Dear Stratford Voice Member

**Housing Threat to Stratford**

The issue of housing numbers is again under review by Stratford District Council and they are close to deciding what housing targets to set for Stratford in the final draft of the district’s Core Strategy for the period from 2008 to 2028. This will be published in the summer.

Under pressure from Government inspectors, the target of 8,000 houses for the district proposed in the previous draft Core Strategy is expected to be increased to 9,500. Of these, 3,100 have already been built or have planning permission, leaving 6,400 yet to be planned. The previous draft Core Strategy proposed that the housing target should be distributed around the district such that only 560 of the remaining houses would be built in Stratford. There is no guarantee that the additional 1,500 houses now being called for will be distributed in the same way. Indeed, we can expect strong opposition from the smaller towns and villages to receiving even more houses. A scenario being considered by the council is to allocate the entire additional target to an ‘urban extension’ to Stratford – a total of over 2,000 new houses in the town. Possibly even more if the previous distribution strategy is abandoned all together.

We are still waiting for a final decision on the 800-house Shottery application, which is subject to a legal challenge that will be heard at the High Court in July. If this goes ahead it would be a huge development for Stratford to absorb, but now there is the prospect of a further 1,200 houses on top of this.

The Stratford Voice committee does not believe that Stratford can absorb this many houses. We supported the original target of 560, which would be sufficient for the town’s needs. Building more would not, as some suggest, provide more affordable homes for local people but would be mainly ‘executive homes’ encouraging further inward migration of people who commute to work elsewhere. We reluctantly accept that, should the Shottery development go ahead, the number built will increase to 800 houses, but that is more than enough. Stratford does not have the capacity in roads, schools, medical services and other infrastructure to support more. Of equal concern is the harm to the character of our historic town, which is gradually becoming overwhelmed by huge modern housing developments and relentless traffic.

The distribution of the 6,400 remaining houses is due to be decided by councillors in a series of consultative ‘member workshops’ over the coming weeks. While residents will be able to comment on the resulting Core Strategy, it would clearly be far better if the published document contains proposals we could support, rather than putting us in a position of having to attempt to overthrow unfavourable proposals. On behalf of the Stratford Voice committee I therefore appeal to you to write to some or all of our local councillors with your views, immediately, before the series of consultative workshops gets underway. Contact details are provided overleaf.

You will probably be wondering how the additional housing can be absorbed anywhere in the district if it is not to overload either Stratford itself or the surrounding towns and villages. In our view the time has come for the council to identify a site for a new settlement, close to employment opportunities and transport links and, ideally, on previously developed industrial land. We believe such sites do exist in the district and the council must allocate the additional housing to one such location.

Yours faithfully

Martyn Luscombe

Chairman, Stratford Voice May 2013

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