



UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Felsted & Stebbing Ward

District Councillors John Evans & Richard Silcock



DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT: NOVEMBER 2023

We are pleased to submit our monthly Report to the Parish Council, which this Month is dedicated to Local Plan issues, given its topicality and importance.

THE DRAFT LOCAL PLAN – THE VERY LATEST NEWS

This Report brings you the very latest update – hot off the press – namely that the Council decided at its Extraordinary Meeting held on Monday evening this week, 30 October, to permit the **draft Uttlesford Local Plan 2021 – 2041** (“the “Draft Plan”) to proceed to consultation under Regulation 18. This amounts to the first procedural step to be taken towards the creation of an up to date Local Plan for the District.

As we all know, not having an up to date Local Plan is highly damaging for our communities, in that opportunistic and speculative small scale development has over the past decade been permissioned in locations which would otherwise be less than desirable and importantly, without being accompanied by the provision of infrastructure which should be required to be paid for or provided by developers, particularly in the case of larger scale development. This would be achievable when allocated under the long term strategic planning permitted under a Local Plan.

Our current Local Plan was made in 2005 and is now grossly out of date and which gives rise to a presumption in favour of “sustainable development” in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

The Draft Plan is just that – ie a first draft released for the purpose of consultation; it is not a “done deal” as its purpose is to provide a working skeleton document containing potential planning policies and allocations of land which are currently considered suitable for potential residential and employment opportunities over the next **20 years**. All these land areas were put forward by land owners and promoters in the “Call for Sites” exercise undertaken in 2021.

Nonetheless, despite being a first stage/trigger document required to allow the consultation to begin, it did not go through on the nod and regrettably, some political positioning arose and the votes cast were:

Uttlesford District Council, Council Offices, London Road, Saffron Walden, Essex CB11 4ER

e-mail contact: cllrevans@uttlesford.gov.uk and cllrsilcock@uttlesford.gov.uk

FOR: 22

AGAINST: 11

ABSTAIN: 2

NOT PRESENT: 4

Of the votes cast, the Conservative Members all voted against, with one abstention, the Lib Dem members present voted for, with one against, while the R4U and Independent members voted for, with two members against and one abstention.

There was a considerable number of members of the public present in the Chamber and several made oral addresses and written representations were also received, the majority of whom expressed substantial concerns as to the proposed policies relating to Takeley and the Countryside Protection Zone. Former District Councillor Merifield also spoke as a member of the public, being supportive of proceeding to the Regulation 18 consultation stage.

John, being the Cabinet Member responsible for Planning and the Local Plan presented the Report (19 pp) to Council. It with supporting materials is to be found in the following hyperlinks. Apologies to those who might find such links intrusive to their uninterrupted reading of this Report, but in the interests of allowing readers to find and refer back to these important documents and sources, it is hoped that the following format might be found acceptable on this occasion:

Portfolio Holder to Council Report

<https://uttlesford.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s33308/Appendix%201%20Draft%20Uttlesford%20Local%20Plan%202021%202041.pdf>

supported by the Draft Plan (205 pp)

<https://uttlesford.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s33308/Appendix%201%20Draft%20Uttlesford%20Local%20Plan%202021%202041.pdf>

relevant strategic site templates:

<https://uttlesford.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s33275/Site%20Development%20Templates%20LP%20Appendices%202-4.pdf>

and Appendices 1 – 16:

<https://uttlesford.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s33274/Local%20Plan%20Appendices%201-16%20except%202-4.pdf>

plus technical reports and studies by way of supporting evidence. It all makes for a weighty read being well in excess of 3,000 pp:

<https://uttlesford.moderngov.co.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=13578#mgDocuments>

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THE DRAFT LOCAL PLAN – WHAT DOES IT CONTAIN ?

Housing Numbers and Site Allocations

Our October Report contained further detailed background and the procedural steps lying ahead for the Local Plan to which we refer Members and Residents, but as a snapshot of the headlines in the draft local plan:

- it provides for the following **6,076** net housing allocations across the District (= 13,680 gross “housing supply” ie excluding completions and planning permissions etc given/anticipated of 8,352) between 2021 and until 2041. The allocations are suggested to be in locations according to the spatial strategy described in the draft, being consistent with sustainability, meaning for this purpose better (than other locations) access to transport and other facilities:
 - No new towns/garden communities
 - 5,076 additional homes at 10 proposed strategic development sites (greater than 100 homes), located at three Key Settlements and in the following net housing numbers (netted down because of provisions made/permissions given since 2021). Further detail is provided as to the gross numbers at Table 3 on p 13 of the Report :

○ Saffron Walden	1,280
○ Great Dunmow	869
○ Stansted Mountfitchet	390

and three Local Rural Centres:

○ Newport	412
○ Takeley	1,636
○ Thaxted	489

and 1,000 dwellings spread across 13 “Larger Villages” which include Felsted and Stebbing.

- The proposed Housing Requirement as at 1 April 2023 for Felsted and Stebbing within the Plan Period ie to 2041 are 95 and 109 respectively. These are gross figures and again would be netted off by reference to completions and commitments since 2021.

There is encouragement given to Neighbourhood Plans for the purposes of identifying suitable locations for the allocation numbers provided for, so it is very helpful that Felsted Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has been reconstituted and can consider what effect the draft Local Plan might have on its work going forward.

Anticipated timetable for the Uttlesford Local Plan

3 November – 15 December 2023

- Public consultation on the draft local plan

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Early 2024

- Consideration of consultation feedback and revisions to the plan as appropriate
- Putting together the final version of the plan including any modifications

Summer 2024

- Public consultation on the final Regulation 19 version of the plan

End of 2024

- Submission of the local plan to the Planning Inspectorate for consideration

2025

- Public examination by Planning Inspectorate and hearing sessions
- Receipt of Planning Inspector's report

2026

- Adoption of the local plan

There are a great many policies of interest and potential value to our residents which we shall expand upon in our next Report, in case they will be useful to you and for residents to refer to in preparing their Regulation 18 representations.

For example the following include just a few of the policy areas of note:

- ✓ Affordable Housing – there is considerable need for this in the District (currently estimated as 261 households)
- ✓ Draft policies as to house sizes and tenure (including build to rent) are intended to go towards increasing the stock of “affordable homes” (although they are very expensive still in this District) in the hope that first time buyers and those wishing to downsize may have a better opportunity to do so than at present. Planning Permissions granted in abundance to larger sized dwellings (which are more attractive to builders and developers as they give rise to greater profit) has occurred in abundance in recent years. Without a Local Plan, this was not preventable as there was no policy covering the topic;
- ✓ A Community Infrastructure Levy is proposed which will allow the community to specify what infrastructure is needed ie over and beyond the straightjacket of section 106 obligations;

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- ✓ Protection of river valleys and “green/blue buffers” as means for the sustaining of wildlife and recreation
- ✓ Heritage, Landscape and open space protection
- ✓ High Quality Design parameters
- ✓ Infrastructure provision (health and community as well roads/transport)

Advice of the Regulation 18 Consultation is being distributed by UDC on its website and by social media and will also be sent to each household by mail shortly. We encourage the Parish Council and Members and of course as many residents as possible to respond to the Consultation and make their representations.

We will ensure that reminders of what is happening in the coming months continue to be circulated widely.

We would encourage all residents to sign up for updates at www.uttlesford.gov.uk/local-plan-news and also to follow the timetable which is available at www.uttlesford.gov.uk/local-plan-timetable. A set of Local Plan FAQ's has been prepared also which are very useful as well as readable in plain English and they are to be found at <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/article/4923/Local-Plan-FAQs>. Updates are also provided by means of social media.

The main page on the UDC web site referring to the Local Plan is worth bookmarking since it contains references, to be added to in coming weeks, to the detailed technical evidence which have been used in arriving at the draft *Regulation 18* policies.

DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' AND CONSTITUENTS' SURGERY

We continue to hold our joint Surgery in the URC Hall immediately prior to the monthly Parish Council Meeting and we look forward to meeting any resident who wishes to discuss a matter of concern or indeed anything we have commented upon in our Monthly Reports. As usual, no appointment is necessary.

If any resident would like to receive a personal copy of our Monthly Reports, we shall be pleased to send one directly to them by e mail.

Of course, we remain very happy to consider requests for financial support, utilising our Members' Initiative Grant as appropriate and which can be made available to community groups for suitable purposes.

Cllr John Evans

E: cllr.evans@uttlesford.gov.uk

Cllr Richard Silcock

E: cllr.silcock@uttlesford.gov.uk

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