

Recent Development and Development Pressures

Some aspects of the developments that have recently taken place in Dunmow have been given in the overview above. The town has grown rapidly in the last 40 years from 2400 in 1961 to over 7000 now and approaching 9000 when the Woodlands Park estate is complete. This can be compared to the rate of growth in the 19th century described above.

This scale of growth has several implications – the nature of development, the volume of traffic and the provision of community facilities and services. It is ironic that the range of services and activities that existed in the late 19th century town far outweighs those that exist today. Without arguing for some nostalgic and essentially false past era there does seem a need to seek a better balance between housing - and population of course – and the activities that go to make up a so-called sustainable community.

The recent growth has been delivered in a number of housing estates of differing size, culminating in the, by any standards, massive estate of Woodlands Park. Whilst they doubtless provide sound family housing the environments that have been created are wholly residential and essentially those of individual dwellings in small lots set back from standard estate roads with minimal open space. The density of the estates has probably been more or less constant at around 24 houses per hectare but it seems clear these have been increased significantly in Woodlands Park. Without exception these estates reflect the style adopted from time to time by volume house

builders. There is no evidence of a conscious attempt either to reflect the vernacular 'Essex' style or to create a new aesthetic. The guidelines provided by Essex County Council in its now famous Essex Design Guide appear to have had little effect on the appearance or character.

Elsewhere and more recently a more distinctive and essentially vernacular style has been adopted. The high density infill developments within the town centre reflect this new design approach to one degree or another. The style change has been accompanied by a greater massing with three storey building now quite common. The White Street development exemplifies this more recent style although it will be some time before the full impact of this development is felt and appreciated.

If there was scope for innovation and creativity then it might have been expected in Woodlands Park. This development will result in around 1600 dwellings. Almost 600 of them are complete, 450 are under construction and 556 to be completed. Unfortunately the style and layout exemplified there reflects an eclectic approach typical of volume house builders who rely on delivering a standard predictable and conventional product. Failing to echo or reflect the Essex vernacular in any convincing way it also fails completely to take the opportunity to define a new aesthetic. The poor designs are aligned with a rigid and conventional approach to road layout and open space so that the quality of environment is by any standards poor. The estate lacks any community facilities, leaving aside the Tesco store for a population that will approach 3500 or 50% of the Town's population in 2001.



Other developments have taken place in Dunmow recently. The new police station and the Travelodge Hotel have been built in the Hoblongs area. Unfortunately these two buildings exhibit a very poor standard of design and contribute nothing to the immediate environment actually managing to increase the impression of sporadic development around the A120 junction. In the centre of the town the redevelopment of the White Street car park will make very substantial changes with housing, new retail and a library.

There is no doubt that the area was in dire need of development or improvement. It's perhaps unfortunate that this scheme has been in the making for some 10 years and therefore will not adopt the most modern and creative approach to design in a town centre. The success of the scheme will depend to a large degree on the quality of the spaces which it produces and the improvements to the pedestrian environment which as things stand in the White Street car park entrance are highly dangerous, visually appalling and by any standards completely unacceptable.

The Future Growth of the Town

The future expansion of Great Dunmow would appear to be inevitable. The Government's housing targets have been substantially increased in recent years. The original version of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England identified Great Dunmow as a location for 2800 more dwellings

by 2016. This specific target was deleted from the later version of the plan but nevertheless the housing target for the Uttlesford District remains at least 9672 new homes in Uttlesford during the period 2001 to 2024. The most recent version of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy is thus seeking between 9672 new homes in Uttlesford during the period 2001 to 2024. Allowing for sites already in the pipeline, the preferred growth option needs to make provision for 4200 dwellings.

Option 1 would see 2130 dwellings at Great Dunmow on proposed employment land at Chelmsford Road; land at Ongar Road and land to the west between the B1256 and the Flitch Way.

Options 2 and 3 would involve 1000 dwellings Between Chelmsford Road and Ongar Road and in West Dunmow, between B1256 & Flitch Way.

Summary recent developments and scale of growth Option 4, which is the Council's preferred option (September 2007) would see 3000 dwellings in a new settlement near Elsenham and 750 in major towns including Gt Dunmow. The range of possibilities facing the town is thus very wide. Option 1 would see a further population increase of around 4600 people bringing the town perhaps over 14,000 people by 2024. A massive and unimaginable change since 2001.

Our aim is to identify areas and aspects of the town's environment that should be enhanced.

