

Policy S7 – The Countryside

The countryside to which this policy applies is defined as all those parts of the Plan area beyond the Green Belt that are not within the settlement or other site boundaries. In the countryside, which will be protected for its own sake, planning permission will only be given for development that needs to take place there, or is appropriate to a rural area. This will include infilling in accordance with paragraph 6.13 of the Housing Chapter of the Plan. There will be strict control on new building. Development will only be permitted if its appearance protects or enhances the particular character of the part of the countryside within which it is set or there are special reasons why the development in the form proposed needs to be there.

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Housing Development

- 6.1. The structure plan requirement for the period 1996 to 2011 is 5,600 homes. Between 1996 and 2000, 980 homes have been completed. This local plan accordingly needs to show how at least 4,620 homes will be provided over the period 2000 to 2011. Over 40% already had planning permission in April 2000. There were permissions for 318 homes (net) on sites for 11 dwellings or less and permissions for 1,575 homes on sites for 12 or more dwellings. Some of these were under construction, others not yet started. The key element is the remainder.
- 6.2. It is important to strike a balance between making effective use of developed land within development limits and protecting their character. Uttlesford's urban areas are relatively small and the opportunities for development in them limited by relatively few potential sites. This is why 75% of the housing provision is proposed in urban extensions and two major settlement expansions. Much of this land already has planning permission, but this plan seeks to make effective use of these large sites, acknowledging that outstanding commitments may constrain what can be achieved on a specific site. Elsewhere, the opportunities for development in a linear loose settlement

sensitive to its character may be different from those in a village where historically buildings have been more clustered. Proposals will also need to respect the character of village approaches. Some have an abrupt break between settlement and countryside. Others have a more gradual transition with well spaced out properties.

6.3. Policy H1 proposes a total of 5052 dwellings, which allows for flexibility in case some sites do not come forward in the Plan period. The allocation of sites has taken into account:

- The availability of previously developed land;
- The location and accessibility of sites;
- The capacity of existing and potential infrastructure;
- The ability to build communities
- Constraints such as flood risk.
- A review of land previously allocated for employment purposes.

6.4. A search sequence has been followed, starting with the re-use of previously developed land in urban areas identified in an urban capacity study, then urban extensions and finally two other key sites within the A120 transport corridor, with its potential to support public transport.

6.5. There are eight strategic sites, that is those with a capacity of more than 50 dwellings. Three of these are on previously developed land.

- Development of the Oakwood Park site commenced in 1999 and is expected to be completed in 2006/7 taking into account the limit of 305 occupations prior to the new A120 dual carriageway.
- Development of the Printpack site, Radwinter Road, Saffron Walden started in 2001/2 and was completed in 2002/3.
- Development of part of the Thaxted Road Saffron Walden site started in 2003/4.

6.6. The remaining sites are greenfield sites

- A substantial part of the largest site, the Woodlands Park site at Great Dunmow had planning permission at the beginning of the plan period and its development is expected to extend throughout the plan's duration with completion in 2010/11.
- The Rochford Nurseries development in Birchanger/ Stansted is expected to be supplying houses in 2005/6 following off site infrastructure works.
- The site, west of Hawthorn close in Takeley village is expected to be supplying houses in 2004/5
- Implementation of the extensive Priors Green site is likely to extend throughout the remainder of the Plan's duration with completion in 2010/11.
- The eighth strategic site is a greenfield site, which would be an urban extension to Saffron Walden south of Ashdon Road. Half of the site is allocated during the plan period and half will only be developed if

monitoring of housing supply indicates that there will be a significant shortfall against the structure plan housing requirement.

- 6.7. A combination of a strong housing market and site specific factors will mean that the objective of securing housing on previously developed land before taking greenfield sites will be achieved in the district. Site specific factors include the need for some developments to be phased in relation to off site highway infrastructure,

Policy H1 – Housing Development

The local plan proposes the development of 5052 dwellings for the period 2000 to 2011 by the following means:

- a) **The re-use of existing buildings and previously developed land, and the use of unused land, within the development limits of the main urban areas:**
 - **Great Dunmow (228 dwellings);**
 - **Saffron Walden (399 dwellings); and**
 - **Stansted Mountfitchet (121 dwellings)**
- b) **Urban extensions to two of the main urban areas, and settlement expansions:**
 - **Oakwood Park, Little Dunmow (810 dwellings);**
 - **Rochford Nurseries, Birchanger and Stansted Mountfitchet (720 dwellings);**
 - **Takeley and Priors Green (939 dwellings); and**
 - **Woodlands Park, Great Dunmow (1253 dwellings).**
 - **Ashdon Road Saffron Walden (75 dwellings)**
- c) **Re-use of existing buildings and previously developed land outside urban areas (450 dwellings).**
- d) **Other contributions to supply, including development with outstanding planning permission not included in the above categories.**
 - **Bellope Meadow Thaxted (30 dwellings)**
 - **Brocks Mead Great Easton (20 dwellings)**
 - **Hassobury (7 dwellings).**

Backland Development and Subdivision of Dwellings

- 6.8. The development of sites without a road frontage and the conversion of existing large residential properties, into smaller apartments for example, are also acceptable, again subject to safeguards.

Policy H4 – Backland Development

Development of a parcel of land that does not have a road frontage will be permitted, if all the following criteria are met:

- a) **There is significant under-use of land and development would make more effective use of it;**
- b) **There would be no material overlooking or overshadowing of nearby properties;**
- c) **Development would not have an overbearing effect on neighbouring properties;**
- d) **Access would not cause disturbance to nearby properties.**

Policy H5 – Subdivision of Dwellings

The subdivision of dwellings into two or more units will be permitted if the character of the area would not adversely be affected.

Affordable Housing and Mixed and Balanced Communities

- 6.9. There are, and will continue to be, many households or potential households in Uttlesford lacking their own housing or living in housing that is inadequate or unsuitable, who are unlikely to be able to meet their needs in the housing market without some assistance. This is the Government's definition of housing need. It is estimated that the scale of the requirements for affordable housing is nearly 300 homes a year for the period 2001 to 2006 taking into account the backlog of existing need, reducing to about 230 homes a year for the next five year period to 2011 once the backlog has been addressed. Much of the need is newly arising each year. The ten year requirement is accordingly 2,650. If the newly arising need in 2000-1 (the underlying rate of about 230 homes a year) is added to this, the total of 2,880 represents just under 60% of the total housing provision in the plan for 2000-11. Future surveys will include a 'Key Worker' housing needs survey to identify who are the key workers in Uttlesford as well as their housing needs.
- 6.10. Over 40% of the homes proposed in total already had planning permission in April 2000. The supply of housing from these sites that would address the situation of those who are unlikely to be able to meet their needs in the housing market without some assistance is already determined. It is about 200 homes (11%). This means that the balance of the total requirement, 2,680, has to be compared with the balance of the housing provision without planning permission of about 3190. In practice the ratio will be even more unfavourable, because of planning permissions granted between 2000 and the date when the policies in this Plan are capable of being accorded sufficient weight to be implemented. The situation justifies affordable housing being sought on as many sites as is practicable, subject to national planning policy.
- 6.11. In Government policy advice, the term affordable housing includes low cost market housing, discounted market housing, as well as housing for social rent or shared ownership from social landlords. However, new build low cost market housing is unlikely to address housing need in Uttlesford. This is because new build housing is significantly more expensive than second hand properties, and those households who are on the margins of being able to meet

their needs in the housing market will be purchasing second hand towards the bottom end of the price band.

- 6.12. For affordable housing to be relevant to those in housing need in Uttlesford it must meet the following tests:
- It results in weekly outgoings on housing costs that 20% of Uttlesford households in need can afford, excluding housing benefits.
 - Such housing should be available, both initially and for subsequent occupancy, only to those with a demonstrable housing need.
- 6.13. This Plan sets a target of 40% of dwellings to be affordable housing, meeting the weekly outgoings on housing costs and availability tests above. This represents a compromise between the proportion justified by the scale of need and what the housing industry can reasonably be expected to provide. The percentage and type of affordable housing on any given site will be subject to negotiation at the time of a planning application, to allow issues of site size, sustainability and economics of provision to be considered. Within Great Dunmow, Saffron Walden and Stansted Mountfitchet, on sites of 0.5 hectares or of 15 dwellings or more 40% affordable housing will be negotiated. Where appropriate consideration will also be given to the provision of housing to meet special needs. The level of housing provision sought on a site should have regard to the Council's target for housing provision yet should not make the development unviable. Elsewhere in the District 40% affordable housing will be similarly sought on sites of 0.5 hectares or of 15 dwellings or more. There may however be smaller sites within the rural areas which could provide a useful contribution to the Council's supply of affordable housing. Appropriate sites should still be large enough to ensure a viable scheme and not lead to the provision of only 1 or 2 affordable units on a site which would lead to a fragmented approach to affordable housing in the rural areas.
- 6.14. It will be important to achieve mixed and balanced communities in two respects: within a larger site, and the village as a whole in the case of smaller settlements. All developments on a site of 3 or more homes must include an element of small 2 and 3 bed homes, which must represent a significant proportion of the total, for those households who are able to meet their needs in the market and would like to live in a new home.

Policy H9- Affordable Housing

The Council will seek to negotiate on a site to site basis an element of affordable housing of 40% of the total provision of housing on appropriate allocated and windfall sites, having regard to the up to date Housing Needs Survey, market and site considerations

Policy H10 – Housing Mix

All developments on sites of 0.1 hectares and above or of 3 or more dwellings will be required to include a significant proportion of market housing comprising small properties.

Affordable Housing on “Exception Sites”

- 6.15. As a consequence of the scale of affordable housing needs and the need to retain mixed and balanced communities, the Council will also exceptionally release suitable land in rural areas for local needs housing that would not otherwise normally receive planning permission. Any such provision will be additional to the housing provision in this Plan, although the number of units completed will be taken into account in future reviews of this Plan.
- 6.16. It is important to establish that a need exists and then to ensure 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 persons may, for example, include existing residents who need separate accommodation locally, those who provide an important local service, or people who have longstanding links with the local community, such as people who used to live in a village but were forced to move away because of a lack of affordable housing, and elderly people who need to move back into a village to be near relatives. '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 larger village that would meet the needs of adjoining smaller communities. It is essential that a registered social landlord is involved to achieve control over future occupancy of the homes provided on such sites.
- 6.17. Schemes are likely to be more appropriate in larger communities providing a basic range of services including a primary school, public transport and adequate infrastructure for sewage disposal. Sewage disposal should be considered at an early stage so that any implications for the viability of a scheme can be taken into account. Various schemes are currently being considered and it is expected that a number will be built during the Plan period. It is intended that in most villages such housing developments will be the only new development sites. In Green Belt villages the need will have to represent special circumstances to justify an exception to Policy S6.

Access

- 3.5 The key issues of the Council's Transport Strategy are set out in detail in Chapter 9. The objectives in this Plan are to locate high trip generating activity in areas well served by public transport; to increase the proportion of journeys made by rail and bus, on foot and by cycle; to reduce the number and length of motor vehicle trips by the location of development; and to minimise the adverse effects of traffic on residential and shopping areas by traffic management measures.
- 3.6 The Council will work with highway authorities to ensure that, whenever possible, transport investment and the resultant transport network will support the Plan's development strategy and policies.
- 3.7 The impact of development on the road network will be assessed and Traffic Impact Assessments may be required as part of applications for planning

permissions. Improvements to the transport infrastructure will be sought where appropriate. The environmental impact of traffic arising from a development will similarly be assessed and Environmental Assessments may also be required. The cumulative impact of developments will also be taken into account.

- 3.8 Development proposals for any building that the public may use will be required to provide safe, easy and inclusive access for all people regardless of disability, age or gender. This should include access to, into and within the building and its facilities, as well as appropriate car parking and access to public transport provision.
- 3.9 The needs of walkers, cyclists and horse riders will be taken into account whenever development would affect routes used by riders or where the potential for the creation of new paths along strategic routes would be jeopardised. Suitable replacement paths will be required when routes used by walkers and riders will no longer be suitable for continued use as a result of other changes to the road network or new development.

Policy GEN1 – Access

Development will only be permitted if it meets all of the following criteria:

- a) Access to the main road network must be capable of carrying the traffic generated by the development safely.**
- b) The traffic generated by the development must be capable of being accommodated on the surrounding transport network.**
- c) The design of the site must not compromise road safety and must take account of the needs of cyclists, pedestrians, public transport users, horse riders and people whose mobility is impaired.**
- d) It must be designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities if it is development to which the general public expect to have access.**
- e) The development encourages movement by means other than driving a car.**

Design

- 3.10 Further Supplementary Planning Documents will be prepared on design issues. This will encourage development to be designed so that it meets the needs of those with physical and sensory impairment. The SPD will also encourage Lifetime Homes, promote compliance with the Association of Chief Police Officers “Secured by Design” Award criteria or any successor initiative and ensure appropriate open space provision and play equipment is provided. Development in accordance with the SPD will be expected to minimise waste generation and enable recycling and also to incorporate design measures to minimise water consumption and to encourage sustainable drainage systems, retention and re-use of grey water. Other aspects of sustainable development design including use of renewable energy, reduction of energy use and planting to enhance new development will also be covered. The Essex Design Guide for Residential and Mixed Use Areas has been adopted as supplementary planning guidance.

Policy GEN2 – Design

Development will not be permitted unless its design meets all the following criteria and has regard to adopted Supplementary Design Guidance and Supplementary Planning Documents.

- a) **It is compatible with the scale, form, layout, appearance and materials of surrounding buildings;**
- b) **It safeguards important environmental features in its setting, enabling their retention and helping to reduce the visual impact of new buildings or structures where appropriate;**
- c) **It provides an environment, which meets the reasonable needs of all potential users.**
- d) **It helps to reduce the potential for crime;**
- e) **It helps to minimise water and energy consumption;**
- f) **It has regard to guidance on layout and design adopted as supplementary planning guidance to the development plan.**
- g) **It helps to reduce waste production and encourages recycling and reuse.**
- h) **It minimises the environmental impact on neighbouring properties by appropriate mitigating measures.**
- i) **It would not have a materially adverse effect on the reasonable occupation and enjoyment of a residential or other sensitive property, as a result of loss of privacy, loss of daylight, overbearing impact or overshadowing.**

Flood Protection

- 3.11 With climate change, assessments of areas with a high potential risk of flooding need to take into account new information and be kept up to date. Areas at high potential risk of flooding from rivers are defined as those where the annual probability of flooding is greater than 1.0%. They will be identified in supplementary planning documents
- 3.12 All the urban extensions and settlement expansions proposed in this Plan are on land above flood plains. The arrangements for surface water run off disposal will need to take the implications for flood risk elsewhere fully into account.
- 3.13 Surface water disposal from new developments, is the responsibility of the developer, and must, where practicable, take place on site using appropriate and acceptable methods, including soakaways. New connections to the public sewerage system must not pose an unacceptable threat of surcharge, flooding or pollution. Surface water must not be allowed to drain to the foul sewer as this is the major contributor to sewer flooding.
- 3.14 The Environment Agency is in general opposed to the culverting of watercourses because of the adverse ecological and flood defence effects likely to arise

Policy GEN3 – Flood Protection

Within the functional floodplain, buildings will not be permitted unless there is an exceptional need. Developments that exceptionally need to be

located there will be permitted, subject to the outcome of flood risk assessment. Where existing sites are to be redeveloped, all opportunities to restore the natural flood flow areas should be sought.

Within areas of flood risk, within the development limit, development will normally be permitted where the conclusions of a flood risk assessment demonstrate an adequate standard of flood protection and there is no increased risk of flooding elsewhere.

Within areas of the floodplain beyond the settlement boundary, commercial industrial and new residential development will generally not be permitted. Other developments that exceptionally need to be located there will be permitted subject the outcome of a flood risk assessment.

Outside flood risk areas development must not increase the risk of flooding through surface water run-off. A flood risk assessment will be required to demonstrate this. Sustainable Drainage Systems should also be considered as an appropriate flood mitigation measure in the first instance.

For all areas where development will be exposed to or may lead to an increase in the risk of flooding applications will be accompanied by a full Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) which sets out the level of risk associated with the proposed development. The FRA will show that the proposed development can be provided with the appropriate minimum standard of protection throughout its lifetime and will demonstrate the effectiveness of flood mitigation measures proposed.

Good Neighbourliness

Policy GEN4 - Good neighbourliness

Development and uses, whether they involve the installation of plant or machinery or not, will not be permitted where:

- a) noise or vibrations generated, or**
 - b) smell, dust, light, fumes, electro magnetic radiation, exposure to other pollutants;**
- would cause material disturbance or nuisance to occupiers of surrounding properties**

Light Pollution

- 3.15 There is a potential conflict between keeping lighting to a minimum as part of protecting the character of the countryside, maintaining the visibility of the night sky, and security and safety objectives. Lighting can also extend the opportunity for outdoor sport activities in the winter months when there is limited daylight. This conflict can be resolved to some extent by careful specification and the use of the best available technology where the cost is proportionate to the benefit, but there may be circumstances where, for example, the importance of facilities to sport development is judged to outweigh the effect on the countryside.

Policy GEN5 – Light pollution

Development that includes a lighting scheme will not be permitted unless:

- a) **The level of lighting and its period of use is the minimum necessary to achieve its purpose, and**
- b) **Glare and light spillage from the site is minimised.**

Infrastructure Provision to Support Development

- 3.16 This will be relatively straightforward where a development such as new housing directly creates a need for new facilities to serve its residents. It is important that in these cases the facilities are provided as soon as they are required. However, in the urban areas where new development is concentrated, even small scale development will cumulatively impact on service provision. It is intended that the scale of development shown in this Plan will form the basis for assessments of impacts on infrastructure and the identification of costed proposals that may be necessary. The Council will then seek to reach agreement with a developer over an appropriate contribution that fairly reflects the level of demand its scheme would generate. Contributions may be applied to specific proposed projects or held in reserve for a reasonable period and used to address impacts arising after the development has been occupied. Supplementary Planning Documents setting out the basis for assessments of impacts and contributions will be adopted.

Policy GEN6 –Infrastructure Provision to Support Development

Development will not be permitted unless it makes provision at the appropriate time for community facilities, school capacity, public services, transport provision, drainage and other infrastructure that are made necessary by the proposed development. In localities where the cumulative impact of developments necessitates such provision, developers may be required to contribute to the costs of such provision by the relevant statutory authority.

Nature Conservation

- 3.17 Nature conservation interest is not confined to the National Nature Reserves, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, county wildlife sites and special verges, which are specifically covered in the Environment section of this Plan.

Policy GEN7 – Nature Conservation

Development that would have a harmful effect on wildlife or geological features will not be permitted unless the need for the development outweighs the importance of the feature to nature conservation. Where the site includes protected species or habitats suitable for protected species, a nature conservation survey will be required. Measures to mitigate and/or compensate for the potential impacts of development, secured by planning obligation or condition, will be required. The enhancement of biodiversity through the creation of appropriate new habitats will be sought.

Vehicle Parking Standards

- 3.18 A realistic approach is needed. This will try and discourage unlimited car parking provision on new developments and thereby car usage, to help tackle the growing problem of traffic emissions and road congestion, encourage efficiency in the use of fossil fuels, and making it easier to walk or cycle for local short distance trips, but only in appropriate locations. It must avoid the risk of parking being displaced to elsewhere within a neighbourhood. Uttlesford's communities lack high quality public transport. In common with many other rural communities, using the car is the only practical way of getting to work, accessing services and making leisure trips. Car ownership levels are relatively high and existing car parking provision is well used. It is important that car parking for new development is adequate. Where there is a lack of off street parking in older residential areas this results in a high level of on street parking. In some localities this results in obstruction of roads and footpaths, causing particular problems for those with limited mobility. The level of parking on new developments should neither exacerbate existing parking problems in communities nor create problems where they do not presently exist.

Policy GEN8 – Vehicle Parking Standards

Development will not be permitted unless the number, design and layout of vehicle parking places proposed is appropriate for the location, as set out in Supplementary Planning Guidance “Vehicle Parking Standards”, a summary extract of which is reproduced in Appendix 1 to this Plan.

Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings

- 5.1. There are 35 Conservation Areas in the District and about 3500 listed buildings or groups of buildings identified in the Statutory Lists. These buildings or groups represent about one quarter of the Essex total, itself one of the most richly endowed of all English counties.
- 5.2. The Listed Buildings in the District vary widely both in age and their vernacular materials. Clay tile, slate and long straw thatch are used for roof materials. The stock of buildings with long straw thatch is big enough to be a cluster of regional architectural importance. Although timber framed buildings predominate, some early buildings are constructed of brick and stone. External finishes include many excellent examples of weatherboarding, pargetting and flintwork. Every period from before the Norman Conquest is represented, but over 40% of all Listed Buildings date from the 17th century.
- 5.3. This rich heritage is one of the key elements in the quality of the local environment. It is important that the development pressures on the district are managed in ways that enable the built environment to be protected and enhanced and inappropriate development to be avoided. The Council will prepare Conservation Area Statements and supplementary planning documents on the design of development within conservation areas.

Policy ENV2- Development affecting Listed Buildings

Development affecting a listed building should be in keeping with its scale, character and surroundings. Demolition of a listed building, or development proposals that adversely affect the setting, and alterations that impair the special characteristics of a listed building will not be permitted. In cases where planning permission might not normally be granted for the conversion of listed buildings to alternative uses, favourable consideration may be accorded to schemes which incorporate works that represent the most practical way of preserving the building and its architectural and historic characteristics and its setting

Open Spaces and Trees

- 5.4. There are open spaces of high environmental quality in many of the towns and villages. Such spaces may include village greens, commons or narrow tongues of agricultural land or woodland or large mature gardens. Sometimes, the land may have been left in a state of untidiness but, nevertheless, the existence of the space may be important to the character of the locality. Retention of the space would also enable its full environmental potential to be realised through an enhancement project. Normally it has been possible to protect such areas by ensuring that they lie beyond defined development limits. The need to protect similar areas within settlements is equally important and the most significant of these have been shown on individual inset maps. Other smaller spaces of importance will also be protected where development would be inappropriate, but it is not practicable to identify all of these.
- 5.5. Where the principle of development is acceptable it should avoid taking away features that are prominent elements and enhance the local environment, such as for example, healthy mature trees. However, as a specific example, it may not be possible to accommodate a residential development on a tight space without removing a clump of sycamore saplings or similar. This may be considered acceptable. Sometimes public facilities may be proposed on open space. Again, if a successful design can be achieved, a limited loss of open space may be permitted.

Policy ENV3- Open Spaces and Trees

The loss of traditional open spaces, other visually important spaces, groups of trees and fine individual tree specimens through development proposals will not be permitted unless the need for the development outweighs their amenity value.

The Quality of the Countryside

- 5.6. Uttlesford is a highly productive arable farming area. There is no Grade land but over 80% of the District is classified Grade 2 by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. There is some Grade 3a land. This represents the best and most versatile farmland. Such land should be avoided for development unless sustainability considerations suggest otherwise.

- 5.7. Pastureland is not extensive but it does exist in the river valleys where drainage problems, in part, have resulted in Grade 3b designation. Although not the best and most versatile farmland, pasture land is important to the character and biodiversity of the district
- 5.8. Proposals to change agricultural land to domestic garden which are not likely to materially change the character or appearance of the surrounding countryside are those which for instance use unworkable corners of fields and do not create wedges of domestic garden intruding into an agricultural landscape. They should include appropriate boundary treatment such as hedgerows of indigenous species or fencing appropriate to a rural location such as post and rail fencing which do not have the effect of urbanising the area or of compromising the openness of the countryside. In the new garden conditions removing permitted development rights may be imposed where structures would compromise the open character.
- 5.9. The District's landscape includes important historic elements. There are twelve historic parklands identified on the Proposals Map and Inset Maps whose character remains relatively intact. Four of these parklands are included in the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. Development proposals will need to be sensitive to the way open space, plantation and water features create their particular landscape characteristics. There are ancient landscapes in two areas where there are notable complexes of surviving ancient semi natural woodland with coppice and standards, and medieval boundary banks: Hatfield Forest and the southern part of Debden Parish. In the latter case there is also clear evidence of very early piecemeal enclosure. Modest proposals such as agricultural development or farm diversification schemes complying with Policy E4 may be acceptable in historic landscapes if handled sensitively and where harm is compensated by landscape enhancement and biodiversity proposals.
- 5.10. Woodland and hedgerows are important components in the local landscape. Many field boundary hedgerows have been lost in recent years and woodlands in the landscape have often acquired particular prominence because of this. Hedgerow legislation introduced in 1997 means that the Council must be notified when an owner wishes to remove a hedgerow. If the hedge is of historic or ecological importance the Council can serve a Hedgerow Retention notice. While development should retain features listed in policy ENV8 wherever possible, it might be necessary, for example, to remove a length of hedging to provide adequate access to a barn conversion. This may be permitted provided there is an agreed scheme of compensating new planting. All of the visually important woodlands in the District are shown on the Proposals Map and Inset Maps. Broad byways and narrow enclosed high-banked lanes are also important elements in the character of the countryside. The best of these have been designated Protected Lanes.

- 5.11. Some of the woodlands are very old and of ecological importance. The best habitats are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Hales Wood and Hatfield Forest are National Nature Reserves. Sites of Special Scientific Interest are identified by English Nature as being of special interest by reason of flora, fauna, geological or physiographic features. Most of the sites in Uttlesford are ancient woodlands, but there are good examples of specific grassland/ streamside habitats. Halls Quarry is a site of geological interest. Where the Council has statutory discretion to require an environmental assessment, because a relevant project is likely to have significant effects on the special character of an SSSI, it will normally require one.
- 5.12. Sites of Special Scientific Interest and National Nature Reserves have the maximum degree of protection from development. Examples of exceptions, though, might be a minor development such as a new access or visitor facilities with limited effects, or a nearby development that might also have limited effects on nature conservation value of the protected site. Other nature conservation sites will still be given a high degree of protection, but a use with limited and temporary effects on biodiversity might be acceptably accommodated if there are landscape considerations that weigh against other technically feasible sites. Also there may be operational reasons why development needs should sometimes override biodiversity objectives. Appropriate mitigation measures will be sought to compensate for biodiversity losses.
- 5.13. Roadside verges also represent uncultivated areas in an intensively farmed landscape where rare plants may still be found, and Special Verges are shown on the Proposals Map and Inset Maps as areas to which Policy ENV8 applies. Special Verges may often be associated with lanes following historic alignments. Other sites of local ecological value exist and further sites worthy of protection may be identified in the Plan period, which might include Local Nature Reserves. The Council will work with English Nature, Town and Parish Councils and landowners to secure the declaration of new Local Nature Reserves in and around the District's main settlements.
- 5.14. Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 sets out the protection which is afforded to wild animals and plants. The presence of a protected species such as bats, barn owls, badgers, great crested newts or water voles on a site will be taken into account when considering a proposal for development. Particular care needs to be given to proposals for the redevelopment of derelict sites. Such sites with derelict buildings and areas of hard standing provide suitable habitats for amphibians and reptiles. Development will either be refused or be subject to a requirement that reasonable precautions be taken. This is not an issue restricted to the countryside, as bats, for example, may roost in the roof spaces of buildings in towns and villages.

Policy ENV5 - Protection of Agricultural Land

Development of the best and most versatile agricultural land will only be permitted where opportunities have been assessed for accommodating

development on previously developed sites or within existing development limits. Where development of agricultural land is required, developers should seek to use areas of poorer quality except where other sustainability considerations suggest otherwise.

Policy ENV7 - The Protection of the Natural Environment - Designated Sites

Development proposals that adversely affect areas of nationally important nature conservation concern, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest and National Nature Reserves, will not be permitted unless the need for the development outweighs the particular importance of the nature conservation value of site or reserve.

Development proposals likely to affect local areas of nature conservation significance, such as County Wildlife sites, ancient woodlands, wildlife habitats, sites of ecological interest and Regionally Important Geological/ Geomorphological Sites, will not be permitted unless the need for the development outweighs the local significance of the site to the biodiversity of the District. Where development is permitted the authority will consider the use of conditions or planning obligations to ensure the protection and enhancement of the site's conservation interest.

Noise

- 5.15. Policies ENV10 and ENV11 aim to ensure that wherever practicable, noise sensitive developments are separated from major sources of noise such as road, rail and air transport and certain types of industrial development
- 5.16. Aircraft movements are a particular major source of noise in Uttlesford. Aircraft taking off from Stansted are required to follow "noise preferential routes" (NPRs) to a height of 3,000 feet (4,000 feet at night time), maintaining a minimum climb gradient of 4%, and remain within a 1.5 kilometre swathe either side of the centre line of the NPR. Two sets of NPRs have been designated by the Civil Aviation Authority. There are statutory requirements for landing aircraft. Aircraft using the Instrument Landing System should not descend below 2,000 feet prior to intercepting the glidepath, and then not fly below it. At night, aircraft should not descend below 3,000 feet until on their final approach and less than 10 nautical miles from touchdown.
- 5.17. Calculation of the noise index of exposure to aircraft noise takes into account the level of use of each NPR and glide path, the number of aircraft movements and aircraft type. Indices are calculated for each year, based on the actual number of movements, and for the future scenario of 25mppa using assumptions. Monitoring of air noise patterns will help to ensure that the policy

continues to be applied to the most appropriate area. Noise sensitive developments include residential uses.

- 5.18. National guidance on Planning and Noise indicates the appropriate response to the level of noise by source. This includes road, rail and mixed sources as well as air noise.

**Policy ENV10 - Noise Sensitive Development and Disturbance from Aircraft
Housing and other noise sensitive development will not be permitted if the occupants would experience significant noise disturbance. This will be assessed by using the appropriate noise contour for the type of development and will take into account mitigation by design and sound proofing features**

- 5.19. It is equally important that new development involving noisy activities should if possible be sited away from noise sensitive land uses. Development that generates noise is typically associated with economic activity. A B2 general industrial use, transport infrastructure, or a significant traffic generator are examples. It will be necessary to weigh the benefit of the jobs created, the value of the business supported, the reduction in congestion costs and any other benefits against the degree of annoyance caused by the noise in the case of these developments, taking into account any controls and mitigation measures that could reasonably be imposed by condition.

Air Quality

- 5.20. The Council's air quality management strategy has identified that, based on traffic forecasts, poor air quality is anticipated alongside the M11 and the new A120. Since both run through the open countryside where there is strict control on new buildings it is unlikely there will be many proposed developments close to either road. The widths of the zones are based on Government standards for the traffic levels predicted. The extent of the zones is based on Local Air Quality Management Technical Guidance Note 3 in respect of Nitrogen Dioxide using the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges Screening Model.

Policy ENV13 – Exposure to Poor Air Quality

Development that would involve users being exposed on an extended long-term basis to poor air quality outdoors near ground level will not be permitted. A zone 100 metres on either side of the central reservation of the M11 and a zone 35 metres either side of the centre of the new A120 have been identified on the proposals map as particular areas to which this policy applies.

Contaminated Land

- 5.21. The principle of sustainable development means that, where practicable, brownfield sites, including those affected by contamination, should be recycled

into new uses. Any proposal on contaminated land needs to take proper account of the contamination. Mitigation measures, appropriate to the nature and scale of the proposed development will need to be agreed.

Policy ENV14 – Contaminated Land

Before development, where a site is known or strongly suspected to be contaminated, and this is causing or may cause significant harm, or pollution of controlled waters (including groundwater) a site investigation, risk assessment, proposals and timetable for remediation will be required.

