

Committee: Extraordinary Council

Date: Monday, 30
October 2023

Title: Draft Uttlesford Local Plan 2021 – 2041
(Regulation 18) Consultation

Portfolio Holder: Cllr John Evans, Cabinet Member for
Planning, Infrastructure and Stansted Airport

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Summary

1. This Report concerns the draft Uttlesford Local Plan 2021 – 2041 which is proposed to be published for public consultation from 3rd November 2023 to 15th December 2023.
2. The currently adopted Uttlesford Local Plan dates from 2005 and if the new Plan is adopted in 2026 there will have been a twenty-year gap. Plans should be updated every five years.
3. The Government has signalled its intention to change the Planning System, to include a new approach to preparing Local Plans, but transitional arrangements allow Councils currently progressing Plans to submit their plans up to June 2025. Failure to meet this date would mean a new Uttlesford Local Plan could not be adopted before 2028 at the earliest.
4. Whilst Uttlesford does not have an up-to-date plan, there is likely to be more speculative and relatively unplanned development coming forward with less consideration for planning for infrastructure.
5. The draft Local Plan is designed to achieve a number of key aims:
 - to be capable of being found SOUND at Examination whilst reducing any risks, as far as possible, associated with its preparation
 - give consideration to the findings of the Inspectors for the previously submitted Uttlesford Local Plans
 - support the delivery of sustainable development by maximising opportunities for the use of sustainable modes of travel and by providing good access to jobs, services and facilities
 - seek to maximise opportunities for new infrastructure to benefit existing communities, in addition to new residents, in an attempt to start addressing the infrastructure deficit, and
 - include a comprehensive suite of new policies to ensure planning in Uttlesford provides for high-quality development, helps to address the climate change emergency, supports biodiversity enhancement, etc.
6. The new Plan makes provision for 5,076 additional homes at ten proposed strategic development sites (greater than 100 homes) located at the three Key

Settlements (Saffron Walden; Great Dunmow and Stansted Mountfitchet) and three of the Local Rural Centres of Newport, Takeley and Thaxted.

7. The Plan also proposes to support 1,000 additional homes on non-strategic sites (less than 100 homes) at our thirteen 'Larger Villages', although the proposed level of additional housing at these settlements varies on a case-by-case basis ranging from NIL to 115 dwellings. There is an opportunity for neighbourhood plans to take responsibility for these allocations if they wish to.

Recommendations

8. That Council:
 - (i) Agrees the Draft Uttlesford Local Plan 2021 – 2041 (Regulation 18) document be published for six weeks consultation 3rd November 2023 to 15th December 2023.
 - (ii) Provides delegated authority for the Director of Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Infrastructure and Stansted Airport to make any minor corrections prior to consultation, including for typographical and formatting purposes.
 - (iii) Notes the suite of technical supporting evidence published alongside the Draft Uttlesford Local Plan 2021 – 2041 consultation.

Financial Implications

9. There are financial implications associated with the preparation of the Local Plan and for the Council once the Plan is adopted. The preparation of the Local Plan falls within the Planning Budget.
10. There would be a range of financial implications associated with delaying the consultation, which largely relate to the fixed timetable associated with proposed changes to the Planning System; these are discussed within the body of this report.

Background Papers

11. The minutes of the 4th October 2023 meeting of Local Plan Leadership Group, which considered the Regulation 18 consultation, can be found at [Agenda item - Draft Uttlesford Local Plan 2021 - 2041 \(Regulation 18\) Consultation - Modern Council \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#). The papers of the 16th October meeting of Cabinet, at which this matter was considered can be found at [Agenda for Cabinet on Monday, 16th October, 2023, 7.00 pm - Modern Council \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#). A full suite of supporting documents are also appended to this Report.

Impact

Communication / Consultation	The Draft Plan will be subject to six weeks of public consultation. A Communications Plan has been approved by the Director of Planning. This will ensure the consultation is well publicised with extensive opportunities for interested parties to engage in the consultation process.
Community safety	N/A
Equalities	An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared as part of the Sustainability Appraisal (refer to list of supporting documents).
Health & Safety	N/A
Human Rights / Equalities	See above – under Equalities.
Sustainability	<p>The Draft Plan has numerous implications for sustainability. It seeks to support sustainable development by promoting development in accessible locations that maximise opportunities for using sustainable modes of travel, and sets out policies to support sustainable development, such as relating to climate change, flooding, biodiversity, etc.</p> <p>The Draft Plan has been informed by a Sustainability Appraisal (refer to list of supporting documents).</p>
Ward-specific Impacts	The Local Plan affects all wards.
Workforce / Workplace	Within existing workforce resources.

Situation

Background

12. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is clear (Paragraph 33) that Local Plans should be reviewed ‘at least once every five years’ and that the reviews ‘should be completed no later than five years from the adoption date of a plan, and should take into account changing circumstances affecting the area, or any relevant changes in national policy’.
13. The current Uttlesford Local Plan was adopted in 2005 and is demonstrably out-of-date. It is one of the oldest adopted plans in England. The National Planning Policy Framework, which significantly altered the approach to plan making in England, was first published in 2012, and there have been a number of revisions, most recently in September 2023.

14. If the currently emerging Uttlesford Local Plan is adopted in early 2026, there will be a twenty-year gap from the previous Plan.
15. There are a number of implications for the Council in not having an up-to-date plan and that relate to the timetable for the preparation of the currently emerging plan. These matters will be considered in turn.

Implications for not maintaining an up-to-date Local Plan

16. NPPF (paragraph 11) makes clear that the 'Presumption in favour of sustainable development' should apply 'where there are no relevant plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date', including 'where the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites'.
17. The implications of applying the 'presumption' within paragraph 11 NPPF essentially leads to an increased level of speculative development coming forward. This has been the case in Uttlesford in recent years, where the 2005 Local Plan is clearly out-of-date. This has been exacerbated by the fact that, partly as a result of the lack of an up-to-date plan, the Council has been unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. For example, the 'commitments' for residential development to be delivered as at 1st April 2021 was 3,570, whereas the equivalent figure as at 1st April 2023 is 5,722¹.
18. Even though the Council is now able to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites (refer to 16 October 2023 Cabinet Report, paragraph 11 above), the 2005 Plan policies can still be considered 'out-of-date' simply by virtue of their age, and a 'tilted balance' approach would still apply (unless protective policies in the NPPF apply). Essentially, in the absence of an up-to-date Local Plan, the Council have less control over development coming forward.
19. An up-to-date Local Plan will enable the Council to develop a strategy for what development comes forward and where. This will ensure development is located to maximise sustainable development and crucially, to assist in planning for infrastructure (services and facilities, such as for health care/ education/ transport). The new Plan will also include updated policies so the Council is able to influence the quality of what development comes forward and how it contributes to enhancing biodiversity/ addressing climate change, etc.
20. In the absence of an up-to-date Local Plan, it is likely that development will continue to come forward in a piecemeal basis, with the Council having less control or consideration over infrastructure delivery. There is anecdotal evidence that key stakeholders (Education Authority/ Health Providers) consider that planning for new infrastructure on the basis of unplanned and

* ¹ These figures do not include any recent decisions post April 2023 and any subject to any legal challenge so may increase.

piecemeal development is much more difficult. There may be a cumulative impact of multiple small piecemeal developments each making a modest contribution to infrastructure that is inadequate for the collective level of growth.

21. The absence of an up-to-date plan has made planning decision-making difficult in Uttlesford. This has resulted in a significant proportion of the council's planning decisions being overturned on appeal, which in turn, has led to the council being 'designated'. Officers anticipate that the Secretary of State will review the council's designation this autumn, and its position in relation to progressing a local plan will likely be a factor as to the outcome.

Implications relating to the timetable for preparing the emerging Plan

22. Government has signalled the intention to make changes to the NPPF and for the approach to plan making. It is stated that details of the new approach will be published in late 2024 and that plans being prepared under the new system will commence in 2025 onwards.
23. Government has made clear that Councils currently preparing Local Plans should continue using the current system. Transitional Arrangements have been set out that ensure that any Plan submitted by June 2025 will be Examined under the current planning system. Under these arrangements, any such Plan will also need to be Adopted by 31 December 2026.
24. For the reasons stated above, it is considered imperative that the Uttlesford Local Plan is progressed efficiently. There is sufficient time for the Council to submit a plan ahead of the June 2025 deadline, although there is relatively little flexibility for changing the timetable (see below):

• Consultation on Draft Local Plan (Regulation 18)	Nov/ Dec 2023
• Publication of Submission Plan (Regulation 19)	June/ July 2024
• Submission to Secretary of State	Dec/ 2024
• Examination	2025
• Adopted	mid- 2026

25. If the currently emerging Plan is not progressed quickly enough, and it is necessary to wait for the new approach to plan making, it is unlikely a Plan could be adopted before 2028 at the earliest.

Previously Submitted Plans

26. It is also important to stress that two proposed Uttlesford Local Plans were submitted to the Secretary of State in 2014 and 2019, but neither progressed to adoption. In both cases, the Inspectors considered the Plans were not capable of adoption, even with consideration for Modifications. This is a relatively unusual circumstance: it is important the Council consider both the findings of the previous Inspectors, but also the importance of preparing a Local Plan that is demonstrably SOUND with any risks associated with its preparation minimised.

27. The Inspectors to the 2019 Plan raised a significant number of issues, including with individual site proposals and with the Sustainability Appraisal (relating to the 2019 Plan). Of particular note was the concern that:

“In order to arrive at a sound strategy, we consider that as a primary consideration, the Council would need to allocate more small and medium sized sites that could deliver homes in the short to medium term and help bolster the 5-year housing land supply”, and

“This would have the benefit of providing flexibility and choice in the market and the earlier provision of more affordable housing. It would also create a buffer so the target of 14,000 homes is not only just being met by a narrow margin and would allow for a less steeply stepped housing trajectory”.

Draft Uttlesford Local Plan (Regulation 18) Consultation

28. Before discussing the proposed Draft Local Plan, it is also worthwhile highlighting the importance of the proposed consultation. One of the overriding aims for plan making as set out in the NPPF (paragraph 16) is that plans:

“be shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement between planmakers and communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and operators and statutory consultees”.

29. Consulting on a draft Plan at an early stage in plan making provides a genuine and meaningful opportunity for interested parties to contribute to the plan making process and help shape the Councils final version of the Plan, which is intended to be published in the summer of 2024.
30. There are key differences between the current stage of plan making – i.e., consultation on a draft plan (Regulation 18) stage, where Councils have some freedom for the nature of the document they publish and are able, and likely, to use the consultation responses to inform and amend the next version of the Plan.
31. In contrast, the Regulation 19 stage is formally a ‘publication’ stage, where the final plan the Council intend to submit to the Secretary of State is published. At the Regulation 19 stage, the Council is not able to make any significant changes to the Plan and any responses are forwarded to the Inspectors presiding over the Examination for their consideration rather than the Council’s.
32. For the reasons explained above, it is considered that publishing a full draft Plan at Regulation 18 stage maximises the opportunity for interested parties to make full and meaningful responses to genuinely help inform the Council’s final Plan intended to be published in the summer 2024.
33. The proposed consultation will be for six weeks (start on 3rd November to 15th December). It will include a printed leaflet to be sent to all known addresses in the district; at least three full page local newspaper advertisements; at least

three in-person 'road show' events; and use various social media. Hard copies of the draft plan will be placed in the district's libraries and in the reception of the council's main offices.

The Emerging Uttlesford Draft Local Plan

34. For the reasons stated above, it is considered imperative that a new Local Plan for Uttlesford is progressed as efficiently and effectively as possible. This Plan should achieve a number of significant objectives:
- to be capable of being found SOUND at Examination whilst reducing any risks, as far as possible, associated with its preparation
 - give consideration to the findings of the Inspectors for the previously submitted Uttlesford Local Plans
 - support the delivery of sustainable development by maximising opportunities for the use of sustainable modes of travel and by providing good access to jobs, services and facilities
 - seek to maximise opportunities for new infrastructure to benefit existing communities, in addition to new residents, in an attempt to start addressing the infrastructure deficit, and
 - include a comprehensive suite of new policies to ensure planning in Uttlesford provides for high-quality development, helps to address the climate change emergency, supports biodiversity enhancement, etc.

Housing Need

35. NPPF (paragraph 61) makes clear that:

“To determine the minimum number of homes needed, strategic policies should be informed by a local housing need assessment, conducted using the standard method in national planning guidance – unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach which also reflects current and future demographic trends and market signals. In addition to the local housing need figure, any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas should also be taken into account in establishing the amount of housing to be planned for”.

36. The Council commissioned Justin Garnder Associates to prepare an Updated Local Housing Needs Assessment (2023) which identifies the Local Housing Need for Uttlesford, for the 2021-2041 plan period of **13,680 homes**.
37. To determine the level of additional housing to be planned for in the emerging Local Plan, consideration is needed for the current completions (houses that have reached a substantial level of construction), commitments (those with planning permission) and for a windfall allowance (a level of development that we can expect to come forward that are not allocated but that would otherwise be policy compliant). The figures as at 1st April 2023 are shown by Table 1.

Table 1: Housing Supply as at 1st April 2023 for 2021 to 2041 Plan Period

Type of Supply	Number of dwellings
Completions (1 st April 2021 to 1 st April 2023)	980
Commitments (as at 1 st April 2023)	5,722
Windfall Allowance (for plan period up to 2041)	1,650
Total	8,352

38. Please note that the commitments figure shown in Table 1 does not include any commitments (proposals gaining planning permission) since 1st April 2023 and it may therefore be expected the figure will increase. If this figure does increase this can be taken into account in preparing the final version (Regulation 19) plan for publication in summer 2024.
39. In addition to considering any existing and known housing supply (Table 1), it is also prudent to consider planning for some ‘headroom’ (i.e., planning for slightly more housing than the identified need). This provides for some flexibility and resilience and helps to ensure the Council is more likely to maintain a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites into the future.
40. The Draft Local Plan currently proposes **6,076 additional homes** (discussed in more detail below) which would provide for **14,377 homes** in total within the plan period 2021 – 2041. This equates to 697 homes above the identified housing need (of 13,680) or, roughly a 5% buffer. We can anticipate these figures will change in the final version (Regulation 19) plan as commitments may increase.
41. Inspectors examining Local Plans have regularly considered the provision of a reasonable amount of headroom in housing supply as an important factor when assessing the soundness of the plan. The Planning Inspectors presiding over the 2019 Plan made reference to the importance of planning for some headroom (or buffer); see paragraph 27 of this report (above).
42. Officers are not currently aware of any neighbouring authorities identifying a need for housing they cannot meet within their own areas.

Housing Allocations

43. The draft Local Plan makes provision for ‘strategic’ housing allocations (over 100 dwellings) and for some ‘non-strategic’ housing allocations (less than 100 dwellings). It is important that the Plan is compliant with national policy and guidance, is mindful of the findings of the previous Inspectors (who identified a need for more small and medium sized sites that could deliver homes in the short to medium term) and the role of communities and for neighbourhood planning.
44. The NPPF (paragraph 66) states that ‘strategic policies should also set out a housing requirement for designated neighbourhood areas which reflect the overall strategy for the pattern and scale of development and any relevant allocations’.

45. There are clearly a range of factors to consider in developing an approach for housing allocations. Another of note to Uttlesford is the fact that in the past (including within the proposed 2014 and 2019 Plans) there has been consideration for significant new Garden Communities of varying scales including for c. 5,000 and up to c. 10,000 homes.
46. It is likely that planning for Uttlesford in the long-term will need to give consideration to one, or more, Garden Communities; however, at present, this is considered less appropriate for the following reasons:
- the total level of additional housing to plan for in this Plan is for around 6,076 homes and on that basis it is not considered reasonable to plan for standalone new settlements of c. 5,000 homes or more, on a single site
 - the Council needs to be mindful of the previous Inspector's (2019) comments to plan for more small and medium sized sites, including the need to be mindful of the role of neighbourhood plans and the related importance of supporting the viability and vitality of our most sustainable settlements, and
 - consideration is needed for delivering infrastructure improvements that benefit as many existing communities as possible as well as new residents to help to start addressing the deficit resulting from a protracted period with unplanned development.
47. Uttlesford will need to update its Local Plan every five years to ensure that it regains control of planning for its district and avoids the issues that have occurred in the past with speculative and piecemeal development. It is important a Plan is adopted as efficiently as possible in the short-term for all the reasons discussed in this report and that seeks to address the circumstances the currently emerging plan faces. However, that does not prevent a future Uttlesford Local Plan from considering longer-term and more strategic matters, such as planning for a new Garden Community. It is recommended that work on the next Plan, i.e., to follow the Plan currently in preparation, quickly, with adoption around 2030/31.
48. Consideration could be given to planning for some development (c. 1,500 homes) on sites that have longer term potential to become larger Garden Communities, but is questionable whether that is realistic without effectively signalling that the longer-term and larger development would come forward. If that is the case, any infrastructure associated with the larger scale of development should be considered before any decisions are taken for whether development should be allocated, even at a lower scale.
49. The approach to identifying site allocations is set out in the supporting Topic Paper. In simple terms, a long-list of sites (in excess of 400) were considered at a high-level and filtered, before shorter lists of sites were subject to more detailed consideration. In actual fact, there were more than enough potential development opportunities at the top two-tier settlements ('Key Settlements' and 'Local Rural Centres') to accommodate the identified level of growth. This

ensures that any proposed allocations meet the objectives set earlier in this report and crucially, support sustainable development.

50. Reasonable Alternatives were developed as part of the Sustainability Appraisal (“SA”) and discussed more in the SA. Again, in simple terms, these considered higher and lower growth options at a number of the Key Settlements and Local Rural Centres mainly to facilitate a different scale of infrastructure delivery in each case. Some Local Rural Centres were not identified for any growth (see below). One standalone Garden Community was considered (at Ugley for c. 1,500) homes. The distinction between this site and the other proposed Garden Communities was its scale and that it wouldn’t be suitable to support significant development in the longer term – which as discussed above, is considered more appropriate for consideration in a future Plan.
51. The process described above resulted in proposed site allocations at all three Key Settlements: **Great Dunmow**, **Saffron Walden** and **Stansted Mountfitchet** and three of the Local Rural Centres: **Newport**, **Takeley** and **Thaxted** (discussed more below).
52. There are no proposed strategic allocations proposed at three of the Local Rural Centres of Elsenham, Great Chesterford or Hatfield Heath for the following reasons:
 - Elsenham: There are a number of suitable sites for development at Elsenham, but these already have planning permission and there are already over 1,000 homes committed at this settlement.
 - Great Chesterford: Again, there are sites at Great Chesterford that could support sustainable development, but in one instance it would rely on access from neighbouring South Cambridgeshire. This may be possible and could be considered in the future, but given there is substantial uncertainty concerning the delivery of a Local Plan for Greater Cambridgeshire, there would be uncertainty surrounding the delivery of the site at the current time.
 - Hatfield heath: This settlement is located entirely within the Green Belt. As there are numerous opportunities to bring forward development elsewhere in the district and outside of the Green Belt there are not thought to be any ‘exceptional circumstances’ to justify development at Hatfield Heath.
53. Ten strategic sites are proposed across the six settlements listed above and range in size from 74² to 1,636 dwellings as follows:

▪ ² One ‘strategic’ site falls below the 100 home threshold at Newport for 74 dwellings. However, this site is in close proximity to a second, larger site and it is considered appropriate to plan for these sites together to ensure they deliver coherent, comprehensive and high-quality development.

Great Dunmow:

- The provision of up to 869 dwellings, including affordable and specialist housing on high-quality development to the north-east of the town. The development will support a local centre organised around a new riverside park, to include a new primary school and additional bus facilities. The creation of extensive areas of green and blue infrastructure across the site, including an expansion of the existing woodland to the east of the site. New connections and increased permeability into the existing public rights of way network and wider rural landscape.

Saffron Walden:

- The provision of around 1,280 dwellings, including affordable and specialist housing on high-quality development to the south-east of the town. The development will make provision for a 3 form entry primary school and a new sixth form centre, along with a comprehensive package of infrastructure enhancements including a new link road between Thaxted Road and Radwinter Road, green open spaces, new healthcare and leisure facilities, and improved bus services. The site will also provide a network of legible pedestrian links and landscaped corridors that connect up open spaces and the wider public rights of way network with potential for a new Country Park in the vicinity of the town.

Stansted Mountfitchet:

- The provision of up to 390 dwellings, including affordable and specialist housing on high-quality development to the north of the settlement and outside of the Green Belt. The proposal will deliver a 2 form entry primary school, which helps cater for nearby development that is already consented, and contribute towards the expansion of the existing secondary school. The site will also provide a new community facility, to comprise either an educational, health or leisure function and to be located accessibly with regard to the existing settlement. New areas of green and blue infrastructure which link the settlement into the natural resources within the wider landscape. Enhanced pedestrian and cycle connectivity along Cambridge Road.

Newport:

- Two proposed allocations to the west of the village for up to 412 dwellings that will deliver high quality design which retains key views of St Mary's Church provides new landscaped and public open spaces, and an additional community facility to be located in close proximity to Newport Primary School. The site will also improve pedestrian crossing infrastructure at Wicken Road, with safe and convenient active travel links into the existing settlement along with allowing for the expansion of primary and secondary school. The provision of up to 412 dwellings, including affordable and specialist housing.

Takeley:

- The provision of around 1,636 dwellings, including affordable and specialist housing on development to the north and east of Takeley and including some land that falls within the Little Canfield parish. The proposal would be designed to deliver a single coherent and comprehensive development, providing for a new local centre, to include a new primary school, a new secondary school, as well as a healthcare facility. The development would include extensive open space, the expansion of Prior's Wood, improved pedestrian connectivity within the settlement and improved bus services with significant consideration for environmental protection and enhancement and sensitive planning for heritage assets with substantial buffers.

Thaxted:

- The provision of up to 489 dwellings, including affordable and specialist housing on high-quality development to the east of the settlement. The development will help to improve the viability of the settlement, support local businesses/ retailers and help to improve the viability of local bus services. There will be provision of a 1 form entry primary school on land sufficient to expand capacity to a 2 form entry school, subject to future demand. Safe, attractive and convenient active travel routes that connect the sites to Copthall Lane and the wider public rights of way network. Other infrastructure including enhanced landscape buffers and green corridors.

Other Areas:

54. An allowance is proposed for non-strategic sites (less than 100 dwellings) at our Larger Villages. Again, the methodology for this is set out in a supporting Topic Paper, but consideration was given to a range of factors including population change, planning commitments and the potential for development, including for constraints such as for the Green Belt. On that basis the proposed level of growth in each Larger Village (**Table 2**) varies and ranges from NIL to 115 for the period up to 2041.
55. Where communities wish to prepare neighbourhood plans, it is proposed that they could, if they wish to, take responsibility for any non-strategic allocations and bring those forward in future neighbourhood plans. It is suggested that these communities are asked to consider this matter and respond as part of the consultation. Where communities make a clear commitment to take responsibility for any non-strategic allocations, the Local Plan will not need to take any further action. If some communities do not wish to prepare a neighbourhood plan the Council will add any non-strategic allocations to the next version of the Local Plan, and work with those communities to do so.
56. For Smaller Villages, or any rural settlements below this tier (classified as Open Countryside), there is no expectation that any allocations, including non-strategic allocations, would be necessary. Limited infill development may come forward where consistent with policy. Communities preparing neighbourhood plans could make small allocations if they wished to.

57. If any of the Key Settlements or Local Rural Centres wanted to prepare neighbourhood plans and requested housing requirement figures, these would also be NIL as no additional allocations are required in addition to the proposed strategic allocations. This would not prevent these communities preparing neighbourhood plans and making small allocations if they wished to. In addition, windfall development may come forward where consistent with policy.

Table 2: Proposed Housing Requirement figures to be met through non-strategic allocations at Larger Villages within the Plan period to 2041.

Parish	Residual requirement to be allocated through non-strategic allocations (at 1 st April 2023)
Clavering	111
Henham	112
Birchanger	0
Little Hallingbury	0
Stebbing	109
High Easter	104
Felsted	95
Ashdon	41
Debden	92
Elder Street (Wimbish Parish)	115
Hatfield Broad Oak	111
Manuden	0
Great Easton	110
Total	1,000

58. **Table 3** sets out the level of proposed allocations and the existing commitments and completions (for the 2021 – 2041 plan period) and as at 1st April 2023. This helps to illustrate the distribution of growth between different tiers of settlements and the different settlements.

Table 3: Proposed Housing Allocations, along with existing completions and commitments as at 1st April 2023 for 2021 to 2041 Plan Period.

Settlement	Completions	Commitments	Proposed Allocations	Total
Key Settlements				
Great Dunmow	416	2,361	869	3,646
Saffron Walden	189	1,020	1,280	2,489
Stansted Mountfitchet	18	37	390	445
Local Rural Centres				
Elsenham	17	1,017	0	1,034
Great Chesterford	36	193	0	229
Hatfield Heath	1	41	0	42
Newport	42	113	412	567
Takeley	273	489	1,636	2,398
Thaxted	6	78	489	573

59. The total proposed housing supply (please note these figures will change for the Regulation 19 Plan) is for 6,580 homes to be delivered within the Key Settlements. This equates to around 43% of total planned supply. For the Local Rural Centres the total supply is 4,843 equating to around 31% and for the Larger Villages, the proposed allowance of 1,000 homes equates to around 6% of planned supply.
60. The figures outlined in **Table 3** are a result of several factors, including the availability and suitability of sites, the nature of any constraints and the potential to support the objectives for the Plan, described earlier in this Report, including the need to support sustainable development. We would however typically expect the greatest level of growth to be focused at the top two tiers of settlement, with a much lower level of growth at the Larger Villages, which is shown by the 43%, 31% and 6% distribution.

Employment

61. The Council commissioned the consultants ICENI to prepare an updated Economic Needs Assessment (2023) to inform the emerging Local Plan. This identified a residual need for around 4.5 hectares for office uses and around 25 to 30 hectares for industrial uses (split between: up to 5 hectares at Saffron Walden; 5 to 10 hectares at Great Dunmow; and around 15 hectares in the Stansted area. It was also recommended that proposed expansion of Chesterford Research Park is supported with provision for 18.3 hectares in total. These figures deduct employment needs associated with Stansted Airport, that meet a 'larger than local' need, which has already been met by a substantial permission at Northside (at Stansted Airport).
62. There are five proposed employment allocations in the Local Plan, which are listed below. These proposals meet the identified need in full and are located consistently in line with the updated evidence:

Chesterford Research Park – R&D up to 18.5 hectares

To support the expansion of the existing site – this will meet the identified R&D need for the district in full.

Gaunts End - Office uses of up to 4.5 hectares.

This meets the identified need in full by expanding an existing and established office development.

Saffron Walden (Land North of Thaxted Road/ Rear of Knights Road) – Industrial uses up to 3 hectares.

Meets the majority of the identified need (for up to 5 hectares) at Saffron Walden on land adjoining an existing retail park.

Great Dunmow/ Takeley (Land between A120 & Stortford Road) – Industrial uses of up to 15 hectares.

This site has good access to the A120 and falls between Great Dunmow and Takeley, thus being accessible by walking, cycling and public transport. It is proposed that a Mobility Hub is co-located on this site to help maximise opportunities for use of sustainable modes of travel.

Takeley (North of Takeley Street) - Industrial uses of up to 15 hectares.

This site is located close to Stansted Airport as necessitated by the evidence, whilst also being close to planned housing development to provide opportunities for access via sustainable modes and falls within an existing public transport corridor and where the greatest opportunities for enhancing public transport exist.

Infrastructure

63. It is important the Local Plan makes appropriate provision for infrastructure as part of a coherent and comprehensive overall strategy. One of the objectives for the Plan should be to assist with addressing the infrastructure deficit that has arisen due to the prolonged period with no Plan and where there has been increased speculative and piecemeal development.
64. The proposed site allocations are accompanied by detailed Site Development Templates, which set out the detailed policy requirements the sites would be expected to deliver. This includes design parameters to help ensure the council delivers high-quality development, that gives consideration to protecting our important landscape, environment and heritage, as well as providing for biodiversity, open space, and for new services and facilities, including for health and education. The larger allocations would provide new local centres, that in some instances will include other community facilities along with giving consideration to highways, access and sustainable travel.
65. It is important to consider that the Draft Plan seeks to optimise a wide range of factors and in some instances some compromises may be necessary. For example, new development at Saffron Walden will help to address the infrastructure deficit that has arisen from piecemeal development, this includes the opportunity to provide a link road between Thaxted Road and Radwinter Road that is shown to have positive impacts on traffic flows in the town centre and creates the potential to improve the use of sustainable modes within the town. The development also allows us to provide a 3-form entry Primary School, which not only caters for the proposed allocation, but for other development that is already consented, along with an extensive range of other benefits including making contributions to a new Country Park.
66. Furthermore, new development at Saffron Walden also helps to ensure we continue to support the businesses, employers and retailers by increasing footfall in the town. However, we cannot plan for a new Secondary School, as that would need several thousand more homes and the Council would no doubt prefer to avoid having to transport pupils to an alternative town. For that reason, it is proposed that a new Sixth Form Centre is provided in Saffron Walden, which allows the existing Secondary School to cater for more pupils, whilst avoiding the need for pupils to travel elsewhere. This ensures that we

can balance a wide range of factors and ensure that we plan effectively for the future of Saffron Walden. Secondary Schools operate successfully in many locations across the country with more than one physical site (as do nearly all Universities) however, officers appreciate the need to work with the education authority and schools to further develop the approach by the next version of the Plan (Regulation 19).

67. The Plan is also accompanied by a wide range of technical evidence, including the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, Water Cycle Study, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Transport Assessment, and others and these have been informed by engagement with a range of key stakeholders. This evidence will continue to be refined and updated, with further ongoing engagement, to inform the next version of the Plan (Regulation 19) in 2024, along with being informed by the consultation responses to the draft Plan.

Policies

68. The Draft Plan includes around 71 Core Policies (strategic policies) and around nine Development Policies (non-strategic policies). These fall into three main categories relating to the Spatial Strategy, the Area Strategies, and our thematic chapters that relate to: Climate Change, Environment and Transport; for Economy and Retail; and for Building Healthy and Sustainable Communities.
69. The policies set out in the Spatial Strategy are listed below and provide the overarching context for the plan as a whole:
- **Core Policy 1: Addressing Climate Change** – which sets out criteria for development to ensure it responds to the challenge of climate change appropriately
 - **Core Policy 2: Meeting Our Housing Needs** – which specifies the scale and location of new housing, ensuring development is built in the most appropriate locations
 - **Core Policy 3: Settlement Hierarchy** – which classifies the settlements in Uttlesford according to their role and service function
 - **Core Policy 4: Meeting Business and Employment Needs** – which specifies the scale and location of opportunities for economic growth to ensure that sufficient new jobs are provided across Uttlesford in appropriate locations, and
 - **Core Policy 5: Providing Supporting Infrastructure and Services** – which ensures that new services and facilities are delivered alongside new housing and employment.
70. The Area Strategy chapters help to provide a spatial dimension to the Plan and ensure that anyone interested in particular parts of the district can quickly understand what is being proposed in their areas. The chapters include some policies relating to any development proposals in these areas, including all the detailed requirements for the proposed allocations (the detail is provided in the Site Development Templates included in the Plan appendices). This ensures

the allocations provide for high-quality development and provide for all the infrastructure and other considerations they need to. This chapter also includes policies relating to highways and green infrastructure.

71. The final area of policy inclusion within the plan is the three thematic chapters covering the Climate Change, Environment and Transport; for Economy and Retail; and for Building Healthy and Sustainable Communities chapters. These chapters include over fifty policies are it isn't practical to consider them all within this report. They are designed to be comprehensive and reflect best practice, and are based on updated and proportionate evidence supporting the Uttlesford Local Plan. It is however important to stress that one of the significant advantages of publishing quite detailed draft policies for a full consultation, is to allow interested individuals and stakeholders to contribute to the process. The Council can use these responses, along with any further amendments to evidence, to help them make any revisions they consider are appropriate before preparing the next version of the Plan in 2024.
72. The following paragraphs provide a brief overview of some of the headline Policies, although they can be read in detail within the draft Plan document. Please note that seven additional policies have been added to the draft Plan since the version shared recently with LPLG; these were:
- Core Policy 36: Flood Risk
 - Core Policy 37: Sustainable Urban Drainage
 - Core Policy 66: Planning for Health
 - Core Policy 67: Open Space, Sport and Recreation
 - Core Policy 68: Community Uses
 - Core Policy 69: New Cemeteries and Burial Space
 - Core Policy 70: Communications Infrastructure

Affordable Housing

73. The Local Housing Needs Assessment identified that 261 households p.a. in Uttlesford are currently in affordable housing need, which equates to 38 % of the annual Local Housing Need figure for the district of 684 dwellings. However, the link between affordable and overall needs is complex and many of those identified as having an affordable housing need are already in housing and thus do not generate a net additional need for a home. If for this reason we exclude existing households, our annual affordable need would be 192 dwellings, which equates to 28 % of our annual Local Housing Need³.
74. The draft Viability Evidence identifies some challenges associated with planning for 40% affordable housing on all sites, and for that reason, and for the reasons relating to need, the draft Policy includes a proposed requirement for 35%. There will be an opportunity to refine the evidence following the consultation and so this proposal could potentially be amended, but at present, the emerging evidence suggests that 35% would be appropriate.

³ Justin Gardner Consulting, 2023, Local Housing Needs Assessment. Available at: <https://www.utlesford.gov.uk/localplanevidence>

Climate Change

75. Climate Change represents one of the most significant challenges we face today and the Local Plan seeks to make a significant contribution. The Plan includes a number of policies designed to ensure that new development will achieve the highest possible standard of carbon reduction relating to:

Core Policy 22: Net Zero Operational Carbon Development

Core Policy 23: Overheating

Core Policy 24: Embodied Carbon

Core Policy 25: Renewable Energy Infrastructure

76. These policies are based on updated evidence, which benefit from a range of authorities who have successfully adopted climate change policies in recent months, including in Central Lincoln and Bath and North-East Somerset. The draft policies also benefit from work undertaken recently by Essex County to assist Local Planning Authorities across Essex to develop similarly effective policies. Furthermore, the draft policies have been considered in the draft viability evidence informing this Plan and found to be deliverable.

Countryside Protection Zone

77. The Uttlesford 1995 Local Plan introduced a 'Countryside Protection Zone' (CPZ) policy that identified land parcels around the airport that would be protected from development in order to safeguard the 'rural' nature and setting of Stansted. It was also included in the 2005 Local Plan. This has been partly successful and despite significant development at the airport, now the Country's second busiest airport, its surroundings remain predominantly rural.
78. This plan is seeking to support sustainable development, and thus it is important that any strategic housing and employment development is located where they reduce the need for travel and maximize opportunities for sustainable travel choices, such as walking, cycling and public transport. On this basis, it is proposed that the CPZ area is amended to ensure the rural setting of the airport continues to be protected, but that the sustainable development proposed by the Plan is removed from the areas protected by the 1995 policy.
79. It is considered that the approach proposed strikes an appropriate balance between preserving the rural setting of the airport, which supports sustainable development in accordance with national and local priorities to support the climate change emergency. The Plan appendices include maps showing the CPZ area as set out in the 2005 plan and as proposed to be amended by the draft Plan.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Draft Uttlesford Local Plan 2021 – 2041
 - Local Plan Appendices
 - Site Development Templates

- Appendix 2: Suite of Evidence Base Documents
 - Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA) Update (October 2023)
 - Habitats Regulations Screening Assessment (October 2023)
 - Interim Sustainability Appraisal Report (6 October 2023)
 - Site Selection Topic Paper (October 2023) + Site Selection Assessments
 - Transport Evidence Topic Paper (October 2023) + 8 x supporting documents
 - Viability Assessment – Stage 1 Draft Report (September 2023) + 6 appendices
 - Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – Towns and Villages (October 2023)
 - Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – Smaller Villages (October 2023)
 - Air Quality Modelling Assessment (AQMA) (19 October 2023)
 - Duty to Cooperate Topic Paper (October 2023)
 - Green Belt Study Update (September 2023)
 - Local Plan Update Briefing: Housing Delivery (13 October 2023)
 - Leisure Facilities – Indoor and Built Facilities (September 2023)
 - Addendum to Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) (18 October 2023)
 - Employment Needs Update (September 2023)
 - Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) (October 2023)
 - Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (October 2023)
 - Climate Change Evidence Base (September 2023)
 - Heritage Assessments on Regulation 18 Local Plan Allocations (October 2023)
 - Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) (October 2023)
 - Retail Capacity Study Update (October 2023)
 - Uttlesford Settlement Services and Facilities Topic Paper (October 2023)
 - Water Cycle Study – addendum to Stage 1 (13 October 2023)
 - Village Housing Requirement Technical Note (October 2023)
 - Housing and economic land availability assessment (October 2023)
 - Employment Topic Paper (October 2023)