

Uttlesford District Council

Rural Housing Schemes: An Evaluation



June 2008

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Introduction

Uttlesford is a predominantly rural sparsely populated district in North West Essex with 29,000 dwellings and a population of approximately 70,000. Housing demand in the rural parts of the District is steadily increasing and exception site opportunities need to be maximised by the Council.

There are many challenges that need to be overcome in the rural parts of the District. These include:

- Lack of movement of householders
- Low volume of housing
- Lack of services
- Poor transport links
- Difficulty engaging the community in some local areas

It is also largely due to high house prices in Uttlesford. Our Housing Needs Survey Update 2004 showed that it was more expensive to live in the rural areas. The survey suggested there was an “increased need for subsidised housing especially in the much higher priced rural areas” (Uttlesford Housing Needs Survey Update 2004). It also found that the income needed to buy a two bedroom flat in the Western Rural area was £53,500. This is due to high house prices and lack of supply. The average income in the District is £27,966 (Uttlesford Housing Needs Survey Update 2004)

A greater volume of households are looking for affordable rented or shared ownership in the rural parts of the District to stay close to family and the area they have grown up in.

However we have a good relationship with the Rural Housing Trust and have enabled in partnership with them, 191 rural affordable housing units since 1989. We also have a good relationship with the Rural Housing Enabler working for the Rural Community Council for Essex and a scheme will deliver rural affordable housing in Thaxted in April 2008. Further rural development could be provided through greater community consultation, parish planning, greater involvement and capacity building within the local community.

The Rural Excellence Programme

Uttlesford District Council were successfully selected for the IDeA Rural Excellence Programme in 2007. This has involved working with the Regional Development Agency, Government Office and Town and Parish Councils to solve the most important housing issues for the locality. It is also providing Uttlesford with the opportunity to lead the way in the development of rural housing.

Councillors, Parish Councils, key partners and officers have been taking part in workshops and visits with experienced mentors to look at the following priority areas.

- ❖ Publicising the evaluation of affordable rural housing schemes in order to gain wider engagement and support for such schemes.
- ❖ Development of parish planning.
- ❖ Understanding of how, and ability to, influence the Housing Corporation to access funding.
- ❖ Relationship with Parish Councils to enable the communities to influence the planning policy frameworks.

Uttlesford District Council has been successful in working in partnership to provide affordable rural housing. However this work has never been evaluated by the Council. As part of the Rural Excellence programme, we decided to carry out this survey and report to explore some of the following questions:

- What are the benefits of such schemes?
- Are the objectives for developing such schemes met?
- What impact have such schemes had on the local communities?
- Were the mechanisms and processes for creating them adequate and successful?
- By looking at how they have worked, can we learn from successes and failures so as to better inform and influence housing and planning policies in the future?

Methodology and Process

In attempting to answer some of the questions posed previously, the research and analysis asked questions devised to test the following criteria and assumptions about rural housing schemes:

- That rural local needs housing schemes provide affordable housing for local people.
- That housing is available for a range of tenures.
- That the housing is available for local people who otherwise would not be able to stay in the area.
- That the schemes are solely for local people who qualify by meeting set criteria for a local connection and that these criteria are adhered to.
- That schemes are usually developed on exception sites where development would otherwise not normally be permitted.
- That need was shown by a local housing needs survey.
- That need was shown as defined by the District Council.
- That the housing must remain in perpetuity for the local community.
- That they contribute to the belief that a rural community needs a 'good mix' of age groups to be balanced and thriving.
- That schemes are well sited and designed in relation to the rest of the village.
- That schemes should contribute to and benefit from the sustainability of local services.

- That they benefit a community by helping to ensure the future viability of local amenities.
- That schemes were developed with the full co-operation and support of and in full consultation with the Parish Council.
- That schemes were well managed causing no problems to near-by residents.

Taking the above as objectives, the initial research was carried out by:

- (a) 100% questionnaire delivered “by hand” of all householders of the rural housing schemes
at:-
 - Bowker Close, Newport
 - All Saints Close, Ashdon
 - Churchfields Ashdon
 - Ardley Crescent, Hatfield Heath
 - Oxleys Close, Clavering
 - Boreham Court, High Easter
 - Nettleditch, Littlebury
- (b) A postal questionnaire of the Parish Councils in the above areas.
- (c) A questionnaire delivered “by hand” to the nearest residents of the completed schemes.

Survey Responses - Residents

The survey of households in the schemes at Ashdon, Clavering, Hatfield Heath, High Easter, Littlebury and Newport was 100%. Of the 96 households surveyed, 42 replied, a 44% response rate.

A copy of the questionnaire is enclosed at Appendix I.

The survey was carried out during October – November 2007

Replies were received from households on each of the six sites, so enabling an avoidance of bias in the analysis.

Analysis of Scheme Resident's Questionnaire

Population Balance

One of the main issues found when looking at rural housing need is said to be young people having to leave a village because of the lack of affordable housing. This also has an effect on the local villages where primary schools are forced to close and local facilities lose custom and are no longer viable.

The results suggest that rural schemes in Uttlesford have been successful in countering this trend. The 41 questionnaires returned represented a population of 69 adults and 35 children aged between 0 -16, some 34% is under 18 and a further 36% of the population is aged between 18 and 35. Clearly the emphasis has been to provide housing for young people to be able to stay in the community and contribute to keeping the village alive. The comments on page 13 endorse this view.

Only 4% of respondents are over 65. This is a low figure given that the population in Uttlesford is ageing. Investigation would need to be carried out to ensure that rural housing is meeting the needs of the whole population.

Community Stability

88% of respondents are first time occupiers. Many of the schemes have been there between 3 and 5 years and one scheme over 5 years. This seems to represent a high level of stability for the community and satisfaction of householders. However it may also indicate the current difficulty of those in housing need, houses on rural schemes don't become available very often and current supply may not be meeting need. This may be another area to explore.

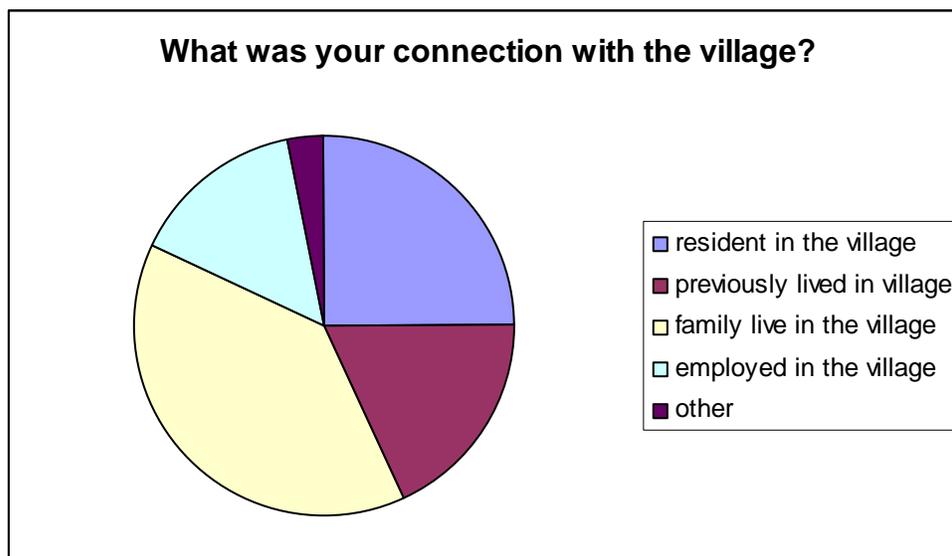
Local Housing for Local People

There is always a misconception that rural schemes although in principle created for local people do not end up as such. That 'outsiders' are allocated the housing either initially or on subsequent lettings.

Analysis of the responses to the questions 'where did you live before moving to the property' and 'what was your local connection' should clarify the misconceptions and indicate that the Local Authority and Housing Associations are fulfilling the criteria.

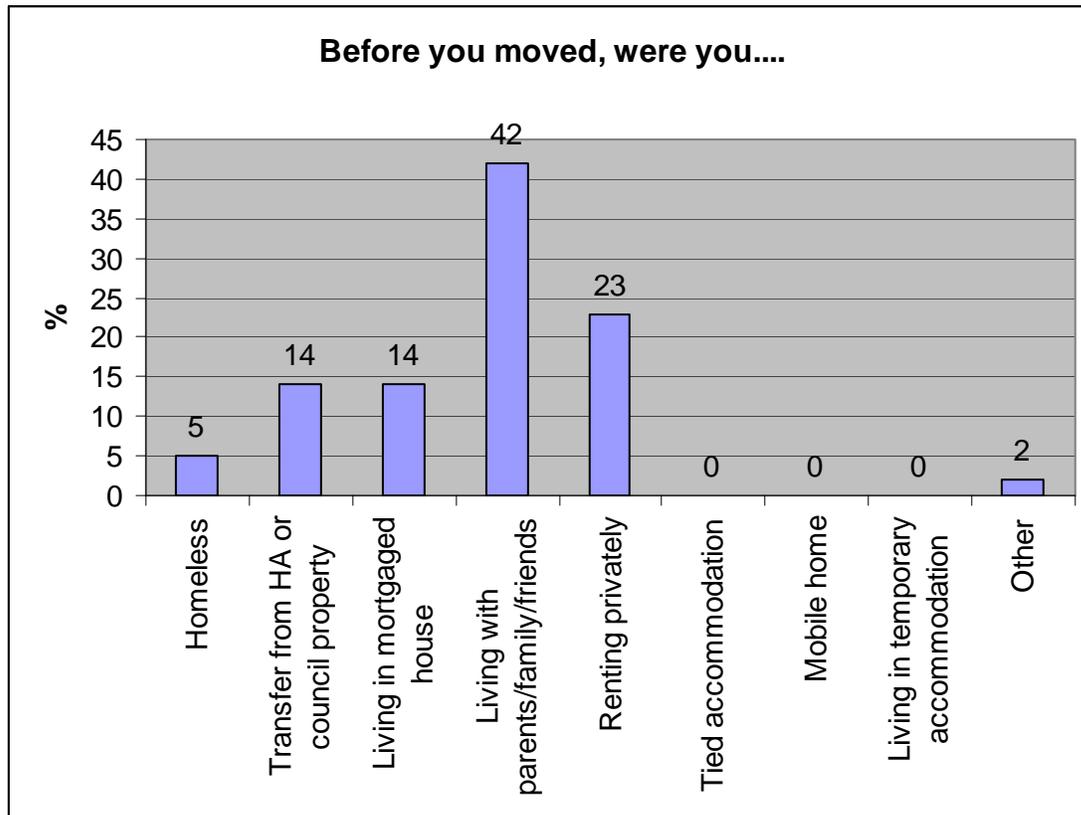
The results show that 48% already lived in the Parish and an additional 30% were living in adjoining Parishes (local people forced to leave their village because no affordable housing was available). It also showed that 22% had moved out of the District generally due to the lack of affordable housing. This could be the source for local misgiving and discontent which is heard from local residents when they get to know their new neighbours.

However, by looking at qualification by local connection, it would seem that 100% were allocated a property based on Uttlesford District Council's local connection criteria. That is although they did not live in the Parish they qualified through previous residence, employment or strong family ties. (25% were already resident in the village, 18% has previously lived in the village, 39% had family living in the village and 15% were employed in the village, 3% other/not answered.)



Need

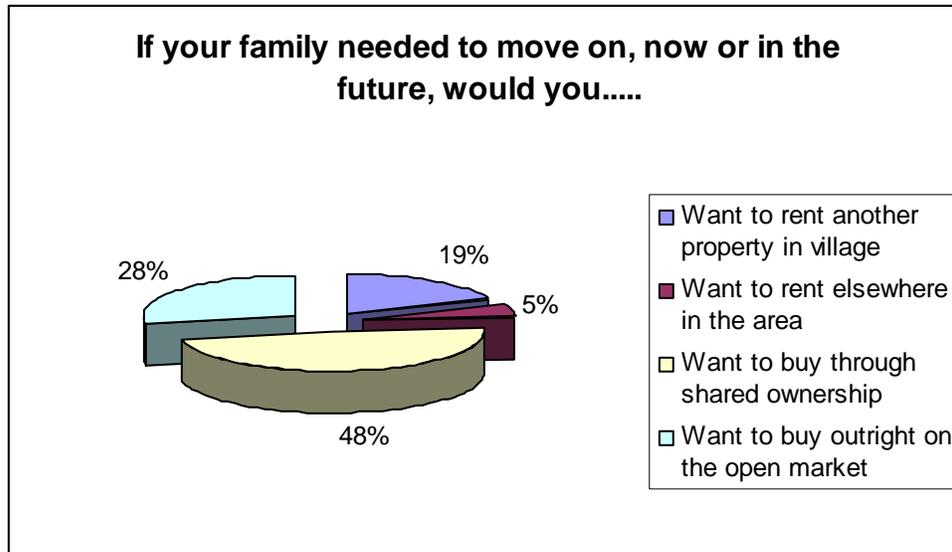
It seemed appropriate to ask respondents about their housing situation before they moved into the rural scheme. 42% were living with parents/family and friends, 23% were renting privately, 14% had transferred from other affordable social housing, 14% were moving from a mortgaged house due to separation and smaller percentages were homeless.



Need by Tenure and Affordability

In terms of tenure, a greater number of questionnaires were returned by shared ownership occupiers (64%) than those renting.

When asked about the choices connected with if the family needed to move on, 28% would prefer to buy on the open market and 48% would want shared ownership.



The survey has shown that a high number of residents will need to move on in the next 5 years. This will need to be explored further with our Housing Association partners and the Parish Councils to ensure that these needs can be met on a future affordable housing site.



A very small proportion (13%) had experienced problems with move on. This has particularly been an issue in one rural village due to families growing in size and a limited number of shared ownership properties available. A further scheme is being sought for that village to build larger properties to accommodate these families.

Community Sustainability

It is felt that rural housing schemes should be considered where they can be sustained by local services and facilities and at the same time, the additional population can add to the sustainability of those services. This is not always easy in very remote villages that have no services left but still have a need for local people wanting to live in the village they have grown up in. This means that some rural schemes will be given planning permission even though they do not have what is considered to be sufficient facilities.

To gain a picture of community sustainability, two questions were asked. One about usage of local facilities and services and one about attendance at local groups and activities.

In terms of facilities and services, the overall picture was that: -

- 22 residents used the village shops at least weekly.
- 17 residents used the post office at least weekly and a further 16 used it monthly.
- 7 residents had children that attended school daily and a further 8 residents had children that attended nursery or play school weekly.
- 12 residents used public transport throughout the month.
- 13 residents used the local pub weekly and a further 12 visited monthly.
- 17 residents used the local doctors surgery monthly.

This appears to show that the affordable housing has made the community more sustainable with more people using the village shop, post office, local pub, doctors surgery and school.

The evidence in relation to use of village community activities showed that 48% attended local groups. These range from mother and toddler groups, residents association, neighbourhood watch, darts team in local pub, organise village festival, on the parish council, run the brownie club and many more. This shows that residents living in the affordable housing are very much part of village life and help ensure that groups are kept alive.

Benefit to the local community

Perhaps one key test should be the response to the question, do you think that your housing scheme has benefited the local community? 95% were positive. Rather than analyse and comment on these responses, they are presented as

verbatim as the views of the people and testimony to the positive benefits of rural housing schemes.

Key issues:

- Keeping the village alive
- Brought people who were born and brought up back to the village
- Affordable housing for local people

All comments made:

- Kept people in the village instead of making them move out
- Keeps pre-school and school going. At one point last year the only children at the Baptist Toddler Group were all from one of the three Housing Association roads. We look out for our elderly neighbours
- Not everyone can afford to pay to live in private accommodation as rent is so high, and waiting lists are much longer
- Brought young families back to the village, providing children for the pre-school and primary school – two very important structures for the community
- Without affordable housing in Ashdon, the people that live here would have had to move out of the village as house prices here are so high. The people that live here are mainly children of people that have lived in the village for many years and as we are now getting our own families, our children are getting to grow up in the same place that we did
- By providing affordable housing for people who want to remain near their families
- By bringing back the village people who had to move away
- It has offered the chance for local people to remain in their home village near family and is bringing children into the school
- Good for people to get to own their own property
- Keeping the village alive
- All the local facilities are being used more
- It has enabled people such as myself (a lone parent) and young couples to remain in a local location with local support
- It encourages people to keep their families here, within the community. It enhances the community spirit to have a truer reflection of the younger families growing up in our community
- Providing housing at a reasonable price level, enabling families to remain close
- In some cases, it keeps local people together to keep village life how it should be
- The residents have benefited and they are and were before the development, part of the local community

- I think it has enabled young people to get on the property ladder without having to move away from their local village. I think it will continue to benefit the local community when they're sold to others like us
- It has brought families closer together. It has brought new life into the village
- Enabled people such as ourselves to bring our children back to area we were raised in. Good mixture of young people who use playground/football pitch.
- It has enabled young people with village connections to come back to their roots. Given people homes who would have been living in unsatisfactory circumstances otherwise
- The EERA has made house buying more affordable
- It's allowed local children who have now grown up and have children or don't, to stay in the area and be close to relatives and enjoy the area that they grew up in and loved. Almost all the people on our rural housing development know each other from school or from neighbouring villages and that is great
- It has brought people who were born and brought up back to the village
- Because people who have connections with the village can be given the chance to have a home in that community and village life
- Affordable housing for local people
- By providing homes for local people
- By getting young people to the village
- It has given people a chance to have a better quality of life in affordable housing
- It's affordable
- It has provided good local housing for local people who earn average earnings. But I feel that more of the properties should be for shared ownership than renting because people we talk to at Bowker Close who are renting don't seem to have any intention to move on. Perhaps you could tier the % of ownership based on peoples earnings and do away with renting
- It has offered us the opportunity to move out from home and it is very affordable for young people. We hop we will get the opportunity to buy this or something else on this estate in the future
- Allowed people who couldn't afford to get onto the property ladder to do so – and free up cramped family homes
- It gives locals the opportunity to stay close to work, families and local facilities and improves the image of the village
- Providing affordable houses for first time buyers
- There are many young families in the close who had to live at their parents' for a long time and this was the only way they could stay in the village. Families are able to stay together. I think it's a fantastic idea, especially for renting

Residents Problems on Rural Housing Schemes

The following replies are taken from the additional comments box on the questionnaire. Again they are presented as found but the following summarise key issues:

- Some poor quality building work
- Parking
- Dogs
- Storage

All Comments made:

- Insects in loft
- Only minor problems that the builders have put right
- No street lighting or fencing around front gardens
- No storage space – cupboard under stairs in plans and was not made due to various reasons (run out of money? couldn't be bothered?). This is where the planners fell down
- Children playing in the car park; Neglected dogs barking non-stop; High noise levels
- Poorly finished and had to get builders in to fix things 3 years on. Some things still not too good, which is sad
- Parking
- Some delays with work to be carried out to gardens
- Some poor building work – broken ridge tile, incorrect installation of shower (leading to leak and ceiling damage), faulty boiler
- Better quality doors, kitchen and boiler!
- Sewage pump which doesn't work properly, but this is very minor
- Back door not at back of house
- Atrocious parking provision. Dogs fouling on open areas
- More storage space and a bigger garden

(These issues have been taken up with the relevant Housing Association managing the properties to ensure that these problems are rectified)

Improvements that could be made in future schemes

The survey asked residents what else they would have liked to have been included on the development/in the property. The following comments were made:

- Play area for the children
- More visitor parking

- More parking
- More car parking spaces
- Could not ask for a better house. The garden, however, is small for a family, especially when behind the boundary fence is 'waste' land with a few trees in it
- A small shop on All Saints Close and more storage space in the house
- Ready-made playground facilities
- A shop and a postbox
- More storage
- Garage, better parking facilities for visitors, should never have had a septic tank installed, central heating pipes should have been enclosed around the property, rear garden should have been more levelled
- Kitchen – I don't get any sunlight in my small garden as other houses block it
- Carpet/flooring throughout the property
- The ground floor flats seem to have a lot less space than upstairs;
- There should be a sign letting people know that it is a private car park;
- The shed should be divided into 8 sections
- More storage for ground floor flats and thicker ceilings to keep noise down
- A balcony
 - Garage/Porch
 - Solar panels or wind turbines – greener, more sustainable. Think once houses known and designated, shared owners should be able to have some input – fittings etc. E.g. patio doors to garden
- More parking
- Street lights
- Street lighting in car park
- More cupboard space
- Play area/green for children
- Kitchen appliances
- Garage rather than a car port
- To already have our phone line activated to save us some money
- More green areas for the new residents in order to integrate more into the community.
- Visitor parking; Road to be wider and extended; Car port on end houses
- Solar panels on houses; Water treatment for water butts; Salt box for when icy in winter; A fire place (just a personal thing); Wind turbine; Street lights

It also asked if there was anything about the design of the property that residents would like to change. The following comments were made:

- I would move my back door
- Parking provision
- Would have liked a separate kitchen
- Bathroom layout – so door doesn't bang into anyone on the toilet

- More storage!
- Be able to fence the front garden as it's so open for children and animals
- The planting in communal areas is very dull
- We have put in a request to make an under stairs cupboard
- Parking!
- The porch above the front door – design offers no protection from the elements
- No, very good and large for a 2 bedroom house
- The possible option of a basement
- More storage from ground floor flats
- A balcony
- Layout and storage
- Extra storage space. No cupboard space designed for cleaning equipment etc. Limited parking within Boreham Court will be a problem when children become of age when they can drive. Most families have 2 or 3 children
- The houses are too close together. If they were spaced out more, people would have more privacy
- Rear window to kitchen too low to rearrange and put sink under – would have been better layout
- Due to the design of our house, it would have been better to have a window situated in our bathroom. All we have is an extractor fan, therefore making the room prone to dampness\
- The stairwell coming down through the kitchen by the sink
- Garage serves better purpose than a car port
- Shower – The water has no power so we will need to fit a pump in the future. I have been told all the houses have this problem
- Better and more flexible layout; There should be a better use of the local landscape as some properties don't look to the fields and it is a shame that some don't have this view; The use of good architect ensures that new residents will enjoy their lives and improve the way they live, improving also the local community
- The living room is an odd shape. The hot water tank in the bedroom makes the room very hot. It would have been great if it was in the hallway

Conclusions

The final question residents were asked was “Overall how do you rate your property?” 43% stated it was excellent, 43% stated it was good, 12% stated it was satisfactory and 2% did not answer. Unsatisfactory and poor received no marks. These are very high percentages and show how happy residents are with their new homes.

Analysis of Parish Council Questionnaire

Questionnaires were sent to six Parish Councils who have had affordable housing built in their village

- Newport Parish Council, Bowker Close
- Ashdon Parish Council, All Saints Close and Churchfields
- Hatfield Heath Parish Council, Ardley Crescent
- Clavering Parish Council, Oxleys Close
- High Easter Parish Council, Boreham Court
- Littlebury Parish Council, Nettleditch

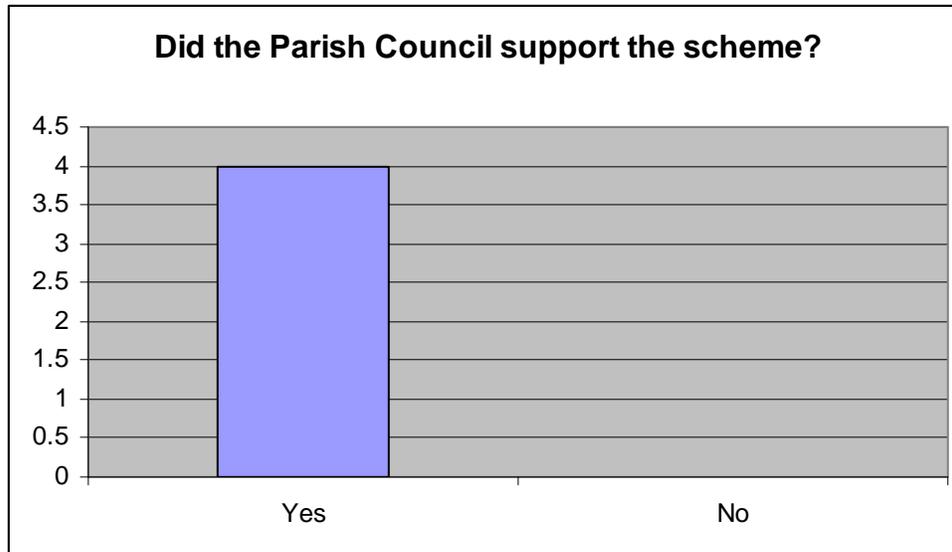
Four Parish Councils responded and a summary of their comments is outlined below. A copy of the questionnaire is enclosed at Appendix 2.

Consultation

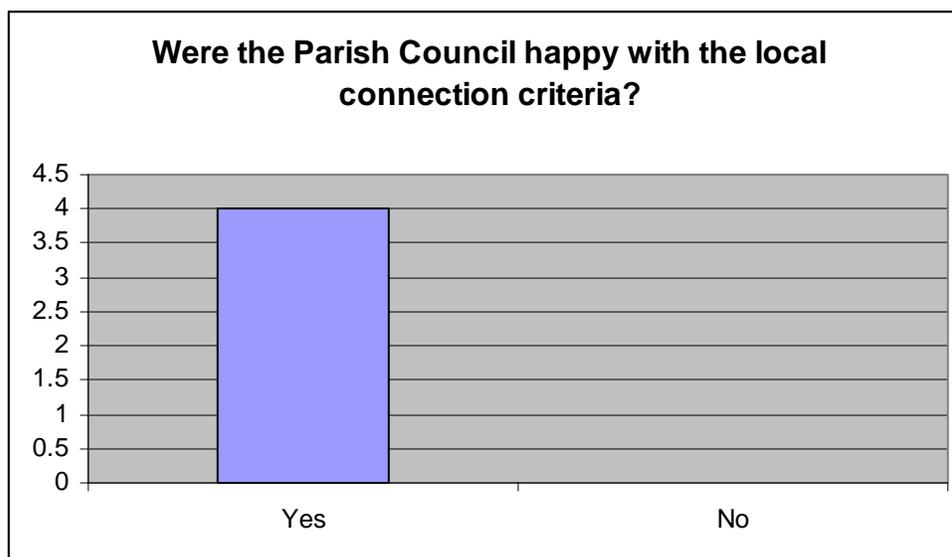
It has long been recognised that for affordable housing to be successfully developed it must have the support of the Parish Council and local people. There are many misconceptions about affordable housing with regard to the people who will be tenants, the type of homes that will be built and the way that the tenants would take care of their homes.

It is therefore important that the Council and the Housing Association consult and involve the Parish Council and local residents to break down any prejudices that may exist.

We asked the Parish Councils if they were consulted/involved in the scheme, whether they supported the scheme, did they have any input, were they informed of/and happy with the local connection criteria and were they happy that the allocations criteria were adhered to when making the allocation.



All of the parishes confirmed that they were consulted on the proposed affordable scheme. Many of them had approached the rural housing provider to investigate the provision of rural housing in their village. All of them supported the scheme from the start.



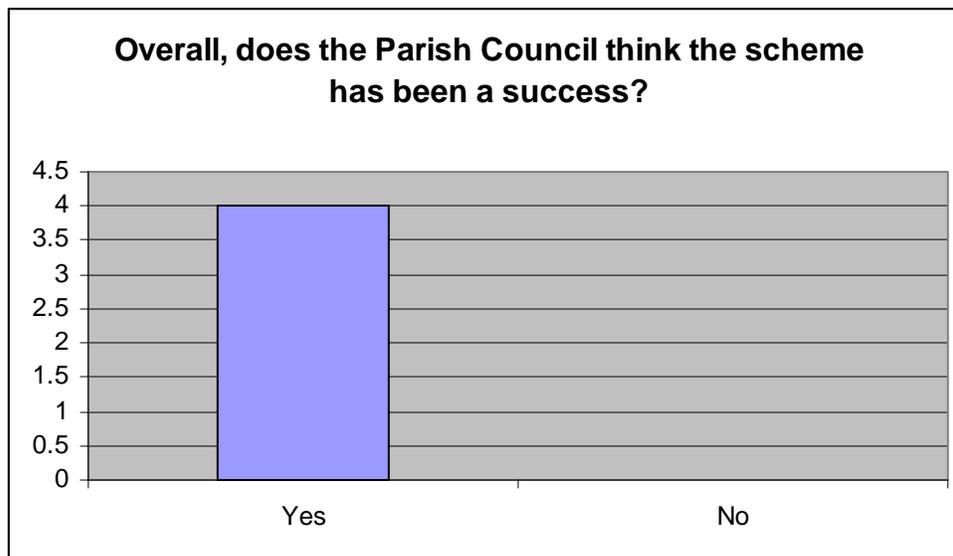
They were also consulted on and agreed with the local connection criteria and indeed this was an important issue because one of the main reasons cited for supporting a development was that it would provide homes for local people.

Half of the parishes became very pro-active in the process and were involved in the identification of possible sites with the Housing Association.

Only half of the Parish Councils were happy that the properties were being allocated to local people. This has already been analysed earlier on in the report and although some of the residents had moved out of the District, they still met the Council's local connection criteria. That is although they did not live in the

parish they qualified through previous residence, employment or strong family ties.

Also, there were some negative comments from one Parish Council about the way the particular Housing Association on their site managed the shared ownership process. This was due to the Housing Association being understaffed and meant that some properties were empty for 6 months. This has since been resolved and the Parish Council are happy with the way the properties are managed and maintained.



All of the parishes surveyed felt the scheme had been a success.

The following comments were made about the schemes by the Parish Councils:

- Occupiers happy, houses first class, fit well into the environment, a credit to Clavering.
- All occupied and residents happy, very good standard of house design and build.
- Keeping local people in the village who wouldn't be able to afford to purchase an open market home in Littlebury.

Conclusions

All of the parishes surveyed felt the scheme had been a success and 75% of them felt that there was a need for a further scheme in the future. They felt that residents were happy in their new homes, it had kept local people in the village and the house design and build was of a good standard.

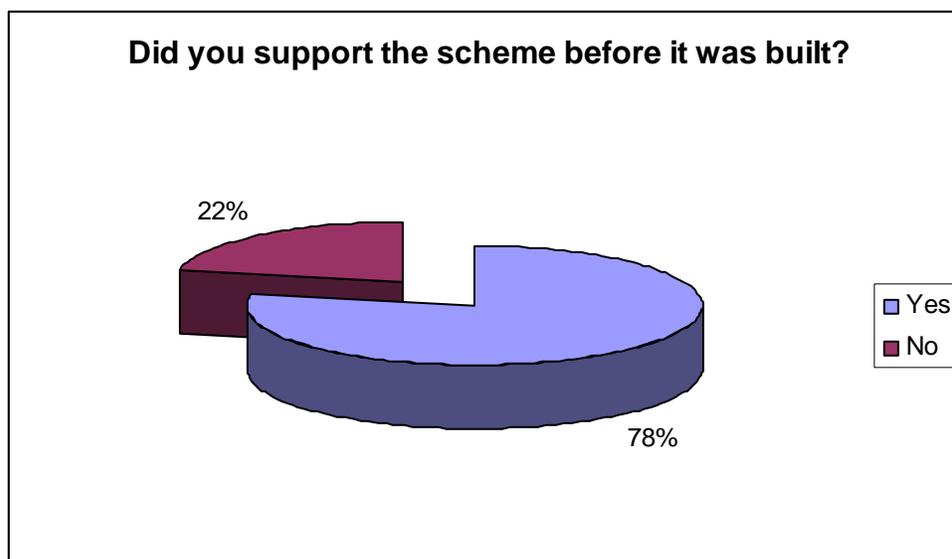
Analysis of Questionnaire to Local Resident's Adjoining Affordable Rural Housing Schemes.

One of the biggest barriers when building an affordable housing scheme is the opposition created by local residents to the scheme.

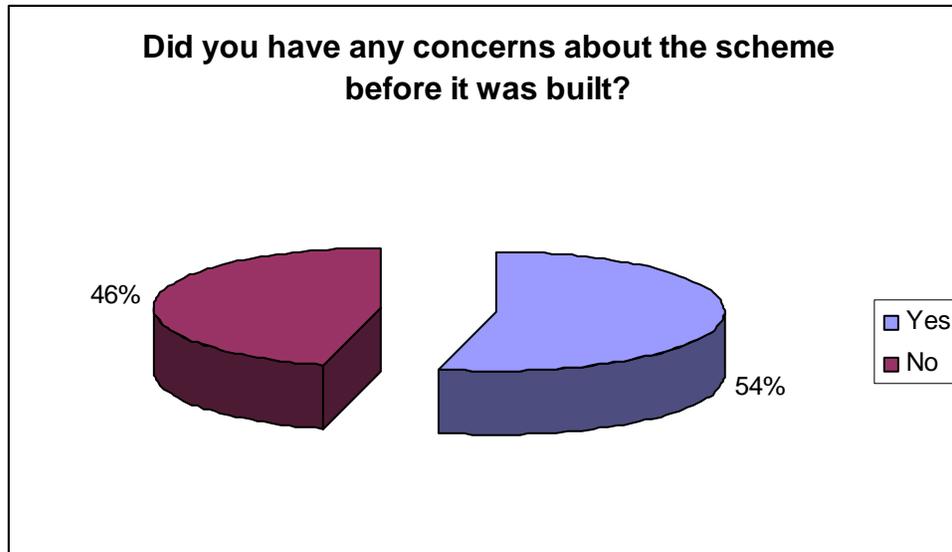
It was decided to survey local residents who lived next to and opposite five of the seven developments included in this research. Two of the developments were not included as they were next to the village shop, playing fields or employment units and no apparent neighbours to discuss the development with.

We delivered 79 questionnaires "by hand" and received 26 replies, a response rate of 33%. A copy of the questionnaire is enclosed at Appendix 3.

22% didn't support the scheme before it was built, however all of the respondents have remained in their homes despite their concerns.



54% had concerns about the scheme before it was built. These included concerns about parking, overdevelopment, noise, being overlooked, degrading of area by loss of rural view, extra traffic, properties becoming scruffy and unkept.



Of the 42% of those who had concerns, 36% felt they were justified.

Residents were asked if the development had assisted their family or friends and 31% stated it had. However 42% stated that they had a future need in their household for affordable housing.

Please explain why you think it has or has not been a success?

The following replies are taken from the additional comments box on the questionnaire. Again they are presented as found but the following summarise key issues:

- ❖ Successful scheme for local people
- ❖ Too early to say
- ❖ Some disappointment from those who were not successful

All Comments made:

- No comment
- Not a success as one of the flats remained unoccupied for most of the first year. Also the prices the flats sold for were much higher than anticipated
- Too early to tell
- Don't know. I would oppose further housing on this site, although in my pessimism I expect this to happen and that this is the real reason for this survey
- Not a success as my niece has lived in Newport most of her life – moving to the village when she was 2.5 years old – applied for a unit and was told

local people!

- Not a success, although I expect it's been a success for those who needed housing
- Too early to say – Concerned at how slowly the land intended as a playground has been brought into a condition to allow equipment to be installed; The apparent reluctance of UDC to appreciate the need for further recreational space; The risk that the village will be split in two.
- A success as at least a few people got a house they could otherwise not afford
- A success for locals and first time buyers as Hatfield Heath is expensive for housing
- A success as youngsters have more chance of affordable housing
- A success as it has given the opportunity for people born in Littlebury to stay in the village community
- A success as the houses look very nice and the area around them is well maintained
- It's been successful because it gave young people in the position to do so, get a foot on the property ladder and those who were not, a rent they could afford
- It is very early for assessment but I believe that local people have been helped to get housing
- It has been successful for those lucky enough to be chosen to have a house or flat, as within our family the application was turned down for one person. It would be good if the developers finished off the estate – the road/pavement at entrance; re-instate the grass verge on the ain road which the developers churned up with their parking during the development. Cars driven by young drivers raw in and out of the estate
- A success as I have met one of the families who seem very nice, with children at the local school
- A success as some young relatives of existing Ashdon residents have moved to the village; Not a success as the building design was too high for the location and a scar on the view
- A success as it has helped young people
- A success as we have made lots of new friends and so have our children

• **Do you think the development has integrated into the existing community?**

The following replies are taken from the additional comments box on the questionnaire. Again they are presented as found but the following summarise key issues:

- ❖ Too early to say

- ❖ Well integrated
- ❖ Some problems with cars/parking, children, noise etc.

All Comments made:

- Too early to know, although if these are local people, they will already be integrated. There is already a Neighbourhood Watch contact in Bowker Close
- No because it is too new and sited on the very edge of the village
- Not sure
- Too early to tell
- Don't know
- Strangers to us but a few, so we have no idea
- Yes
- Not enough time has elapsed to enable a judgement to be made – ask new residents
- Yes, the houses are attractive to look at and once the play area is built, it will make a safer place for the children to play
- In part as some of the occupants are so nice, but unfortunately, there are a few that just cause noise and children seem to congregate at the side of the senior citizens bungalow. It was maybe not a good idea to have this development so near to them
- Good looking build
- Yes
- Yes, in certain circumstances it has, but still the cars are parked on the corner of Ardley Crescent outside the flats on a regular basis
- Yes, because they are all linked to local people, there is a common ground and a lot of the people already lived in the community
- It doesn't help that part for the green was taken for parking and then a large fence went up to partition their parking instead of the shrub border proposed
- It is not too big a development for the size of the village
- Yes I do as the development is in keeping with it's surroundings
- Yes, it has enabled families to see more of each other with less travelling and for the children to attend Great Chesterford school
- Yes, very well
- Yes, I have friends within the Nettleditch area, however, I do think it was built too close to the railway line

Conclusion

The building of affordable homes on what are usually greenfield sites can cause controversy and some very strong feelings from local residents. However the results from this survey indicate that 74% felt the development was a success. This is a very high percentage if you assume that the local residents surveyed in

this questionnaire are those most likely in a village to object to a scheme close to their property.

These results should encourage and reassure parish councils who are considering supporting an “affordable housing scheme”.

Overall Conclusions

To summarise, the key learning points from the conclusions drawn from the report are:

1. FROM TENANTS

- The schemes allowed young people to remain in the village.
- They provided homes for people employed locally.
- The homes were affordable for those on lower incomes.
- The residents used village services and helped the local economy.
- They became involved in village activities

2. FROM PARISH COUNCILS

- All of the Parish Councils were pleased with the design of the schemes and the way they fitted into the village.
- They believed the key to success was full and constant consultation with the village through the Parish Council.
- They were insistent that the homes were available for local people only

3. FROM RESIDENTS ADJOINING AFFORDABLE HOUSING SCHEMES

- A fifth of respondents did not support the schemes before they were built. However, almost three quarters of the same respondents agreed that the developments had been a success once built and integrated into the community.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

The final and overriding conclusion must be that the resources invested in rural housing schemes in Uttlesford have resulted in long term economic, social and environmental improvement for the householders and the community. This positive impact has been made possible because of the high level of consultation between all those involved in the process. This includes Housing Associations, Uttlesford District Council's Housing and Planning Departments, the Parish Councils and local residents.

The undoubted success of the schemes in this research makes the case for bringing forward further schemes, where there is a proven need, and justifies the Council's pro-active policy towards delivering a rural housing programme with the support of Parish Councils.

For further information about this research or the delivery of affordable rural housing, please contact Suzanna Wood or Sophie Robinson

01799 510543/510633

Or by email: swood@uttlesford.gov.uk/srobinson@uttlesford.gov.uk

Appendix 1 –

16th November 2007

Please ask for Suzanna Clarke or Sophie Walker on 01799
510543/510633

email: sclarke@uttlesford.gov.uk or
swalker@uttlesford.gov.uk

Dear Resident,

RURAL HOUSING IMPACT STUDY IN UTTLESFORD

I am writing to you to ask for your help. Uttlesford District Council are conducting an independent survey on the impact that affordable housing schemes (Housing Association) for local people, have on the village in which they are built.

This is an important survey because it may influence the Council's support for these schemes in the future.

I enclose a confidential questionnaire, which I have sent to each tenant in..... I have also sent questionnaires to five other village schemes in Uttlesford.

I would be grateful if you would spend a few minutes completing this questionnaire and returning it to me in the prepaid envelope provided.

I would like to stress that the survey is independent and the names of tenants completing these questionnaires will be kept confidential and would be known only to the Housing Strategy team

Other organisations, including Housing Associations, Parish Councils and the District Council are also being interviewed and this information will be included in a report, which should be available in January 2008.

I would therefore be grateful if you could return the questionnaire by the 3 December 2007. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you wish to discuss any aspect of the questionnaire.

I thank you in anticipation of your support.

Yours sincerely,

Suzanna Clarke
Housing Strategy Manager

Sophie Walker
Housing Development Officer

**Uttlesford District Council
Rural Excellence Rural Housing Survey**

Questionnaire for Residents

- 1. Please complete your address and contact number in the box below**

- 2. Please give details of people living in your home**
(Please write number of people in the box provided)

Number of adults: Under 21 21-25 26-35 36-55 56-65 Over 65

Number of children: Pre-School Primary Secondary Over 16

- 3. Were you the first occupier of your home?**

Yes No

- 4. How long have you lived at this address?**

Less than 1 year 1 – 2 years 3 – 5 years Over 5 years

- 5. Are you:** a. Tenant? b. Shared ownership resident?

- 6. Where did you live before moving to this property?**
(Name of village or town)

7. Before you moved to this property were you:

- Homeless
- Transferred from another housing association or council property
- Living in a mortgaged house
- Living with parents/family
- Living with friends
- Renting privately
- Tied accommodation with employment
- Mobile home
- Living in temporary accommodation (hostel B&B)
- Other (please specify): _____

8. How long did you have to wait before you were housed?

- Under 6 months
- 6 – 12 months
- 12 – 18 months
- 18 – 24 months
- Over 2 years

9. What was your connection with the village?

- Resident
- Previous resident
- Employment
- Family
- None
- Other (please specify): _____

10. If you needed to move on from your current accommodation, when do you expect this will be?

1 to 2 years

3 to 5 years

Over 5 years

N/A

11. If your family needed to move on, now or in the future, for any reason, (e.g. house does not meet needs) would you?

Want to rent another property in the village

Want to rent elsewhere in the area

Want to buy through shared ownership

Want to buy on the open market

12. Have you experienced any problems with the need to move on?

Yes

No

If 'Yes' please state why:

12(a) if you do need to move on, please give your reasons.

13. Do you or your family use the local facilities?

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Never	N/A
Village Shop	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Village Post Office	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Village Hall	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Village Pub	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Play Group	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Nursery School	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Primary School	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Petrol Station/Garage	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Doctors Surgery	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Chemist	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Public Transport	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Other local shops/facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>				

14. Do you or any members of your family; attend any local groups, organisations or clubs?

Yes No

If 'Yes', please specify:

15. Do you think that this housing development has benefited the local community?

Yes No

If 'Yes', please say how:

16. Have you experienced any problems with the development?

Yes

No

If 'Yes', please specify:

**17. What else would you like to have been included on the development/
in the property? Please provide comments:**

**18. Is there anything about the design of the property that you would like to change?
Please provide comments:**

19. Overall, how would you rate your property?

Excellent

Good

Satisfactory

Unsatisfactory

Poor

Comments:

19. Do you think the development is a good place to live? Please provide comments:

20. Do you think the development has integrated into the existing community?

Please provide comments:

21. Any additional comments.

Would you be willing to undertake a short follow-up interview if required?

Yes

No

Thank you for answering this questionnaire, please return it in the enclosed reply paid envelope.

Questionnaire Summary for Residents of Uttlesford Rural Housing Schemes.

Please give details of people living in your home:

Adults	Number	%
Under 21	6	9
21-25	14	20
26-35	17	25
36-55	26	38
56-55	3	4
Over 65	3	4
Total	69	100

Children	Number	%
Pre school	14	40
Primary	15	43
Secondary	2	6
Over 16	4	11
Total	35	100

Were you the first occupier of your home?

	Number	%
Yes	37	88%
No	5	12%
Total	42	100%

How long have you lived here?

	Number	%
Less than 1 year	14	34
1 – 2 years	14	34
3 – 5 years	10	25
Over 5 years	3	7
Total	41	100

(1 respondent did not answer the question)

Are you renting or shared ownership?

	Number	%
Renting	15	36

Shared ownership	27	64
Total	42	100

Before you moved to this property, were you?

	Number	%
Homeless	2	5
Transfer from another HA or council property	6	14
Living in mortgaged house	6	14
Living with parents/family/friends	18	42
Renting privately	10	23
Tied accommodation	0	0
Mobile home	0	0
Living in temporary accommodation	0	0
Other	1	2
Total	43	100

(Some people ticked more than one box)

How long did you wait?

	Number	%
Under 6 months	8	25
6 -12 months	9	28
12 – 18 months	8	25
18 -24 months	1	3
Over 2 years	6	19
Total	32	100

(Some people did not answer question)

What was your connection with the village/parish?

	Number	%
Resident	15	25
Previous resident	11	18
Employment	9	15
Family	24	39
None	0	0
Other	2	3
Total	61	100

(Some had more than one connection)

If your family needed to move on, now or in the future, would you?

	Number	%
Want to rent another property in village	10	19
Want to rent elsewhere in the area	3	5
Want to buy through shared ownership	26	48
Want to buy outright on the open market	15	28
Total	54	100

(Some people ticked more than one box)

Have you encountered problems with the need to move on?

	Number	%
Yes	5	13
No	33	87
Total	38	100

(Some people did not answer question)

If you needed to move on, when would you expect this to be?

	Number	%
1 – 2 years	6	17
3 – 5 years	10	28
Over 5 years	4	11
N/A	16	44
Total	36	100

(Some people did not answer question)

Do you or your family use the local facilities?

	Daily	%	Weekly	%	Monthly	%	Never	%
Village shop	6	25%	16	24%	9	10%	2	2%
Village post office	2	8%	15	22%	16	18%	4	5%
Village hall	2	8%	5	7%	10	11%	16	18%
Village pub	1	4%	12	18%	12	13%	9	10%
Play group	1	4%	4	6%	2	2%	10	11%
Nursery school	2	8%	1	1%	0	0	6	7%
Primary school	7	29%	0	0	0	0	10	11%

Petrol station/garage	0	0	6	9%	3	3%	8	9%
Doctors surgery	0	0	0	0	17	19%	5	6%
Chemist	0	0	0	0	6	7%	3	3%
Public transport	2	8%	3	4%	7	8%	8	9%
Other local shops/facilities	1	4%	6	9%	8	9%	6	7%
	24	98	68	100	90	100	87	98

(Due to rounding up/down of figures, some totals do not add up to 100%)

Do you or any members of your family attend any local groups, organisations or clubs?

	Number	%
Yes	20	48
No	22	52
Total	42	100

Do you think that this housing development has benefited the local community?

	Number	%
Yes	40	95
No	2	5
Total	42	100

Have you experienced any problems with the development?

	Number	%
Yes	11	27
No	30	73
Total	41	100

(1 respondent did not answer the question)

Overall how would you rate your property?

	Number	%
Excellent	18	43
Good	18	43
Satisfactory	5	12
Unsatisfactory	0	0
Poor	0	0
Not answered	1	2
Total	42	100

Please ask for Suzanna Clarke or Sophie Walker on 01799
510543/510633

email: sclarke@uttlesford.gov.uk or
swalker@uttlesford.gov.uk

Dear

RURAL HOUSING IMPACT STUDY IN UTTLESFORD

I am writing to you to ask for your help. Uttlesford District Council are conducting an independent survey on the impact that affordable housing schemes (Housing Association) for local people, have on the village in which they are built.

This is an important survey because it may influence the Council's support for these schemes in the future.

I enclose a confidential questionnaire, which I have sent to you and five other Parish Councils who have had affordable housing built in their villages.

I would be grateful if you would spend a few minutes completing this questionnaire and returning it to me in the prepaid envelope provided.

I would like to stress that the survey is independent and the names of tenants completing these questionnaires will be kept confidential and would be known only to the Housing Strategy team

We will also be interviewing Housing Associations, the tenants of the scheme atand others, in an effort to get a real assessment of the benefits of affordable housing in villages. This information will be included in a report, which should be available in January 2008.

I would therefore be grateful if you could return the questionnaire by the 3 December 2007. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you wish to discuss any aspect of the questionnaire.

I thank you in anticipation of your support.

Yours sincerely,

Suzanna Clarke
Housing Strategy Manager

Sophie Walker
Housing Development Officer

**Uttlesford District Council
Rural Excellence Rural Housing Survey**

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR

PARISH COUNCIL

RURAL HOUSING AT:

1. Were the Parish Council consulted/involved in the scheme?

Yes

No

2. Did the Parish Council support the scheme?

Yes

No

3. Did the Parish Council have any input into the selection of the site?

Yes

No

3 (a) If the answer to Question 3 is yes, what was your input?

4. Were the Parish Council informed of the local connection criteria required for tenants?

Yes

No

5. Were the Parish Council happy with the local connection criteria?

Yes

No

6. Are the Parish Council happy that the houses have been allocated to tenants with a local connection to the village?

Yes

No

6(a) If not why?

7. Are the Parish Council involved in the re-let/re-sale of the properties?

Yes

No

8. Are the Parish Council happy with the choice of Housing Association?

Yes

No

8 (a) If the answer to Question 8 is No, please explain why.

9. Is the Parish Council happy with the way the Housing Association manages and maintains the homes?

Yes

No

9(a) If the answer to Question 9 is No, please explain why.

10. Did the Parish Council have any concerns about the scheme before it was built?

Yes

No

10(a) If the answer to Question 10 is Yes, what were their concerns?

10(b) If the answer to Question 10 is Yes, were their concerns justified?

Yes

No

11. Overall does the Parish Council think the scheme has been a success?

Yes

No

12. Please explain why you think it has or has not been a success

13 Do the Parish Council think there is a need for a further scheme of this kind in the future?

Yes

No

13(a) If the answer to question 13 is Yes, please state how far in the future you think this will be.

Signed by: _____ **Designation:** _____

Thank you for answering this questionnaire; please return it in the enclosed reply paid envelope.

Parish Council Survey Results

Were the Parish Council consulted/involved in the scheme?

	Number	%
Yes	4	100
No	0	0
Total	4	100

Did the Parish Council support the scheme?

	Number	%
Yes	4	100
No	0	0
Total	4	100

Did the Parish Council have any input into the selection of the site?

	Number	%
Yes	2	50
No	2	50
Total	4	100

If the answer is yes, what was your input?

➤ Yes, helped with identifying a suitable site
➤ Yes. Suggestion of suitable sites and preferences
➤ No. This was done by the planning department in conjunction with landowners

Were the Parish Council informed of the local connection criteria required for tenants?

	Number	%
Yes	4	100
No	0	0
Total	4	100

Were the Parish Council happy with the local connection criteria?

	Number	%
Yes	4	100
No	0	0
Total	4	100

Are the Parish Council happy that the houses have been allocated to tenants with a local connection to the village?

	Number	%
Yes	2	50
No	1	25
Yes and No	1	25
Total	4	100

If not, why?

➤ Not all were Newport residents and there has been some local objection
➤ The difficulty was that since a proportion had to be sold for shared ownership, it was hard for the RHT to find qualified applicants who would afford the mortgage. This meant people with very tenuous connections had to be offered homes. The PC understood this position, but would be wary of this in the future

Are the Parish Council involved in the relet/resale of the properties?

	Number	%
Yes	1	25
No	2	50
Don't know	1	25
Total	4	100

Are the Parish Council happy with the choice of Housing Association?

	Number	%
Yes	3	75
No	1	25

Total	4	100
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Is the Parish Council happy with the way the Housing Association manages and maintains the homes?

	Number	%
Yes	3	75
No	1	25
Total	4	100

If no, please explain why?

➤ Several complaints from tenants about the lack of maintenance around general areas, lighting etc. Very poor dealing with handover of open areas to Council so that PC can provide play areas/recreational space as agreed. Now have 2 Housing Associations involved so could get even more difficult, though ERHA seem to be quite good at listening to tenants
➤ Currently early days
➤ xxxxx had a terrible reputation, which was justified. They cause problems and delays. Some purchasers lost mortgage offers over and over, some houses were unoccupied for 6 months, the administration was slap-dash and non-communicative. It was investigated by the RHT and even went up to Parliament, but the damage was done

Did the Parish Council have any concerns about the scheme before it was built?

	Number	%
Yes	1	25
No	3	75
Total	4	100

If the answer is yes, what were their concerns?

Too many properties on site at top of village with no amenities and too many properties overall for a village our size

If the answer is yes, were the concerns justified?

	Number	%
Yes	1	100
No	0	0
Total	1	100

There is still no play area completed, even though tenants have been in almost one year on the latest part. *(This is due to a one year clause in the S106 agreement to ensure that the land for the play area is handed over in a good condition to the Parish Council)*

Re-sales have thrown up issues with market values, leading to having to put some properties on the open market. This is a real concern that can only increase in all affordable developments unless action is taken when they are built

Overall does the Parish Council think the scheme has been a success?

	Number	%
Yes	4	100
No	0	0
Total	4	100

Please explain why it has or has not been a success?

- It seems that a short sighted approach to affordable housing with a local connection has led to this situation. 66% of a 3 bed property in Ashdon is circa £150k, which is no longer affordable
- Keeping local people in the village who wouldn't be able to afford to purchase an open market home in Littlebury
- All occupied and residents happy. Very good standard of house design and build.
- Design is excellent, occupiers' happy, houses first class, fits well into the environment and it's a credit to Clavering.

Do the Parish Council think there is a need for a further scheme of this kind in the future?

	Number	%
Yes	3	75
No	1	25
Total	4	100

If there is a need for a further scheme, how far in the future would this be?

➤ When suitable land is available
➤ Not long, already working towards it and finding locations as there is still much need
➤ Overwhelmingly yes. We understand future schemes can be for all rental houses and would pursue this if land can be found, as soon as possible

Appendix 3

Please ask for Suzanna Clarke or Sophie Walker on
01799 510543/510633
email: sclarke@uttlesford.gov.uk or
swalker@uttlesford.gov.uk

Dear Resident,

RURAL HOUSING IMPACT STUDY IN UTTLESFORD

I am writing to you to ask for your help. Uttlesford District Council are conducting an independent survey on the impact that affordable housing schemes (Housing Association) for local people, have on the village in which they are built.

This is an important survey because it may influence the Council's support for these schemes in the future.

I enclose a confidential questionnaire, which I have sent to residents close to the scheme in

I would be grateful if you would spend a few minutes completing this questionnaire and returning it to me in the prepaid envelope provided.

I would like to stress that the survey is independent and the names of tenants completing these questionnaires will be kept confidential and would be known only to the Housing Strategy team. Alternatively, if you do not want to give your name, just enter the road name and this will suffice

Other organisations, including Housing Associations, Parish Councils and the District Council are also being interviewed and this information will be included in a report, which should be available in January 2008.

I would therefore be grateful if you could return the questionnaire by the 3 December 2007. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you wish to discuss any aspect of the questionnaire.

I thank you in anticipation of your support.

Yours sincerely,

Suzanna Clarke

Housing Strategy Manager

Sophie Walker

Housing Development Officer

**Uttlesford District Council
Rural Excellence Rural Housing Survey**

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR NEIGHBOURS TO THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING SCHEME
AT:**

1. Name and Address (optional)

2. Did you live at your present address before the houses at were built?

Yes

No

**3. If you answered Yes to Question 2 -
Did you know that they were Housing Association houses for local people?**

Yes

No

4. Did you support the scheme before it was built?

Yes

No

5. Did you have any concerns about the scheme before it was built?

Yes

No

6. If the answer to Question 5 is yes, what were your concerns?

Questionnaire from Neighbouring Residents to Scheme

Did you live at your present address before the houses were built?

	Number	%
Yes	25	96
No	1	4
Total	26	100

Did you know that they were Housing Association homes for local people?

	Number	%
Yes	24	96
No	1	4
Total	25	100

Did you support the scheme before it was built?

	Number	%
Yes	18	78
No	5	22
Total	23	100

Did you have any concerns about the scheme before it was built?

	Number	%
Yes	13	54
No	11	46
Total	24	100

What were your concerns?

➤ Noise, being overlooked and views gone, and we perhaps were concerned after having bought our house before the new development occurred	➤ Access to houses
RHT were required by UDC to use more land than required, increasing the number of dwellings by 50% more than PC wanted; Concerned at so large a concentration of additional housing at some distance from the village centre, without supporting facilities or amenities; Doubtful that so large a number of properties would in truth be affordable & within reach of eligible	➤ Being overlooked; More cars so more danger to children as some people do drive fast

persons who were most in need	
➤ Over development	➤ The size of the development; The overall look which did not appear in keeping with the rest of the crescent;
➤ My concern was that the car park was taken from other residents with cars. So therefore parking is now a hazard, especially the cul-de-sac where vans and cars are obstructing cars turning as too many cars are parked	➤ The houses being close to the electricity pylons
➤ Extra traffic onto London Road; Being overlooked; Noise from residents; Flooding problems	➤ Degrading of area by loss of rural view opposite our house; Problem of on the road parking
➤ That the development would be very dense and become scruffy and unkept	➤ That the tenant's wouldn't care for the homes and the area in which they were living
➤ Increased traffic and building on farmland. Traffic is a problem at my end of the village as cars are travelling at speeds way in excess of 30mph and often overtake while still in the 30mph zone	

If the answer was yes, have those concerns been justified?

	Number	%
Yes	4	40
No	6	60
Total	10	100

Has the development assisted any of your family or friends?

	Number	%
Yes	8	32
No	17	68

Total	25	
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Does anyone in your household have a future need for affordable housing?

	Number	%
Yes	11	48
No	12	52
Total	23	100

Overall, do you think the scheme has been a success?

	Number	%
Yes	17	74
No	3	13
Too early to say	2	9
Don't know	1	4
Total	23	100