

Report to Neighbourhoods and Community Services Select Committee

Date of meeting: 17 November 2015

**Subject: Uttlesford Local Plan Issues and Options
Consultation**

Officer contact for further information: I White

Committee Secretary: A Hendry



Recommendations/Decisions Required:

To respond to two of the consultation questions as follows:

- (a) **Cross-boundary strategic planning issues should include:**
- **housing provision for the settled and travelling communities, taking account of the 2015 SHMA, the updated Essex GTAA, and the planning constraints of neighbouring authorities;**
 - **implications for housing need, employment demand and commuting patterns from development at Stansted Airport and the Harlow Enterprise Zone;**
 - **major infrastructure projects including Junction 7a of the M11 and the upgrading of the A414 in the Hertford area;**
- (b) **It is unfortunate that the timing of this consultation has meant that the final version of the SHMA (published on 15th September) has not been included or even mentioned in the consultation document. This is a key piece of joint evidence prepared for the four partner authorities in the Housing Market Area. Such an important piece of evidence should be explicitly referred to, and would be helpful in explaining the option figures for housing growth;**
- (c) **The consultation document should also refer to the Co-operation for Sustainable Development Group which is one of the key mechanisms through which SHMA partners have been, and will continue to be, engaged on cross-boundary issues such as housing and jobs provision and distribution, and infrastructure requirements.**

Report:

1. **Uttlesford District Council's previous Local Plan ran into difficulties at Examination in Public in late 2014. The Inspector's main concerns were about Objectively Assessed Housing Needs (OAHN) and the capacity of the village of Elsenham to take the amount of new development being proposed. In his letter of 19th December 2014, the Inspector concluded that the scale of work required to address these issues was such that it could not be completed within the normal maximum 6-month period for a suspended Examination. He also commented that a new settlement may be an appropriate means of catering for the future long-term growth of the district, and recognised that there were limits to the expansion capacity of the district's 2 market towns – Great Dunmow and Saffron Walden. Uttlesford withdrew the Plan from examination in February 2015.**
2. **The current Issues and Options consultation on a new Local Plan is intended to be the first of three such exercises, and is for a 6 week period ending on Friday 4th December 2015. It includes 19 questions broken into 3 categories – general issues;**

areas of search; and the overall level of development and different strategies (scenarios) for delivering development. The new Local Plan will cover the period up to 2033.

3. Uttlesford is one of the Strategic Housing Market Area (SHMA) partners with this Council (the others being Harlow and East Herts) and Members will be aware that the updated SHMA report and a linked Economic Evidence study were included in the Local Plan evidence base at Cabinet on 8th October. The OAHN figures for this Council and Uttlesford from 2011 to 2033 are, respectively, 11,300 and 12,500, but these are not housing target figures as account needs to be taken of planning constraints (eg Green Belt) and all other relevant evidence base issues. Discussions will therefore need to continue with SHMA and other partners about distribution of housing within the wider SHMA area.
4. The Issues and Options document proposes a settlement hierarchy comprising – (i) market towns – Great Dunmow and Saffron Walden; (ii) key villages (7 in total) – the major focus for development in the rural area; (iii) type A villages – which have a primary school and some local services; and (iv) type B villages – 23 being named, but including other smaller villages and hamlets – these do not have a primary school and have limited local services.
5. The consultation document discusses two potential levels of new housing (580 and 750 dwellings per year – the former being recommended by the Inspector at last year's EIP) and considers an outline range of options for distribution of the development (scenarios) related to the settlement hierarchy, but also including proposals for one or two new settlements. It is made clear that these are not the only possible options for growth. As the SHMA period runs from 2011, the OAHN figures need to include existing but unimplemented permissions (5,000), and an allowance for windfalls (estimated at 50 per year or 750 over the 15 year period of the Plan). The net OAHN figure for Uttlesford to 2033 is therefore 6,750 new units (ie 12,500 minus 5,000 minus 750). Over 15 years, 580 dwellings per year would result in 8,700 new units (the document uses the figure 8,750), and 750 dwellings per year over 15 years creates 11,250 new houses (the document uses the figure 11, 750).
6. Officers are concerned that the SHMA is not mentioned in the consultation document as this is a key piece of joint evidence prepared for the four authorities in the Housing Market Area. Such an important piece of evidence should be explicitly referred to. The Sustainability Appraisal non-technical summary, which accompanies the Issues and Options consultation, refers to the joint SHMA in several places as being unfinished, but it was sent to the four partner authorities on 15th September, so these statements are already out-of-date and incorrect.
7. Officers are also disappointed that there is no reference to the Co-operation for Sustainable Development Group. This is one of the key mechanisms through which the SHMA partners have been, and will continue to be, engaged on cross-boundary issues such as housing and jobs provision, and infrastructure requirements. The next stage of consultation for the Uttlesford Plan should benefit from the discussions (at Officer and Member level) of this group – this should help the district council to justify its selection of options for future growth and perhaps to identify other options. These would in turn have implications for additional scenarios and areas of search.
8. Officers do not believe it is helpful or necessary to answer the majority of the consultation questions, as most depend on a detailed knowledge of Uttlesford (eg the appropriateness of the proposed settlement hierarchy, and issues and evidence concerning areas of search) and are more relevant to residents and businesses of the district.
9. The consultation does however mention consideration of cross-boundary issues and identifies three – (i) the growth and development needs of the wider area; (ii) the

impact of Stansted Airport on the wider area; and (iii) the impact of more people using the A120 and M11 – and asks for suggestions for other cross-boundary issues which the Local Plan should address.

10. The consultation document can be viewed on www.uttlesford.gov.uk/lpconsult

Reason for decision: Important at this early stage of new Local Plan preparation to identify strategic cross-boundary issues, and to draw attention to the potential level of housing development that may be need over the Plan period, also taking account of planning constraints in other districts.

Options considered and rejected: Not to respond to the consultation

Consultation undertaken: Within Planning Policy team

Resource implications:

Budget provision: From existing resources

Personnel: From existing resources

Land: None

Community Plan/BVPP reference:

Relevant statutory powers: Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004;

Localism Act 2011

Background papers: Uttlesford Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation 2015

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications:

Key Decision reference: (if required): N/A