

Uttlesford Local Plan (Issues and Options) 2020-2021

First Consultation: Theme 2 Character and Heritage 25 November 2020

Introduction

The Community Stakeholder Forum discussed the theme on 25 November 2020 and the theme was then open for comment.

Comments received by 23 December 2020 are summarised below and common themes are shown in the diagram.

These comments will be presented back to the Community Stakeholder Forum on 27 January 2021 and Local Plan Leadership Group on 22 February 2021.

Comments received after 24 December 2020 up to the close of consultation on 21 April 2021 will be brought together in a document summarising comments from all nine themes, the Council's response and how the issues raised in the comments will be reflected in the Draft Local Plan.

Between 25 November and 24 December 2020, 27 people responded to the theme.

What we have been told so far

The following is a summary of what people said about the issues relating to the provision of new development and its impact on the character and heritage of the District.

To read all the representations in full please go to the [Consultation Portal](#).

What do you like about the character and heritage of Uttlesford, and how would you like to see this protected and enhanced whilst providing new sustainable communities



Outstanding landscapes with historic rural settlements
Smaller communities would benefit from additional scale to support facilities and services
No coalescence between existing settlements
New development located within walking distance of good public transport and facilities
Development of larger communities should be focussed on brown field sites first
Impact on landscape and heritage can be mitigated with careful design and layout to create places



Car Dominance

Place cars underneath buildings
Adequate parking for dwellings to avoid on street
Locate new development close to public transport and close to facilities to reduce reliance on cars
Additional infrastructure required in the District to reduce car journeys



Density v Greenery

Density should reflect surrounding vernacular
High density close to centres and stations
Low density in rural locations
High density requires more play provision
Open spaces required in new developments to preserve biodiversity



Materials/ Standardisation/ Style

Use complimentary materials near heritage assets
Environmentally friendly materials to reduce carbon emissions



Standardisation not always bad –minimum standards for space, lighting etc



Generic developments eroding character
Imaginative design and materials
Mix of styles appropriate for new developments



Heritage: Protect and enhancement

Bespoke mitigation measures to limit harm
Avoid edge of town development with inadequate screening buffers
Regeneration sites in town centres must fit in with neighbouring buildings
Prevent changes to topography alien to character of the landscape

What do you like about the character and heritage of Uttlesford, and how you would like to see this protected and enhanced whilst providing new sustainable communities?

General comments

Uttlesford was considered by most respondents to have a distinctive rural character with an agricultural countryside, woodland areas, attractive historic market towns and villages. The character and heritage of the District is highly valued and should be protected

Outstanding landscapes with historic rural settlements set within them must be preserved through planning policy and development directed to areas of less importance.

Uttlesford benefits from multiple communities each with a strong community spirit with a base of community assets which define its character and heritage which provide a base to build sustainable and harmonious communities for the future

New development should promote social inclusion and provide mixed communities.

Policies should place heritage, character and landscape protection as key factors in decision making.

A Neighbourhood Plan is the most appropriate vehicle for deciding a local development strategy.

Smaller communities would benefit from additional scale to support the use of facilities and services, and enable improved public transport funded by developer contributions to reduce car usage

Some respondents felt that the new plan should spread the housing across the district, making delivery more achievable.

Some concern over the number of urban estates that keep being added to existing settlements and the ability of facilities and services to cope.

The character of existing towns and villages will be destroyed by edge developments. A ring of new houses does not plan for an integrated town but dormitory subdivisions

Development around areas that have already significantly contributed to housing needs, such as, Elsenham, Dunmow, Takeley must be protected from further development

One respondent thought that garden settlements were commuter towns by another name

Redevelop land within the existing towns providing heritage and character is not compromised

Development of larger communities should be focussed on brown field sites first

It was generally felt that there should be no coalescence between existing settlements. If necessary, large buffers should be installed.

Not all landscape can be safeguarded. Potential impact on landscape and heritage can be mitigated with careful design and layout to create places.

New housing development has to be located within walking distance of good public transport facilities and in locations that are truly sustainable in terms of access to local facilities and infrastructure.

If new communities are to be sustainable and carbon neutral then schools, surgeries, shops, day care centres, youth and community centres with good access to recreation facilities and open spaces need to be planned in line with the housing development

One respondent supported a Cambourne style new development adjoining motorway and rail networks

What do we want – a market town or city?

Car dominance: How can we address the often competing demands of travel and place?

Other countries successfully place car parking underneath the housing, either at ground level or below

Provide adequate parking so cars do not end up parked on pavements, detracting from any character.

People will not want to park their high-end vehicles away from their home

Reduction in car use will never be achieved whilst so little infrastructure is provided.

Car use can be reduced by investment in cycle & walking routes; higher density new development in suitable locations; enhanced 'green' public transport car pools; electric bicycles, and new train lines

Locating new development close to stations, bus routes and settlement centres with access to a good cycleway / pedestrian network would assist in reducing reliance on car use.

A sustainable new community with public transport and associated education, shops and jobs would assist in reducing car usage

Better footpath connectivity between villages and potentially extending the public footpath network to better accommodate bikes would help reduce car dependency

Transport links and infrastructure should be in place before occupation of development, reducing the need to use cars within the community. Links to the rest of the region essential.

Different travel patterns and scenarios may develop due to changing work patterns and technologies

Density v Greenery: What should be Uttlesford's future density strategy and why?

Density should be determined on a case by case basis and reflect surrounding vernacular.

New development should be of higher density close to village centres and stations in order to reduce the amount of greenfield land to be released

Need a mixed strategy with lower density in rural sites but allowing for more concentrated infill developments in towns as long as green spaces are provided.

High density requires proper maintenance - maintenance spending is critical to keep it functioning

Green open spaces must be incorporated into new developments to preserve biodiversity and our ecosystem.

Plan needs to be very descriptive about what is acceptable in terms of density, materials and style of new developments

Heritage: How do you think we should protect and enhance the setting of heritage assets and balance the need for locating new development in the most sustainable locations – should this be through integration and complementary design, or buffers?

Bespoke mitigation measures depending on the circumstances. Design can mitigate harm and buffers where possible to protect the setting of heritage assets.

Avoid edge of town development with inadequate screening buffers that adversely impact on views of settlements

Heritage assets should be enjoyed. Appropriate integration of new development will encourage future residents to learn and appreciate heritage assets as well as managing the wider environs of the asset.

Regeneration of redundant land in town centres must be high quality, intending to fit with neighbouring buildings

A Robust Spatial Strategy Process that looks at the most appropriate locations for development, irrespective of whether the land has been put forward by a developer

One respondent was concerned that changes to the topography with bunding around development was alien to the character of the townscape /landscape.

Materials/Standardisation /Style: What do you think should be the Council's future priorities when guiding developers in their use of materials? How can the Council and developers help deliver less standardised development? What style of development do you want to see built in the future (e.g. traditional and/or contemporary), and which new schemes do you like and dislike?

Building materials for developments near heritage assets should be complementary.

New materials in an appropriate context would not be out of place

Go for a contemporary twist on the vernacular rather than ersatz Tudor or medieval- to build the heritage of the future reflecting how we live now

Climate Emergency necessitates environmentally friendly materials. Using the most up-to-date building techniques and materials is important for making new builds energy efficient and to keep carbon emissions down. Viability, durability and availability are also important factors to consider.

Local materials and styles should be prioritised to reflect local characteristics

One respondent thought that the visible frontage of developments should reflect the use of traditional materials and timber, avoiding the eyesore of the standardised urban estate style of development

Neighbourhood Plans should define acceptable materials and define standards for external appearance

Some respondents felt that standardisation wasn't always bad. Standardised development should be allowed as long as it meets high quality build. Minimum standards of spacing, facilities, appearance, etc, that can be exceeded are appropriate

A few respondents considered that developers generic developments were eroding the quality of the built environment.

Quality over quantity must be a priority.

New buildings must be well designed: good sized rooms, light, materials, outdoor recreation, community spaces.

Should avoid never-ending estate roads and cul-de-sacs. Squares are good but obviously can't be used everywhere.

Inappropriate to determine a set style across the whole District. Largest settlements in Uttlesford have a variety of styles of buildings with some modern buildings between period ones. New developments should have a mix of styles and have individuality.

Adopt a selection of suitable styles and colours.

Imaginative design and materials could be specified so that new development is somewhere people want to live

Materials, Standardisation & Style: An updated Essex Design Guide could address this.

- **and which new schemes do you like and dislike?**

The Avenue looks interesting and quite pleasing. Newhall in Harlow is also award-winning, but the contemporary styling and layout is different just for the sake of being different.

New developments should have a mix of styles and have individuality. An example of this is Poundbury in Dorset. It is considered to be well planned and highly successful

I like what has been built around Cambridge. It is unashamedly modern but fits in, as good design always will. Woodlands Park in Dunmow is not the way to do it. City style squares full of mock townhouses have nothing to do with Uttlesford.