



**THE RT. HON. SIR ALAN HASELHURST, M.P.**

(Member of Parliament for Saffron Walden)  
Chairman of Ways & Means and Deputy Speaker

House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

22<sup>nd</sup> January, 2008

W. G. Bates, Esq.

*Dear Mr. Bates,*

Many thanks for your letter of 9<sup>th</sup> January.

It is thoughtful of you to suggest that I might contribute a piece to the website. I enclose something which I have prepared. I have tried to exclude anything overtly partisan.

What I have written is exclusively on the housing issue, but I assure you that I am vigorously fighting the post office closure.

*Yours sincerely,*  
*Alan Haselhurst*



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The Government has said that Uttlesford's housing target must be increased by 4200 above the previously set level. My straightforward position is that I am against this, but I recognise that in the short-term Uttlesford District Council, which originally accepted this figure, is under statutory obligation to produce a plan to accommodate it.

I have taken a cross-party delegation of District Councillors to see the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Hazel Blears, to plead Uttlesford's case. Her response is currently awaited. I am not over-hopeful that we will get any concession from her in light of the Government's seeming determination to stick to its goal of three million new homes by 2020.

People who know this District well surely recognise that there is no way of doing the Government's bidding which is likely to command the universal support of local residents. Most of the infrastructure problems to which the extra number of homes gives rise – railway, roads, schools, health services, employment – are common to the entire District.

Broadly speaking there are two ways of trying to deal with this wholly unwelcome problem. The initial choice is between a concentrated and a dispersed solution. This in its turn gives rise to alternatives within each approach.

The thinking behind a single or major settlement is that it protects everywhere else from speculative development and that it reinforces the need for new infrastructure to support it, making the securing of resources for it more probable. Equally, large-scale development is objectionable to whichever community has it visited upon them whether Henham/Elsenham, Stebbing, Takeley, Great Chesterford or Dunmow (to mention some of the ideas which have been floated).

Conversely a spread solution seeking to share the burden evenly or proportionately across the District admits to would-be developers that there are no or few parts of Uttlesford which are sacrosanct. It is also likely to mean higher costs in respect of road improvements and school provision.

A completely even distribution of the additional homes would mean approximately 80 per parish, a figure unlikely to find favour in the smallest villages. If a de minimis approach is adopted, the share increases for the remainder to a point at which objection is likely to be raised. The alternative approach is to work from the top down and share the total between, say, the seven or ten or twelve largest settlements. Unfortunately there is little evidence to suppose that the settlements in question would calmly accept the numbers involved.

There is, of course, the extreme option of defiance. However, if the District Council chooses to ignore the time-frame within which the Local Development Framework is to be completed, the danger is that developers will submit planning applications and the Secretary of State will call them in for decision by her. This risks more than 4200 being wished upon us.

A Member of Parliament has no role in the planning process. My job is to represent the opinions of my constituents to the decision makers. If I can do anything to point the way towards a broadly acceptable conclusion, I will not hesitate to try.