

**Response to Uttlesford District Council Draft Local Plan
4 September 2017**

The Spatial Vision

- Uttlesford claims it wants to be one of the best places to live in the 2020's and beyond. The plan must be much more ambitious and embrace the world of the 2030's if it is to achieve this. Aiming for a sustainable local economy in the information age should be a priority. The Plan should deliver world class broadband throughout the district, early development of new large employment sites to attract growing industries, development of a comprehensive network of non fossil fuel transport links and build on the enviable local education provision to give young people a head start. The proposed new garden villages provide a perfect opportunity to do so.

Spatial Strategy

Policy SP2

- We are broadly supportive of the proposal to focus the bulk of housing development in a few well designed garden villages, this being preferable to the yet more opportunistic development of large estates with no facilities around existing towns and villages. However, it is essential that such garden villages really do deliver on the promise and are not an excuse for yet another large development of executive houses. They must be well planned with a sustainable housing/jobs balance, a mix of housing types and tenures, including low cost starter homes for both purchase and rent and include social housing. Essential infrastructure such as transport links, schools, shops and healthcare facilities must be provided from the outset. High quality overall design and professional delivery of garden villages will be critical to them becoming economically and socially successful communities that are desirable places to live.

Policy SP4

- The District already has high numbers of out-commuters. It is our view that this reflects both the high local skill base mentioned in the plan but also the limited local employment opportunities. Significant numbers of extra jobs will need to be provided throughout the District to avoid the planned additional housing simply increasing out commuting. Appendix 4 states that at least one new job should be created in new settlements for every home built. Increasing the number of jobs beyond the numbers of new homes would enable out commuting to be reduced, improving job opportunities for all residents and the sustainability of the local economy.

Policy SP5

- The plan envisages three new 'garden communities' providing much of the new housing. If well planned and executed this would be preferable to yet more opportunistic housing development, with few or no facilities, being added to existing communities. Appendix 4 sets out the principles for developing these, using a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) such as a Development Corporation with powers to plan and manage the long term development process, and achieve land value capture to pay for the early delivery of infrastructure and facilities alongside commercial and residential development. However, the plan does not say whether this approach will be used, or set out any alternative method to achieve these, to ensure these will be economically and socially successful planned communities. Given that three settlements are planned, we believe it would be appropriate to establish a SPV to oversee their development. There is a case for doing so jointly with other Essex councils, to give economies of scale and making it easier to recruit suitably qualified staff. In the absence of an SPV, the release of enhanced land value to enable the timely provision of good community facilities will be dependent on very stringent planning conditions being specified and enforced. We do not believe this would be as effective. It is unlikely that the communities will be successful in the long term unless adequate infrastructure and facilities is provided early in their life.
- The planned new communities should include local heat and energy grids, serving both residential and commercial areas and supported by local generation, to maximise their efficiency.

Policy SP7

- Until infrastructure such as schools, shops and GP surgeries is in place, new residents of NUGV will be required to travel considerable distances to use local services in Saffron Walden and the rail station at Audley End. Use of the B1383 through Littlebury would therefore increase. Traffic on this route is already heavy and speeding through the village, especially on entry and exit, is a considerable safety issue. Accidents regularly occur on the stretch from Littlebury to Audley End; it seems reasonable to assume that an increase in volume of traffic would result in a greater

number of accidents. Reduction of the speed limit through Littlebury from 30m.p.h to 20 m.p.h and possible further traffic calming measures should be considered.

- It does not seem realistic to assume that the majority of northbound traffic will use the A11 as a preferred route. In order to prevent 'rat-running' through local villages, already a problem for these communities, an upgrade to junction 9 of the M11 would seem to be a necessity.
- Until schools are built to serve the new developments, free bus transport will have to be provided to existing local schools with places at substantial cost. In reality, for NUGV residents, these school places will be at Saffron Walden, Newport, Stansted and possibly Great Dunmow, with bus services likely to be routed through Littlebury. Making spare places available to school children living in existing settlements at nil or low cost could help to reduce the impact of increased traffic on roads through the district at peak travel times.
- The assumption that rail commuters from NUGV will travel solely from Great Chesterford station is unrealistic unless Great Chesterford station is expanded and easy access from NUGV is provided, and or parking provision increased. Currently Audley End and Whittlesford have a greater number of fast services into London and better provision for parking. Commuters that choose to drive to Audley End will further increase traffic through Littlebury. Increased use of Whittlesford may have a traffic impact on Hinxton and Ickleton.
- Schools in the north of the District are close to capacity, with some families now having difficulty as their children are in more than one school some distance from each other. The proposal that students travel to Dunmow would result in excessive journey times for both students and parents, and make it difficult to maintain the home/school relationship needed to support learning. This is not sustainable, and additional school places will be required at the outset of any new planned settlement. Younger children from Littlebury have, since the closure of the village school, attended Gt Chesterford. We believe the very early provision of a new primary school in NUGV is essential to enable this to continue.
- Additional medical and dental services are required in communities that have absorbed recent growth, and at the outset in any new settlements. In the latter case, this will minimise travelling and help develop a sense of community.
- Landscaping of new developments should be designed using predominantly native species in bee and wildlife friendly corridors linked to open countryside to maximise their benefit.

Policy SP12

- The plan should reduce the energy demand of the District, and include firm proposals to increase the local generation and storage of electricity which is being promoted and incentivised by Government.

Housing

Policy H2

- The proposed size mix set out in para 4.10 and Appendix 2, is inappropriate. Developers may well prefer to build larger homes, but that should not drive what is approved. Given that the national average household size is 2.4 people, more people are living alone, and that the District has an above average age profile, a very much higher proportion of dwellings in all tenures should have 1 and 2 bedrooms. This would provide more suitable housing for both younger and older residents, reduce the need for younger people to move away to find affordable accommodation and produce more balanced communities.
- Due to the rising in age of the population, suitable accommodation for the elderly would be a requirement, designed to be integrated with the community on each site. Good quality sheltered accommodation, dementia villages or similar, and some housing suitable for multi-generational families should be provided to facilitate choice.

Policy H6

- In the new settlements at least, it should not be necessary to agree less than the target 40% proportion of new

developments being social housing. Priority should be given to local residents who do not wish to move away from their local area.

Para 3.94

- Every new home should be mandated to have solar water heating and solar PV and, when the technology is ready, electricity storage

Employment

Para 5.3

- The draft Plan focuses discussion of employment largely on Stansted Airport and Chesterford Park. Many of the new employment sites identified are small. Identifying larger potential employment sites should be a priority to attract larger businesses and a greater range of employment.
- The plan relies heavily on residents of new settlements working locally to achieve sustainable communities, but there is little detail on how this will be achieved. In North Uttlesford, there is the opportunity to bring in large numbers of high skill and ancillary jobs by attracting high tech companies from Cambridge, as we understand that some are now unable to find single sites there of sufficient size for their long term needs.

Para 5.11

- The District already has high numbers of out-commuters. It is our view that this reflects both the high local skill base mentioned in the plan but also limited local employment opportunities. Significant numbers of extra jobs will need to be provided throughout the District to avoid the planned additional housing simply increasing out commuting. Appendix 4 states that at least one new job should be created in new settlements for every home built. Increasing the number of jobs over and above the numbers of new homes would enable out commuting to be reduced, improve job opportunities for all residents and the sustainability of the local economy.

Retail

Para 6.17

- There should be sufficient properties in garden villages eventually for most of their regular retail needs to be provided within the settlement. However, it is important that daily retail needs are met at the outset to minimise traffic movements and develop the community.

Policy RET1

- The growth of on line shopping, and its impact on established shopping centres is not addressed.
- Out of town retail should be minimised.

Transport

Policy TA2

- All new developments must be connected by safe walking and cycling routes to the local facilities they will use. The design of new settlements should incorporate a comprehensive network, with mechanisms to build it at the same time as the housing.
- Bus use in Uttlesford is low, mainly due to infrequent services and high fares. The recent removal of subsidies from bus routes by Essex County Council has resulted in high increases in fares; this has reduced access to public transport for people who most need it, such as those on low incomes, the young, those with mobility issues and those living in isolated rural villages. The availability of demand responsive transport vehicles is poor. Improvements to the bus transport network across the whole of Uttlesford would need to be implemented in order to reduce increasing car use by new and existing residents who need to travel for employment or leisure. Recognising the rural nature of the

District, this may require public funding, but would help achieve air quality and other UDC targets, as well as delivering a more inclusive community.

Policy TA3

- There must be adequate provision for electric car charging. Every new house and apartment should have the capability. Additionally, substantial numbers of charging points are required in the public realm and existing settlements, including provision for homes with no 'on plot' parking. The current proposal is completely inadequate

Policy TA4

- Garages should be of adequate size for modern cars, to maximise the use of off street parking.

Policy TA5

- Car ownership and use in Uttlesford is already above the national average. The Plan should set targets for traffic reduction, to reduce congestion and emissions, and take full account of changing technology and transport options.
- The Plan does not take account of the planned reduction of use of fossil fuels or the evolution of electric vehicles, including autonomous vehicles. It should take account of the announcements by Government and manufacturers about the major change over to electric (and hydrogen fuel cell) vehicles that is expected to occur in the mid 2020's i.e exactly the period the plan covers. The adoption of electric vehicles will actually reduce pollution and noise.
- Although bus, cycle and walking routes will be incorporated into the design plan for the new settlements, it will be imperative to link these with improved facilities across the rest of the district to support integration of the new developments into the wider community and to prevent increased car use across the district.
- The provision of cycle paths in Uttlesford is inadequate, as is the proposal within the plan that improvements are limited to the path already in place from Saffron Walden to Wendens Ambo and improvements to the Fritch Way. Recreational cycling is very popular locally; Saffron Walden has one of the most successful Triathlon clubs in the country. In addition, there are substantial benefits to be had from developing cycling routes for both recreation and utility cycling. The Cam valley from NUGV to Gt Chesterford, Littlebury, Saffron Walden and Newport is virtually flat, and the distances to employment sites, schools, shops and stations are within the range considered to be viable for utility cycling. Developing continuous, connected, safe routes in this part of the District should be a high priority. It would reduce car movements, and there is an opportunity to link such a network to Whittlesford station and Cambridgeshire employment sites, benefiting new and existing Uttlesford residents. It could potentially attract more visitors to Saffron Walden. Significantly, it would also help UDC meet targets in its existing policies on health, recreation and air quality.

Para 7.16

- There is an increased use of on-demand app based services such as Uber and Zip car. The combination of these technologies with autonomous vehicles may lead to the decrease in private car ownership and increased use of pool cars. This is already happening in the under 30 age group in the US.
- Car sharing should be encouraged by planning conditions, with the provision of parking (and charging) spaces for community vehicles, as is offered now at a new development of flats on the outskirts of Chelmsford and many outside the District.

Infrastructure

Para 5.40

- Although the Plan refers to the need for broadband to be improved, it is not ambitious enough. As we move from traditional industries to a knowledge-based economy, with more working from home, world class broadband will be needed to attract and retain companies.
- Every premise needs high speed internet connectivity. The stated target of 10Mb/s is the minimum that a modern family

home needs today. This will be totally inadequate to in the future, for either domestic needs as broadcast TV gives way to on demand streamed services and home working becomes more common. The target should be at least 100Mb/s with technology that can be upgraded to 1GB/s as needed. This is the standard to be trialled in six pilot areas (announced by government last week), and is highly likely to be the expected norm nationally. All properties in the garden villages and new developments elsewhere should be fibre enabled from Day 1. Technologies exist to deliver these speeds in dispersed rural areas without the limitations of radio and satellite referred to in the draft plan and should be implemented quickly to maintain the competitiveness of the District.

Policy INF2

- The proposed level of provision of sports fields and recreational facilities are far below those of adjoining authorities. This is inadequate, and should be increased to similar levels. Doing so will help UDC achieve targets on existing policies on health, among others.

Design

Policy D5

- Applying the Essex Design Guide style to the planned new settlements would be inappropriate. These should reflect the age in which they are being planned and developed, giving greater scope to incorporate energy generation and management discretely.

Environment

Policy EN16

- Minimising traffic movements and developing non fossil fuel transport should be explicit objectives within the plan, accompanied by detailed proposals on how this is to be achieved.
- High quality planting on new sites should ensure the buildings merge into the landscape.
- The Plan should include an objective to maximise the use of the local countryside for exercise and recreation, alongside food production, nature conservation and the retention of traditional vernacular buildings and rural features.

Countryside

Policy C1

- Minimising light pollution by careful design of both public and private lighting installations will be important to reduce visual impact of new developments and maintain the rural character of the area.