

<b>Committee:</b>	Youth Council Housing Working Group	<b>Date:</b>	4 December 2018
<b>Title:</b>	Report on the Youth Housing Debate/Seminar held on 1 December 2018		
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### Foreword

The leadership of the Youth Council sincerely hope this report demonstrates our capability to promote democracy for young people. It is our fervent wish to continue this democratic process among young people. Youth Councillors would be pleased to meet or exchange emails with elected members and officers who have read this and look forward to hopefully corresponding with some of you over our ideas, which require facilitation from full council.

### Summary

This report summarises the opinions of young people concerning housing locally and what they think are important points in the development of the housing process going forward in Uttlesford. The debate was split into two parts; one part led by Nigel Brown on existing communities vs building entirely new ones, and one part led by Simon Payne on what is important in a community and on the “Ebenezer Howard” concept of garden communities. Point 6 refers to the former, and 1-5 the latter.

#### 1. *Concerning housing directly*

- Ecological design, and using ecologically and sustainably sourced materials, was the most important issue as voted by young people in this section. In terms of direct design features, lots of natural light was mentioned as a way to combat need for constant heating, but the use of renewable materials and energy sources was seen as a priority in reducing environmental impact of housing both in and beyond construction.

- Access to high quality primary and secondary schools ranked very highly, and was suggested as a “USP”; Unique Selling Point, for any new developments. I cite the North Cambridge/Eddington community, with the Cambridge University Primary School, as evidence of this being a good methodology in creating successful, sustainable communities.

- Properly affordable housing was listed as something important to young people. In order for young families to be able to move in, not only should houses be affordable, but should be in decent state of repair and include all necessary “white goods”. This is due to the financial challenges faced by young, first-time buyers.

Other important issues were raised, and just because they did not receive as many votes does not mean they should not be considered. Some examples

were the need to be welcoming to all races, nationalities and religions; the debate around old/modern style house design; garden sizes; fitting in with communities in terms of design; large rooms in open plan as opposed to small rooms; freedom of interior design choice; quality of homes; not building on green belts; and safe outdoor spaces. Background paper 1 details these points further.

## 2. *Opportunities to maintain fitness and health in communities*

- Walking, cycling and running routes through the countryside was the highest voted recommendation from young people for fitness opportunities. Existing footpaths do not meet the needs of cyclists and runners in winter. The group recommend creating routes that lead out of urban spaces and into green ones.

- A local sports centre, and sporting facilities were highlighted as another key requirement. Not just the provision of these spaces, but provision of these spaces *affordably* – not everyone can afford a gym membership or a swimming pool membership. In addition to general green space, there should be designated playing field sites. These should have floodlights so they are not redundant in winter.

- General access to gyms and large open areas, while overlapping with other issues, was seen as important to getting people to keep fit and healthy. In spite of online recreation becoming more prominent, people strive to improve themselves physically (perhaps as a result of interaction online with those who are doing the same) and need space to do this.

Also mentioned was the key issue of mental health provision, and not separating that from “fitness” and therefore not providing for it when considering general health; noise insulation to provide for quiet times; and repeated a few times was the general call for more opportunities for exercise/fitness. Background paper 1 details these further.

## 3. *Technology and its role in the future of development and housing*

- Really good broadband was voted as the key issue in the role of technology. It was decided that it needs to not just be adequate but “super-fast”, to not leave anyone behind. Internet links were shown as key thanks to the increase in people working from home and needing this internet to be consistent and high speed. In addition, digital recreation was mentioned as one of the key reasons for the broadband speed requirement.

- Technologically driven environmental control inside houses was also highlighted as a key issue. Technology needs to be driving insulation, air conditioning, heating, recycling, water usage; everything needs to be driven from the front with new and effective tech, in a *sustainable and ecological* way. Especially regarding recycling, which was highlighted as needing to be simple and to be the “most environmentally friendly” way of recycling available, minimising landfill and nonrecyclable/nonreusable waste.

- One issue highlighted was future proofing for automation. Young people don't know how AI and automated services will look in the future, but just reading the news makes it blatantly clear that it needs to be provided for in housing development. That could be through leaving infrastructure open to the implementation of "house-AI". Also, young people want jobs that are not at constant risk of redundancy through automation.

Also mentioned were whether communities will have a say in the tech provided; integration of communities with tech and setup; digital community congregation/communication; electricity; development of houses by generalised formula or feedback samples; affordability of tech and mandatory (or not) nature of tech. Details of these issues are available in background paper 1.

#### 4. *Transport*

- A key conclusion of this debate was the need for *affordable, subsidized, and regular* public transport. Expensive public transport systems reduce the independence of young people, make it difficult to get around, and are a huge problem for many people in a world increasingly shunning car travel. Saffron Walden suffers from a high volume of car traffic which has caused it to fail air quality and carbon emissions tests. Improved, cheap public transport was suggested as the solution to this for a new community.

- The forum agreed that all new streets should have bike lanes. Cycle lanes encourage healthier lifestyles and lower carbon emissions and should not be overlooked when planning for transport infrastructure in a new community.

- Improved access to trains and links between transport modes was also highlighted. The group highlighted the need for better links because they do not feel it is easy to travel.

Also discussed were spreading out infrastructure to encourage walking; and the careful balance of auto/pedestrian authority. Further discussion of these points can be found in background paper 1.

#### 5. *Amenities and leisure*

- Voted more important beyond any other issue in this section was the need for community and recreational areas. These spaces need to be for learning new, useful things, like cooking and playing instruments; or for leisure like cinemas and swimming pools. The focus group saw continuing access to libraries as essential for any community. Also suggested were spaces for learning instruments like a music centre with rentable instruments and space for music teachers to teach in, provision for adults to make new friends when they are no longer in schooling through things like language classes, fitness sessions, sports groups, regular lectures and debates, internet gaming "LAN cafes" and so forth. This point had an high number of very creative and interesting suggestions which can be found in background paper 1.

- Green space everywhere was also seen as an important part of leisure. Trees should line all the streets, which should have green space woven into them: not only should there be large designated green space areas like the SW common and Bridge End Gardens, but the group thought it should be possible to see greenery from all windows. This links to exercise/fitness and the recommendation of running/cycling tracks. Landscaped green spaces were also commented on; Bridge End Gardens was seen as “better” as a green space than the common thanks to its landscaping.

- Finally, gardens were spotlighted as an important leisure time activity. Gardens should be built into all houses, it was argued, even if only through rooves/balconies, but also community gardens (allotments) should be regular in placement and spread between streets and areas. People should have access to these community gardens if they want to grow things (which should be encouraged) regardless of wealth. Green rooves, with solar panels and carbon dioxide absorbing plants, should be woven into shops and large community spaces.

Also discussed were community discussions and fair conductance of these; the need for less “big” shops and more small/artisanal shops and more deliveries; police stations in town to give feelings of safety (ram raids and drugs in SW mentioned); and a variety of facilities and provision for different social groups. These are detailed in background paper 1.

#### 6. *New standalone developments vs extensions of existing communities*

A debate was conducted on whether new developments should generally attached to old ones or stand alone, in the manner that UDC is planning to develop.

Arguments that suggested they should be attached to old ones included provision of amenities and community functions the new community might not immediately have built up, as well as infrastructure. Also, it was suggested that trying to “pigeonhole” people into communities which they have no freedom to leave and participate in other communities could be cause for social unrest.

Arguments that suggested they should be entirely new builds entailed the encouragement of new communities to grow and develop, not putting strain on old developments and avoiding building on greenbelts. Most importantly and much discussed was the forcing of responsibility for developing infrastructure and amenities onto the developer: promises cannot be so easily broken if they are developing an entire town. Developing standalone communities was seen as a way to stop developers from breaking these promises and might perhaps reconcile “the developer” with “the population”, two camps that are seen to be much at odds with one another.

## Recommendations

7. Millie Wolter, our incumbent chair, and I are looking to push youth involvement in housing further and would like to meet anyone who has suggestions or ideas to discuss them. Some of our preliminary ideas are below, but the youth council email is at the top of the document and we would like to hear from anyone with ideas. Essentially, please get in touch!

Idea/Recommendation
Ongoing funding for a regular panel of young people to be consulted on housing. Involvement of young people needs to be constant in the process. Ongoing funding from the council outside the youth council budget for a defined plan/methodology of contacting young people for opinions would help to create this necessary channel of communication that the council has expressed so much desire for. This idea is further explored in background paper 2.
Addition of “seats for young people” at any debate or consultation on housing or development.
Permanent addition of young people to the committee meetings where developments are given planning permission, even if without a vote but as a contributor to the discussion.
Answering of the questions raised by young people (see <i>Questions</i> section) by relevant authorities, such that I might report back to members of the forum.

## Questions

8. The following questions were raised for UDC to answer. Please email responses [youthcouncil@uttlesford.gov.uk](mailto:youthcouncil@uttlesford.gov.uk) and we will share them with the housing focus group. It is important that they receive answers, to give our pilot group of young people faith in the system we hope to create.
  - Is it financially feasible to subsidise housing in a commuter area like Saffron Walden for people who live there, to make sure it is not completely a commuter settlement?
  - To what level will automation affect job provision?
  - How do UDC propose to consult on what leisure provision should be available in their new communities?
  - What say will communities have in the technology that is provided – will it be “mandatory”, for example, to have AI built into your house? Obviously that is dystopian, but what provisions are being made now to make sure these choices are being offered and life could continue “tech-free”?
  - How do communities that already exist plan on integrating tech so they don’t get left behind and become “old fashioned”?

- How will power in the three garden communities in Uttlesford be supplied, and is it sustainably sourced?
- Are houses currently designed by a general formula, or are they designed from feedback samples of populations planning on living there? If there is a formula, please could it be shared?
- What provision is there that people are not left behind by tech because they cannot afford it?
- Is there a plan to future proof broadband and services provision without need for constant roadworks?

## **Background Papers**

9. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and have been attached:
  - 1: Summary of Housing Seminar document.
  - 2: Expansion on the proposal for a youth body, fielded by the council, to sit and debate on new developments.