

Committee	FULL COUNCIL
Date	9 November 2020
Agenda Item	12

To debate HTC's concerns with the overall impact of excessive housing growth upon the town's infrastructure

Cllr Gronland and Cllr Atkinson have become increasingly concerned over the large number of applications for planning in Halstead which are put forward. Although strongly objected to by the Council, they are often then allowed to go forward by the District Council. It was agreed they should jointly present a motion to the next council meeting to establish an action programme for the council.

Every time a new development is approved, there is an extra burden on schools, the surgery, parking, the road system. Even though some developments are strictly outside the boundary of Halstead, they are close enough for the new inhabitants to treat Halstead as the focus of their activities for shopping health and schooling. The over development is also having a serious impact on the landscape, which is largely what makes Halstead an attractive place to live.


It was agreed a way forward was to gain more information from BDC relating to planning intentions and how government was influencing building developments. As a result, Halstead Cllrs Gronland, Atkinson and the Clerk had a meeting with Jan Stobart (Community Engagement Officer, Rural Community Council of Essex) to request clarification about the local plan and the housing inspector's brief. The meeting soon became a discussion about revisiting the prospect of a Neighbourhood plan. At present there is an increase to £27,000 of grants available to each council, and many free technical support packages that are available now which were not available in the past, meaning that a decision to go forward with a Neighbourhood Plan it would have less impact on the budget than previously discussed.

Cllr Atkinson is willing to take the lead and work to get community involvement, and already has the backing of H21stG. To protect the rural position of Halstead, Jan Stobart recommended talking to a nearby parish council who might think it beneficial producing a joint neighbourhood plan, as this will have the added advantage of helping protect the sensitive setting of Halstead.

Although producing a neighbourhood plan would not stop development, it would establish a range of dialogues, which may not otherwise take place, and may potentially influence the activities of other local organisations. The plan could include things like improvement of streets and public spaces or where community facilities should be located. This would provide the context for negotiations with local authority departments (e.g. highways) and could help to influence their future works or development. It will also mean that we have more influence on the type of development, where it happens and that it should be more 'in keeping' with Halstead and its genus loci. It was noted Halstead already has an initial structure of a Town Plan that could be expanded into a neighbourhood plan.

There is presently a white paper out which will completely change the face of planning. At a detailed level it may mean less local involvement when applications are put in, but it does appear that neighbourhood plans will be important on where development will take place. It cannot influence the BDC's current Local plan but will be in place to influence the next Local plan which looks like it will become more important in the proposed new planning system. It will have the same legal status as the Local plan.

Recommendation: That Cllr Atkinson (and any other councillors) carries out more research to establish the costs, resources and the viability of producing a Neighbourhood plan.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sarah Greator". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Sarah" and the last name "Greator" clearly distinguishable.

Sarah Greator Town Clerk