

Stop Little Dunmow Expansion Campaign

The press release issued by Green Issues on behalf of its client Chater Homes gives us no comfort that the interests of the local communities are of particular importance let alone paramount in the preparation of a proposal for 3,000 new homes to which the developer has given the name Chelmer Mead. We remain sceptical about Mr Chater's stated commitment to listen to the local community.

To date Chater Homes/Green Issues have paid lip service to community consultation. It is stated that a number of exhibitions were held to explain its proposals. These "exhibitions" were arranged on short or no notice and held in the immediate run up to Christmas. At the exhibitions we found Green Issues' representatives to be ill prepared and showing a lack of local knowledge or appreciation of rural communities although perhaps this is not surprising given its office locations in London, Reading, Manchester, Cardiff and Newcastle. Further, two of the exhibitions were held not locally but rather in Elsenham and Henham – it would be interesting to hear from Mr Chater or his consultancy firm what the rationale was for holding exhibitions in these two particular villages. Rather than suggesting it was an attempt to rely on NIMBYism to give its proposals momentum, it may have been simply a lack of local geographical knowledge evident from the description, in the press release, of Chater Homes as an Essex company although when we last looked at a map Ipswich (where the head office of Chater Homes is located) was in Suffolk.

We have no wish to personalise this important matter but since Mr Chater has decided to do so in the press release, we must say that we find it disingenuous for him to say that he fully understands the issues facing Little Dunmow. The fact is Mr Chater no longer lives in Little Dunmow or the local area and to suggest planting a few more trees would retain the special character of the village shows no appreciation of or respect for our local communities.

It is important to emphasise the scale of the Chelmer Mead proposal – it is over four times the size of Oakwood Park.

A secondary school, a relief road, a community centre, shops, business units, health services, maybe a "substantial country park" and "potentially" a golf course not to mention 3,000 homes all provided in 900 acres and yet by planting a few trees Little Dunmow will remain the distinct historic village it has always been. We remain sceptical. Indeed in the press release Green Issues/Chater Homes appear unclear as to the effect of the development. They claim Chelmer Mead will blend with existing communities and then state Little Dunmow will be separated and its special character protected.

We believe the Chelmer Mead new settlement proposal is a speculative, opportunistic and poorly thought out scheme which is inconsistent with and fails to meet the objectives set out in the Core Strategy and the key drivers of policy, overall spatial strategy and regional transport strategy objectives contained in the draft East of England Plan.

Chater Homes is a property development company and it is simply a statement of fact that as a private company its purpose is to enhance shareholder value. Chater Homes has no track record of development on this scale and it would not be the first developer which having obtained planning permission sold its interest or having built the houses failed to deliver on the community aspects

given such prominence at the application stage. We have to look no further than our own Oakwood Park for community services promised and still not delivered.

It is interesting that at the explanatory exhibitions it was difficult to identify where the 3,000 houses were to be located whilst the golf course and country park which featured so prominently on the plans are now, less than a month later, a “potentially” and “could [be]”.

We would finish with a couple of questions for Mr Chater and his consultants:

1. Why did you decide to ignore the open consultation process put in place by Uttlesford District Council and submit such a significant proposal on the deadline date for comments?
2. Mr Johnson (Account Manager, Green Issues), how do you reconcile your statement that *“This is different to a run of the mill development you will find anywhere else. This is based on principles and we want to provide facilities that people want. We are really listening to the locals.”* not only with your actions to date, but also with the stated methods of your consultancy company to achieve planning success, as specified on your website?
 - *Firstly, local research to determine the political views, key movers and shakers and the history of political support for development in the area.*
 - *Finding out exactly what the local MPs have said on development.*
 - *MPs' majorities were carefully studied as were previous local and general election statistics from the area.*
 - *This was used to devise the future political composition of the area (rising up until the 2020s).*
 - *Secondly, a survey was drawn up consisting of relevant questions (importantly this **did not** identify the client).*
 - *Green Issues' specialist communications staff undertook the survey via the telephone speaking to councillors at the County and District level, scoring a hit rate of around 90%.*
 - *Having spoken to 26 councillors and a local MP, a report was drawn up also taking into account the undercover research that had already been taken.*

Oh and yes what was the rationale for holding two of your exhibitions at Elsenham and Henham?

If you are really listening to locals, why do you not hear what they are saying? No thank you Mr Chater.