



Public Document Pack

Uttlesford District Council

Chief Executive: Dawn French

Local Plan Leadership Group Remote Meeting

Date: Monday, 8th February, 2021

Time: 7.00 pm

Venue: Zoom - <https://zoom.us/>

Chair: Councillor G Bagnall

Members: Councillors M Caton, R Freeman, P Lees, M Lemon, B Light,
S Merifield, R Pavitt (Vice-Chair), N Reeve, M Sutton and M Tayler

Public Participation

At the start of the meeting there will be an opportunity for up to 10 members of the public to ask questions and make statements subject to having given notice by 2pm the working day before the meeting. Each speaker will have 4 minutes to make their statement. Please write to committee@uttlesford.gov.uk to register your intention to speak with Democratic Services.

Public speakers will be offered the opportunity for an officer to read out their questions or statement at the meeting, or to attend the meeting over Zoom to readout their questions or statement themselves

Members of the public who would like to watch the meeting live can do so [here](#). The broadcast will be made available as soon as the meeting begins.

AGENDA

PART 1

Open to Public and Press

1 Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

To receive any apologies and declarations of interest.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

4 - 6

To consider the minutes of the previous meeting.

3 Housing Study

7 - 21

To receive a presentation and report on the Housing Study.

4 Feedback on Consultation on Theme 1: Where you live

22 - 32

To receive feedback on consultation on theme 1: where you live

REMOTE MEETINGS AND THE PUBLIC

Due to the Government's social distancing measures imposed in the wake of Covid-19, the way in which the public can participate in Uttlesford District Council meetings has changed. Meetings are no longer being held on site or in person and 'remote meetings' will be held on the virtual meeting platform Zoom until further notice. Members of the public are welcome to listen live to the debate of any of the Council's Cabinet or Committee meetings. All live broadcasts and meeting papers can be viewed on the Council's calendar of meetings webpage.

Members of the public and representatives of parish and town councils are permitted to speak or ask questions at meetings of the Local Plan Leadership Group. A maximum of 10 speaking slots are available on a first come, first served basis. You will need to register your intention to speak with the Democratic Services Officer by 2pm the working day before the meeting. Please register your intention to speak by writing to committee@uttlesford.gov.uk.

Agenda and Minutes are available in alternative formats and/or languages. For more information please call 01799 510510.

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Agenda Item 2

LOCAL PLAN LEADERSHIP GROUP held at ZOOM - [HTTPS://ZOOM.US/](https://zoom.us/), on THURSDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2020 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor G Bagnall (Chair)
Councillors M Caton, R Freeman, P Lees, M Lemon, B Light,
S Merifield, R Pavitt, N Reeve, M Sutton and M Tayler

Guest (non-voting): Councillor J Evans

Officers in attendance: G Glenday (Assistant Director –Planning), S Miles (Local Plans and New Communities Manager), L Mills (New Communities Senior Planning Officer), H Richardson (Local Plan and New Communities Team Project Officer), C Shanley-Grozavu (Democratic Services Officer)

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no apologies for absence or declarations of interest.

2 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2020 be agreed as an accurate record.

3 **ISSUES & OPTIONS**

The Local Plans and New Communities Manager presented the report.

In response to questions, officers clarified the following about the Issues and Options stage of developing the new Local Plan:

- The Community Stakeholder Forum will be considering nine local plan themes over a seven-month period. For each topic, there will be an online presentation given by an external speaker, followed by an online discussion by the forum. Both the speaker's presentation and a link to the full forum meeting will be available for residents to access on the website.
- To date, the Community Stakeholder Forum have met twice, and a small number of residents have already engaged with the consultation, following these meetings. It not unusual for consultations to receive a low level of responses when they first open, and officers expect it to gain traction as it is advertised further through methods such as social media and a leaflet drop.
- All nine local plan themes will remain open throughout the consultation.
- Officers will be working with multiple organisations, including the Environment Agency and Water Board, to provide evidence around infrastructure within the new Local Plan.

- The membership of the Community Stakeholder Forum is published on the Council's website and officers are currently gathering short biographies on each individual to include alongside this which will establish why they have been chosen to represent their special interest area.
- The forum structure is an entirely new idea for developing the Local Plan and the membership of the Community Stakeholder Forum came from officers asking networks for nominations of people they think would be appropriate.
- The Special interest areas originated from a report which was previously present to and agreed by the working group.

Members raised concerns about the membership of the Community Stakeholder Forum, particularly around the recruitment process and the bias to the north of the district. It was confirmed that the panel is not intended to represent the whole community, but rather to generate a conversation for the public to comment on, however officers recognised that the majority of members were from northern areas of the district so ensured that the outstanding vacancies were sourced from southern areas. Councillors thanked officers for listening to members and changing the process in light of their concerns.

In addition, members requested that officers consider holding another Town and Parish Council Forum as this would allow another opportunity for stakeholders to engage with the consultation.

AGREED: That the proposed approach set out in this report be noted.

4

CALL FOR SITES

The New Communities Senior Planning Officer presented the report and introduced the three options for mapping to accompany the call for sites.

Members discussed their preferences and indicated that, should content maps be chosen, officers consider including additional information on the maps, such as Metropolitan Green Belt and healthcare facilities, including those across the district border which are used by Uttlesford residents. They recognised that, in developing a new local plan, there was an opportunity for fresh thinking and that the plan needs to reflect changing needs in areas such as employment, transport, internet and climate change.

In response to further member's questions about the Call for Sites process, officers clarified the following:

- A Call for Site will be put out and officers will then seek to develop a strategy with options for delivering the Local Plan. By developing a strategy, submissions can then be assessed on whether they can satisfy the requirements set out.
- The assessment criteria will also consider information not currently included on the maps, such as GP surgeries and Metropolitan Green Belt.

- If officers do not receive submissions which satisfy their strategy's requirements, they will then approach local site owners and ask them to consider putting their site forward.
- The transport forecast for Stansted Airport is out of date, along with the evidence base which was used to inform the previous Local Plan. Officers are in touch with the Department for Transport and have requested guidance to support transport assessments. This, however, does not impact the Call for Sites.
- Officers will consider a range of site for residential and commercial use. In the case of larger sites, they could also be considered for mixed usage.

Councillor Lees proposed, and Councillor Reeves seconded, a motion that the group recommend Option 3. This was agreed unanimously.

AGREED: That

1. the Group's preference for the mapping to accompany the call for sites is option three (using a set of context maps)
2. the Group endorse the proposed approach to preparing a site submission form, subject to any amendments agreed with the Portfolio Holder.

5 **LOCAL PLAN LEADERSHIP GROUP: DRAFT MEETING SCHEDULE**

The group noted the draft meeting schedule for February to June 2021.

Committee: Local Plan Leadership Group

Date:

Title: Housing Study

Monday 8 February
2021

Report Author: Simon Payne, Local Plan Project Manager

spayne@uttlesford.gov.uk

Summary

1. A Housing Study was commissioned by the District Council and Braintree District Council to inform future local plan policies and forthcoming reviews of the Councils' Housing Strategies. The Study was intended to consider, amongst other matters, the issue of the affordability of housing and the need to help younger people get on the housing ladder. This report sets out the key findings that are relevant to Uttlesford and asks the Group to note the findings.

Recommendations

2. The Group is invited to note and comment on the findings set out in this Housing Study.
3. The Group confirms that the Study is added to the evidence base of new local plan.

Financial Implications

4. Costs associated with implementing recommendations in the report will be the subject to future reports as part of the preparation of the local plan and a Review of the Council's Housing Strategy

Background Papers

5. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report:
 - Full Report on the Housing Study

Impact

- 6.

Communication/Consultation	N/a
Community Safety	N/a
Equalities	The Study addresses equality issues in

	considering housing strategy,
Health and Safety	N/a
Human Rights/Legal Implications	The proposed approach is in accordance with statutory planning requirements.
Sustainability	The approach is consistent with the Council's objectives on sustainability.
Ward-specific impacts	All
Workforce/Workplace	N/a

Situation

7. Officers in the Planning and Housing Departments worked together in commissioning the Study. The work was originally commissioned when Uttlesford and Braintree Councils were planning to deliver Garden Communities, one of which straddled the District Boundary between the two Councils. After the Study started Uttlesford withdrew its plan from the examination process (Braintree also withdrew the part of its local plan that proposed a Garden Committee on the boundary with Uttlesford). The Study brief was consequently amended to omit the reference to specific development sites.
8. The Study therefore considers housing in new communities and other strategic scale developments (1,000+ new homes). The Consultants consider that many of the Garden Cities principles can be applied to strategic scale development and to a lesser extent smaller scale schemes. Their recommendations fall into two broad categories; those which can be taken forward immediately and others which only relate to the delivery of large-scale housing schemes.
9. This Study has been informed by two Listening Events that were held in October 2019 and takes account of evidence provided by the councils and others. Interviews were conducted with the promoters of North Uttlesford Garden Community, Easton Park and West of Braintree; and with the operators of Chesterford Research Park, Stansted Airport and Stansted Chamber of Commerce. Evidence has also been taken from work undertaken by Cambridge University Hospital and from the Wellcome Trust.
10. The Study considered different housing options at different ages and stages in life with the value of providing choices and offering flexibility.
11. The preparation of the technology section of the Study predated the Covid-19 pandemic and the events of the last few months have highlighted the importance of technology in maintaining the quality of life and the very real and current need to plan homes and places to enable people to work and study from home.

12. Another consideration is the commitment the District Council is giving to addressing the Climate Change and Biodiversity Emergency. Cabinet are due to consider informal Planning Guidance on Climate Change on 9 February and these new planning policies will also shape the future of housing within the District.

Findings of the Study (Executive Summary attached as Appendix)

New Homes

- a. For those at the beginning of the housing ladder (households with low incomes who do not have suitable accommodation) there is an ongoing need for rented affordable housing and this should ideally be part of all new housing schemes. Community led housing schemes could be encouraged to provide rented affordable housing.
- b. For those on higher incomes and at other end of housing ladder there is a need for a diversity of housing to recognise peoples' changing housing needs as families grow and then decrease. There is a role of custom and self-build housing and for market rented accommodation. Build to rent funded by institutional investors can meet a range of housing needs and offers a more secure form of renting as the investor is looking for long term returns. Demand for rented accommodation will be highest in locations near to large employment areas. It is suggested that the Council test the market with an interested developer.
- c. For those on intermediate incomes (in the middle of the ladder) the Study recommends looking at a range of options - a local Living Rent; shared ownership; equity share.
- d. For those with specialist housing needs, some will access social rented options. The District Council is producing a Housing Strategy which will consider such needs along with retirement housing and housing with care options.
- e. Councils will need to work with gypsy & traveller organisations to deliver the identified needs.

Housing Need and Demand

- f. In terms of affordable rented accommodation, highest need is for 1 or 2 bedrooms.
- g. There are benefits of developing housing for the older person in strategic sites as design of housing can be adaptable and of wider environment accessible by foot, cycle or mobility scooter.
- h. Early engagement with site promoters to discuss housing mix is suggested

Employment

- i. The Study found demand for private rented accommodation from people working at Stansted Airport and Chesterford Research Park who do not want a long-term housing option. There were similar findings from surveys undertaken by Cambridge University Hospital and the Wellcome Trust. For those looking to settle and with incomes of £32,000-£50,000 there is interest in low cost home ownership.
- j. The planning of new communities and strategic development should consider job opportunities and housing needs of people who live and work locally.

Accelerating delivery

- k. The Study suggests having a variety of housing models to create diversity. Other means are selling plots in new communities and strategic sites to small and medium sized builders; use of modern methods of construction and self and custom build housing. In relation to the latter there is potential for the Councils to be more active in meeting this demand.

Delivery of New Council Homes

- l. The Study sets out a route map that includes renewing the business plan to ensure maximum benefits are achieved, reviewing the council's objectives to be clear about priorities, developing strategic partnerships to secure land and deliver new council homes. It also suggests considering 'strip lease arrangements'¹ and the creation of a dedicated housing company to either increase the provision of affordable rented homes or deliver market rented homes that generate a long-term revenue stream for the council.

Housing Registers and Allocations Policies

- m. The Study suggests that Uttlesford reviews its current eligibility criteria to widen access to affordable housing.

Implications for new Uttlesford Housing Strategy

- n. Three key themes for the new strategy are suggested
 - *Choice* – pro-active housing options and advice service, new allocations policy and local lettings plans, innovation and variety in tenure and design

■ _____
¹ A very long term leasehold with relatively modest rental payments and tenant has option to buy back the real estate at the end of the lease for a nominal payment

- *Engagement, collaboration and partnership* – early engagement with promoters/applicants of major developments, ongoing engagement with communities and residents, engagement with employers to promote and understand housing preferences, and effective partnership working
- *Delivery* – of high-quality new homes to include a new, expanded council-house programme, pro-active facilitation of custom/self and community housing and new joint ventures.

Housing and Technology

- o. The Study considers future working patterns. It comments on how we've seen people's homes become their office, classroom, gym etc. It suggests that all new communities should have digital infrastructure strategies and homes designed to provide space for work and Study for all family members.
- p. It also considers the role of co-working spaces offering flexibility and meeting spaces.

Leadership and collaboration

- q. The Study suggests that the creation of new communities requires civic leadership and long-term relationships between councils, promoters and house builders, and others. The councils should create formal and informal working arrangements to ensure effective engagement between key parties.

Key Recommendations from the Study

Operational Changes

1. Create a one-stop shop housing options service to promote the full range of housing choices and tenures, alongside homelessness prevention.
2. Review housing partnership working arrangements in order to deliver greater choice of homes and include developers and housebuilders in strategic housing conversations.
3. Engage with 'target customers' to understand their housing preferences including older residents and people working in Uttlesford.
4. Publish a Prospectus that sets out priorities for mainstream and specialist housing.
5. Create a custom/self-build and community housing service with a dedicated officer or commissioned service to develop and bring forward schemes. A business case could be developed by the Council or third parties for the service to be self-financing with income through management fees for delivering each project.

6. Develop an Innovation Demonstrator Project through purchasing land on a large site. The project should be shaped by a local working group but, as an example, could include serviced plots for self-build or custom build, plots for local builders and land for affordable homes all to be built to Zero Carbon standards. The intention would be to generate a return whilst taking a patient approach to payments in order to facilitate flow for self/customer builders and local builders.

For Uttlesford Council Only

- a. Ensure the new Housing Strategy considers the housing needs and preferences of all those who live and work in the district, including a framework for Affordable, Sub-Market and Market Housing Options based on the Homes outlined in the Executive Summary.
- b. Develop a Business and Delivery Plan for New Council Homes based on the steps outlined in this Study.
- c. Develop an approach towards the use of Modern Methods of Construction, through site visits and discussion with Swan and other local housing associations.
- d. Assess the monetary and non-monetary value of a long-term lease arrangement with an institutional investor for delivery of social rented homes.
- e. Evaluate direct delivery or management of market rented homes by the council through a wholly owned company
- f. Amend the Allocations Policy to widen access to affordable housing, through easing the local connection requirements.
- g. Adopt the themes of choice, engagement, collaboration, partnership and delivery for the new Housing Strategy, lifting work from this Study as appropriate.

Planning, determining, and delivering new communities

7. Ensure the governance structures for new communities enable both internal public sector discussion and strategic dialogue with the promoter or developer.
8. Ensure planning policies encourage diversity of tenure and welcome innovation.
9. Set aspirational goals for accessibility, adaptability and connectivity to ensure your homes are fit for people of all ages and abilities; and enable home working and Study.
10. Encourage very early engagement to share information on the identified needs of particular groups including those with specialist housing needs, and Gypsies and Travellers.

11. Agree Local Lettings Policies for new communities in order to create balanced communities.
12. Ensure a monitoring and review system is in place for each new community in order to collect the evidence to underpin future planning decisions.

Risk Analysis

13.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
The findings in Housing Study may become out of date given emerging local plan policies	3 – Moderate risk given unforeseen issues arising from pandemic	3 – Failure could undermine achievement of Council objectives	Review findings in the light of changing circumstances.

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.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1.4 INTRODUCTION

This Study was commissioned by Uttlesford and Braintree District Councils in 2019. At that time the councils were planning four new Garden Communities and it was intended that an employment Study would be commissioned to sit alongside this Housing Study and together inform a new Development Plan Document. The situation is now different, and therefore the Study has a new dual purpose:

- To recommend strategic and operational changes that both councils can make in the short to medium term
- To recommend approaches to be applied when planning, determining and developing new communities and other strategic scale developments.

In this Study, the term strategic scale development refers to sites that will deliver more than 1,000 new homes. This is roughly the number of new homes required for a new primary school, and a development of this size would also be expected to provide other resources such as local shops and community centre. There is no upper limit for the size of a strategic scale development, but it is rare for any single development site to provide more than 10,000 homes, which is the size of a market town.

Strategic scale developments need to be designed to fit within the local context and may be built on the edge of an existing settlement or as a new community. Whatever the setting, it is important that there is a comprehensive plan for the whole site that covers housing, employment, community and connectivity, and other aspects such as character and addressing climate change, both within the site and in the wider area.

This Study has been informed by two Listening Events that were held in October 2019 and takes account of evidence provided the councils and others. Interviews were conducted with the promoters of North Uttlesford Garden Community, Easton Park and West of Braintree; and with the operators of Chesterford Research Park, Stansted Airport and Stansted Chamber of Commerce. We would like to thank everyone for sharing their views and exploring ideas so positively.

1.5 NEW HOMES

Housing is expensive in Braintree and Uttlesford, both to buy and rent. This picture is the same in surrounding areas, and therefore we have used some employee feedback from South Cambridgeshire to supplement the evidence and information about Braintree and Uttlesford. It is important that any strategy or policy for new homes should encompass the housing needs and preferences of everyone. We provide some examples of households and their preferred housing options in the Housing Need and Demand chapter. Many factors influence people's choices including age, income and whether the person or family want a short- or long-term accommodation option, and how flexible they might want tenure to be.

At the beginning of the housing ladder are households with low incomes who do not have suitable accommodation. The option for these households is generally an affordable, social or private rented home, perhaps financed in part or whole by Universal Credit. Most of these households will qualify for Affordable Housing in Braintree but may not meet the eligibility criteria for the Uttlesford Housing Register which has more restrictive rules. There is an ongoing need for Rented Affordable Housing, and this should be part of all new housing

schemes, unless there are sound reasons for a departure from policy. We suggest that the Councils encourage community-led housing schemes to come forward to provide Rented Affordable Housing as part of locally based solutions but anticipate that this will meet only an element of the overall need. As a stock-holding council, Uttlesford can play a significant part in the delivery of new Rented Affordable Housing. Both councils have enabling roles to play in working with housing associations and developers to bring forward new Rented Affordable Homes.

Those with higher incomes who are at the other end of the housing ladder are households who can afford to rent or buy a home paying open market prices. Many people opt to move into homeownership when their finances permit. They may purchase a home outright or with a mortgage funded through their income and with a deposit that they have raised. Often homeowners gradually move into larger homes as their income and family size grows, and then may opt to downsize as they age perhaps releasing equity to help their own children buy their first home. We recommend that diversity is encouraged in this sector: diversity of provider and design in order to provide greater choice to home buyers. We also advise that the councils play a stronger role in bringing forward custom and self-build housing including co-housing in order to meet identified demand and also to stimulate more diversity in new and existing communities.

There is considerable debate about whether more people would opt for long term market rented options if there was a better rental offer. We have been told that there is a shortage of market rented housing in Uttlesford, including for families and for single people who want to share with others. We therefore think that market rented accommodation should be part of the overall mix.

There is growing interest in Build to Rent which includes both apartments and family housing, funded by Institutional Investors, and with designs that particularly suit the rental market. Build to Rent provides more security than traditional private rented homes as the investors are looking for long term returns. Build to Rent housing can be an option for households with a wide range of incomes as schemes can include market rented and discount market rented homes, which is a form of Affordable Housing. It can meet both short- and long-term accommodation needs. We advise that the councils approach this sector either directly or with interested developers, in order to seriously test the market. It is likely that demand will be highest near the largest employment sites.

Between those who need Affordable Housing and those who can afford market housing are people on 'intermediate' incomes who do not have the need or vulnerability required for priority access to Social housing (such as dependent children, overcrowded housing, physical impairment or medical need). As with other income groups, there are a wide range of people in this category and they will have a range of housing preferences. Some would like a rented offer and may be interested in an intermediate rental product. Others will aspire to home ownership and be interested in shared ownership, equity share or Rent to Buy. This group might benefit most from a Local Living Rent. A Local Living Rent would be approximately 70% of the Average Market Rent and would be a policy change to be developed over time through discussion with Homes England, Government and housing providers. A Local Living Rent reduces the need for public subsidy through Housing Benefit and is affordable to everyone on average incomes. Affordable local rent levels allow people, to save for a deposit to buy into shared ownership or equity, if their circumstances permit and if they want to become homeowners. Shared ownership is the most common form of low-cost home ownership, and is accessible with deposit as low as £5,000. Equity share is an alternative and this has been a

very attractive option for all those who have taken advantage of the Government's Help to Buy Scheme. The study outlines a range of options, and we advise that the councils carefully encourage a wider range of intermediate housing options in order to test the market for new products and to better match the offer with people's diverse preferences.

People with specialist housing needs generally have low incomes and will access social rented options, but this is not always the case particularly with regard to retirement housing and housing with care options. Essex County Council is producing a new Housing Strategy that will include provision for people with specialist housing needs, and we recommend that the development of this Strategy is accompanied by engagement with these needs groups to better understand their housing preferences.

Accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers can be provided in different ways. Some opt for sites managed by the Local Authority or a Housing Association, and others would prefer to have the opportunity to buy land to privately own and manage their sites. Braintree and Uttlesford both have some additional need for Gypsy and Traveller provision, and we recommend that local Gypsies and Travellers are consulted on any proposals at an early stage.

1.6 HOUSING NEED AND DEMAND

There is much in common between Uttlesford and Braintree, however Braintree is a little poorer than Uttlesford across a range of socio-economic factors, including household income, educational attainment and health outcomes. Housing is expensive in both districts, with the cost of an average house being 10 times the average income in Braintree and 12 times the average income in Uttlesford.

In both districts, there is a need for Affordable Housing including rented homes. The market for shared ownership and intermediate housing products is smaller in Braintree, but this may not hold true in the future. In terms of affordable rented accommodation, the highest need in both districts is for homes with one or two bedrooms. The delivery of new homes, particularly the Affordable Housing, should be aligned to the delivery of community infrastructure, public transport and new jobs.

Reflecting the national picture, the number of older people is increasing in Braintree and Uttlesford. Many older people want to remain living in their own community, but some will choose to move into more suitable accommodation or to live near family members. Strategic sites can be good places for older people to live because new housing can be designed to be adaptable, and the wider environment will be designed so that it is easy to move around by foot, cycle or mobility scooter.

There is strong value in early engagement between the councils and the site promoters to discuss housing mix in order to develop shared approaches and ensure that any particular needs are incorporated early in the design process.

Employment

In both Uttlesford and Braintree, a high number of people who live in the district, commute out of the district for work. In both districts, there are a significant number of small and medium sized businesses, and people who work in local services including health, education and retail.

Uttlesford has two large employment sites, Stansted Airport and Chesterford Research Park, which are both projected to create hundreds of new jobs. There is a demand for private rented

accommodation from people working at these sites who do not want a long-term housing option.

Several employers including Cambridge University Hospitals (CUH) and the Wellcome Institute have recently consulted employees on their housing needs and preferences. They found that there is demand from younger people for private rented housing, and that many younger people are comfortable to have shared accommodation. As young people want to form settled households, they will want access to more secure housing, and many are interested in low cost home ownership if their annual household earnings are £32,000 – £50,000. The Government's proposals for First Homes are expected to be attractive, but other low-cost home ownership options may also be popular.

CUH and the Wellcome Institute found interest in innovative tenures and we advise that these are tested on strategic sites, perhaps with a cascade mechanism so that the tenure can be changed if necessary. CUH found that some people who are eligible for Affordable Housing are not aware of this and may falsely believe that they would be part of a very long waiting list. We suggest that a new Housing Advice and Options service be developed that promotes and explains the full range of housing options available to everyone. This should include information about the new homes available in the districts, and the range of tenures.

The planning of new communities and strategic developments should include clear employment strategies that consider the job opportunities and housing needs of people who will live and work locally. This should include 'key workers' working in vital services including education, health, social care and emergency services, and food retail.

Accelerating Delivery

Developments should build out at pace in order to create sustainable new communities and meet demand for new homes. The Letwin review found that diversity is the key to delivery and therefore new planning and housing policies should encourage innovation in tenure and construction, whilst being clear about the expectations for Affordable Housing.

New housing models are being delivered in different parts of the country. Braintree and Uttlesford will be attractive locations because they are areas with high housing demand. Examples of more varied housing include: Net Zero Carbon schemes, mixed tenure retirement living, Rent to Buy, Build to Rent including family housing, and self or custom build housing. A further way to create diversity is to sell smaller plots to small and medium sized local builders, as well as larger plots to the major housebuilders. Small builders often struggle to find land, and therefore would probably keen to take advantage of opportunities in New Communities. The wider choice provides an element of competition between providers and this can also help to drive the market.

There is growing interest in Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) generated by concern about shortages of skilled labour and interest in ways to speed up construction whilst ensuring quality. The term MMC covers a range of products from components and sub-components to modular housing. Quality can be assured as each item can be checked before leaving the factory. There is local expertise and interest, including from housing associations such as Greenfields and Swan Housing, and it is recommended that the councils deepen their understanding through some site visits, and through discussions with interested housing associations and developers. Uttlesford should consider the value of using MMC in its council-house building programme.

Self and Custom Build Housing

There is significant demand for self and custom build housing in Braintree and Uttlesford, as identified by the Self and Custom Build Registers. The councils have taken a relatively passive approach towards this sector, and there is potential for Braintree and Uttlesford to work together to identify and bring forward schemes to meet and stimulate demand, engaging with developers, landowners and those on the Self and Custom Build Register.

Delivery of New Council Homes

Uttlesford District Council has completed an investment programme that has seen a comprehensive refurbishment and redevelopment programme of its sheltered housing schemes, and the development of new council homes on a number of small council-owned sites. To date, the majority of schemes have been planned and tendered separately. The Council is now ready to plan a new investment programme and wants to deliver around 200 homes over the next three years. We believe that target is achievable and could be exceeded. The Study sets out a route-map that includes renewing the business plan to ensure maximum benefits are achieved, reviewing the council's objectives to be clear about priorities, developing strategic partnerships to secure land and deliver new council homes. The council is also asked to consider 'strip lease arrangements' and the creation of a dedicated housing company to either increase the provision of affordable rented homes or deliver market rented homes that generate a long term revenue stream for the council.

Uttlesford and Braintree Housing Registers and Allocations Policies

Uttlesford has its own Allocations Policy whilst Braintree has a shared Allocations Policy with a group of seven councils in Essex and Suffolk.

Uttlesford and Braintree have similar approaches towards assessing 'reasonable preference' based upon national legislation and guidance regarding priority needs, and more varied approaches when assessing eligibility in terms of 'local connection'. Uttlesford requires applicants to have lived or worked in the district for at least three years, whilst Braintree has no such requirement. Having assessed the impact of different criteria upon demand, we suggest that Uttlesford reviews its current eligibility criteria in order to widen access to Affordable Housing.

Local Authorities have powers to use Local Lettings Policies in certain circumstances, and we advise the Councils to develop shared Local Lettings Policy for any new community that straddles their boundaries. This is so that there will be a single, joined-up approach towards the letting of affordable homes in these communities.

Implications for new Uttlesford Housing Strategy

Uttlesford's current Housing Strategy was published in 2016 for the period to 2021. We have considered the implications for the proposed new Strategy arising from our Study. We recommend three key themes for the new Strategy:

- (i) **Choice** – pro-active housing options and advice service, new allocations policy and local lettings plans, innovation and variety in tenure and design
- (ii) **Engagement, collaboration and partnership** – early engagement with promoters/applicants of major developments, ongoing engagement with

communities and residents, engagement with employers to promote and understand housing preferences, and effective partnership working

- (iii) **Delivery** – of high-quality new homes to include a new, expanded council-house programme, pro-active facilitation of custom/self and community housing and new joint ventures.

Housing and Technology

The study includes a section on housing and technology which draws from two major reports that considered future working patterns. Digital infrastructure is also fundamental for children and young people to study at home, and for older people and others to live independently with the help of assistive technology.

Over recent months during the Coronavirus pandemic, there has been a huge increase in home-working and in the use of communications platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams and WhatsApp. For many people, their homes have become their offices and also the place for their social lives. People have used the same communications platforms for work and leisure, whether to keep in touch with family, participate in community activities or do exercise classes. At the same time, the vast majority of children have been home-schooled, communicating with their teachers through their laptops or phones. There is a sense that this will create lasting change. Therefore, it is very clear that all New Communities should have digital infrastructure strategies. Homes should be designed to provide space for work and study, by adults and children.

People enjoy working for short periods in coffee shops or similar as a break from working at home, or to make use of time between other commitments. There is also an expansion of co-working spaces offering flexible tenancies, hot-desking and meeting space. The delivery of these sorts of facilities should be planned as part of the phasing strategies for New Communities.

Leadership and Collaboration

New Communities are long-term projects. Milton Keynes was started in 1967 and achieved its original goal of 250,000 residents around 2011. Smaller new communities of 2,000 or 3,000 homes usually take 10 -15 years to build out. These timescales do not include the time needed to design the new developments and take them through the planning process. The creation of these communities requires civic leadership and long-term relationships between councils, promoters and housebuilders, and others. The councils should create formal and informal working arrangements to ensure effective engagement between key parties. This could include a New Communities Strategic Development Board, perhaps within the framework of North Essex Garden Communities, to develop and co-ordinate place-shaping and community-building for all ages. The agendas should have two parts: one for internal public sector discussions and one with the developer(s) for the sites under discussion. The Board could be supported by a multi-disciplinary team whose members may combine their work on strategic sites with other duties. The purpose would be to ensure an organisational approach that encourages creativity, rounded debate and active learning.

Effective engagement with local people, including new residents, is a key element of successful community-building. It enables local people to help shape the new development, and they will bring a unique perspective rooted in their local knowledge. It is important to listen and develop mutual understanding, and also to nurture connections between new and existing communities. Local ward councillors, parish councillors and other community leaders can play

a very constructive role in facilitating two-way communication if they are kept up to date with technical discussions.

1.7 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Key recommendations are noted here and included in the Executive Summary. There is further detail in the body of the Study. The recommended actions fall into two categories:

- Operational changes for the short to medium term
- Approaches to be applied when planning, determining and delivering New Communities and other strategic scale developments.

The councils should develop an Action Plan with monitoring arrangements for the recommendations that they adopt. Braintree and Uttlesford could work together to deliver projects or operate independently.

Operational Changes

1. Create a one-stop shop housing options service to promote the full range of housing choices and tenures, alongside homelessness prevention
2. Review housing partnership working arrangements in order to deliver greater choice of homes and include developers and housebuilders in strategic housing conversations.
3. Engage with 'target customers' to understand their housing preferences including older residents and people working in Braintree and Uttlesford
4. Publish a Prospectus that sets out your priorities for mainstream and specialist housing.
5. Create a custom/self-build and community housing service with a dedicated officer or commissioned service to develop and bring forward schemes. A business case could be developed by the Council or third parties for the service to be self-financing with income through management fees for delivering each project.
6. Develop an Innovation Demonstrator Project through purchasing land on a large site. The project should be shaped by a local working group but, as an example, could include serviced plots for self-build or custom build, plots for local builders and land for affordable homes all to be built to Zero Carbon standards. The intention would be to generate a return whilst taking a patient approach to payments in order to facilitate flow for self/customer builders and local builders.

For Uttlesford Council Only

- a. Ensure the new Housing Strategy considers the housing needs and preferences of all those who live and work in the district, including a framework for Affordable, Sub-Market and Market Housing Options based on the Homes outlined in the Executive Summary
- b. Develop a Business and Delivery Plan for New Council Homes based on the steps outlined in this study
- c. Develop your approach towards the use of Modern Methods of Construction, through site visits and discussion with Swan and other local housing associations
- d. Assess the monetary and non-monetary value of a long-term lease arrangement with an institutional investor for delivery of social rented homes
- e. Evaluate direct delivery or management of market rented homes by the council through a wholly owned company
- f. Amend the Allocations Policy to widen access to affordable housing, through easing the local connection requirements.
- g. Adopt the themes of choice, engagement, collaboration, partnership and delivery for the new Housing Strategy, lifting work from this study as appropriate.

Planning, determining, and delivering new communities

7. Ensure the governance structures for New Communities enable both internal public sector discussion and strategic dialogue with the promoter or developer
8. Ensure planning policies encourage diversity of tenure and welcome innovation
9. Set aspirational goals for accessibility, adaptability and connectivity to ensure your homes are fit for people of all ages and abilities; and enable home working and study
10. Encourage very early engagement to share information on the identified needs of particular groups including those with specialist housing needs, and Gypsies and Travellers
11. Agree Local Lettings Policies for New Communities in order to create balanced communities
12. Ensure a monitoring and review system is in place for each New Community in order to collect the evidence to underpin future planning decisions

Agenda Item 4

Committee: Local Plan Leadership Group
Title: Feedback on Consultation on Theme 1: Where you live
Report Author: Sarah Nicholas, New Communities Senior Planning Officer
snicholas@uttlesford.gov.uk
Date: Monday, 8 February 2021

Summary

1. This report feeds back on the comments received on the First Consultation (Issues and Options) Theme 1: Where you live.

Recommendations

2. That members note
 - a. the consultation responses and the Forum's views
 - b. potential actions to address issues
 - c. that no final recommendations will be made until all comments have been considered (consultation ends 21 April 2021)
3. That members, if desired, provide any feedback e.g. for officers to consider later when making final recommendations, for Forum members' reference.

Financial Implications

2. None at this stage.

Background Papers

3. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

Impact

4. None

Communication/Consultation	Consultation is on going
Community Safety	n/a
Equalities	Forthcoming policies will be subject to an equalities and Health Impact Assessment

Health and Safety	n/a
Human Rights/Legal Implications	n/a
Sustainability	Forthcoming policies will need to meet the sustainability objective of the Council
Ward-specific impacts	All
Workforce/Workplace	n/a

Situation

Background

5. In preparation to the formal consultation on a draft Local Plan the Council is consulting on a series of 9 themes. The starting point for the consultation on each theme is the Community Stakeholder Forum whose purpose is to inform, start a discussion and generate comment.
6. The first theme was on the topic of Where You Live and was discussed by the Community Stakeholder Forum on 11 November. The Forum heard a presentation from Dr Noha Nasser on '15-minute neighbourhoods' and then discussed the points raised in her presentation. Dr Nasser's presentation and a video of the Forum are available on the [website](#).
7. Following the Forum the theme was open for public consultation asking the general question of 'What do you value about where you live and how would you like to see it improve in the future?'. People are invited to make comments up to the close of the whole consultation on all the themes on 21 April. However, comments received within the first four weeks would be summarised and presented back to the Forum for comment and to this working group.

Summary of consultation responses

8. Between the 11 November and 9 December 2020, 33 people responded to the theme.
9. Appendix 1 is a summary of these comments. Common themes are shown on the infographic adapted from the consultation document. This is followed by a more detailed summary of the comments.

Community Stakeholder response

10. Appendix 1 was discussed by the Community Stakeholder Forum on 13 January 2021. They were asked to consider if any of the comments were particularly pertinent, surprising or hadn't raised an issue.

11. Some members were surprised by the comments about lack of open space. Others felt that these comments related to large green amenity spaces. Whereas there is a lot of farmland there are less parks. The importance of having a large area of open space to relieve the pressure on Hatfield Forest was specifically mentioned.
12. The appropriateness of a 15-minute community to a rural district was questioned. It was considered that village populations are too small to support a 15-minute neighbourhood and that people had to drive to larger towns. An alternative view was put forward that providing more services locally reduced the need for car journeys. It could also be a reason to stop sprawling development.
13. The responses clearly showed that people are proud of where they live; proud of the heritage and feel strongly that it needs to be protected.

Officer comments

14. The places that people valued are recognised and the local plan needs the appropriate protection policies. Strong design policies are needed to deliver development which respects the existing character. The Council will need to consider policies which allow development that reflects or creates a new rural vernacular which people can be proud of; that is affordable and that is integrated or connected to the village or town centre.
15. Policies are also needed to ensure new services and facilities are provided to support new developments.
16. The need for local job opportunities was identified. The Council may wish to consider more innovative policies than allocating employment land.
17. In relation to the issue of parks raised by the Forum members, there are only 7 parks in the whole of Uttlesford and perhaps the local plan needs to consider any imbalance in the diversity and distribution of open space/green spaces across the district.
18. In relation to thinking about the development strategy, the comments raise some interesting questions. For example how does the Council take into account views that consider existing settlements to be the right size against views that support the provisions of an improved bus service or new local shop (which would need an increased population to support them)? Or the view that residents do not expect a range of services in villages and the recognised reliance on the car against the Council's aims to combat the climate crisis? Should the local plan consider a strategy based on 15-minute neighbourhoods and what do these look like in a rural district?
19. When developing policies which affect the environment where people live, the Council will need to be mindful of its duty under the Equality Act 2010. Of relevance here is to ensure that policies don't negatively impact on people due to their protected characteristic – to ensure that everyone has access to a good home, employment, healthy environment and services and facilities.

20. Reliance on the car and lack of efficient or practical alternatives is identified as a big issue (covered in theme 4)

What happens next

21. The consultation on this theme remains open until 21 April 2021.

22. Officers and the Forum will consider any feedback made by members at this meeting. Final recommendations, taking into account all comments on all themes will be prepared after the close of consultation in April. The Council will use the comments to determine its vision, strategy, policies and prepare the draft Local Plan.

23. Early comments made on Theme 2: Character and Heritage will be presented to the next meeting of the Working Group.

Risk Analysis

24.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Insufficient regard is given to the comments received on the consultation	1 Little	3: Could lead to unsound plan.	Members and officers to carefully consider results of consultation, and clearly explain reasons for decisions made.

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.

What you have told us so far ...



The built environment



Historic environment valued;
New developments needs to respected historic character of settlements;
Need for affordable housing;
Changes in working habits may increase demand for housing in villages.

People, community



Strong community spirit valued;
Settlements considered to be right size to foster community spirit.

Community facilities



Community facilities valued;
Need to be provided in new developments

Access to services



Existing services valued;
Range of services not expected in small settlements;
New services need to be provided with development;

Connections



Value strategic road and rail connections;
Improved bus service, walking and cycling connections would reduce reliance on car.

Jobs



Value proximity to larger towns and cities;
Need for local job opportunities.



The natural environment

Access to countryside valued;
Rural environment valued;
Need for more open spaces;
Should be main consideration of new development.



What's in walking distance?

For some, services are in walking distance;
Issue of areas without pavements or lighting;
Developments on edge of settlements are beyond 15 minute walk;



Recreation & sport facilities

Value range of facilities found in settlements;
Need for better facilities in some areas.



Lifestyle

Value opportunities for exercise and access to nature.

What do you value about where you live and how would you like to see it improve in the future?

Built environment: What do you like about the built character of where you live?

General comments

Value the spread of small towns and villages across District which have preserved much of the area's historical, cultural and community worth.

Is 15 min neighbourhood appropriate to rural district? People like rural location/isolation of village life.

Delivering a 15 minute community doesn't require a new settlement. Existing settlements would benefit from selective small-scale development to provide affordable housing, local facilities and improved public transport.

Changes in working habits resulting from technology advances (notably fibre & Zoom) and accelerated by the Covid crisis are likely to increase demand for housing in rural villages. Equally, the climate crisis requires a significant shift away from the traditional commuting model of working.

Need for affordable housing with mixed communities to avoid social isolation.

We need to build houses fit for the 22nd century.

Chronic lack of affordable housing.

Settlement specific comments

Clavering	Value variety and low density. New development has increased traffic and exacerbated flooding and light pollution.
Little Easton	Value historic buildings and historic connections. Need affordable housing for local people
Saffron Walden	Historic architecture of human scale and widely admired. Need more affordable housing
Stansted Mountfitchet	Include trees in new housing developments. Value good facilities, green spaces, access to transport links
Thaxted	Value heritage. Negative impact of traffic, would like 20mph speed limit through village
Various	New developments do not reflect vernacular style. Rural character of settlement

Natural environment: How easy is it for you to access nature?

General comments

Value agricultural countryside.

Environmental and sustainability factors should be main consideration of new development.

Uttlesford should be leader in Green recovery.

Need for greenspace and Country Park to relieve pressure on Hatfield Forest, need tariff on new housing to fund protection of Hatfield Forest

Settlement specific comments

Elsenham	Rural character has been spoilt by recent development.
Great Dunmow	Value open spaces. Need to ensure new spaces provided in new development
Little Easton	Value rural environment. Promote restoration of Easton Park as country park for benefit of District and relieve pressure on Hatfield Forest.
Saffron Walden	Limited open space for leisure, need more open space.
Takeley	Value rural character, wildlife.
Various	Value access to countryside from the village

What's in walking distance? Can you walk to the places you need or like to go?

Settlement specific comments

Barnston	A 'neglected corner' with no amenities.
Clavering	Dispersed village but most village services within walking distance; some roads without pavement or lighting.
Saffron Walden	Wide range of services accessible. Developments on the edge are beyond 15 minutes' walk.
Takeley	Community buildings, shops, job opportunities.
Various (Newport/Clavering)	Walkable community not easily achieved in linear / dispersed villages.

Recreation and sport facilities: What are recreation facilities like in your area? How could they be improved?

Settlement specific comments

Clavering	Has range of facilities in village.
Great Chesterford	Value integrated open spaces.
Great Dunmow	Has good facilities for town of this size.
Priors Green (Takeley/Canfield)	Lack of open space, distant from facilities in Takeley.
Saffron Walden	Need for more and better leisure and sports facilities.
Takeley	Has sports pitches and clubs.

Lifestyle: Does where you live enable you to live a healthy lifestyle? If not, what would help?

General comments

A good work-life balance, healthy diet & physical exercise may be unaffordable to key workers

Settlement specific comments

Clavering	Easy to access physical activity, nature, allotments for fresh food.
Great Dunmow	Opportunities for exercise, fresh food and be mentally active.
Hadstock	Whilst there are social networks some people might be socially isolated.
Little Easton	Value peace, pollution free, risk free and healthy environment.
Takeley	Opportunities for healthy lifestyle.

Jobs: Are there work opportunities in your area?

General comments

Value proximity to larger towns and cities

Lack of job opportunities

Settlement specific comments

Saffron Walden	Need for more local jobs.
Great Dunmow	Lack of job opportunities.
Little Easton	Most residents commute. Value other benefits of rural living than being able to walk to work.
Clavering	Minimal opportunities. Need to travel out of village.
Takeley	Job opportunities at airport and able to commute by train from Stansted or Bishop's Stortford.

Connections: Can you use sustainable transport – train, bus, cycle, walk?

General comments

Value strategic connections (M11, rail-line, airport)

Need to have more emphasis of sustainable travel.

Public transport connections poor and expensive making a car cheaper and easier; lack of foot and cycle paths.

Low-cost transport options required and delivered early in development.

Settlement specific comments

Barnston	Benefits from good express bus service but less useful local service. Village would benefit from by-pass and all-weather footpaths to access services.
Clavering	Limited sustainable opportunities, a car is essential. A reliable and frequent bus service is a priority.
Great Dunmow	Poor connections to rail.
Hadstock	Poor bus service, lorries and traffic making walking hazardous.
Little Easton	Value walking and cycling in local area otherwise car required.
Saffron Walden	Poor walking and cycling connections; poor public transport links; need safer streets and better connectivity.
Takeley	Primary school walkable, good bus service, road access to M11, rail stations at Stortford and Airport.

Access to services: How easy is it to access essential services?

General comments

Value good health, education and other services and proximity to larger towns and cities

Difficult (time and cost) to access services such as Job centres

Refuge from domestic violence needed

Settlement specific comments

Clavering	Has shop, school and pub in village, other services 3-4 miles away.
Great Chesterford	Developments on periphery not integrated with village centre and have inadequate physical connections.
Great Dunmow	Value shops making themselves different and special. Need improved access to medical facilities. Services under pressure due to recent growth. New development should provide additional services.
Hadstock	No shop or pub and so reliant on car.
Little Easton	Value services in Gt Dunmow and Thaxted. Do not expect services in small village. Would like village shop and better bus service.
Saffron Walden	Need for easily accessible medical care.

Stansted Moutfitchet	Has a good range of services.
Takeley	The primary schools are oversubscribed, no secondary school, no doctors' surgery. No additional services provided with new development.

Community facilities: Are there places near where you live to meet, exercise, hold groups and activities?

General comments

Value libraries for quiet space to study, free access to computers.

Community facilities needed in new development to prevent isolation and encourage community cohesion.

Settlement specific comments

Clavering	Has halls and church.
Great Dunmow	Value facilities for public and private functions.
Hadstock	Would like community hub with drop in facilities.
Little Easton	Value community facilities which are within walking distance. Potential to increase use of facilities.
Takeley	Has halls and church.

People and community: Who lives in your area, is there a sense of community and what makes that?

General comments

Lack local vision for Uttlesford - need devolved democratic power leading a strong community, providing for itself and living respectfully in balance with our environment and with each other.

A vision is needed as Uttlesford is currently a poorly linked, rural commuter district with high per-capita carbon emissions. Uttlesford should be the most sustainable rural district in the UK.

Settlement specific comments

Berden	Village has a sense of togetherness as a community.
Clavering	Village has strong sense of community and passion for locality. Many retirees, few young families due to limited and expensive housing.
Great Chesterford	The village is the right size to have a sense of community. There are thriving societies and other groups.

Great Dunmow	Value community spirit and broad mix of people.
Little Easton	People have made conscious choice to live in small village community
Saffron Walden	The town has a strong community spirit with active participation.
Takeley	Village has sense of community but falls to a small minority of dedicated individuals to nurture and sustain the community spirit.