

Uttlesford Futures
Joint meeting of the Economic Development & Environment Groups
3 March 2010

Uttlesford Core Strategy
Further Preferred Options Consultation

Present

Name	Organisation/Agency
Alan Dean	Uttlesford District Councillor & Chair of the Economic Development Skills & Learning Group
Paul Garland	Sustainable Uttlesford & Chair of the Environment Group
Steve Rhenius	Uttlesford District Council
Keith Hughes	Essex Business Link
Peter Riding	Friends of the Earth
Tony Morton	Sustainable Uttlesford Farming Wildlife and Countryside Group
Peter Wilcock	Uttlesford District Councillor
Graham Fletcher	Federation of Small Businesses
Joan Herbert	Adult Community Learning (Essex County Council)
Melanie Jones	Uttlesford District Council
Sarah Nicholas	Uttlesford District Council
Mike Jeffs	Sustainable Uttlesford
Mike Perry	Dunmow Chamber
Bruce Tice	Saffron Walden Business Forum
Graham Hunter	Hunter Scientific
Paul Gadd	Saffron Walden Friends of the Earth
Catherine Dean	Uttlesford District Councillor
Jan Menell	Uttlesford District Councillor
Dorothy Holland	National Apprentice Service

Introduction – Cllr A Dean

- 34,000 jobs in district
- 8,000 more economically active people than jobs
- 1/8 of district population commute to London
- High % of people come into the district to work at Airport
- Significant % of district population work from home.
- Employer and Business Survey found
 - 42% of business operated from pre 1950s properties
 - 12% thought they would move away from Uttlesford in the next 3 years mostly due to requiring larger premises.
 - 26% of business had been in Uttlesford for 1-5 years (a similar % had been in the district for over 20 years)

Questions/Issues

Tony Morton

The Council ignores the farming sector and its role in the local economy and impact on biodiversity.

Alan Dean – work is being done by certain groups on promoting local trade and local purchasing.

Paul Garland

With the issue of Peak Oil we are likely to see a radical change in farming methods which may have spatial planning implications as more people will work on farms.

Tony Morton

A scarcity of petrol will impact business who do not have to be in Uttlesford for operational reasons and who rely on people travelling to them to work there. Agriculture is more appropriate here than some businesses.

Setting the Scene: the LDF Process – Melanie Jones (UDC)

- Core Strategy sets vision & objectives and broad policies for steering and shaping development, locations for growth, areas for protection.
- Consulting on preferred options following completion of further study work.
- Documents comprised of leaflet, Further Preferred Options Document, Sustainability Appraisals, numerous background studies.
- Encourage response via Limehouse software
- Employment and retail studies are out of date and need to be refreshed.

Questions/Issues

Jan Menell

Have we consulted farming community?

The Council has specifically consulted NFU, CLA, farmers as district residents and businesses, Audley End Estate.

Alan Dean

Need to find out what jobs are needed where they should be located and this should dictate where houses are located.

This will be covered by review of Employment Land Survey

Mike Perry

Housing development always leads to commuting.

UDC should give incentives to encourage business growth.

Paul Garland

Do figures distinguish between internal jobs growth and in commuting?

Single jobs total set out Regional Plan <2030

The Local Business View – Graham Hunter, Hunter Scientific

- Hunter Scientific manufactures glass micro tools for embryo & gamete handling; and for sperm injection, embryo biopsy etc. Also distribute and service equipment worldwide.

- Started off in domestic garage now in converted farm buildings at Priors Hall, Widdington, where low rent is a commercial advantage.
- Employ 22 staff, all trained and local and tend to stay with company for many years.
- Good Points about location
 - Cheap rent
 - Easy access to transport infrastructure
 - Near Stansted Hub for all Couriers
 - No need for High Street presence
 - Clean, rural environment
- Bad points about location
 - No room for further expansion
 - New building projects are difficult & expensive
 - Roads not gritted in winter
 - No rubbish collection
 - No recycling facilities
 - Council Tax high
 - No Public Transport
- Summary
 - Uttlesford has been a good place to develop our business in but now we are struggling due to lack of suitable facilities to expand into.
 - We have invested a lot of money in our clean rooms which are not movable.
 - No grants available for relocation unlike our competitor based in Cornwall.
 - We want to stay in the area because that is where all our staff live.
 - Frustrated by lack of a business champion at UDC.

Questions/Issues

Catherine Dean

Unfortunate that being located next to Grade 1 listed barn constrains development opportunities

By widening the types of business which can locate at airport would increase the availability of employment sites.

Tony Morton

Currently benefiting from cheap premises, however in order to gain the additional benefits you require this will inevitably lead to an increase in rent.

Alan Dean

301 bus does visit Widdington, but probably not frequently enough for employees.

Graham Fletcher

Broxbourne DC constructs and manages business parks themselves and therefore has control over types of units and rents.

Paul Garland

Is development too constrained by listed building legislation and guidance?
How important is it to preserve buildings in aspic?

Peter Wilcox

The Council is not proactive enough in supporting small businesses/enterprises. There is a need to provide mid-range rental units.

Local Development Framework: Key Policy Areas – Sarah Nicholas, (UDC)

- Options for safeguarding existing employment sites
 - Continue to safeguard to limit conversion to housing land or other non-employment uses – may mean they remain undeveloped for business use
 - Release for other uses and find alternative employment sites – problems of finding realistic alternative sites.
 - Release part of site for alternative use and retain part for employment – will restrict type of employment uses but aims to secure its development.

- Options to Identify additional land
 - Allow expansion on unallocated Greenfield sites subject to criteria – contrary to recent government advice (PPS4)
 - Allocate suitable sites – provides certainty of where development allowed however risks not being developed
 - Accept that some firms will relocate outside district – acknowledging that protecting rural character of district limits development opportunities.

- Additional issues to be included in strategy
 - Provision of employment land within suggested new settlement
 - Conversion of rural buildings

- Function of market towns – need to clarify retail strategy and further work has been commissioned which will be completed in summer 2010 and subject to further consultation. Options include
 - Identify specific sites for retail development
 - Criteria based policies

- Number of changes proposed to environmental policies with the aim of strengthening and clarifying them:-
 - Metropolitan Green Belt Q – Maintain broad area but asks if there should be a boundary review to allow limited development in villages surrounded by Green belt?
 - Protecting the Countryside Clarifies the strategy for development in the countryside - protected for its own sake, agricultural productivity and biodiversity.
 - Protecting Agricultural Land To be included in policy on protecting the countryside –
 - Countryside Protection Zone No changes proposed

- Landscape Character Now refers to Landscape Character Assessment and need to take into account key characteristics, features & sensitivities to change.
- Protecting Historic Environment Amended to give greater protection and makes reference to Town Design Statements and conservation area appraisals.
- Protecting nature conservation & geological sites Amended to give greater clarity & protection – implementing Essex BAP
- Character of market towns Amended to give greater clarity – sets out elements to protect and what new development must achieve
- Use of natural resources Amended to be consistent with sustainability objectives dealing with accessibility, safety, minimising water, waste pollution etc
- Renewable energy Amended to be consistent with national & regional guidance providing for integration of renewable energy in development schemes and stand alone energy regeneration schemes
- Open Space New policy proposed to safeguard existing facilities and ensure provision within new development.

Questions

Catherine Dean

What has been the success of live/work developments?

This is being investigated

Paul Garland

Can S106 monies be used to create employment?

This can be considered as part of the infrastructure policy

Does definition of open space include allotments?

Allotments are included as a type of green space in PPG17 and are included in the Council's Green Space Strategy Audit (2006)

Alan Dean

Is there a map of available employment sites?

Mapping the data is being investigated.

Environment Issues Raised

Biodiversity policies fall short of what is required. No information on what lives where; no reference to Living Landscapes; Accessible Natural Green Space Standards (ANGSt); no policy on how the Council is to address shortfall in open space; no reference to green corridors and linking of natural open spaces.

Council should have a biodiversity officer who can interface with farmers and encourage support of biodiversity.

Economic Issues Raised

Need to take a stance on whether/how much local businesses should be able to expand in situ taking into account the character of the area. Understand what 'character of the area' actually means.

Employment sites are more valuable to owner for residential development

Re-evaluation of Employment Land survey must take account of Peak Oil.

Must concentrate on understanding and promoting the district's strengths eg tourism.

Problems arise if employment and residential uses are next to each other – they should be kept separate.

Is policy on Stansted Airport correct? Some businesses have moved away. Should look into be able to allow a broader type of occupiers on land/buildings at Stansted Airport.

Core Strategy should be informed by a study showing where money is spent (balance between inward/outward) and impact on district.

Development (location of?) should encompass/enable sustainable transport

Need to consider impact of increasing housing densities.

Council should have someone interfacing with businesses – Economic Development Officer – with adequately high standing within UDC.

Businesses should be part of/included in community engagement

Retailers face difficulties in competing against 'retro-discounting' where a salesperson will receive the discounted value of the product if sales targets are met.

Companies should have a local procurement policy – should be part of spatial policy.

Core Strategy is defensive/protective rather than pro-active and strategic.

Need to identify sources of funding?

- Saffron Walden lies within the Greater Cambridge Partnership – does this raise opportunities for funding/investment?
- Eastern Plateau LEADER project funding (EEDA)

Need to look at retail and protection of village shops.

Take into account input from Parishes, from parish plans.

Need for group to engage with planned review by UDC of employment and retail studies.