

## 8. Rural Area Strategy

This Chapter sets out the strategy for non-strategic development at the Largest Villages along with providing any Development Management Policies that apply only to the rural areas



## Introduction

- 8.1 Beyond the three Key Settlements and six Local Rural Centres, Uttlesford District also contains 13 Larger Villages, 24 Smaller Villages and a number of smaller settlements that fall within open countryside, as set out within Chapter 4.
- 8.2 Most of the villages and hamlets within the rural area retain their traditional character and the rural area is host to an outstanding natural and historic environment. However, there are also some challenges facing the rural parts of the district, including housing affordability and access to employment, shops and services and with comparatively poorer public transport connectivity than the larger settlements, limited by the loss of some bus services. On this basis, it is considered appropriate to plan for some non-strategic (less than 100 dwellings) development sites at the Larger Villages, in the rural area to help sustain them and maintain their vitality and viability. The Larger Villages are the next largest and most sustainable settlements in the rural areas, although any development should be of a much lower scale than for the Key Settlements and Local Rural Centres.
- 8.3 This Chapter sets out our strategy for non-strategic development at the Larger Villages (As defined in Core Policy 3 and later in this Chapter) along with providing any Development Management Policies that apply only to the rural areas, including:
- **Core Policy 19: Rural Area Housing Requirement Figures**
  - **Core Policy 20: Affordable Housing on Rural Exception Sites**
  - **Core Policy 21: Rural Diversification**
  - **Development Policy 1: New Dwellings in the Countryside**
  - **Development Policy 2: Replacement of a Dwelling in the Countryside**
  - **Development Policy 3: Agricultural/Rural Workers' Dwellings in the Countryside**
  - **Development Policy 4: Extensions to Dwellings in the Countryside**
  - **Development Policy 5: Change of Use of Agricultural Land to Domestic Gardens**

### How the Rural Area will change by 2041:

- 8.4 Through this Local Plan over the period 2021-2041 housing and employment growth will be predominantly focused at the most sustainable locations in the district: the Key Settlements and Local Rural Centres. The Rural Area – defined as the rest of the district – will not accommodate any strategic scale growth. However, to deliver the Plan Spatial Vision and Strategic Objectives, it is important that Uttlesford's Larger Villages continue to see an appropriate level of non-strategic growth to help maintain their vitality and viability, including service provision, rural employment, and allow families to remain in their local community should they wish to do so. There is also a need to deliver affordable housing in the rural area where house prices are amongst the highest within the district either through non-strategic housing development at the Larger Villages, or through rural exception sites, where supported by the community.
- 8.5 Growth across the rest of the district will continue to be more limited, focusing on meeting local community and business needs and helping to support the vitality of these more rural settlements. Any development will be directed towards the larger and more sustainable villages that offer a wider range of services and are more well connected than the smaller villages. Refer to the Settlement Facilities Study<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> UDC, Settlement Facilities Study, 2023. Available at: <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/article/4924/Local-Plan-evidence-and-background-studies>.

## Housing in the Rural Area

- 8.6 The largest and most sustainable villages within the rural area – the Larger Villages as set out within Core Policy 3: Settlement Hierarchy – will accommodate the non- strategic development sites (sites of less than 100 dwellings) of 1,000 additional dwellings across the 13 Larger Villages in the plan period up to 2041, as outlined in Core Policy 2: Meeting our Housing Needs. Windfall development is not included in the 1,000 dwellings allowed for in the rural areas and will occur across the district where the relevant policies in this plan are met.
- 8.7 NPPF paragraph 66 states that strategic policies should “set out a housing requirement for designated neighbourhood areas which reflects the overall strategy for the pattern and scale of development and any relevant allocations”. NPPF paragraph 67 requires local planning authorities to set “indicative housing requirements” for neighbourhood areas “if requested to do so”, taking into account factors “including the latest evidence of local housing need, the population of the neighbourhood area and the most recently available planning strategy of the local planning authority”. This Local Plan therefore aims to future-proof this requirement by identifying housing requirement figures for all currently Yesdesignated neighbourhood areas and all Larger Villages (regardless of whether they are designated neighbourhood areas) for the plan period. The Plan also provides guidance for any smaller communities who may wish to prepare a neighbourhood plan in the future.
- 8.8 Housing requirement figures are required for all designated neighbourhood areas, however some designated areas contain settlements which are classed as ‘Smaller Villages’ in the settlement hierarchy and therefore in line with the spatial strategy are not apportioned any non-strategic growth. This means that the Local Plan does not support ANY development (strategic or non-strategic) at Smaller Villages, or Open Countryside, unless any small proposals come forward that are consistent with other Local Plan, or national policies, such as for Rural Exception Sites. Whilst the Smaller Villages are nonetheless encouraged to plan for modest housing through any future neighbourhood plans and by encouraging windfall development, any identified housing requirement figures for Smaller Villages are identified by this Plan as Nil.
- 8.9 There are 13 Larger Villages in Uttlesford District and a number of designated Neighbourhood Areas that contain Smaller Villages. Table 8.1, shown below, illustrates the different tiers, settlements, parishes, and Neighbourhood Plan status, alongside Green Belt constraints and whether there are any strategic allocations in the areas.
- 8.10 The NPPF requires any housing requirement figures identified for designated neighbourhood plan areas, to reflect the strategy for the area. In Uttlesford, the strategy focuses strategic allocations at the Key Settlements and Local Rural Centres, as these are the largest and most sustainable settlements in the district. For clarity, the residual housing requirement figure for all Key Settlements and Local Rural Centres is NIL as no non-strategic allocations are required here to deliver the Spatial Strategy, with all strategic allocations made in this Local Plan.



- 8.11 In relation to the housing requirement figures for the Larger Villages, it is proposed that any Larger Villages located in the Green Belt would not be appropriate locations for allocations to be made. The Council does not consider there are any exceptional circumstances for allocating development in the Green Belt in Uttlesford, as there are a large number of opportunities for development in the district that fall outside of the Green Belt. This means that the villages of Birchanger and Little Hallingbury are not appropriate locations for non-strategic allocations, and the housing requirement for these villages is set at the level of completions and commitments as at 1st April 2023<sup>46</sup>.

**Table 8.1: Larger village and other designated neighbourhood areas in Uttlesford District**

Tier	Settlement	Parish	Planning Policy status	Neighbourhood Plan Status
Key Settlements	Great Dunmow	Great Dunmow	Strategic	Made 8 December 2016
Key Settlements	Saffron Walden	Saffron Walden	Strategic	Made 11 October 2022
Key Settlements	Stansted Mountfitchet	Stansted Mountfitchet	Strategic	Area Designated 17 September 2015
Local Rural Centres/ Small Towns	Great Chesterford,	Great Chesterford,	Strategic	The Great and Little Chesterford Neighbourhood Plan was Made 2 February 2023
Local Rural Centres/ Small Towns	Hatfield Heath,	Hatfield Heath,	Strategic, Green Belt	Area Designated 20 December 2021
Local Rural Centres/ Small Towns	Newport,	Newport,	Strategic	The Newport and Quendon & Rickling Neighbourhood Plan was made on 28 Jun 2021.
Local Rural Centres/ Small Towns	Takeley/ Prior's Green,	Takeley	Strategic	Area Designated 29 September 2021
Local Rural Centres/ Small Towns	Thaxted	Thaxted	Strategic	NP Made 21 February 2019
Larger Villages	Clavering	Clavering	N/A	N/A
Larger Villages	Henham	Henham	N/A	N/A
Larger Villages	Birchanger	Birchanger	Green Belt (inset)	N/A
Larger Villages	Little Hallingbury	Little Hallingbury	Green Belt (inset)	NP Area Designated 28 Feb 2023
Larger Villages	Stebbing	Stebbing	N/A	NP Made 19 July 2022
Larger Villages	High Easter	High Easter	N/A	N/A
Larger Villages	Felsted	Felsted	N/A	NP Made 25 Feb 2020
Larger Villages	Ashdon	Ashdon	N/A	NP Made 6 Dec 2022
Larger Villages	Debden	Debden	N/A	N/A

(continued over page)

46 Justin Gardner Consulting 2023 LHNA Study available at : [uttlesfordreg18evidencebase.co.uk](http://uttlesfordreg18evidencebase.co.uk)

Tier	Settlement	Parish	Planning Policy status	Neighbourhood Plan Status
Larger Villages	Elder Street	Wimbish	N/A	N/A
Larger Villages	Hatfield Broad Oak	Hatfield Broad Oak	N/A	NP Area Designated 22 April 2022
Larger Villages	Manuden	Manuden	N/A	N/A
Larger Villages	Great Easton	Great Easton	N/A	Great Easton, Dutton Hill and Tilty NP Area Designated 30 Aug 2022
Smaller Villages	Flitch Green	Flitch Green	N/A	NP Area designated 25 January 2022
Smaller Villages	Little Dunmow	Little Dunmow	N/A	NP Area designated 18 May 2021
Smaller Villages	Little Easton	Little Easton	N/A	NP Area designated 9 July 2020
Smaller Villages	Radwinter	Radwinter	N/A	NP Area designated 7 Nov 2018
Smaller Villages	Quendon & Rickling	Quendon & Rickling	N/A	The Newport and Quendon & Rickling Neighbourhood Plan was made on 28 Jun 2021.
Open Countryside	Broxted	Broxted	N/A	NP Area designated 4 Jan 2022
Open Countryside	Cherry Green	Broxted	N/A	NP Area designated 4 Jan 2022
Open Countryside	Duton Green	Great Easton	N/A	Great Easton, Dutton Hill and Tilty NP Area Designated 30 Aug 2022
Open Countryside	Tilty	Tilty	N/A	Great Easton, Dutton Hill and Tilty NP Area Designated 30 Aug 2022
Open Countryside	Little Chesterford	Little Chesterford		The Great and Little Chesterford Neighbourhood Plan was made on 2 February 2023.

8.12 **Core Policy 19: Rural Areas Housing Requirement Figures** sets out the housing requirement figures for the rural area over the plan period (2021-2041) and also the residual to be allocated through non-strategic allocations. The methodology for how the figures have been calculated are set out in the '**Rural Housing Requirements Methodology Topic Paper**<sup>47</sup> taking into account the relative size of the population, the relative availability of services and facilities, development that has been completed since the beginning of the plan period, development that is already 'committed' through the granting of planning permission or a Neighbourhood Plan allocation and available Housing/ Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) housing capacity.

47 UDC, Rural Housing Methodology Topic Paper, 2023. Available at: <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/article/4924/Local-Plan-evidence-and-background-studies>

- 8.13 Parish Councils should make it clear if they wish to make allocations to deliver the housing requirement in their responses to THIS consultation (see below). If not, then any non-strategic allocation proposals will be included in the Publication version (Regulation 19) of preparing this Local Plan.

**Consultation Question:**

There is an opportunity for the Town/ Parish Councils for the Larger Villages with an identified need for non-strategic allocations (Table 8.2) to take responsibility for making these allocations through a Neighbourhood Plan, if they wish to.

Where Town/ Parish Councils make a formal commitment to prepare Neighbourhood Plans to meet the identified non-strategic allocations, there will be no further detail provided in the Local Plan. Where Town/ Parish Councils choose not to prepare Neighbourhood Plans, or that will not include any non-strategic allocations, the District Council will work with those communities to identify non-strategic allocations and add them to the Publication Version of the Plan, to be published in Summer 2024.

We are asking the Town/ Parish Councils for the Larger Villages listed in Table 8.2 to confirm their intentions in response to this consultation.



## Core Policy 19: Rural Area Housing Requirement Figures

In accordance with the Spatial Strategy in Core Policy 2: Meeting our Housing Needs, the 1,000 dwelling non-strategic (sites under 100) housing requirement for the rural area will be distributed across the Larger Villages and other settlements within designated neighbourhood areas in accordance with **Table 8.2** shown below.

For clarity, the housing requirement over the plan period 2021-2041 is the figure to be met through non-strategic development in each Parish in total, taking into account completions since 1st April 2021 and known commitments (at 1st April 2023), with the residual location figures to be delivered through **additional** Neighbourhood Plan allocations (where a Qualifying Body wishes to do so) or the Uttlesford Local Plan with the sites to be confirmed at Publication (Regulation 19) stage.

The Local Plan identifies Strategic Allocations at Key Settlements and Local Rural Centres. For this reason the housing requirement figures for these settlements for the purposes of informing Neighbourhood Plans or Non-Strategic Allocations is NIL.

Development will be supported at non-strategic allocations at the Larger Villages through a masterplanning process involving the community, local planning authority, developer and other stakeholders, where development meets the requirements set out within the relevant Neighbourhood Plan or allocation policies (to be included in the Publication version of this Plan – where required) and in accordance with the Development Plan taken as a whole.

**Table 8.2: Housing requirement figures for Larger Villages and other villages preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.**

Settlement Hierarchy Tier	Parish	2021-41 Housing Requirement Figure	Residual requirement to be allocated through non-strategic allocations (at 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2023)
Larger Villages	Clavering	186	111
Larger Villages	Henham	170	112
Larger Villages	Birchanger	3	0
Larger Villages	Little Hallingbury	22	0
Larger Villages	Stebbing	171	109
Larger Villages	High Easter	114	104
Larger Villages	Felsted	309	95
Larger Villages	Ashdon	58	41
Larger Villages	Debden	141	92
Larger Villages	Elder Street (Wimbish Parish)	130	115
Larger Villages	Hatfield Broad Oak	130	111
Larger Villages	Manuden	30	0
Larger Villages	Great Easton	138	110
Smaller Villages	Fritch Green	0	0
Smaller Villages	Little Dunmow	0	0
Smaller Villages	Little Easton	0	0
Smaller Villages	Radwinter	0	0
Smaller Villages	Quendon & Rickling	0	0
Open Countryside	Broxted	0	0
Open Countryside	Cherry Green	0	0

## Core Policy 19: Rural Area Housing Requirement Figures (continued from previous page)

Open Countryside	Duton Green	0	0
Open Countryside	Tilty	0	0
Open Countryside	Little Chesterford	0	0
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,712</b>	<b>1,000</b>

### Rural Exception Sites

- 8.14 The rural area of Uttlesford District contains many areas with high house prices and a limited supply of affordable homes. There is justification therefore for an exception to be made against normally restrictive policy beyond built-up areas, to allow for affordable housing to be provided on small sites that would not normally be considered for housing use, where there is a local need and where other policy considerations are acceptable.
- 8.15 On that basis, and in addition to the non-strategic allocations outlined in **Core Policy 19: Rural Area Housing Requirement Figures**, limited rural exception sites will be supported, in principle, to deliver affordable housing to meet local needs in rural areas where market housing may not usually be supported, including within the Green Belt, where there is an identified local need and on a small scale that adjoins the existing settlement.
- 8.16 The NPPF requires local planning policies to support opportunities to bring forward rural exception sites that will provide affordable housing to meet identified local needs, and to consider whether allowing some market housing on these sites would enable the scheme to be viable. In these instances, it is important to establish that a specific need exists and then to make sure that accommodation is made available for those people who have a genuine need for housing in the locality that they cannot meet in the market. Such people may for example, include existing residents who need separate accommodation locally, key workers or people who have longstanding links with the local community, such as people who used to live in the village but were forced to move away because of a lack of affordable housing, and people who need to move back into a village to be near relatives.
- 8.17 'Local' in this context means 'within the parish', principally, although the needs of those who live or work in an adjoining parish may also be accepted. This would particularly apply where a scheme is proposed in a Smaller Village that would meet the needs of adjoining smaller communities. Properties need to meet an identified local need and be provided and maintained by a registered or other provider, to be agreed by the Council at an early stage. On some exception sites the Council may consider development that includes cross-subsidy from open market sales on the same site. The applicant would need to demonstrate to the Council's satisfaction that a mixed tenure scheme was essential to the viability and delivery of the development.



## Core Policy 20: Affordable Housing on Rural Exception Sites

Development proposals for affordable housing within rural areas, to meet local needs only, will be permitted as an exception, subject to all the following criteria being met:

- i. a demonstrable local community need for affordable housing has been established
- ii. the number, size and tenure of the dwellings are suitable to meet the identified need
- iii. is of a scale appropriate to the size of the adjoining settlement
- iv. the site and the development will not result in harm to the significance of any heritage assets
- v. the proposal is designed to respect the characteristics of the local area, including the countryside setting, and
- vi. schools and health facilities with capacity, shops and other community facilities are within reasonable travelling distance.

A development appraisal should accompany the application that clearly demonstrates how the above criteria have been met. The Council will consider the cross-subsidisation of the affordable homes with some market homes where the number of market homes is the minimum necessary to deliver the affordable housing, which will be informed by a PPG- compliant developer-funded viability assessment agreed with the Council (through an open book approach).

## Development in the Countryside

- 8.18 Whilst development in this plan is focused more within the larger, and more sustainable settlements, and to a much lesser extent in the Larger Villages, there will still be occasions where development within the countryside is appropriate.
- 8.19 Under **Development Policy 1: New Dwellings in the Countryside and Development Policy 2: Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside** a criteria- based policy approach will be used to determine applications for residential development within the countryside.
- 8.20 The rural nature of Uttlesford and the significant role that agriculture plays in the economy of this area means that agricultural land and other rural land-based activities have a notable presence in the landscape and form an attractive backdrop to the various settlements. Development needed to directly support such uses is important to foster a successful rural economy, but it can also have an impact on the landscape if not properly managed. As such, it is important that development is located and designed appropriately, to minimise adverse impacts or even benefit the countryside. When a new dwelling is permitted for an agricultural worker under **Development Policy 3: Agricultural/ Rural Workers Dwellings in the Countryside**, the authority will only remove this restriction when it sees comprehensive evidence that the business no longer needs the dwelling, and it has been marketed for sale or rent for a minimum period of 24 months at a market price that reflects the occupancy.

8.21 It is important to ensure that extensions to dwellings do not have an adverse impact on the surrounding open countryside and are of an appropriate design and scale for their location. Under Development Policy 3: Agricultural/ Rural Workers Dwellings in the Countryside the Council will assess all such proposals against the criteria within the policy with particular regard to respecting the character of the original dwelling and retaining the openness of the rural area. Proposals that substantially alter the original dwelling will not be permitted. The original dwelling is defined as the dwelling granted permission if built since 1948. If the property was built prior to 1948, then it will be defined as the building that stood at 1st July 1948. Consideration will be given to what constitutes a disproportionate addition that will be influenced by various factors, such as:

- the scale, design and character of the dwelling and any extensions
- the setting of the property and its visual impact on the wider landscape, and
- the design and character of the extension proposed.

### **Development Policy 1: New Dwellings in the Countryside**

Dwellings outside the developed footprint of a settlement, which are not agricultural workers dwellings, will only be permitted when one or more of the following apply:

- i. the development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be an appropriate small-scale development that secures the future of associated heritage assets
- ii. the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings without substantial reconstruction
- iii. the development would involve the one for one replacement of an existing dwelling in accordance with Development Policy 2
- iv. the development would involve the subdivision of an existing residential dwelling, and
- v. the development is for an individual dwelling where the design is of exceptional quality, in that it is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture and would help to raise the standard of design more generally in rural areas and would significantly enhance its immediate setting and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.

Development will also need to be in accordance with other policies in the development plan, including, but not exclusively, those relating to landscape character, setting, and design.



## **Development Policy 2: Replacement of a Dwelling in the Countryside**

The replacement of an existing dwelling outside the developed footprint of a settlement will be supported provided that:

- i. the residential use of the original dwelling has not been abandoned
- ii. the original dwelling is not of any architectural or historical merit and it is not valuable to the character of the settlement or wider landscape
- iii. the original dwelling is a permanent structure, not a temporary or mobile structure
- iv. the replacement dwelling is of a similar size and scale to the original dwelling
- v. it is located on the footprint of the original dwelling unless an alternative position within the existing residential curtilage would provide notable benefits and have no adverse impact on the wider setting, and
- vi. the replacement dwelling would not materially increase the impact of the dwelling on the appearance of the surrounding countryside.

## **Development Policy 3: Agricultural/Rural Workers' Dwellings in the Countryside**

Applications for new dwellings that support rural operations will only be acceptable where they are essential to the effective running of existing rural businesses. Applications should be accompanied by evidence of:

- i. details of the rural operation that will be supported by the dwelling
- ii. the need for the dwelling
- iii. the number of workers(full and part time) that will occupy the dwelling
- iv. the length of time the enterprise has been established that the dwelling will support
- v. the commercial viability of the associated rural enterprise through the submission of business accounts or a detailed business plan
- vi. the availability of other suitable accommodation on site or in the area, and
- vii. details of how the proposed size of the dwelling relates to the needs of the enterprise.

Any such development will be subject to a restrictive occupancy condition and the removal of permitted development rights.

## **Development Policy 4: Extensions to Dwellings in the Countryside**

Extensions to dwellings in the open countryside will be permitted unless they result in disproportionate additions to the original dwelling (excluding any detached buildings), which:

- i. do not respect the character of the original dwelling by retaining its visual dominance
- ii. do not retain the openness of the rural area by extending the visual impression of built development, and
- iii. substantially alter the scale, design and character of the original dwelling.

## **Change of use of Agricultural Land to Domestic Gardens**

- 8.22 Proposals to change agricultural land to a domestic garden will be acceptable where there is no material change to the character or appearance of the surrounding countryside and should not create wedges of domestic garden intruding into an agricultural landscape. Proposals could include, for example, unworkable corners of fields that do not affect the ability to use the land for agriculture. Proposals should include appropriate boundary treatments like native hedges or post and rail fencing which do not have the effect of urbanising the area or changing the openness of the countryside.

## **Development Policy 5: Change of Use of Agricultural Land to Domestic Gardens**

Change of use of agricultural land to domestic garden will be permitted if the proposal, particularly its scale and means of enclosure, does not result in a materially negative change in the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside.

If structures in the new garden, for example sheds or other outbuildings, would change the open character of the countryside the Council may impose conditions removing permitted development rights when granting planning permission.



## Rural Diversification

- 8.23 Diversification proposals for agricultural and land-based rural businesses have potential to sustain the rural economy and enhance, restore, or maintain the character of the landscape and increase soil carbon through land management techniques and reducing pollution. Whilst planning has fewer controls over agriculture, there are clear links between the practices of farms and estates that impact on wider public goods such as habitat, natural flood management, biodiversity, food and fuel, soils, and countryside access for active lifestyles.
- 8.24 Working with landowners on 'Estate Plans' to help influence the management of estates is another opportunity that might be opened up through early discussion with landowners and promoters in the rural development process. Diversification
- 8.25 proposals on privately managed estates will be supported where a proposal demonstrates sustainable practices and outcomes. This is preferably supported by an agreed Estate Plan that delivers and secures multiple wider public benefits such as employment and enterprise opportunities, sustainable access, social and cultural facilities, environmental enhancements, biodiversity increases, conserving and enhancing heritage assets (including a focus on saving heritage assets that are 'at risk') and improvements to land management. It is therefore important to facilitate the reuse of buildings in the countryside but in a manner which makes a positive contribution to both the rural landscape and the rural economy.
- 8.26 The Council supports the diversification and growth of Uttlesford's rural economy. Potential opportunity and growth areas include:
- floorspace provision of small (potentially shared) units in rural areas, including to support micro businesses
  - an alternative to working from home, particularly in relation to office type premises
  - for growth of non-office-based sectors (e.g., manufacturing) workshop space, particularly incubator space for small businesses
  - and based uses including Agri-tech, Agri-food and Forestry-tec sectors may provide opportunity to deliver growth and support sustainable food production, maintain plant and animal health and support and enhance natural habitats, and
  - cultural sector organisations and businesses, including creative industries and makers, arts organisations and practices.

### Core Policy 21: Rural Diversification

In rural areas, proposal for economic activities that bring about rural diversification shall normally be permitted, providing that:

- i. the development is operated as part of a viable rural business (including farm holding) and contributes to the viability of the holding
- ii. it is not detrimental to the character and appearance of existing buildings and their setting within the landscape
- iii. existing buildings are used in preference to new buildings or extensions
- iv. utilities and other infrastructure are available or can be provided, and
- v. there is access by means of an existing road; no highway hazards are created or increased; and road improvements incompatible with the character of the surrounding area are not required.