

Uttlesford Core Strategy
Overview of Comments Received in Response to the
Further Consultation on Preferred Options
February to April 2010

The Council went out on consultation on further preferred options for the core strategy between February and April 2010. The consultation material consisted of; the main consultation document which asked 31 questions on the full range of policies in the Core Strategy; a leaflet which was delivered to every household in the district and focused on seven key questions along with the sustainability appraisal work. A full report of the responses received is available on the Council's website but because that document is quite long this document has been prepared to give a brief overview.

Note: please read alongside "Uttlesford Core Strategy-Further Consultation on Preferred Options, February 2010" for the background to the questions.

Q1 Housing Numbers

Do you have a view on the Council's preferred option (Option 4)? Which option do you think is best in terms of finding sites for 4,000 homes in the district?

This question was included in the leaflet delivered to all households and 2089 responses were received from this method. A further 160 responses were registered on the Limehouse system giving a total response of 2249. Of these 1435 (64%) were objection. 764 (34%) were comments of support or conditional support and the remaining 49 (2%) were observations.

61% of the householder objectors who gave their address details live within the CM22 6 and CM24 8 postcodes which includes Elsenham, Henham, Stansted Mountfitchet, Birchanger, Ugley and Takeley

In relation to the second part of question 1 which asks which option do you think is best in terms of finding sites for 4,000 homes in the district 1,155 comments were received. Of these 368 people expressed a preference for one of the other options set out in the consultation document. Their preferences were.

*Option 2 was the preferred option with 61% (224) comments in support
Option 1 was the second favourite with 27% (99) comments in support
Option 3 was third favourite supported in 10% (37) of comments
Option 5 with only 2% (8) support*

Around 755 comments were made suggesting alternative options to those above. These options included

Dispersal of housing around the District: 37% (283)

Elsenham Alternative 32% (245) put forward by a number of respondents who were specifically objecting to the Elsenham new settlement proposal which is

Assuming that 4,000 dwellings is the right number

- Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow are large towns with significant infrastructure and services which could cope with at least 1,500 houses each, a small percentage on their existing housing numbers*
- the 6 "key villages" (including Elsenham) could accommodate 130 houses each, an acceptable percentage increase on their existing housing numbers*
- the remaining small villages would then have to accommodate 12 houses each*

New settlement at Great Chesterford: 9% (67)

*Other suggestions: 9% (65)
New settlement at Boxted Wood: 3% (19)
Growth to be concentrated in Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow: 3% (21)
New settlement at Chelmer Mead: 2% (13)
Argue smaller scale of growth: 2%(17)
Supports new settlement in principle but not in Elsenham or those listed above: 2% (16)
New settlement at Easton Park: 1% (90)*

The new settlement proposal element of Option 4 has again attracted considerable opposition. People are generally concerned about its deliverability in terms of the amount of infrastructure required, its sustainability and the environmental impact.

The preferred alternative is for some form of wider distribution over a larger number of settlements.

Those that supported Option 4 did so because it allowed for a comprehensive development.

Although people expressed an opinion on the options, concern was still expressed that the overall scale of development is inappropriate for Uttlesford.

Q2 Comparative Sustainability Assessment

Do you have any comments on the Comparative Sustainability Assessment?

90 comments were received on this question. The majority (62%) are objections. Opinions on the Comparative Sustainability Appraisal ranged from considering it a comprehensive assessment of options to the view that it had been produced to justify the decision and there were concerns about the scoring and lack of weighting.

Q3 Sustainability Appraisal of the 6 Housing Options

Do you have any comments on the Sustainability Appraisal of the six housing options?

Of the 72 comments received, 65% of responses were objections. Around half of the objections were made by landowners or agents acting on behalf of landowners or developers seeking to promote sites which would not be supported by the preferred option. There is no clear preference for any of the alternative options

Q4 Distribution of Housing

Do you have any comments on the housing locations identified above? Do you think the housing numbers are about right for each of the towns and villages? If not, what do you think the scale of development should be and do you think any alternative should be included?

65% of the respondents to this question objected to the housing distribution and 29% supported the distribution.

Many of the objections were to the scale of development proposed for Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow.

Objections to the development north east of Elsenham made at question 1 were reiterated at question 4.

Many of the respondents are landowners or agents acting on behalf of landowners or developers seeking to promote sites and support or object to the distribution depending on whether their site is compatible with the distribution.

A number of the respondents question the overall scale of growth.

Q5 Development scenarios for Stansted Airport

What are your views on the scenarios for development at the airport? Do you agree that scenario 2 represents the most realistic scenario? If not please say what your preference would be and why

The split between support for and objection to Scenario 2 is about even. . The decision of BAA to withdraw the application and the lack of any national and regional policy context for growth at the airport confirms that scenario 2 remains the most appropriate assumption for the LDF.

Q6 Emerging Spatial Strategy

Do you have any comments on the emerging spatial strategy?

Of the 103 comments received 64% of the responses to this question were objections. Many of the objections have been made by developers promoting sites and/or areas of land for development which currently do not feature in the spatial strategy.

The continued protection of the Metropolitan Green Belt and the Countryside Protection Zone are supported.

Any review of the housing numbers for the district following the abolition of the Regional Plan in July 2010 could have implications for the spatial strategy.

Q7 Stansted Airport

Is this amended objective appropriate in the light of the discussion in Chapter 3 about the different possible scenarios for growth at the airport?

The responses ranged from support – recognising that the airport has planning permission to handle 35mppa and that a 2nd runway is unlikely in the plan period; to objecting because the strategy is not flexible enough to deal with the uncertainty around the airport. The reworded objective reflects the most likely Scenario for the airport as discussed in relation to Q5 above. There is support for this approach.

Q8 Maintaining Existing Employment Sites

Do you think the Council should maintain existing employment sites? Do you support the use of employment land for housing? For the larger sites it would be possible to have a mixture of employment as long as the employment was not noisy or polluting. Do you think this would work?

64% of the respondents to this question supported the use of employment land for housing, and 29% objected. Those in support thought it an appropriate use of underutilised or allocated employment land. Objectors were concerned about the loss of employment land. Representations supporting the use of employment land for housing were divided over whether a mix of uses on a site is appropriate. Respondents wished to make sure that residential properties would not be adversely affected by noise or pollution from adjoining employment uses. The Council will use information from the updated Employment Land Review and the SHLAA to inform decisions about potential sites.

Q9 New Employment Sites in Greenfield Locations

Do you think the Council should keep provisions in the policy to allow new employment sites on Greenfield sites in certain circumstances? Are there any other measures which the Council could use to support firms to grow within the District?

32% of respondents to this question supported new employment on Greenfield sites. The majority (53%) of people responding to this question objected to the proposal to allow new employment sites on Greenfield sites.

A significant number of people supporting this approach were objectors to the Elsenham new settlement who felt that large sites even in Greenfield locations were likely to be more attractive to employers and therefore more likely to be delivered than the likelihood of any significant employment being created in North East Elsenham. Other supporters made it clear that employment on Greenfield sites should only be considered as a last resort and should be subject to controls on size, access and traffic etc.

Some objectors are not convinced that the employment needs within the District would justify the release of Greenfield land and they were generally concerned about the loss of agricultural land. Objectors considered that employment development should be provided on Brownfield land or unused commercial properties or land.

Q10 Other Employment Issues

Are there any other issues which you think need to be addressed in the Employment Strategy?

46 comments were made in total. Most of the comments were objections or observations and many were making points about the employment strategy generally and not necessarily identifying other issues which should be included as set out in the question. The issues raised related to the new settlement at Elsenham; Stansted Airport and employment in rural areas. The future role of employment land at Stansted Airport is being considered as part of the Employment Land Review. The Employment Land Review will also help in confirming the appropriate distribution of employment locations within the strategy.

Q11 Getting Around

In your view does this set out a realistic and workable strategy for transport in the District? If not are there any other measures which should be included?

Of the 37 comments received 46% of the respondents to this question were in support of the strategy. 35% were objections to the Strategy. Most of the objections to the policy are on the basis that it is unrealistic and unworkable. People feel that there is no reasonable alternative to the private car in terms of public transport because the buses are slow, irregular and unreliable. There is a level of support for the policy but more work could be done to identify additional measures to overcome the objections.

Q12 Housing Contingency Figure

Do you agree that it is right not to include a contingency figure when enough sites are available?

Of the 55 comments received there were far more objections to the proposed change than representations of support but most of the objections were made by development companies or agents acting for landowners promoting land for development within the District. As a result of the abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategies the housing numbers for the district will be subject to further testing and may be reviewed.

Q13 Criteria for Gypsy Sites

Do you think that these criteria are the right ones to take into account? Do you know of any sites which you think might be suitable?

59% of the respondents to this question felt that the criteria were the right ones to take into account. Around 29% of respondents objected to the criteria. Many of the objectors considered that there was no need to make provision for any sites and that gypsies and travellers should finance and provide their

own sites. There were concerns about crime and rubbish. Some people objected to sites being used for businesses. Generally people thought that sites should be small and located away from existing residential properties.

A number of locations were suggested for sites including expanding existing sites at Little Dunmow and Stansted Mountfitchet, along the major routes like the M11 and the A120, the new settlement locations. Only a relatively small numbers were suggested by people with an interest in the land. These included land at Watch House Green Felsted and Wicken Bonhunt.

Q14 New Policy on Phasing

Do you agree with the proposed policy?

50 comments were received on this question, half of which were objections. Representations supporting this policy were generally conditional on supporting infrastructure being provided early in the development process and continuously delivered along with each phase of any housing development. Objectors to the policy highlighted the lack of any provision if the housing strategy identified should fail to deliver.

Q15 Housing Strategy

What are your views on the suggested distribution of housing?

Do you agree with the criteria for identifying sites in the towns and villages and what the development of the sites should incorporate?

Do you agree with the broad description of what is sought at the development at Elsenham?

From 91 comments 27% of respondents to this question supported the suggested distribution of housing. 63% of the respondents objected to the distribution. A significant number of these objections were from developers and land owners promoting alternative sites.

Q16 Infrastructure Provision

Do you have any views on the three approaches identified?

From the 34 comments received a variety of views are put forward and there is no consensus.

Q17 Green Belt Review

Do you think there should be a review of the greenbelt boundaries to allow small-scale/limited development on the edge of villages within the green belt?

37% of representations on this question were in support of a greenbelt review. A significant number of those supporting a greenbelt review were objectors to the Elsenham new settlement proposal. They consider that the attractive countryside such as that around Elsenham and Henham should be saved from development rather than save indifferent countryside merely because it is protected by the out dated Green Belt policy. 60% of respondents objected to a review of the MGB, valuing the Green Belt as an important safeguard against development.

Q18 Countryside Policy

Do you think the suggested changes explain the strategy for development in the countryside more clearly than that suggested in the Preferred Options consultation? If not what further changes would you suggest?

From 30 comments 55% of respondents to this question supported the revised policy. 40% of respondents objected. Objections included the views that the policy was too restrictive because some agricultural land will have to be lost to development and other views were that it is too flexible and there should be no development on Greenfield sites.

Q19 Landscape Character

Do you think the proposed changes overcome the objections to the previous policy? If not what changes would you like to see?

From 16 comments 69% of respondents supported the revised policy, and 25% objected. Objections are mainly around the details of the policy rather than the principles and these can be addressed in rewording etc.

Q20 Historic Environment

Do you think this new policy will overcome the objections?

From 19 comments 69% of respondents supported the suggested policy and 26% objected. Representations related to ensuring the protection of the setting of historic features is adequately covered by the policy, the policy is locally distinctive and reference to national guidance is up to date.

Q21 Open space

Do you support the addition of this new objective, and policy in the Core Strategy - if not what additional changes would you like to see?

From 21 comments 90% of respondents supported the revised policy and 10% objected. There is a view that the policy should be expanded to take into account the multiple functions that open space can provide.

Q22 Nature Conservation and Geological Sites

Do you think these suggested changes would overcome the objections to the preferred options policy? If not what other changes do you think should be made?

Of the 18 comments received half supported the revised policy. However, there was still a view that the policy wording could be stronger and a policy on green infrastructure should be included.

Q23 Retail Issues

The Council would welcome your comments on this preliminary assessment of the issues which the retail strategy will need to address. Do you have any comments on the alternative approaches to new development suggested? Are there any other issues which should be considered?

Of 25 comments received, 28% were support, 28% were objections and the rest were observations. Some of the representations considered that the policy should be flexible and not exclude edge of centre and out of centre developments. The opposing view is that policy should refer to retail development being within Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow. The results of the Retail Assessment currently underway will inform the retail strategy and assist in developing a retail hierarchy for the District.

Q24 Character of Market Towns

Do you have any comments on the proposed changes to this policy? Do you think this policy should remain as a separate policy or should it form part of the policy framework for the retail strategy outlined in Chapter 18?

Of the 17 comments received on the suggested revised policy the majority supported the policy remaining separate, because it gives a more robust

policy position and because people felt that the policy should apply to other types of development e.g. employment, tourism and residential within the towns centres and not just retailing.

Q25 Sustainable Development and Use of Natural Resources

Does this policy cover all the relevant issues? Do you agree that this suggested policy covers the issues in Policy LC2 and LC3 which could now be deleted?

Of the 24 comments received 62% supported the suggested revised policy and 21% objected. The majority of representations are suggesting additional issues which the policy needs to cover such as the air quality issues in Saffron Walden and specific targets for water efficiency.

Q26 Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency

Do you think the proposed changes will overcome the objections and provide a sound strategy for use of renewable energy in the District?

Of the 27 comments received 71% of the respondents supported the suggested revised policy. There were varying views on the wording of the policy to indicate when proposals to generate energy from renewable sources should outweigh environmental and other such constraints. There was also the view that the policy should address the issue of wind turbines and the potential impact on aviation.

Q27 Reducing Flood Risk

Do you support the proposed changes to this policy? If not what other changes do you think should be made?

16 comments were received on the suggested revised policy and the majority (69%) supported the policy. The Environment Agency objected to the revised policy saying that the wording is confusing and disjointed and suggested new wording for the policy.

Q28 Access to Stansted Airport

Do you think the proposed changes explain the strategy for access more clearly?

Of the 17 comments received half were in support and around half were objections to the proposed changes. A number of the representations were concerned that service improvements have focused on the airport as a regional interchange, and public transport access should only be acceptable where it has no detrimental effect on services provided to the rest of the district.

Q29 Health and Community Facilities

Do you agree that this policy should be deleted because these issues are covered by other policies in the Core Strategy?

Of the 19 comments received 43% of the respondents were in support and 58% objected to the deletion of the policy. The objectors felt that health issues were important and should continue to be covered in a separate policy, which could also encompass other issues.

Q30 Health Impacts

Do you agree that this issue is covered by Policy DC13 and that this policy should be deleted?

Of the 11 comments received, 54% were in support and 36% objected to the deletion of the policy.

Q31 Accessibility

Do you agree that this policy repeats issues covered in Policy DC13 and could be deleted?

Of the 12 comments received the majority (75%) were in support of the deletion of the policy.