



Upwood and the Raveleys Parish Council

Leadership in Planning for the Future

The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development (meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs¹).

Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching and interdependent objectives: economic, social and environmental.

a) Economic – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

b) Social – to support a strong, vibrant and healthy community, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) Environmental – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land by reversing the effects of fragmentation and degradation, and supporting planning proposals that seek to improve connectivity to our local wildlife sites by creating wildlife corridors or stepping stones, helping to improve and protect biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

Upwood and the Raveleys Parish Council, as a small, rural parish, aspires to playing a small role in supporting the National Planning Policy Framework and Huntingdonshire District Council's Local Plan to 2036 to meet these objectives whilst also regarding the "Bigger, better, more joined up" principles of The Lawton Review (2010) and the Natural Environment White Paper (2011) aimed at providing better connectivity between wildlife sites (Upwood Meadows, Lady's Wood, Raveley Wood, Wennington Wood, The Great Fen) and all other areas of woodland and open space. This can be achieved through simple measures such as planting more hedgerows, and even duly considered landscaping schemes developed through the planning process. Upwood and the Raveleys is situated in the heart of a landscape with great potential to improve upon the environment, especially with The Great Fen on the doorstep.

Upwood and the Raveleys Parish Council works closely with Huntingdonshire District Council's planning department to ensure that community views on planning applications and local plans are represented. Planning applications are published on the parish council's monthly agendas and members of the public regularly attend meetings or forward correspondence in response to applications which may impact the local community. Two councillors hold portfolio responsibilities for planning. One takes the lead on reviewing plans and proposed sites and presenting maps and diagrams using a digital projector at council meetings. The second has specific responsibility for ensuring that councillors are well informed on environmental and ecological issues and the landscape effect of proposed developments.

There are currently plans for 160 houses to be built on the old airfield site in the neighbouring parish of Bury. The longer-term plan for the development of a further 650 homes on the airfield which falls within Upwood and the Raveleys Parish

¹ 4 Resolution 42/187 of the United Nations General Assembly.

boundary has been rejected both by the parish and the district council and was also turned down when the decision was taken to appeal. Plans are still under discussion and if other local development plans are halted there is real likelihood of development of the airfield taking place. If planned appropriately, the expansion of housing stock can do much to sustain the infrastructure of local life, providing homes for local families and contributing to a broader range of amenities and services. However, significant and rapid housing growth without the necessary supporting infrastructure could weaken community cohesion and damage the local environment.

The results of the Community Led Plan showed that parishioners favoured a range of housing types, but that development locations should be small and kept within the existing built-up footprints of the villages. There were many varied comments regarding the airfield at Upwood. Some expressed the wish to leave it undeveloped, whilst others felt that if development were inevitable, the appropriate planning of infrastructure needed to be in place first.

Upwood and the Raveleys Parish Council regularly reviews its position regarding the feasibility of producing a neighbourhood plan. It maintains a line item in its three-year budget for ongoing consideration, but it is unlikely to pursue this within the next three years. The parish council would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with neighbouring parishes to produce a combined neighbourhood plan as it feels that this would be more appropriate for a small parish which, in planning and infrastructure terms, is mutually dependent on its neighbours.