

help us plan for the future

Housing, shops, jobs, transport and the environment are the issues influenced by the new Local Development Framework for the district.

Your views will help to shape the framework which will help to determine the planning policies for the area.

To help you complete the questionnaire opposite we have explained the background to the issues and choices facing the district below.



CHAIRMAN OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE, CLLR ALAN THAWLEY INSPECTS EXAMPLES OF HIGH AND LOW DENSITY NEW HOUSING IN GREAT DUNMOW.

HOUSING

The draft East of England Plan says that 8,000 new homes should be built in Uttlesford between 2001 and 2021. Sites are already identified for two thirds of these. The council objected to the plan's suggestion that most of the balance should probably be provided as an urban extension to Great Dunmow. The council feels that the community should decide where in the district the new housing should be built.

Government is keen to encourage new development on brownfield land. But there isn't enough of it for all new development to be absorbed in this way and there comes a point when it might be better to build on a greenfield site on the edge of one of the larger towns or villages in the district.

Options include putting the houses in a small number of large sites to enable the maximum level of public service infrastructure, scattering them throughout the district with significant extensions to many villages, or a combination of approaches.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The council is keen to make sure that the housing being built meets the needs of all the different types of households that live in the district.

Housing in Uttlesford is expensive - in 2005 the average house price was £292,804. This means there is a lack of affordable housing to satisfy those in need, including first time buyers, key workers and those on low and middle incomes needing more space.

Council research reveals there is a need for social housing to rent and for shared ownership schemes for people who could afford a small mortgage.

The council currently asks for 40% of homes on sites of 0.5 ha or 15 dwellings and above to be for social rent or shared ownership. In villages, schemes just providing affordable housing may be allowed beyond development limits subject to certain conditions being met.

EMPLOYMENT

Because business use often has lower land value than housing land there is sometimes pressure from developers to develop employment sites for housing. The council has resisted this in the past but some proposed sites have not been developed and this may be because the sites are not in the right place.

The council thinks it is important to balance the provision of employment land with housing because that creates scope for a sustainable community in which people are able, if they choose, to work near where they live.

TOWN CENTRES

A recent retail study found Great Dunmow, Saffron Walden, Stansted Mountfitchet and Thaxted were trading well with few empty shops but that 76% of resident non-food spending was lost to other centres. The district's centres are unlikely to grow because the larger centres nearby like Cambridge and Bishop's Stortford have a wider range of shops. There is limited opportunity for new shops to be built in market towns.

Given the rural nature of the district it might be difficult to encourage more people to shop within the area, especially for clothes, electrical goods and large non food items.

TRANSPORT

Car travel is a major contributor to the CO₂ emissions which are responsible for climate change. In our largely rural district good transport and accessibility is vital to the district and the people in it.

The car will remain the main choice of transport for most residents, workers and visitors. The need to reduce car travel and to encourage people to use other types of transport like buses, trains and bicycles poses a major challenge since it affects the choices people currently make about how they go about their daily lives.

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"I URGE ALL RESIDENTS TO COMPLETE THE FEEDBACK FORM AND HELP SHAPE PLANNING POLICY. WE ALL HAVE AN INTEREST IN THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DISTRICT AND NEED TO CONSIDER THE OPTIONS CAREFULLY," SAYS CLLR THAWLEY.

SUSTAINABLE ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The use of oil, coal and natural gas to supply power and heating is the main source of CO₂ emissions in the UK.

We could encourage developments to incorporate "passive" technology to reduce the amount of energy that we use. This can involve simple things such as good quality insulation. It can also include facing buildings to the south so they gain heat from the sun which can then be moved around the building.

The plan could also require major new developments to include renewable or 'low carbon' energy technologies such as solar panels or wind turbines to help meet their energy needs.

Conservation of water is becoming increasingly important. The plan could require water saving features from the simple (e.g. low flush toilets) to the advanced (harvesting rainwater).

Existing building regulations do not address energy used for construction, or specifically require use of low carbon technologies or require special water saving features.

GREEN SPACES

A survey of public green space in the district is being carried out. This will help us to draw up a strategy to make them more inviting and accessible to all.

To help us complete the strategy we need to know what residents and visitors want from our green spaces and what they think of the facilities provided.

A PROPOSED SPATIAL VISION

The council is working to produce a vision of how the district could be in the future. Below, are the planning elements of the vision.

Uttlesford will enjoy a sustainably high quality of life in which the benefits of the unique character of the district are equally available to all residents, workers and visitors

Economy, employment & training

- Opportunities exist for those who want to, to work from home
- facilities exist for companies to grow without leaving Uttlesford
- we are a leading centre in adopting renewable energy and for the production of biomass as an energy source.

Getting around

- People have a real choice about how to travel,

enabling a reduction in reliance on the private car with the driver being the only person in the vehicle

- a network of cycle and foot paths exists throughout the district.

District Character

- The houses and facilities people need are affordable and available locally
- our towns and villages continue to be separate entities with green space between them
- our countryside, its biodiversity, agricultural and visual qualities are protected and accessible to all
- our towns are safe, clean and attractive places.
- new housing developments have been dispersed with significant extensions to many settlements
- OR
- new housing developments have been concentrated on relatively few sites enabling the provision of the maximum level of public service infrastructure
- all development is as close to carbon neutral as possible and incorporates measures to minimise water consumption
- the impact of Stansted Airport has been minimised and it is recognised as an asset to the district which attracts people to live, work and visit.

Living in communities

- Accessible, high quality health services and effective promotion of healthy living mean that healthy lifestyles are available to all.