

**Member Motion: 20 Key Tests for the Uttlesford Green Local Plan,
as proposed by Councillor Light and seconded by Councillor Caton
- Full Council, 5 October 2021**

Motion co-proposed by: Cllr Barbara Light and Cllr Paul Fairhurst,
Green Party Group

Seconded by: Cllr Melvin Caton, Liberal Democrat Group

MOTION:

This Council has already committed to an environmental agenda and climate change mitigation.

Council agrees to develop a 20-point test to evaluate and objectively assess to what extent the emerging Local Plan qualifies as a Green Local Plan. This test will be developed collaboratively and draw on local and national expertise and on good practice elsewhere in the country. This will result in a benchmark test which is in parallel to, yet distinct from and independent of the Local Plan process.

By way of a starting point, we submit the following 20 tests that resulted from consultation with local stakeholders.

20 KEY TESTS FOR THE UTTLESFORD GREEN LOCAL PLAN:

A detailed assessment must be made of how the Local Plan will meet and exceed the local and national climate change strategies and action plans and a detailed sustainability appraisal made on how local housing will meet our commitment to a 'net zero carbon' district by 2030. All developers and all settlements will be required to meet the green tests.

1. Assessment of real local housing needs:

A proper and rigorous assessment of the real local housing needs must be carried out. This needs to be based on current data; not on market requirements or on economic growth.

2. Sustainable transport:

Sustainable transport modes such as railways must be close to selected settlement sites. Transport modes must include electric rural bus services connecting villages and towns with services running at least hourly. Active travel is required to reduce private car usage, and cycle and walking networks must connect villages and towns safely and include quiet lanes throughout the district. The Local Plan must envisage connecting all these cycle paths together by the end of the plan period. Velo City principles are to be established in larger settlements with all services available within a 15-minute walk and interconnectivity between villages and towns based on a 15-minute cycle ride or electric buggy ride.

3. Character and density:

The character and density of any housing settlement must be appropriate to the spread-out rural nature of the district and to the constraints of the medieval towns and villages. There must be a robust guarantee that the towns will not exceed their natural limits and reach a saturation point after which the quality of life; the provision of services and the infrastructure will decline.

4. Biodiversity:

Biodiversity must be protected, valued and enhanced: agreed UN targets require 30% of the land to be formally protected. As part of the local plan and the climate strategy, Uttlesford must seek to increase its wildlife habitats throughout the planning period; creating wildlife corridors and wildlife areas in woods, meadows and hedgerows. The local plan must ensure there is no loss of biodiversity and identify suitable areas for protection and for the creation of new wildlife zones in settlements and in the countryside. Local nature reserves must be established and new water courses and ponds dug.

5. Renewable green energy:

All energy for new developments must be from renewable sources and could be produced partially onsite by/for individual houses as well as by community-owned companies for one or more settlement. New houses must be energy efficient, properly insulated and have solar panels installed as well as heat pumps. The Council will aim to retrofit all older

buildings by the end of the plan period including insulation and solar panels to achieve energy neutrality.

Solar panels must be fitted on all available roofs, car parks and brownfield sites; heat source pumps established on community-owned land.

6. Design:

The design of houses and other buildings must be low-density and conform to the rural environment and existing buildings in the district. Cars must be parked in defined areas of any settlement, enhancing air quality and giving preference and priority to paths for pedestrians and cyclists. New infrastructure must allow for the delivery of goods and parcels from defined parking areas by electric floats or vehicles powered by energy efficient technology.

7. Shops and Community Centres:

Shops and facilities must be available within a 15-minute walk or safe cycle of all developments.

8. Building materials:

All new developments must meet Passiv house or equivalent standards of insulation. All building materials must be low carbon, environmentally friendly and produced as locally as possible. New building carbon emissions must be calculated in order to achieve 'net zero carbon' by 2030. Buildings could be modular and produced offsite for onsite assembly.

9. Topsoil:

Topsoil from all developments must be preserved and reused in these developments to secure biodiversity and soil quality.

10. Preservation of rural landscape:

The preservation of rural landscape must be maintained, and 1.5 running metres of new indigenous hedges must be planted for each bedroom in a development.

11. Tree planting:

A quality native tree appropriate for the area must be planted within the development for each new bedroom built in the district, with a minimum of three trees per new dwelling.

12. Rural character:

The district's rural character must be differentiated from the urban by increased amenity space per dwelling. Thus, a minimum quota of garden space should be double that defined by the Essex design guide which is applicable to urban and City areas.

13. Amenity green space:

Sufficient allowance must be made for amenity green space and no less than 5sq metres of green space per new bedroom must be provided for each development. This is in addition to SUDS or other functional space and includes amenity sports and play access. Allotments and community gardens must be allowed for.

14. Recycling:

All new developments must allow for comprehensive recycling stations that encourage healthy and full recycling.

15. Affordable homes:

More than 40% affordable homes must be built with 5% bungalows with disabled access. These houses must be built to Passiv or similar standards, be part of settlements and not distinguishable from other houses.

16. Water:

No developments are to be permitted in areas where water has been over-extracted. Water use in all houses must feature water capture through grey water and other schemes, including green roofs. Streams and water courses must be restored through bank planting and dams.

17. Agriculture:

The vast majority of land in Uttlesford is devoted to agriculture. The council must work with farmers and partner with the NFU, agricultural colleges and groups such as the Soil Association to support the transition to sustainable farming practices such as agronomy and permaculture and better water management.

18. Natural green spaces:

These must be within and outside settlements and include wild natural zones and country parks. Countryside farm parks with public access should be established where traditional mixed farming techniques and sustainable ecology can flourish.

19. Fuelling stations:

Each existing and new settlement must have electric vehicle fuelling stations.

20: Green economy and investment:

The Local Plan must provide opportunities for the post fossil fuel world, creating research and manufacturing facilities for new green technologies, and actively seek inward investment enabling a green economy to flourish.