

LPLG 24 May 2021 Supplementary Paper

LPLG Workshop – 17 May 2021 & Community Stakeholder Forum Feedback

1. LPLG Workshop – 17 May 2021

1.1. Background

1.1.1. On the evening of Monday 17 May a workshop was held for LPLG members to discuss the vision and objectives for the Local Plan. Members discussed the purpose of the vision and objectives, in terms of:

- The vision setting out an aspirational view of what the district will look like in twenty years' time; and
- The objectives setting out aspirational but realistic ways of achieving this vision.

1.1.2. This vision and accompanying objectives will be used to develop the policies and allocations for the plan.

1.1.3. Members considered and discussed what was important to the district and looked at examples of others' visions and objectives. Officers took notes throughout the discussion and after the workshop have used the members' views to prepare the below draft vision and objectives.

1.1.4. LPLG are invited to examine the draft vision and objectives and consider whether officers have accurately captured the thoughts of the group. Furthermore, after the group are satisfied with the wording of the draft vision and objectives they are invited to recommend to Cabinet a version of them to inform the drafting of the plan.

1.1.5. Members will have the opportunity to refine the wording of this vision and objectives, as the final version will be agreed for consultation in early 2022. Therefore, at this point in time members are asked to focus on the principles in the draft text set out below. Future text to be added, and changes from the discussions in the workshop are highlighted yellow.

1.2. Draft Vision for Uttlesford

1.2.1. Our vision reflects the change required to achieve our ambition to achieve net-zero carbon status by 2030 and to protect and enhance Uttlesford's rich natural and historical heritage. Residents will know their views have been listened to and will have the opportunity to influence decision making. Town and Parish councils will play an increasing role in this. Local people will be involved in making Uttlesford 'the best place to live, work and play'.

Uttlesford will have embraced the changes required to be net zero carbon, enabling us to live, work and play well, within the limits of the environment and our natural environment will be protected

1.2.2. The essential landscape value of Uttlesford's countryside will be enhanced promoting biodiversity and increased woodland, contributing to the region's prosperous rural and

agricultural economy. The rivers of Uttlesford will be protected and enhanced, and together with green infrastructure, contribute to a network of blue and green corridors for the benefit of wildlife and people. Hatfield Forest will be part of this network, however it will also be protected from overuse. Access to the countryside for recreation and tourism will be promoted in a managed way, supporting agricultural diversification, the creation of jobs and the healthy lifestyles of residents and visitors alike. The network of footpaths, safe cycle routes and bridleways will be expanded and improved resulting in Uttlesford residents having the highest levels of active travel and health in Essex.

Uttlesford's rich natural and historical heritage will be protected and enhanced, for the health and enjoyment of people now and in the future

- 1.2.3. Uttlesford will be known for its beautiful rolling countryside, its market towns and villages with a rich heritage, and a strong cultural offer and economy that operates at a local, national and international scale. The needs of local people, as well as generations after will be met and the people of the district will be healthier, happier and able to meet most of their day-to-day needs locally within a community that is good for their health and well-being.

Uttlesford will have a diverse, resilient and thriving sustainable economy

- 1.2.4. Uttlesford will have a diverse range of businesses and a tourism offer which supports the attractive towns and villages that act as employment and service centres for the surrounding rural hinterland. Small businesses and start-ups and a growing number of people working from home will be positively supported. The local benefits of Stansted Airport will be maximised, while its environmental impacts are managed and minimised. Links to other sources of prosperity will also benefit the district. The north of the district will benefit from improved links into the high-skilled 'Cambridge phenomenon', supporting high-value job growth at Chesterford Research Park and elsewhere. The south of the district will benefit from improved links to Harlow, Chelmsford, Bishop's Stortford and Braintree.
- 1.2.5. The market towns of the district will have viable and vibrant town centres with a diverse range of stores and other facilities to attract people to shop and visit. Villages with smaller centres will meet the day-to-day needs of their local catchments.

New development will be of high quality design, link homes with jobs and focus on sustainable construction, materials and travel

- 1.2.6. New development will be focussed on providing the right homes and employment in the right place to address the challenge of climate change, to strengthen communities and provide greater opportunities to live and work locally. ... *[To be added to following consideration of the Preliminary Outline Strategy in July]*
- 1.2.7. High quality design will protect and enhance the intrinsic character and built heritage of Uttlesford's towns, villages, and the wider environment will be balanced with the benefits of proportionate development to provide affordable housing, local jobs or additional community facilities. The quality of new development will be high, and supported by appropriate design guidance, agreed with local communities.

1.2.8. New buildings will be designed to low energy standards and renewable energy generation will meet the district's needs.

1.2.9. How people get around the district will have changed, and the use of public transport and active travel as an alternative to the car will be far greater than it is today. Furthermore, the district will support car use will have shifting to zero tailpipe emission vehicles by providing appropriate infrastructure. The level of commuting will be rebalanced to reduce the need to travel and address congestion and climate change.

1.3. Draft Objectives for Uttlesford

a. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding & drought

To ensure Uttlesford adapts to the effects of climate change including extremes of weather, through:

- The location, design and resilience of development;
- Planning for low energy new development;
- Planning for renewable energy provision in the district; and
- Reducing and managing the risk of flooding and drought.

b. Promoting healthy and safe communities

To plan and design new and existing places to promote healthy and safe communities by:

- Encouraging physical and mental well-being;
- Enabling active travel;
- Designing well-connected communities that function well;
- Enabling access to open green space for leisure, play and sport; and
- Enabling social connection and inclusion.

c. Conserving and enhancing the natural and built environment

To proactively conserve and enhance our natural and built environment by:

- Creating and protecting a network of green and blue wildlife corridors with our partners throughout the district; and
- Protecting the high quality, beautiful landscape of the district;

d. Conserving and enhancing the built environment

To proactively conserve and enhance our built environment by:

- Delivering development of high quality design within existing settlements; and
- Protecting historic buildings and village cores from harmful development.

e. Building a strong and competitive economy

['Supporting high quality communications' has been merged with 'building a strong and competitive economy for efficiency']

Build a diverse, resilient, sustainable economy by:

- Planning for job growth to align with population growth in the district;
- Enabling inward investment to promote higher value jobs and diverse employment opportunities within the district;
- Enabling local employment by protecting the best existing employment sites from changing to other uses;
- Supporting agricultural diversification, culture, leisure and tourism to create a diverse rural economy;
- Supporting high quality communications.

f. Ensuring the vitality of town centres

Ensuring the vitality of town centres by:

- Enhancing the role of the market towns in serving the wider needs of their hinterlands;
- Supporting the provision of a wide range of services and facilities for Uttlesford whilst conserving and enhancing the historic character of our town and village centres; and
- Protecting and enhancing retail and commercial sites and managing loss to other uses.

g. Delivering a sufficient supply of the right homes in the right places

Delivering a sufficient supply of the right homes in the right places by:

- Planning for sustainable, safe, attractive and healthy places to live while meeting local and lifetime housing needs in terms of type and tenure including affordable housing and housing for people with specific accommodation needs.

h. Achieving well-designed places and making effective use of land

Achieve well-designed places and make effective use of land by:

- Developing design policies and guidance to support new high quality new development; and
- Planning for developments at an optimal density to make an effective use of land and viable support services and facilities.

i. Enabling infrastructure and promoting sustainable transport

['Enabling infrastructure' incorporating open space provision has been added to this objective]

To proactively enable infrastructure and promote sustainable transport by:

- Enable utility providers to improve their infrastructure and services so that they can meet people's current and future needs, protect the environment;
- Providing new homes close to jobs, services and facilities, promoting active travel opportunities;
- Enable innovative but realistic transport improvements, particularly better and more integrated public transport, cycling, pedestrian and bridleway facilities;
- Enable the maintenance of and qualitative improvements to sporting and leisure facilities, including enhancing opportunities for culture and tourism; and
- Help the public to access and enjoy open spaces such as parks and allotments and support healthy lifestyles.

j. Protecting the Green Belt and the Countryside Protection Zone

Protecting the Green Belt and Countryside Protection Zone by:

- Ensuring development does not harm the purposes of the Green Belt or the Countryside Protection Zone.

2. Community Stakeholder Forum feedback

2.1. Background

2.1.1. On the evening of 19 May the Community Stakeholder Forum (CSF) met to consider the representations received on the final three consultation themes for the Local Plan. LPLG has already received reports summarising these representations. Below are summaries of the discussions at the CSF on these three topics.

2.2. Feedback from the Community Stakeholder Forum on theme 7: 'Local economy'

2.2.1. Overall, there was support for the consultation response themes. The following points were picked out from the consultation as priorities: -

1. The question should be 'how can we support growth in a sustainable economy?' and the need to plan for transition, with a strong vision of future green industries e.g. modular homes, cross laminated wood manufacture, battery manufacture and a clean energy economy
2. The importance of our skilled local work force, and linking training and skills from school and college through to employment, and helping enabling take up of local jobs
3. Supporting a diverse economy and industry range
4. Keep the industry range wide is important, protecting, evolving and increasing employment sites
5. The importance of transport infrastructure was again reinforced, especially in relation to logistics, warehouse-based industries and movement of goods
6. Will East West Oxford – Cambridge rail link open opportunities to Uttlesford residents.
7. The need to build on support for local purchasing and local procurement, resulting from the covid-19 pandemic and increase local production, including food production, keeping things in the round
8. Making the most of our heritage and culture and promoting tourism. Some concern that housing growth in villages is ruining the tourism industry of these villages
9. There was recognition of what we already have in the district and to build and strengthen that, including:
 - Chesterford Park and connections to Cambridge in the north
 - Stansted airport and surrounding employment land

- Connections with Bishop's Stortford and Harlow to the south
- Links with Braintree and Chelmsford to the east/south east

10. Acknowledged the lack of employment in certain areas:

- Great Dunmow suffers from out commuting
- The north east of the district where there is a predominance of agricultural land

11. Strong support for stopping town centre use (retail and commercial) being turned to residential

12. Challenge to the green belt around Birchanger, where there are very good employment and transport links

2.3. Feedback from the Community Stakeholder Forum on theme 8: 'Homes'

2.3.1. The following points were picked out from the consultation as priorities: -

1. Homes to be built to mitigate climate change and no houses should be built which require retrofitting to known policies.

Homes should be designed to conserve water and homes should not be built where there is no water.

Net zero developments should be given priority. A maximum carbon footprint could be set which must not be exceeded. The choice of building materials has a big impact on this and moving away from brick and concrete to cross laminated timber reduces the carbon footprint of a building.

2. It is important to provide specialist housing and particularly to build homes specifically for elderly and disabled but also more generally to build accessible and adaptable homes.

The Council should work with neighbouring authorities to ensure there is adequate provision for gypsies and travellers, especially transit sites.

The community and mental health benefits of multi- generational housing needs to be recognised. Homes should not be built which result in silos of people living in narrow age groups.

3. The benefits of Modular housing was recognised.

4. The priority for affordable homes was again reinforced.

5. There was support for the need to build more smaller houses.

6. In relation to the design and layout of homes, the need for broadband was reiterated. The value placed on private and community gardens was welcomed. The importance of front gardens in helping neighbourliness was an interesting point,. However, it was also mentioned that not everyone wants to maintain a garden and therefore to provide a variety of house types needs to be provided.

Compensating the loss of garden space through house extensions with green roofs was considered an interesting concept. And there was a suggestion that the concept of roofs should be reinvented to provide outdoor space, roof top gardens and green roofs.

2.4. Feedback from the Community Stakeholder Forum on theme 9: 'Local economy'

2.4.1. Having considered the consultation responses, comments from Forum members included the following:

1. Agree with the comments around providing up-front infrastructure for new development. However, there is scepticism that this will actually be achieved.

Officer commentary: The Council's made no decision on this for the Local Plan yet, however it is often not right to secure infrastructure before any development. The risk with providing infrastructure too early is that it either remains unused, or worse the capacity is up by others. It is suspected that the correct approach will be to secure infrastructure when it is needed and as early as possible.

2. A proposal was put forward that Essex County Council should build a road from the Stebbing area to Haverhill, to facilitate large-scale development in the north-east quadrant of the district which is currently poorly-served by road infrastructure.

3. As per Noel Farrer's presentation on 'Character and heritage' (Theme 2), new development should look less like his example of Flich Green and more like his examples showing squares and remote parking.

4. As brownfield land is a commonly-held priority, there should be ongoing dialogue with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation regarding development at Carver Barracks.

5. Some of the green belt around Birchanger has already been significantly compromised in landscape terms and has good potential for homes and jobs due to its connectivity. Perhaps this could be developed, with a less-compromised landscape elsewhere being preserved to compensate.

6. The district contains insufficient green space, for walking and recreation, to which people have access.

7. A number of consultation responses highlighted the advantages of village life but also that primary schools are often undersubscribed and other activities such as sports clubs struggle to remain viable. Perhaps development could be directed to such villages, in order to support schools, services and other activities.

8. A proposal was put forward that the district requires an east-west corridor, to relieve development pressure on the existing north-south corridor. A new sustainable transport route, incorporating a railway, could utilise the Flich Way, creating a link of national importance between Oxford and Harwich.

Another Forum member noted that a similar idea was once highlighted by Essex County Council. However, an election led to a change in political priorities. Unfortunately, a new railway requires a substantial amount of funding, whereas roads are much cheaper.

9. Public transport should be prioritised, provided that it is both sustainable and affordable.

10. Affordable housing should be a priority.