

Committee:	Environment Committee	Agenda Item
Date:	24 November 2009	2
Title:	Uttlesford Core Strategy – Consultation	
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Summary

- 1 Consultation on the Preferred Options stage of the Core Strategy ended in January 2008. Since then, officers have been considering the representations and carrying out additional study work. The next formal stage in the process towards adoption of the Core Strategy set out in the regulations is consultation on the submission document. However, at submission stage the guidance states that the Core Strategy should be as complete as possible and in view of some of the comments received at the preferred options stage it would not be appropriate to proceed to submission without giving statutory consultees and members of the public the opportunity to make further comments on the additional work which has been carried out. An extra consultation stage is therefore being proposed early in 2010 and this report seeks members' approval for this further consultation on the basis outlined in this report.

Recommendations

- 1) That further consultation be carried out and the Preferred Options be reviewed in the light of the responses in mid 2010 before proceeding to submission.
- 2) That the consultation be on the basis
 - I. that the Core Strategy assumes the Stansted Airport G1 development will be implemented
 - II. that Option 4 comprise 3000 homes to the north east of Elsenham; 750 homes at Great Dunmow; 30 at Great Chesterford; 50 at Newport; 20 at Stansted Mountfitchet; 30 at Takeley; 30 at Thaxted and 90 distributed across other villages.
 - III. that the Preferred Options for Core Strategy Policies address the issues and include the proposed changes identified in the table in paragraph 20 of the report
- 3) That officers review the findings of the ongoing technical studies and bring a further report to the committee before consultation is launched should the findings indicate an adjustment to the preferred option may be required.

Background Papers

- Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)
- Draft Comparative Transport Assessment
- Draft Water Cycle Study (Stage 1 – Scoping and Outline Study)
- Option 4 - Suggested distribution of changes – draft Sustainability appraisal
- Stansted airport – draft sustainability appraisal of options

Impact

Communication/Consultation	Consultation carried out in accordance with the adopted Statements of Community Involvement
Community Safety	n/a
Equalities	Policies make sure that no group is disadvantaged
Finance	To be actioned within budgetary provision
Human Rights	n/a
Legal implications	Need to continue to comply with legislation including the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2004 and 2008 amendments.
Sustainability	Process has been and will continue to be subject to Sustainability Appraisal
Ward-specific impacts	All
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

- 2 The Council started preparing the Core Strategy in 2006. In 2007, following consultation with members of the public and the key stakeholders on the issues facing the district and the options for resolving those issues the Council consulted on the Policy Choices and Options for Growth document. The responses to this were used to develop preferred options for the district which were subject to further consultation from November 2007 to January 2008.

The preferred options included a proposal that the majority of the housing growth required in the district for the plan period should be delivered in a new settlement of 3,000 homes to the north east of Elsenham with the balance of the housing requirement being met in the larger towns (750 homes) and the villages (250 homes). A report summarising all the representations received was submitted to this Committee in November 2008.

- 3 A number of issues were raised in response to the preferred options consultation, particularly by the Government Office which need to be resolved before the Council can progress with the Core Strategy. The Council has also had the benefit of an advisory visit from a Planning Inspector to consider what has been done so far in the preparation of the Core Strategy and to identify matters at this stage which appear potentially problematic or upon which advice was requested. The Inspector was generally in agreement with comments made by Go-East in their response to the preferred options document. The following list summarises the outstanding issues which need to be addressed before the Core Strategy can be submitted for examination.
- Stansted Airport – what are the options, how do these relate to other strategies, what are the potential impacts of growth, what is the evidence for the Council’s position and what is the preferred option?
 - Options for the 1,000 homes over and above the 3,000 at Elsenham – what does this mean for places and how do they perform in sustainability terms?
 - Are the policies relevant to the Core Strategy – are they strategic in nature, do they repeat national guidance, is there duplication between any policies, are any changes required in response to comments made?
 - Do the key issues identified arise from the evidence base?
 - Are there demonstrably clear links between the Core Strategy and the Sustainable Community Strategy? The Core Strategy should be the key delivery mechanism for the spatial aspects of the SCS.
 - Are there any gaps in policy coverage? E.g. a Strategy for getting around, retail strategy and detail on health and education provision have been mentioned as areas where further work might be required.
4. In response to the issues raised the Council has commissioned further study work which is listed under the background documents above. All the studies will be available on the Council’s website under planning/local plans and local development framework/background studies. The studies remain work in progress at present and current drafts are published as background documents to this report. They will be finalised before the consultation commences.
5. The consultation planned for early in 2010 will address the outstanding issues above and also give people the opportunity to look at and comment on the study work and the soundness of the distribution of all 4,000 homes in the light of those studies. The consultation material will enable people to compare Option 4 with

the other options included within the 2008 consultation and also other new settlement proposals and a general dispersal scenario. It is proposed that the consultation will run for six weeks.

6. The three key areas for the Consultation will be:

a. Stansted Airport Options

7. Three principal scenarios for Stansted Airport have been assessed against the sustainability objectives set for the LDF. These scenarios are:
1. Throughput broadly in the range of 20-25 million passengers per annum (mppa). This represents a no growth scenario. Passenger throughput peaked at 24 mppa in the 12 months ending October 2007 and since then has fallen back to just over 20 mppa.
 2. Implementation of the G1 planning permission with throughput rising to 35 mppa during the plan period.
 3. Implementation of BAA's G2 proposals with throughput rising to 68 mppa during the plan period.
8. Scenario 1 (throughput remaining below 25 mppa) performs best in terms of the sustainability objectives, followed by Scenario 2 (implementation of G1). Scenario 3 (implementation of G2) performs poorly, particularly because of the direct impacts from the land take associated with the 442ha extension of the airport and the cut and fill operation to create the second runway, taxiway system, new terminal and associated aircraft stands, and noise impacts associated with an increase in total aircraft movements from 207k in 2006 to 495k in 2030.
9. In 2009 the DfT published a new set of passenger traffic forecasts at the same time as it announced confirmation of its policy to support a third runway at Heathrow. These forecasts represented a material reduction in overall air passenger demand in 2030 from forecasts issued in 2007 and those published in December 2003 at the time of the Airport White Paper.
10. The set of forecasts included low, central and base cases. The forecast central case demand for the London Area is now 35 mppa lower than in 2003 and 25 mppa lower than the DfT 2007 forecasts, almost the capacity of a single runway. The 2009 forecasts also included a sensitivity test using 2008 gross domestic product forecasts, which reduced the central case forecasts for 2030 by a further 30 mppa. Another sensitivity test assuming that aviation entered the EU Emissions trading scheme in 2012 and the retention of Air Passenger Duty reduced the central case forecast by a further 17 mppa. Stansted passenger demand in 2030 is revised downwards in the DfT central forecasts from 70 mppa to 55 mppa. It is significant that 15 mppa of the 25 mppa reduction from the London Area is at Stansted. This is due to the dominance of low cost carriers and discretionary leisure travellers in its market mix. Because of uncertainties as to

whether even the DfT 2009 forecasts have fully taken into account changed circumstances as illustrated by the impact of its sensitivity tests, a single runway airport at Stansted is likely to have sufficient capacity to last well beyond 2020.

11. Reduced demand forecasts for 2030 at a level not greatly in excess of the full use of the existing runway are also likely to adversely affect private sector investment decisions on a second runway at Stansted even if that were to attract continued support in Government policy and planning permission were to be secured. The future ownership of Stansted is also uncertain as a consequence of the Competition Commission's requirement that BAA sell off Gatwick and Stansted and the referral of the matter to the Competition Appeals Tribunal before a final decision by the Competition Commission. A new owner of Stansted is more likely to seek to extract as much value as possible from full use of the existing runway than risk investment in the next 5 years on capacity for which there may be weak demand. Airline users are much more likely to be attracted to additional runway capacity at Heathrow than Stansted.
12. The poor performance of G2 against the LDF sustainability objectives and reduced demand forecasts as the context for a private sector investment decision combine to indicate that G2 scenario should not be assumed as the basis for the core strategy. Notwithstanding Scenario 1's performance against the sustainability objectives, revised demand forecasts suggest that the G1 permission will be implemented. The economic recession is assumed to stabilise in 2011 with limited growth in the range between 0 and 1%, and stronger GDP growth expected to resume in 2012.. Related increases in the number of air passengers will be from a relatively low base (the moving annual total as at September 2009 was 20.248 mppa) and therefore implementation date and achievement of 35 mppa throughput will be delayed, but G1 delivery still represents the most appropriate assumption for the LDF.

b. Options for distributing 1,000 homes as the balance of the housing requirement for Option 4

13. The preferred options consultation in November 2007 did not make any specific reference in Option 4 to where the 1,000 homes required over and above the new settlement might be located. It just identified that 750 dwellings would be located in the towns and 250 dwellings in the villages. The Government Office identified this as an important omission because it would not be clear in the Core Strategy what the implications for the towns and villages within the district might be if options for this housing growth were not explored in more detail. Officers have therefore prepared a paper – Option 4 – A Suggested Distribution of Housing which is appended to this report. The paper looks at six options for distributing the 1,000 homes. Each of the six options has been subject to a sustainability appraisal.
14. In relation to the towns the options are to divide the development of the 750 homes equally between Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow or direct the majority to one or the other. The assessment of the sustainability objectives and

infrastructure indicates that Great Dunmow is better placed to accommodate the majority if not all of the 750 homes.

15. There are numerous possible combinations for distributing the 250 homes. There are five key villages – Great Chesterford, Newport, Stansted Mountfitchet, Thaxted and Takeley and 18 villages with primary schools – the preferred strategy has already identified that such villages are appropriate for limited growth as there would be rural sustainability benefits. The options range from concentrating the development in any one of the key villages to a more even distribution across the key villages and allowing for very limited development in the other villages in all options. Significant development in any of the villages is constrained by the infrastructure capacity, particularly school capacity and sewage network capacity. This scale of development would impact on resources and the environment. It is therefore considered not appropriate to locate all 250 homes within one or two villages. However, if the development was distributed across the villages it would result in a smaller scale of development which could be accommodated by the existing infrastructure and have minimal impact on the environment.
16. The recommended preferred option is that sites for 750 dwellings are identified in Great Dunmow; 30 in Great Chesterford; 50 in Newport; 20 in Stansted Mountfitchet; 30 in Takeley; 30 in Thaxted and 90 distributed across other villages.
17. This option will form part of the consultation in 2010 which will in particular enable infrastructure providers to comment on the assessment of the options. This is particularly important in relation to Waste Water Treatment Capacity and Sewerage Network capacity where, since the appended paper has been published the Environment Agency has raised additional concerns in response to the Draft Water Cycle Study particularly at Great Dunmow.

c. Review of the Core Strategy Policies

18. In addition to the four growth options the Preferred Options document also contained the strategic policies which should help to deliver the vision for the district and meet the objectives arising from the vision. There were some objections to both the principle and the detailed wording of some of these policies. There was some duplication between some of the policies and in some cases an overlap with national guidance. Officers have reviewed the policies in the light of the comments made and are recommending that the policies are also included in the consultation in January to seek further views from key consultees and members of the public.
19. The Preferred Options policies are listed below together with summary of the issues identified by officers where further consultation is required.
20. The consultation will also contain a revised Spatial Strategy which will need to take into account any implications arising from the Housing and Stansted Options papers and any issues resulting from the changes to the strategic policies below.

Preferred Options Policy	Issues and Proposed Changes for further Consultation
E1 – Employment Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The policy needs to reflect any specific employment issues arising from responses to the Stansted Options paper • Further test the Council's preferred approach of Greenfield expansion sites against alternative approaches to make sure that this is a sound approach. • Explain how the new settlement at Elsenham fits into the employment strategy for the district. • To consider the principle of releasing existing safeguarded employment sites for residential and/or mixed use schemes. • To include reference to the re-use of rural buildings in the strategy
GA1 – Accessible Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explain more fully what the strategy for transport and accessibility for the District is. This would acknowledge the continuing role of the car for most residents in this rural district but would involve the council working with service providers and Essex County Council to improve public transport links, making sure new development is linked to existing or proposed services and facilities by well designed, safe cycle and pedestrian routes and encouraging new ways of working to reduce travel to work.
DC1 – Housing Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To consider the implications of the SHMA for the Core Strategy and to consult on any options arising. This suggests that the percentage of affordable housing which the Council is seeking on development sites should be increased. Additional viability work has been commissioned since it is unlikely under current market conditions that this increase would be realistic. • To expand on the policy context for gypsy and traveller site provision. • To include a new policy on delivery and phasing of housing sites as required by national guidance.
DC2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Housing Options Paper
DC3 Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More information will need to be provided on what the infrastructure requirements of delivering the Core Strategy will be. This will accompany the submission document. The consultation document needs to explain in more detail what the mechanisms are for delivering and funding infrastructure e.g. S106, Roof

	<p>Tax, Community Infrastructure Levy, and to seek views on this.</p>
<p>DC4 Metropolitan Green Belt</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now that the SHLAA has been published and shows that there is adequate land without a green belt review to deliver the housing growth do we still want to have some flexibility in defining green belt boundaries around settlements as set out in the preferred options document. • The consultation document will set out two options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ continue with the broad area but undertake a comprehensive review of the outer boundary and the inner boundaries around villages ○ Maintain the boundaries as set out in the adopted local plan
<p>DC5 Protecting the Countryside</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The preferred options policy repeats national guidance – the consultation document will suggest an amended text to explain in more detail how the countryside contributes to the character of the district and what the issues are. • The policy suggested for the consultation document will protect the countryside for its own sake and for its value as productive agricultural land. Development in the countryside will only be considered after other options have been discounted. The best agricultural land will be protected and development will be focussed in locations with good access to services and facilities. • The policy should also make reference to the re-use of rural buildings
<p>DC6 Protecting Agricultural Land</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consultation document will suggest that this policy should be deleted and that protection of agricultural land should be included as an element of Policy DC5 above.
<p>DC7 Countryside Protection Zone</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consultation document will provide justification for retaining this policy but in response to some objections to this policy it will also set out an alternative approach of deleting DC7 and relying mainly on Policy DC5 to protect the area around the airport from inappropriate development. • On the basis that the underlying principal of the Core Strategy should be that there will only be one runway at the airport the consultation will confirm that if retained the broad extent of the CPZ will remain as defined in the Uttlesford Local Plan
<p>DC8</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes are suggested which will give more detail to the Preferred Options policy and text with reference to

Landscape Character Assessment	the Landscape Character Assessment (LCA). The LCA will form the basis for detailed policies in the Development Control DPD. Development will be expected to contribute to landscape improvements identified in the LCA and any other design guidance approved by the Council.
DC9 Protecting the historic environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes are suggested in response to objections including the need to make reference to Conservation Area appraisals and local guidance like Town and Village Design Statements.
DC10 Protecting Nature Conservation and Geological Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes are suggested in response to comments made in the Preferred Options Consultation. The policy should make reference to the Essex Biodiversity Action Plan. The policy should try and deal with the issues of habitat loss and fragmentation and require new development to contribute to new green spaces and other measures which will increase biodiversity and link into the wider network of habitats/sites.
DC11 Function of the Market Towns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was no retail strategy in the Preferred Options document which concentrated mainly on the towns of Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow . The consultation document will briefly set out the issues and suggest a new objective – to reduce the need to travel by maintaining a range of retail opportunities within the district to meet local needs. • The policy should support the retail function of Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow but also consider the role of other centres and village shops and services and demonstrate how these will be supported in order to meet the objective. • The policy will also need to make provision for retail floorspace in the new settlement at Elsenham. • Retail elements of the strategy need to be consistent with national guidance (unless clear reasons for departure) • When the preferred options consultation was published there were very few available town centre sites in Saffron Walden. Vacancy levels have since increased and the Council needs to test that the preferred options approach of allowing some development on the edge is still valid in this changed context. To do this 3 options will be presented for consideration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Edge of town expansion ○ Identify specific sites ○ Criteria based policies
DC12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consultation document will suggest that this policy

Character of the Market Towns	should be deleted and included as part of Policy DC11 above.
DC13 Use of natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The consultation document will suggest that the scope of this policy is broadened to make sure that all development is sustainable, of high quality and meets the needs of users with minimal impacts on health, the natural environment and general amenity. The policy would be renamed and would include issues currently covered by policies LC2 and LC3 which could then be deleted.
DC14 Renewable Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Preferred Options policy does not reflect guidance in PPS22 because it relates to stand alone renewable energy schemes but does not refer to requirements for energy efficiency in new development. An amended policy will be suggested which would overcome this omission.
DC15 Reducing Flood Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In response to Environment Agency comments new wording is suggested to include more information on flood risk from the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) and reference to Sustainable Drainage Schemes (SUDS)
DC16 Land within the airport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No change
DC17 Development at the Airport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No change
DC18 Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No change
LC1 Health and Community Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This policy doesn't say anything that is not already covered in Policy DC3 and the consultation document will suggest that this policy should be deleted
LC2 Health Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The consultation document will suggest that this policy is incorporated into an expanded policy DC13
LC3 Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The consultation document will suggest that this policy is also incorporated into policy DC13
New Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In response to comments made by Natural England and the results of the Green Space Audit which identifies deficiencies of open space in many parishes the consultation document will suggest a new objective and policy to deal with this issue. The new objective

	would be to protect existing open space, play, sports and recreational facilities and to provide enough new facilities to meet the community's needs. The policy will safeguard existing open space and recreational facilities and will require new development to either provide these facilities or to make a contribution towards joint provision in the area.
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Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That the Core Strategy will be found unsound	2 – The Core Strategy has not been fully tested.	Lack of up to date planning framework to determine planning applications	Undertake additional consultation and adjust the preferred option if required in the light of feedback.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.