

Uttlesford Community Stakeholder Forum

Proposals for Stage 2: Draft plan preparation



1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1. To inform discussions around how the Community Stakeholder Forum, first established to coincide with the 'Issues and Options' consultation on the Local Plan, could evolve to provide input into the next stage of work – preparing a draft version of the plan.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Community Stakeholder Forum was established to enhance the Council's community engagement on the new Local Plan. Comprising local stakeholders representing a wide range of special interest areas, the independent Forum has convened regularly via Zoom for meetings that are both livestreamed and recorded on YouTube for the wider public to watch.
- 2.2. The purpose of the Forum has been to act as a discussion group, and its programme of meetings has succeeded in drawing out a range of insightful perspectives that would not normally be heard in a traditional engagement process. The format has allowed sufficient time to debate different views and ideas, while its publicly-accessible content has helped to inform the wider community's comments on the 'Issues and Options' consultation.
- 2.3. The consultation closed on 21 April 2021, and the next stage of work on the Local Plan involves considering the comments received and compiling various studies to support the preparation of draft policies and site allocations.
- 2.4. Now that the Forum is established and has proven to be a valuable discussion group, the Council intends to continue with and evolve the format to enhance community engagement throughout preparation of the Local Plan.

3. Proposal for the Community Stakeholder Forum

- 3.1. The proposal for the Forum during 'Stage 2' (preparing the draft plan) is set out in the below table.

Role:	Discussion group, to support the Council in the preparation of specific aspects of the draft Local Plan.
Topics:	Sessions will be held on a small number of specific topics, to ensure clear outputs that can be used to inform the draft plan. The proposed topics are: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How the Local Plan could support low/zero-carbon transport choices

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. How design and density policies could be used to support high quality and thoughtful designs 3. How the Local Plan could support a mixture of land uses in existing villages through defining and facilitating ‘community hubs’ 4. A self-generated topic, to be selected using a poll based on the Local Plan’s objectives (Appendix A)
Membership:	<p>Refreshed membership comprising a wide range of local stakeholders, with current Forum members given the opportunity to re-join. New members to be invited as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Targeted invitations to known individuals/organisations that could make a valuable contribution – for example, those with specialist knowledge 2. Open invitation¹, publicised using the Council’s website, social media channels and Local Plan newsletter <p>Membership may vary by topic, with the format being flexible to accommodate fluctuating attendance numbers.</p>
Format:	<p>Interactive workshop sessions conducted using Zoom meeting software. Depending on social distancing requirements, in-person attendance will be considered.</p> <p>Depending on the topic being considered, public surveys may be used to inform the session.</p>
Schedule:	<p>Two two-hour evening sessions per topic, as follows:</p> <p>Topic 1 – July Topic 2 – August Topic 3 – September Topic 4 – October</p> <p>Scheduling to be optimised according to the policy writing timetable for each specific topic.</p>
Governance:	<p>Officers will consider the outputs from the Forum’s sessions, combine them with other work and make recommendations to Councillors using the established governance structure – typically, starting with Local Plan Leadership Group.</p>

3.2. Beyond Stage 2, it is expected that the Forum will evolve further to support community engagement activities around the formal ‘Preferred Options’ consultation in spring 2022.

¹ All responses to the open invitation will be considered. However, it may be deemed inappropriate for those who already have a clear voice in Local Plan preparation to join the Forum (e.g. site promoters, statutory consultees and Town/Parish Councils).

4. Conclusion

- 4.1. The current members of the Forum are invited to draw upon their experience of the programme so far, and comment upon the proposal as presented. The proposal will be refined as necessary and the new programme initiated.

Appendix A

Local Plan vision and objectives

The following vision and objectives were produced by officers and the Councillors in the Local Plan Leadership Group. While amendments may yet be made, they are listed here to aid understanding of the possible topics that the Forum will consider.

Vision

Our vision reflects the ambition required to achieve net-zero carbon status by 2030 and to protect and enhance Uttlesford's rich natural environment and built heritage.

Residents will know their views have been listened to and will have the opportunity to influence decision making. Town and Parish councils will play an increasing role in this. Local people will be involved in making Uttlesford 'the best place to live, work and play'.

Uttlesford will embrace the changes required to be net zero carbon, enabling us to live, work and play within the limits of the environment whilst protecting our natural environment

The essential landscape value of Uttlesford's countryside will be enhanced promoting biodiversity and increased woodland, contributing to the region's prosperous rural and agricultural economy. The rivers of Uttlesford will be protected and enhanced, and together with green infrastructure, contribute to a network of blue and green corridors for the benefit of wildlife and people. Hatfield Forest will be part of this network, however it will also be protected from overuse. Access to the countryside for recreation and tourism will be promoted in a managed way, supporting agricultural diversification, the creation of jobs and the healthy lifestyles of residents and visitors alike. The network of footpaths, safe cycle routes and bridleways will be expanded and improved resulting in Uttlesford residents having the highest levels of active travel and health in Essex.

Uttlesford's rich natural and historical heritage will be protected and enhanced, for the health and enjoyment of people now and in the future

Uttlesford will be known for its beautiful rolling countryside, its market towns and villages with a rich heritage, and a strong cultural offer and economy that operates at a local, national and international scale. The needs of local people, as well as generations after will be met and the people of the district will be healthier, happier and able to meet most of their day-to-day needs locally within a community that is good for their health and well-being.

Uttlesford will have a diverse, resilient and thriving sustainable economy

Uttlesford will have a diverse range of businesses and a tourism offer which supports the attractive towns and villages acting as employment and service centres for the surrounding rural hinterland. The district will work with its partners to ensure

business growth will be ambitious, innovative, future focussed and benefit the whole district. Small businesses, creative start-ups and a growing number of people working from home will be positively supported. The local benefits of Stansted Airport will be maximised, while its environmental impacts are managed and minimised. Links to other sources of prosperity will also benefit the district. The north of the district will benefit from appropriate improved links into the high-skilled 'Cambridge phenomenon', supporting high-value job growth at Chesterford Research Park and elsewhere. The south of the district will benefit from appropriate improved links to Harlow, Chelmsford, Bishop's Stortford and Braintree.

The market towns of the district will have sustainable, viable and vibrant town centres with a diverse range of stores and other facilities to attract people to shop and visit. Villages with smaller centres will meet the day-to-day needs of their local catchments.

New development will link homes with jobs, be of high quality design and focus on sustainable construction, materials and travel

New development will be focussed on providing the right homes and employment in the right place, in line with policies, to address the challenge of climate change, to strengthen communities and provide greater opportunities to live and work locally. ...
[To be added to following consideration of the Preliminary Outline Strategy in July]

How people travel through and around the district will have changed, and the use of public transport and active travel as an alternative to the car will be far greater than it is today. The necessary infrastructure to support this change will be delivered in a timely manner. The district will support car use shifting to zero tailpipe emission vehicles by providing appropriate infrastructure. Furthermore, the level of commuting will be addressed to reduce the need to travel and address congestion and climate change.

High quality design will protect and enhance the intrinsic character and built heritage of Uttlesford's towns, villages, and the wider environment will be balanced with the benefits of proportionate development to provide affordable housing, local jobs or additional community facilities. The quality of new development will be high, and supported by appropriate design guidance, agreed with local communities.

New buildings will be designed to low energy standards and renewable energy generation will meet the district's needs.

Objectives

a) Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding & drought

To ensure Uttlesford adapts to the effects of climate change including extremes of weather, through:

- The location, design and resilience of development;
- Planning for low energy new development;

- Planning for renewable energy provision in the district; and
- Reducing and managing the risk of flooding and drought.

b) Prioritising water resilience, sustainable consumption and river health

To ensure the health of our rivers and sustainable water use by:

- Ensuring water can be sustainably supplied to new development;
- Incorporating enhanced water efficiency standards in new development;
- Ensuring that sewage treatment and water recycling is upgraded to support development; and
- Prioritising reduced pollution of our rivers.

c) Promoting healthy and safe communities

To plan and design new and existing places to promote healthy and safe communities by:

- Encouraging physical and mental well-being;
- Enabling active travel;
- Designing well-connected communities that function well;
- Enabling access to open green space for leisure, play and sport; and
- Enabling social connection and inclusion.

d) Conserving and enhancing the natural and built environment

To proactively conserve and enhance our natural and built environment by:

- Creating and protecting a network of green and blue wildlife corridors with our partners throughout the district; and
- Protecting the high quality, beautiful landscape of the district;

e) Conserving and enhancing the built environment

To proactively conserve and enhance our built environment by:

- Delivering development of high quality design within existing settlements; and
- Protecting historic buildings and village cores from harmful development.

f) Building a strong and competitive economy

Build a diverse, resilient, sustainable economy by:

- Planning for job growth to align with the existing population distribution and population growth in the district;
- Enabling inward investment to promote higher value jobs and diverse employment opportunities within the district;
- Enabling local employment by protecting the best existing employment sites from changing to other uses;

- Supporting agricultural diversification, culture, leisure and tourism to create a diverse rural economy;
- Supporting high quality communications.

g) Ensuring the vitality of town centres

Ensuring the vitality of town centres by:

- Enhancing the role of the market towns in serving the wider needs of their hinterlands;
- Supporting the provision of a wide range of services and facilities for Uttlesford whilst conserving and enhancing the historic character of our town and village centres; and
- Protecting and enhancing retail and commercial sites and managing loss to other uses.

h) Delivering a sufficient supply of the right homes in the right places

Delivering a sufficient supply of the right homes in the right places by:

- Planning for sustainable, safe, attractive and healthy places to live while meeting local and lifetime housing needs in terms of type and tenure including affordable housing and housing for people with specific accommodation needs.

i) Achieving well-designed places and making effective use of land

Achieve well-designed places and make effective use of land by:

- Developing design policies and guidance to support high quality new development; and
- Planning for developments at an optimal density to make an effective use of land, reduce the loss of agricultural land and viable support services and facilities.

j) Enabling infrastructure and promoting sustainable transport

To proactively enable infrastructure and promote sustainable transport by:

- Enable utility providers to improve their infrastructure and services so that they can meet people's current and future needs, protect the environment;
- Providing new homes close to jobs, services and facilities, promoting active travel opportunities;
- Enable innovative but realistic transport improvements, particularly better and more integrated public transport, cycling, pedestrian and bridleway facilities;
- Enable the maintenance of and qualitative improvements to sporting and leisure facilities, including enhancing opportunities for culture and tourism; and
- Help the public to access and enjoy open spaces such as parks and allotments and support healthy lifestyles.

k) Protecting the Green Belt and the Countryside Protection Zone

Protecting the Green Belt and Countryside Protection Zone by:

- Ensuring development does not harm the purposes of the Green Belt or the Countryside Protection Zone.