



Report To: Planning Portfolio Holder
Lead Officer: Director of Planning & New Communities

4 December 2015

Uttlesford Local Plan Response to Issues and Options Consultation

Purpose

1. To consider the contents of a Local Plan Issues and Options consultation from Uttlesford Council and agree an appropriate response.
2. This is not a key decision.

Recommendation

3. That the Planning Portfolio Holder agrees the consultation response set out in Appendix 1.

Background

4. Uttlesford District abuts our southern boundary. A chiefly rural authority, its chief settlements are Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow. Stansted Airport lies within the district to the north east of Bishops Stortford (which lies within East Hertfordshire). A number of key transport routes run through the district. Those passing into South Cambridgeshire are the M11, the Cambridge to Liverpool Street railway line, and the A1301 running past Hinxton, Sawston and Great Shelford and the A1307 running close to Linton, Great and Little Abington and Babraham. The junction between the M11 and A11 is within Uttlesford, adjacent to the administrative boundary.
5. Uttlesford District Council is in the early stages of preparing a new Local Plan for the district to guide its future to 2033. This first consultation, known as Issues and Options, is an evidence-gathering exercise before the Council draws up a Local Plan next year. A consultation on a draft Local Plan will follow later in 2016, and then a further consultation will follow in 2017 before submission of the plan for examination.
6. The consultation runs between 22nd October and closes at 4.30pm on the 4th December (the date of the Portfolio Holder meeting). The proposed response will be submitted via their internet consultation portal or via email.
7. In July 2014 Uttlesford submitted its previous Local Plan for examination. In December 2014 the Inspector concluded that the plan as a whole had major soundness issues such that a suspension of the plan was not appropriate. Preparation then began on this new Local Plan taking account of the Inspector's conclusions and findings.

Summary of Issues and Options

8. The consultation consists of 19 questions set out in the Issues and Options Consultation Document and seeks views on three main areas as follows:
- General Consultation Questions including questions on vision and development strategy, settlement hierarchy, cross-boundary strategic planning, infrastructure planning, employment, housing tenure mix and affordability, leisure, recreation, and open space, and the natural and historic environment.
 - Areas of Search including questions on a range of locations which the Council is proposing to assess before reaching a view about the suitability of potential areas for development. These include Areas of Search for new settlements, two of which are close to the boundary with South Cambridgeshire.
 - Scenarios for future growth including questions on the overall level of development, and alternative spatial packages to deliver development.
- The background papers identified below include a link to the full Uttlesford Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation Document, and to a Sustainability Appraisal Non-technical Summary.
9. It includes a question about ‘Cross Boundary Strategic Planning’ asking whether there are any specific cross boundary planning issues that should be considered in local plan.
10. In the settlement hierarchy, Great Chesterford is identified as a key village (in the hierarchy key villages lie just below the market towns of Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow). The function of key villages is described as: ‘Major focus for development in the rural area – suitable for a scale of development that would reinforce role as provider of services to a wide rural area’. In the employment section it is recognised that Stansted Airport is central to a major employment cluster which attracts in-commuters, that Chesterford Research Park provides high tech jobs, and that there are limited employment opportunities within the two market towns and villages in Uttlesford.
11. The consultation identifies a large number of areas of search for development, both for sustainable urban extensions to existing settlements and for new settlements. Five high-level criteria were used to inform the development of ‘areas of search’. Further technical work is taking place to narrow down the range of options concerning such matters as highways and flooding. These five assumptions were as follows:
- Potential to contribute to effective cross-boundary strategic planning priorities.
 - Potential to minimise the need to travel by car, for example by locating residential development near to jobs, shops, leisure opportunities, and other facilities.
 - Potential access to the strategic highways and rail network.
 - Exclusion of areas with special protection, for example Registered Parks and Gardens and Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
 - Focus on key villages and “villages with a primary school and with some local services: e.g. village hall/pub/shop suitable for a scale of development that would reinforce its role as a local service centre” (known as Type A rural settlements in the 2014 submission Local Plan).

12. This evidence will be used to decide on areas to be taken forward in the local plan. The areas of search are illustrated in a map extract from the consultation document at Appendix 2. Two new settlement options lie close to the boundary with South Cambridgeshire around Great Chesterford. The South Cambridgeshire Parishes on this boundary are Ickleton, Hinxton, Gt Abington, Hildersham and Linton.
13. Area of Search 1 is located to the east of M11 Junction 9a. Area of Search 2 is located to the west of M11 Junction 9. The document states that close working with South Cambridgeshire District Council will be necessary in the assessment of these areas to ensure that the requirements of the Duty to Co-Operate are met.
14. The document includes a number of scenarios to look at alternative spatial options to provide for the development of between 8,750 new homes (580 dwellings per year) and 11,750 new homes (750 dwellings per year). Existing permissions and windfalls provide for 5,750 homes in all the scenarios. Up to two new settlements are provided for. Depending on when their development starts scenarios including new settlements could provide between 500 and 6,000 homes in the plan period and provide for ongoing development after the plan period.

Proposed Response

15. It is important that Uttlesford plans to meet its full objectively assessed housing and employment needs, taking account of the need for a measure of flexibility. Close working under the duty to cooperate is necessary in regard to housing, employment and transport matters. The boundary between the two councils is also the boundary between two housing market areas and the relationship between the two should be considered.
16. This Council considers that new settlements can make a sustainable contribution to meeting objectively assessed housing and employment needs in appropriate circumstances and in appropriate locations.
17. The emerging Uttlesford Local Plan will need to give careful consideration to the appropriateness of a new settlement close to the boundary with South Cambridgeshire and its impacts on and relationship to the southern part of South Cambridgeshire. The A1301 and A1307 are heavily used towards Cambridge and the transport impacts of new developments in the northern part of Uttlesford need to be fully understood to inform future decision making. The viability assessment of the emerging Local Plan and its policies should take account of the need to mitigate transport impacts outside Uttlesford along the corridor towards Cambridge. Consideration should be given to the outcome of the emerging City Deal A1307 study.
18. Two areas of search for development lie very close to the administrative boundary. If either are taken forward into the Local Plan, Uttlesford should engage positively with this Council and neighbouring Parish Councils in South Cambridgeshire. There are a number of key issues that would need to be considered, including transport, Green Belt and relationship with the major business parks in this part of South Cambridgeshire, including the Wellcome Trust Genome Campus and Granta Park. We are aware of potential employment-led proposals being worked up to the north of

Uttlesford in South Cambridgeshire. If they come forward they will be relevant considerations for the Uttlesford Local Plan.

19. This Council has considerable experience of planning for and delivering new settlements and sustainable urban extensions - on the Cambridge fringe, at Cambourne and Northstowe and more recently at Waterbeach and Bourn Airfield. A key consideration in planning any new settlement is the scale of development and the need to ensure that it will have sufficient critical mass to provide all key services and facilities within the new settlement. A key factor that has influenced this Council's view is to have sufficient dwellings to support a new secondary school. Innovative approaches must be explored to ensure timely delivery of key services, including up front provision of infrastructure if necessary. For example, at Northstowe, the secondary school is being provided early due to capacity issues in local schools. Ensuring that there will be sustainable transport options is also a key consideration for any new settlement and early transport modelling to understand issues and potential requirements is essential.
20. Whilst each Council should meet its own objectively assessed development needs, there will be a relationship across the administrative boundary and if a new settlement is provided close to South Cambridgeshire, some residents will inevitably look for work in jobs in the southern part of the district and sustainable transport links will be important. The railway line provides a positive opportunity in this regard.
21. Early transport modelling will be important to consider the impacts of any new settlement and should also have regard to emerging employment and housing proposals in the corridor to Cambridge. A corridor approach is advocated, similar to that being pursued for the A10(north) where a recently let contract is being taken forward in consultation with landowners and promoters of development in the corridor, including making financial contributions to the study. The scope of the study needs to be agreed but should include the M11, A11, A1301, A1307, A505 and the corridor to Cambridge. Early engagement with both Cambridgeshire and Essex County Councils as highway authorities will be important.

Options

22. The Planning Portfolio Holder has the following options:
 - (a) Agree the proposed response; or
 - (b) Agree the proposed response with amendments; or
 - (c) Not to agree the proposed response.

Implications

23. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:

Financial

24. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Legal

25. There are no direct legal implications of this report.

Staffing

26. There are no direct staffing implications arising from this report.

Equality and Diversity

27. The Uttlesford Local Plan will be subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment to demonstrate how potential equalities issues have been, and will be addressed.

Climate Change

28. There are no direct climate change implications arising from this report.

Consultation (including from the Youth Council)

29. Informal discussions have been held with Uttlesford District Council which have helped to inform this report.

Effect on Strategic Aims

Aim 3: We will ensure that South Cambridgeshire continues to offer an outstanding quality of life for our residents.

30. The proposed response to consultation set out at Appendix 1 is intended to help secure a continued high quality of life for South Cambridgeshire residents.

Background Papers

Uttlesford Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation Document.
Sustainability Appraisal Non-technical Summary.
<http://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/lpconsult>

Appendices

- Appendix 1 Proposed response to the Uttlesford Local Plan Issues and Options consultation
Appendix 2 Map extract from the consultation document

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