

Uttlesford Local Plan
– Water Cycle Meeting Notes
Tuesday 20 October 2020
10.30 – 12.00
Teams Meeting Conference

Attendees:

- Simon Payne, Local Plan Project Manager, Uttlesford DC
- Sarah Nicholas, New Communities Senior Planning Officer, Uttlesford DC
- Paul Sallin, Principal Urban Designer, Uttlesford DC
- Gemma Allsop, Sustainable Places - Planning Advisor, Environment Agency
- Laurence Chalk, Catchment Officer - Environmental Enhancement, Affinity Water
- Kim Harding, Asset Protection Specialist, Affinity Water
- Nuria Hernandez Cubero, Asset Engineer, Affinity Water
- Alessandro Marsili, Asset Manager, Affinity Water
- Stewart Patience, Spatial Planning Manager, Anglian Water
- Nicky McHugh, Development Planner, Thames Water
- Chris Colloff, Consultant Planner, Savills (working for Thames Water)
- Lee Sencier, Development and Flood Risk Manager, Lead Local Flood Authority, Essex CC
- Jayne Rogers, Environment Officer, Essex CC

Apologies:

- Mumin Islam, Water Resources Planning Manager, Affinity Water
- Allan Simpson, Strategic Growth & Infrastructure Manager, Anglian Water
- Stephen Miles, Growth and Planning Policy Manager, Uttlesford DC
- Gemma Allsop, Sustainable Places - Planning Advisor, Environment Agency

1. Local Plan and Water Cycle Update

- 1.1 Paul Sallin (PS) welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 1.2 Simon Payne (SPay) provided an update on the new local plan process. The Council has resolved to prepare a local plan afresh for the period up to 2040 and the proposed timetable is to submit the new local plan by summer 2023. Sarah Nicholas (SN) outlined the approach to the Issues and Options stage which is due to start shortly with nine themes being discussed through an independent Community Stakeholder Forum with everyone encouraged to add their views through an online site.
- 1.3 The Council is also setting up a Strategic Infrastructure Delivery Group, involving adjacent local authorities and there is an opportunity for Water issues to be considered through that group too.
- 1.4 Lee Sencier (LS) advised that Essex County Council had published an updated Sustainable Drainage Systems Design Guide earlier in the year.

2. Local Plan Process

- 2.1 SN asked if the outline water cycle study of 2017 will need to be updated. Stewart Patience (SPat) observed that the study, which covers Thames, Anglian and Affinity

Water Areas, was predicated on a set of housing numbers assuming three new Garden Communities - a new spatial strategy would be different. It therefore follows that the outline study would need to be redone although it may not be too difficult to do once the new spatial strategy is sufficiently outlined.

- 2.2 SPat highlighted the fundamental issue of where the development would go. SPay outlined the proposed 'Call for Sites'. PS referred to officer work on 'Areas of Search' and looking at railway station locations, larger settlements and major employment sites.
- 2.3 Raised the question about evidence to support the future spatial strategy. SPat stated that the Water Companies could offer a view on options but would need information of scale and timing so advice could be given on impact on catchment areas. Nicky McHugh (NMCH) confirmed this and stated that the quality/depth of the answer depended on the quality/depth of the question.
- 2.4 There are very few locations with available headroom for water treatment. SPat felt it would not be a surprise that wherever development was directed the growth would exceed available waste water treatment capacity. But it should be born in mind that the water companies have a statutory duty to make capacity for new development and ultimately this is funded through the customer.
- 2.5 Chris Colloff (CC) commented on the uncertainties of future provision including the status of expansion of Stansted Airport which is currently subject to a planning appeal process. Lee Sencier (LS) would like to know which sites first and then assess them for flood risk. Also review the Flood Risk Strategic Assessment.
- 2.6 PS invited everyone to suggest anyone else who should be involved in the discussion. SPay asked about expertise around the Chalk Stream issue. Alessandro Marsilli (AM) has been involved in the Low Flow examination of the River Cam in the Water Resources Team at Affinity Water. He also said it is important to involve colleagues from the Brampton Office of the Environment Agency and AM agreed to provide names in an email.
- 2.7 It was agreed that we need to think beyond the medium term, for example up to 2040.

3. Identification of Issues

- 3.1 SPat referred to three policies in the withdrawn plan that relate to water efficiency (Policies EN11-13). These should be in the new local plan. National policy is changing and may be more restrictive on water usage. Kim Harding (KH) state that water efficiency of 110 litres per person per day as the lowest target, preferably 100 litres and to take account of retro fitting in existing houses as well as the design of new housing. A recent report by Ricardo Consultants is helpful on this issue and deals with the costs and benefits of rainwater harvesting and grey water. KH will share a link to this report.
- 3.2 LS pointed out that the Essex Sustainable Urban Drainage Design Guide includes options for rainwater recycling and prioritising this in the discharge hierarchy over infiltration, watercourses and sewers. AM stated that licence conditions about water extraction is linked to the flow in the River Cam – but when there are drought conditions this creates problems. Discussions between Affinity and the Environment Agency have been taking place on this issue. Looking to bring in water to the catchment from somewhere elsewhere by pipe. Also need to look at the way the River

Cam links to the aquifer to see what may assist. PS felt UDC need to know more about this.

- 3.3 CC raised the question about how water efficiency is enforced through Building Regulations or Development Management and felt this should be happening now. AM felt that centralised water treatment created problems. Better to take water out of the aquifer and then put it back locally rather than transport it to another catchment area and then creating a gap. KH pointed out this is consistent with zero carbon to keep things local.

4. Opportunities

- 4.1 SPay raised the question about designing in more water in development design. SPat stated that this needs to be picked up in multi functional SUDS linked to water efficiency outside homes (as well as inside the homes). Historical mixed sewerage systems create problems during flood events which can be overcome by good design. AM commented that the chalk aquifer is not suitable to maintain storage – very limited capacity and rapid flow (a weir or barrier does not really help). Bringing water from a different area can affect the chemistry of a chalk stream which affects wildlife. Water companies are discussing transfers between water catchments.

5. Best Practice

- 5.1 PS asked participants to share best practice as a follow up to the meeting. LS outlined broader amenity benefits from permanent water features and SUDS integrated into the landscape. PS suggested green corridors could be designed as part of the SUDS network. Jayne Rogers (JR) talked about the importance of SUDS being part of the green infrastructure network and not in a separate 'silo' of thinking.
- 5.2 PS asked if there were any special locations UDC should avoid. NMCH commented that greenfield is harder to support than an urban extension given the lead in time. AM answered a question about climate change modelling. All companies are taking the implications seriously both in relation to droughts and heavy rain events.
- 5.3 LS stated that the Essex Design Guide does take account of Climate Change based on the upper level of predictions. PS asked what the impact of Climate Change was expected to be. AM replied that the assumptions are for more intense events – this is negative - storm events pushes water out of the catchment rather than steady rain that tops up the aquifer.

6. Any Other Business

- 6.1 PS thanked everyone and confirmed that notes will be shared. SPay agreed that this is a useful forum and asked everyone to suggest any additional participants. Future meetings would be timed in line with the local plan programme.