Allocations (including LA3) perform against these social, economic and environmental criteria.

The Sustainability consultants have provided a supplementary report to accompany the Modifications document. This assessment only considered the changes proposed to the Core Strategy since the Pre-Submission version was published. The conclusions with regard to LA3 have therefore not changed and the 2011 assessment remains valid.

A final Sustainability Appraisal Adoption Statement has also been prepared to accompany the adoption version of the Core Strategy and this was appended to the report considered by Cabinet on 17th September.

In accordance with planning regulations, the Sustainability Appraisal Reports and Working Notes were published alongside relevant consultation on the Core Strategy and comments sought on these documents as well as the Core Strategy document itself.

All sustainability reports and more informal working notes are available from the Council's website and were part of the information submitted to the Core Strategy Examination.

Finally, it is important to understand the role of Sustainability Appraisals:

- It is not a case of sites being considered for inclusion in a planning document needing to 'pass' an assessment. It is all about the relative performance of available sites against the sustainability criteria.
- There are always inherent conflicts between the social, economic and environmental criteria that make up a sustainability assessment. The issue is how these can best be balanced and any potential negative impacts mitigated.
- The main thing the Council is seeking to avoid is an assessment highlighting a serious negative impact against any of the criteria. West Hemel Hempstead is not assessed as having any serious negative impacts. It is also important to note that other potential Green Belt releases put forward by developers, both around Hemel and other towns and large villages were subject to the same process of sustainability assessment. LA3 performs well in comparison with these alternative sites.

Question from Julie James to the Leader of the Council:

'Can you please confirm that predicted housing demand in Dacorum still derives from the London Commuter Belt (West) Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2010 (covering six Hertfordshire authorities, including Dacorum), as stated in the Pre-Submission Core Strategy 2011 consultation document. If not, what other studies at National or Regional level were used instead for Dacorum , and how and when was the change to use these studies communicated to the public? If SHMA is still a source for Dacorum housing demand figures, please confirm that despite its title, the study was undertaken in 2008/9.'

Answer:

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment carried out for authorities within South West Hertfordshire did not generate any housing demand figures for Dacorum. Rather it relied on the housing targets from the East of England Plan and assumed that these equated to housing demand (which they broadly did). The figures for Dacorum contained in East of England Plan were quashed following a legal challenge in 2009. The East of England Plan was abolished in its entirety by Government earlier this year.

The figures for predicted housing demand contained in the SHMA are therefore not the source of current housing demand figures for the Core Strategy and have not been for some time. References to the SHMA in the Pre-Submission Core Strategy relate to requirements for affordable housing and different types of dwelling mix – not overall housing demand.

As part of the evidence submitted to the Examination the Council prepared a background paper entitled '*Selecting the Core Strategy Housing Target.*' This paper is available on the Council's website. It sets out the range of household growth projections that have been published by organisations, including the Office for National Statistics, and what these all say about the level of housing demand in Dacorum.

Despite Government's assertion that it is up to local planning authorities to set their own housing targets, it has become increasingly clear that Planning Inspectors are using the most up-to-date household growth projections produced by the Office for National Statistics as the proxy for local housing demand, and any deviation from this figure needs to be robustly justified. Dacorum's Core Strategy currently provides for 84% of the ONS figure.

Question from Simon Belson to the Leader of the Council:

'What traffic modelling has been carried out for the total combined impact of all of the large scale developments planned under the new Core Strategy? If Yes, what are the findings'.

Answer:

As summarised in response to Mr Royal's question above, the County Council, on behalf of the Borough Council, has developed a traffic model for Hemel Hempstead. There have been two runs of this model so far. The first in 2009 considered the highway impacts of new development within the existing town boundary. A second model run in 2010 tested the additional impact of the LA3 and the other Local Allocations proposed for the town. A third model run is currently underway to update the 2010 work – in particular to ensure the redevelopment proposals within the town centre are fully taken account of.

In summary, the run which included LA3 and the other two Local Allocations concluded that there would be the need for localised junction improvements in the town, but no issues were raised which could not be appropriately mitigated or meant that the development should not take place.

The detailed findings of the 2010 model run which covers the total combined effects of all the development proposed at Hemel Hempstead in the Core Strategy are clearly set out in the output report.

The Highway Authority is satisfied that the local road network can accommodate the level of growth proposed in the Core Strategy.

Councillor Williams received the petition on behalf of the Council to oppose the Dacorum Borough Council building on Green Belt Land at West Hemel Hempstead, (known as LA3).

21. ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. By the Mayor

The Mayor announced that members of the Dacorum Youth Council would be attending the next Council meeting on 20th November 2013 to participate in the meeting.

2. By the Group Leaders and members:

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Ayling, B Chapman, Doole, McKay, MacDonald, Mahmood, Tiley, Townsend and Wixted.

3. Members of the Cabinet:

Councillor Williams, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Community Leadership

The Leader of the Council informed members that there had been some ongoing issues with the supply of materials for the Old Town Regeneration, in particular the "one-way system". He told Members that the expected date of completion would now be the end of the year. As a consequence of the ongoing delays in the high street he apologised to Members that the high street would not be ready in time for the annual Halloween event in October and this would therefore be cancelled. The Leader of the Council said that he was hopeful that all would be resumed in time for the Christmas event and that the Council were working in partnership with "Jacksons" contractors and Hertfordshire County Council to ensure that all works are completed as soon as possible.

There were no questions for the Leader of the Council.

Councillor Tiley, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources – In the absence of Councillor Tiley, the Chairman of the Audit Committee, Councillor Taylor made the following announcement.

Councillor Taylor informed Members that a meeting took place with the external Auditor's on the 18th September. It was at this meeting that the Auditor's completed their findings of the financial statements to secure value for money in the Council's resources. Councillor Taylor made reference to the Government Accounts and

informed Members that the Audit certificate had been issued and discharged until 31st March 2014. He said that he was pleased with the figures that had now been produced.

Councillor Taylor thanked Sally Marshall for all her hard work and input over the past few years with the Audit Committee and the Council.

Questions and Answers

Councillor N Hollinghurst asked the Leader of the Council if he was in a position to update Members on progress of the multi-storey car park development in Berkhamsted.

Councillor Williams said that this had now been commissioned and there were still some issues to be resolved which would be presented to Cabinet in November.

Councillor Harden, Portfolio Holder for Residents and Regulatory Services

Legal Governance: Licencing.

Dacorum Borough Council is inviting residents and taxi drivers in the borough to have a say on proposals to change the maximum amount that licensed taxis can charge for journeys within Dacorum.

The Council is responsible for licensing the vehicles and drivers who run taxis that can be flagged down on the streets or queue up at taxi ranks. The Council is also responsible for setting the maximum fares that can be charged. The fares were last set in August 2011 and the Hackney Carriage Drivers Association has asked the Council to review the existing table of fares to reflect the rising costs of fuel, insurance, licence fees and vehicle maintenance.

To comment on the consultation visit the council's website, click on consultation.

Dacorum Borough Council, responsible for licensing Adult Entertainment establishments and is consulting residents and businesses on changes to its Sex Establishment Licensing Policy.

Reviewed every three years, the Council has proposed some changes to the Sex Establishment Licensing Policy including a revised application form. The consultation on the changes & the draft policy is open until Friday 1 November 2013.

Amongst other things the policy sets out the considerations that the Council should take into account when making a decision on an individual application for a Sex Establishment Licence, including consideration of the location, appearance, management and objections to the grant of a licence.

The draft proposals are published on the Council's website under consultation.

Comments from this consultation will be considered before Licensing and Health and Safety Committee approve the policy and when agreed will be in place until February 2017.

In licensing adult entertainment establishments, the Council makes no moral judgement on the activities being provided there and recognises that Parliament has made it lawful to operate an establishment of this kind. The role of Dacorum Borough Council as a licensing authority is to administer and ensure compliance with the licensing regime in accordance with the law.

Resident Services: CCTV.

If you look in this week's Gazette you will see that our CCTV operator Izrar Ali has won the Pride in Dacorum award for Unsung Hero. Izrar has already been recognized by the courts for his role in preventing a serious crime and it is great to see him recognized for his skills by our community.

Old Town Hall.

Completion of the first phase of the project will enable the café bar to be open during the day 10.30am-5.30pm, Monday to Saturday, as well as before and after shows. The £33k refurbishment work in the café has included new kitchen and bar, better accessibility and creating more room, space and light by uncovering more of the room's large windows. The second phase of the £700k refurbishment project, expected to be completed in early 2014, will transform the cellar space by creating a new public entrance, drink serving area and improving disability access.

These improvements will allow the Council to provide an even larger arts and cultural programme for residents and visitors to enjoy. Over six thousand people crossed The Old Town Hall's threshold last year and the new facilities promise to bring even more visitors during the day.

Community Safety

Please note that the next Dacorum Community Safety Partnership meeting, due to take place on 2 October 2013 has been postponed to Wednesday 23 October 2013. If you would like to attend this important meeting about issues of crime reduction & safety in your area, please contact member services.

Adventure Playgrounds

Dacorum Borough Council and The Snow Centre arranged for a clash of seasons in August with a flurry of snow at each of the four Adventure Playgrounds in Hemel Hempstead.

Fresh snow was delivered for the children to play in, cool off and have some winter fun in the sun.

The Snow Centre explains the reason for this arrangement; each evening we groom our 160m main slope and large lesson slope, removing the top layer of snow ready for a fresh layer to be skied, snowboarded or sledged on the next day. The removed snow is then melted in our melt pit. Over the summer we made extra snow to deliver to the Adventure Playgrounds for the children to have fun with.

Questions and Answers

Councillor Mrs Wyatt–Lowe expressed the public’s concern with regards to the number of sex establishments within the borough and asked if there had been a significant increase.

Councillor Harden reassured Members that there had been no increase within the borough.

Councillor Flint asked the Portfolio Holder his view on the closure of the ice rink in Hemel Hempstead.

Councillor Harden deferred the question to the Leader of the Council.

Councillor Williams confirmed to Members that the redevelopment of Jarman Park was still on-going and were in the process of developing the 8 restaurants which have all served their required notices. He informed Members that the Council were aware that there would be no ice rink and he regretted its closure, but it was not profitable or viable to keep open.

Councillor Tindall referred to the police front desk closure and asked why this decision had been supported by the police commissioner.

Councillor Harden explained that Members concerns were raised with the PCC & constabulary following the issue being raised at the last full council. The PCC confirmed that the decision made was the correct one.

Councillor Harris asked the Portfolio Holder if he would consider looking at the support given for Christmas lights in neighbourhood shopping centres.

Councillor Harden pointed out that it was agreed that the Council would fund the infrastructure, electric circuits and equipment; which it did last year and that Neighbourhood Action groups & local businesses would fund the lights.

Councillor N Hollinghurst added that the infrastructure in Tring for lights was past its sell by date and therefore the council needed to review this.

Councillor Harden replied that Tring Town Council had been given a grant to fund the lighting.

Councillor Mrs Laws, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services and Sustainability

Community Champion Award winners

Our fifth annual Community Champion Awards were awarded to The Noise Project in Markyate and John Priestly from Hemel Hempstead.

The Noise Project has a team of 100 volunteers from toddlers to pensioners who spend three days in August carrying out goodwill errands in Markyate village. The teams - mostly consisting of teenagers and young adults - remove graffiti, clean subways making it safe for users carry out various gardening jobs for the elderly and infirm, litter pick, paint murals for schools and much more.

John Priestley, winner from the individual category, has been instilling civic pride on his street by keeping his front garden in pristine condition since 2007. But he goes the

extra mile by keeping all his neighbours' front gardens neat and tidy as well through watering, weeding, cutting hedges and pruning fruit trees.

Three Dacorum parks have retained their Green flags and they are for Canal Fields, Tring Memorial Garden and Chipperfield Common.

Questions and Answers

Councillor Guest informed Members that she had received complaints about litter in her ward. She asked what the Council were doing to educate the community.

Councillor Laws mentioned that they work closely with Herts Waste Project in connection to this. She said that she would ask officers from Cupid Green to speak to Communications to help in highlighting the importance of keeping the community clean.

Councillor Mrs Rance asked if the Council would consider waiving the parking fees in the borough on Remembrance Sunday.

Councillor Laws said that the decision was made last year to not waive the charge and would not be reviewed.

Councillor Harris referred to his question raised at the last Council meeting relating to the lack of access to Council services over the weekend to deal with dead animals, as this was a big problem which needed to be addressed.

Councillor Laws would consider this and respond via email.

Councillor Mrs Bassadone asked if there would be restrictions in place for Good Friday and if the parking fees would be waived.

Councillor Laws said that they will not be waiving any parking fees for any events in the borough as it would be unfair to offer for one event and not for the rest. She confirmed that all events would be charged as normal.

Councillor Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing

Councillor Mrs Griffiths made the following statement.

“Given that we have a very full meeting tonight I will keep my report very short. I am delighted to report that we are making very good progress with our programme of building new council homes, with contracts awarded for Farm place and the hostel at the Elms, work will start on site this month and are well progressed on both Galley Hill and London Road Apsley.

Cabinet have also approved new homes at Queen Street Tring, and to progress further Schemes in Hemel Hempstead and Apsley. Officers were busy identifying further sites to help complete the second phase of the programme.

Cabinet in October will be considering the overall Housing Strategy which will help our guide our work to meet housing need over the new five years.

We have once again achieved 100% compliance on gas safety check in August”.

Questions and Answers

Councillor Mrs Wyatt-Lowe was pleased to hear about the new council homes being developed. However she did not feel that this had been advertised very well. The Portfolio Holder was asked how and where this good news had been advertised.

Councillor Mrs Griffiths replied that up until now the council could only report that new homes were coming. However now that action can be shown a massive campaign would be underway to advertise the new homes.

Councillor N Hollinghurst supported the new housing developments. He did however raise concern with how the mobility scooter policy could be introduced sensitively. He asked if the Portfolio Holder would take steps to ensure greater sensitivity and sensible assessments of risk were carried out.

Councillor Mrs Griffiths explained that the officers did treat this sensitively. She felt that Councillor N Hollinghurst was also referring to the clear landing policy, which had come into force from the fire brigade. The Portfolio Holder was happy to assist with enforcing the policy. She would discuss further the risks with regards to the motorised vehicle policy.

22. QUESTIONS

None

23. BUSINESS FROM THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING

None

24. CABINET REFERRALS

The referrals from Cabinet on 23 July and 17 September 2013 were submitted. It was moved by Councillor Williams, duly seconded and

Resolved:

That the following be approved:

1. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY – 2013/14 TO 2017/18 (CA/101/13)

The revised Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period 2013/14 to 2017/18.

2. CUSTOMER SERVICE UNIT DRAWDOWN FROM RESERVES (CA/102/13)

1. The release of £613,858 from the appropriate reserve to cover the set up and part year costs of the transfer of the Customer Service Unit to Northgate.

2. To amend the capital programme to include capital costs of £363,154 for systems implementation and related development costs agreed to be incurred on the Effective Date of the contract.

3. APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME 2013 (CA/116/13)

The release of £126,728 from the Management of Change reserve in order to deliver the scheme.

4. DACORUM LOCAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK: ADOPTION OF CORE STRATEGY (CA/121/13)

- 1. Adoption of the Pre-Submission Core Strategy, incorporating main and minor modifications, in accordance with Regulation 26 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012;**
- 2. That the Assistant Director (Planning, Development and Regeneration be authorised to:**
 - (a) Make any necessary minor and non-consequential changes to the Core Strategy and associated Proposals Map prior to publication;**
 - (b) Publish the Adoption Statement for the Core Strategy in accordance with the planning regulations;**
 - (c) Agree the final version of the Sustainability Appraisal Adoption Statement, in accordance with environmental protection legislation.**
- 3. The response to comments received on the minor modifications consultation, as set out in Annex 4 of the report.**
- 4. Adoption of the updated Affordable Housing Guidance (Annex 6 of the report) as a supplementary planning document (SPD).**
- 5. Adoption of the Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Masterplan (Annex 7 of the report) as a supplementary planning document (SPD).**
- 6. That the updated Chilterns Buildings Design Guide (Annex 8 of the report) be adopted as supplementary planning guidance (SPG).**
- 7. That the existing supplementary planning documents, supplementary planning guidance and advice notes, appendices and proposals schedules in the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011 (listed in Annex 2 of the report) be retained for use in planning decisions until specifically reviewed and/or superseded.**
- 8. That the provisional timetable in Annex 3 of the report be agreed, as the basis for future work programming, until formalised through a review of the Local Development Scheme.**

Key points of discussion

Councillor Williams explained that it had taken seven years to reach this stage of the process and had previously been approved by Council, in draft. He recognised the concerns raised, however noted that Dacorum needed to have an appropriate plan in place.

Councillor Flint raised concerns around the impact on the infrastructure especially surrounding the two access points to and from the site. There would be an increase in traffic near adventure playgrounds, small roads would need to cope with increased traffic and in areas with existing speeding problems.

Councillor Flint was pleased the council were having discussions with St Albans District council and hoped other partners would join those discussions. Councillor Flint

supported the West Hemel Action Group and the local community and therefore was unable to support the Core Strategy.

Councillor Guest made the following statement:

"Madam Mayor, anyone who's been around in local government as long as I have remembers a thing or two.

I remember how between 1996 and 1999, Liberal/Labour Herts County Council and Labour-controlled Dacorum Borough Council threatened the Green Belt at Fields End, the area now known as LA3. I opposed it then and I oppose it now.

In 1999, when I stood for this Council in Warners End, I told the people "I am totally opposed to Green Belt development at Fields End and if elected will do everything to stop it". I meant it then and I mean it now.

I remember how the Green Belt at Fields End was threatened by the previous Labour Government's Regional Spatial Strategy and East of England Plan. I opposed it then and I oppose it now.

Only last year when the Core Strategy was going through this Council, Labour said that there wasn't enough housing in it. Yes, they wanted even more housing which would mean destroying even more Green Belt.

This very week Ed Miliband raised the spectre of a future Labour Government embarking on a two-year frenzy of house building, with 200,000 extra houses a year. This would mean more green fields concreted over.

Why a change of heart by this Council's one Labour member in the face of local history and her own leader? This sounds like Contrary Mary politics, opposing for opposition's sake.

Why do I consistently oppose building on the Green Belt at Fields End?

It would mean the irretrievable loss of irreplaceable wildlife habitat. Constituents have reported seeing birds, bats badgers and hearing the song of the lark. Building homes here would destroy their homes. It would mean the loss of a green lung taking carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and releasing oxygen back into the air. The sweeping vista from Chaulden Vale to Fields End would be gone forever. It would be paradise lost with no possibility of a Paradise found again.

During the days of the East of England plan it was finally realised that such a development would put pressure on the water supply.

The catastrophic impact on the local environment is why I have opposed building on the Green Belt at Fields End since 1996 and why I will be voting to save it by voting against the Core Strategy tonight".

Councillor Marshall noted the different aspects of the Core Strategy but felt the impact of the housing element was of great concern. She explained that the inspector had noted Dacorum's plans to produce lower levels of housing than those suggested by the Office of National Statistics (ONS). Councillor Marshall noted that she was a ward councillor for Boxmoor and therefore neighboured the wards most affected. She assured the community that she and the other councillors would monitor traffic issues and highlight any improvements required. She said it was tempting to oppose the strategy, however this would mean that the council would not have one in place. She respected those who were opposing it, however she would be voting in favour of the strategy.

Councillor Whitman raised concern with the increased traffic levels that will affect Chaulden. He is the ward Councillor for this area and sympathises with the community. He felt that the community were not being listened too, even though they had submitted a petition with 1700 signatures.

Councillor Reay made the following statement:

“This plan has had a long gestation – nearly a decade. There has been significant consultation and revisions and much of the Green Belt land originally suggested for release has not been released. Under the previous government we had top down targets set for us regionally by the East of England Assembly. Now under the Coalition government we can determine our own housing need and the level of provision subject, nevertheless, to a finding of soundness by a Government Inspector.

This gives us the responsibility: but we still need to provide for our housing need so far as possible while not losing sight of the benefits of the environment in which we live. We have had on the one hand a significant and growing need for affordable housing – the birth rate is increasing – many schools are expanding and new ones being built and this will feed through in due course into more housing need. But at the same time we are surrounded for good reasons by protected land in the form of Green Belt and the Chilterns; Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The task that we have is to balance these competing pressures. It is a difficult balance. The Core Strategy does not meet all of the identified need. The Inspector recognised this.

It still leaves a projected shortfall of c. 2000 houses across the borough over the planning period.

We have been threatened by legal action from developers on the one hand and from the action groups on the other – concerned to protect their immediate environment. This shows, I think, that we have got the right balance of the provision of supply vs. the need to protect the environment about right.

The Inspector agreed that this balance is right and consequently found the strategy sound – despite the shortfall in provision with demand but only with the added requirement that there should be a further review of the Green Belt in a few years’ time.

As a councillor representing a Berkhamsted Ward I attended several sessions of the Hearing. Many residents opposed Green Belt releases at the hearing and, in Berkhamsted, these were strongly represented by the Berkhamsted Residents Action Group. I felt that the Inspector was listening hard to the points raised by all sides and this was reflected in the thoughtful decision that he made – to support the soundness of the plan but to allow for an early review. As a representative of a Berkhamsted Ward I have been told that the Berkhamsted Action group supports the Core Strategy and accepts that the balance it represents is about right.

That we have the support of a Government Inspector is something we should be grateful for since many boroughs in the neighbouring areas are not in such a fortunate position. They put themselves at risk of rogue planning applications. We should not underestimate the risk of a planning application being submitted in the absence of an adopted core strategy. We would lose all control and be at the mercy of an Appeal Inspector. The absence of a sound Core Strategy would not be a return to the status quo but instead a recipe for chaos and urban sprawl.

For all these reasons I commend the adoption of this Core Strategy”.

Councillor Elliot made the following statement:

“Madam Mayor, as one of the Conservative Councillors for Chaulden and Warners End I constantly hear from residents how this is a pleasant place to live and a fantastic place to bring up their children.

I am reminded of how we are only a short walk away from some lovely green countryside.

As a conservative I am opposed to building on green field sites and to my horror we intend to build 900 homes to the West of the town on such land.

This is an area which provides a haven for wildlife, allows residents to escape from the pressures of everyday life and provides an area of tranquillity for all.

I recognise the need to provide good, affordable housing that allows people to work, play and bring up their children within the town and Borough. That was the original vision of the new town planners after the dark days of the last war. However once we have built on this green belt land it is gone forever, never to return for the future generations, and if built we will have;

Increased traffic

Increased pollution

Increased demand for utilities

Increased need for schools

Increased need for Medical facilities

Increased construction traffic over 10 years as it is built

Increased destruction of our green and pleasant land

The residents of Chaulden and Warners End don't want this, my fellow ward Councillors don't want this and I don't want this.

I must vote against the adoption of this core strategy”.

Councillor Adshead was fully sympathetic for the local residents. He explained that he was a ward councillor for Hemel Hempstead Town and would therefore be affected by LA02. He felt that if the council did not adopt the strategy they would be open to all sorts of chaos. This was therefore the better option of the two, which would enable the council to have control, regulated planning and development by adopting the strategy.

Councillor Anderson noted that with a heavy heart, he would be supporting the strategy. He would of course be happier to remove LA03 and not develop on green belt land. He recognised the concerns raised by members of the public and explained that the Strategic Planning & Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered the strategy in great detail. He stressed that the M1 as an alternative site was not an option as this was not in Dacorum and therefore the responsibility of St Albans District Council. With regards to the concerns around the infrastructure, he noted that Dacorum had worked with the Hertfordshire Highways Authority and had to go with the advice they had been given.

Councillor Mrs Wyatt-Lowe was extremely pleased to see the increase in affordable homes being built. She sympathised with the residents present, as she had seen 900 homes developed in her ward, Woodhall Farm and agreed it would bring disruption but would also bring much needed housing. She therefore supported the Core Strategy.

Councillor Mrs Bassadone noted that the population was significantly growing. She felt that the housing requirements should be able to be met in existing communities and neighbourhoods. She too did not want to develop on green belt land, but the population was increasing and this was an option to be considered. She therefore supported the Core Strategy.

Councillor Mrs Griffiths noted that she was the ward councillor for Leverstock Green, the Portfolio Holder for Housing but a resident in Warners End. She was therefore fully aware of the impact on residents but felt that the council must consider the bigger picture and the impact on the borough. An element of affordable housing would be included in the development. She explained that the council could not play around with the Core Strategy and that if they did not have one there would be associated risks for future developments and the process. Councillor Mrs Griffiths supported the Core Strategy as it was the only mechanism which would give the council some control.

Councillor Williams stressed that the Core Strategy was an important document, not just for housing but for leisure, health, education etc. If there was no plan, there would be no development and no infrastructure. He noted that the population in Dacorum was growing and had done so by 7000, between 2001-2011. Car ownership averaged at 1.4 cars per household. A plan was needed in order to support the community needs, it was not the role of Dacorum Borough Council to provide schools, doctors surgeries etc.

Councillor Williams continued to highlight that in 2007 the education system reduced school places in the area by 100. Currently there was a need to provide an extra 420 school places within Dacorum. This clearly demonstrates the increased population.

The Core Strategy needed to provide a plan until 2031. He explained that of the 11,000 dwellings to be provided, 9700 homes would be developed on brown field sites, some land would be transferred from employment use to housing and sites for 500 homes still needed to be identified, and there would be a mix of social housing provision.

He understood that the council had to make difficult decisions for the benefit of the future. If the strategy was not adopted there would be no future control over development of green belt land. He felt that it was a robust plan which gave controlled responsibility to the council with no damage to the borough.

The Mayor put the recommendations to the meeting and declared them to be carried:

36 Voting for, 4 Against and 1 Abstention.

The meeting adjourned at 9.10pm and reconvened at 9.15

5. TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2012/13 (CA/122/13)

To accept the report on Treasury Management performance in 2012/13 and the Prudential Indicators 2012/13 actuals.

6. COUNCIL NEW BUILD PROGRAMME (CA/124/13)

- 1. The indicative development plans for the site at Queen Street, Tring, be approved and the appropriation of the site to the HRA from the General Fund for £290,000; under s122 Local Government Act 1972.**

2. That the indicative development plans for the site at Able House, Hemel Hempstead, be approved the acquisition of the site by the HRA for a maximum of the amount shown in Appendix 3 of the report.
3. That the indicative development plans for the shared ownership dwelling at the White House, Wigginton, be approved and acquisition of the site by the HRA for a maximum of the amount shown in Appendix 3 of the report.
4. That the indicative development plans for the land at the Papermill, Apsley, be approved and acquisition of the site by the HRA for a maximum of the amount shown in Appendix 3 of the report.
5. The establishment of a consultancy budget of £50,000 to fund work on a planning application for development of the land at the Papermill, Apsley.

25. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE DATES

The report was moved by Councillor Williams, duly seconded and

Resolved:

Audit Committee

That an extra meeting of the Audit Committee will be held on 7 October 2013.

26. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The report was moved by Councillor Williams, duly seconded and

Resolved:

Licensing Health & Safety Enforcement Committee

That Councillor Mrs Bassadone and Councillor R Sutton be appointed as substitute members on the Licensing Health & Safety Enforcement Committee.

27. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

To consider passing a resolution on the following terms:

That, under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded during the item in Part 2 of the Agenda for this meeting, because it is likely, in the view of the nature of the business to be transacted, that if members of the public were present during this item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information relation to the financial and business affairs of the Council and third party company/organisation. (Cabinet Minute CA/128/13) & (CA/129/13).

28. GADE ZONE REGENERATION AND PUBLIC SERVICE QUARTER PROCUREMENT UPDATE (CA/128/13)

See Part 2 Minutes.

29. APPOINTMENT TO ASSIST THE COUNCIL IN THE PROCUREMENT OF A DEVELOPMENT PARTNER TO DELIVER NEW HOMES ON SELECTED GARAGE SITES (CA/129/13)

The Leader of the Council noted that this referral had been included in error, as the decision had already been made by the Cabinet.

The Leader of the council thanked the Chief Executive Daniel Zammit and noted that this was his last Council meeting prior to his retirement. Councillor Williams said that it had been a delight to work with him and had been a great experience. Everyone at the council held him in high regard. He added that the bar had been set at a very high standard and he had achieved many great things.

The Leader explained that the Chief Executive had given the authority a clear directive and led the way with such passion. On behalf of the Council D Zammit was wished well in his retirement.

Councillor Rance echoed the Leaders comments and added her thanks to the Chief Executive on behalf of the opposition. She felt that he had given them much support and always treated everyone fairly. She thanked him for all the advice he had given over the years.

The Mayor thanked D Zammit and said he had been a wonderful Chief Executive and she wished him well for the future.

D Zammit thanked the council for their kind wishes and added that it had been a delight and an honour to serve the council and Dacorum. He and his family were new to the area when he first joined DBC, however now shared the love and passion of the community. He said it had been a delight working with the councillors and the community.

The meeting ended at 9.25pm