



UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Felsted & Stebbing Ward

District Councillors Sandi Merifield & John Evans



DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT: MAY 2022

Cllrs Sandi Merifield and John Evans are pleased to present their Monthly Report to the Parish Council.

This month, being the first in the new municipal year, we thought that we would dedicate the majority of our report to climate issues in general and by re-emphasising the steps being taken by Uttlesford District Council to promote the “Green Agenda”, the Council having in July 2019, declared a climate emergency.

By this, we as Councillors together with our colleagues pledged to take local action to contribute to prevent a climate and ecological catastrophe through the development of practices and policies with the aim to achieving net zero-carbon status by 2030 and to protect and enhance bio-diversity in the District. This link will perhaps provide the back-drop to our aims:

<https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/article/6788/Achieving-net-zero-carbon-status-by-2030>

CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

We are sure that many residents will have been following the progress being made meanwhile in this connection, which includes the establishment of an Energy and Climate Change Working Group of Cabinet, leading in turn to a Climate Change Strategy and key priorities being set, which have included:

- making UDC owned buildings more energy efficient
- introducing electric vehicles as part of the fleet (refuse vehicles are yet to be included given the complexity and the cost of the technology required for heavy and multi hydraulic/function vehicle types)
- minimising use of paper by use of digital formats
- tree planting on UDC owned land
- introduction of carbon off-setting of emissions

Furthermore, an interim planning policy addressing climate change has been prepared and is already being applied to good effect in cooperation with many developers of new housing. It is intended to bridge the gap between the absence of any relevant policies on the subject under

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the 2005 Local Plan and those which will emerge in the new Local Plan. This is a worthwhile document and is we feel a “good read” for all concerned including especially members of your Planning sub-committee. It was prepared with substantial support from the Essex Climate Change Commission:

[https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/media/10714/interim-climate-change-policy/pdf/Interim Climate Change Planning Policy 01.03.21 PDFA1.pdf?m=637502093891130000](https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/media/10714/interim-climate-change-policy/pdf/Interim%20Climate%20Change%20Planning%20Policy%2001.03.21%20PDFA1.pdf?m=637502093891130000)

Meanwhile there is also support available for parishes and community groups in Uttlesford that want themselves to address the climate emergency and an event has been organised on 4 May 2022, whose details are available to your Clerk, the outline of which is to describe community energy project work including:

- The support available to parishes and community groups in Uttlesford
- How local communities can develop their own projects
- Help available for setting up a community energy project
- Using the latest tools to identify projects
- Emerging ‘smart local energy system’ technologies
- New finance models that enable installation of systems at no upfront costs to local residents and business

A link to registration for the remote (by TEAMS) seminar is available via:

[Helping Uttlesford parishes take Climate action: energy and housing Tickets, Wed 4 May 2022 at 11:00 | Eventbrite](#)

CARBON FOOTPRINT

It might be helpful to review what might be the carbon footprint of a given community and there is a tool which works for parishes, wards as well of course as for district councils and other larger local authorities. It draws on more than 30 data sets to estimate the total amount of greenhouse gases produced by our ordinary daily activities and might help to identify where the best results might be obtained in tackling these issues in tackling the climate emergency. This tool which was produced by researchers at the Centre for Sustainable Energy and Exeter University is easy to input and we recommend an early review:

www.impact-tool.org.uk

It includes data for carbon produced by a wide variety of activities and while it takes some time to appreciate its content, it will we think be a worthwhile exercise in coming to understand what makes up the carbon contributors at a very local level. An entry for a given parish can be made easily and it was interesting to us to note the differences shown even between one parish and another (in our own cases, comparing Felsted with Stebbing). With a greater awareness of this topic, steps can be taken to educate further and prepare the community as to the significance of this topic for the current generation and that yet to come.

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BIOIVERSITY – NET GAIN

There are two pieces of recent legislation which bear upon this subject which are of importance and considerable interest, namely the Environment Act 2021 and the Agriculture Act 2021. Both will lead to regulations and detailed policy making, but provide for the following obligations, target setting and detailed reforms in the following areas:

Environment Act

- Air quality
- Biodiversity
- Resource efficiency and waste management

This will lead to a significant change, since from late 2023, all planning permissions will have to deliver a **10%** biodiversity net gain.

Agriculture Act

- Environmental Land Management Scheme (“ELMS”)

This three tier programme is intended (among other matters) to replace the EU Common Agricultural Policy and reward sustainable methods of farming, leading to the restoration of some 300,000 ha to natural habitats by 2042, ie by means of taking some land out of production. As there are some 9 million ha under agricultural production presently, this might be thought not to be a huge proportion but in some quarters, it is believed that “greening” agriculture without adequate subsidy protection will increase food prices and/or push production off-shore to nations with lesser production and/or welfare standards, which to many would likely be regarded as unacceptable.

It might be reasonably be thought what are these national legislative changes and policies to do with us as district and parish councillors?

However, national policy (NPPF 2019 paragraphs 170(d), 174(b) and 175(d)) already provides that planning policy should provide biodiversity net gains where possible and reference to it is also to be found in design principles and a biodiversity metric is available to provide developers and other interested parties with a means of assessing changes in biodiversity value and loss brought about by development or changes in land management. This may be of particular interest again to residents interested in this field and also your own planning sub-committee members when reviewing planning applications.

We think that this article written by the Planning Advisory Service will be of general interest as it takes the reader into a description of the changes in this area lying ahead, both in text form and also by way of links to relevant visual presentations:

[Biodiversity net gain – why bother? | first magazine for councillors \(lgafirst.co.uk\)](https://www.lgafirst.co.uk/biodiversity-net-gain-why-bother/)

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ENERGY GREEN STRATEGY

While the proposals do **not** directly affect our ward nor Uttlesford generally, they do affect Braintree District and as they are reasonably proximate to our boundary, it might be of interest to know that National Grid Electricity Transmission (National Grid) intends to carry out pre-application consultations in summer 2022 on proposals to provide additional network capability in East Anglia. National Grid needs to build an additional (new) 400 kV electricity transmission line between existing substations in Norwich in the north to Tilbury in the south and a new substation to connect new offshore wind close to the coast. Currently, (please excuse the pun!) there is 4,100 MW of existing generation in East Anglia but by the end of the decade, with new nuclear, offshore wind and interconnectors becoming on stream, that is set to rise to approaching 25,000 MW – far exceeding the capability of the existing network.

To secure more energy supplies from renewable sources and move towards net zero by 2050, Network Grid needs to build a new 400 kV electricity transmission line between existing substations in Norwich in the North to Tilbury in the south and a new substation to connect new offshore wind close to the coast. The swathe of land potentially affected in our general area is that to the SE of Great Notley and south of Great Leighs. Consultation on the programme will be open until 16 June 2022. More information is to be found here:

<https://www.nationalgrid.com/electricity-transmission/network-and-infrastructure/infrastructure-projects/east-anglia-green>

and

<https://eastangliagreen.participatr.io/index.php?contentid=27>

AIRSPACE AND ROUTING EX STANSTED AIRPORT

We have previously reported on work being undertaken by the Civil Aviation Authority for a permanent change to the airspace design because Stansted Airport wishes to modernise airspace arrangements for aircraft operating to and from the Airport at altitudes of 7,000 feet and below. In 2017, London Stansted introduced performance based navigation to two existing departure routes and as a result, one of which affects Stebbing (routes pass directly over the centre of the village) and Felsted (routes pass over the eastern part of the parish). The Airport now seeks to make further use of new technologies so that they say “the operational efficiency and environmental benefits that modern aircraft offer can now be fully realised”.

There are **51** (!) documents loaded onto the CAA’s portal dealing with the current stage of consultation so there is a considerable amount of material to digest which we have only just commenced and it might be found here:

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<https://airspacechange.caa.co.uk/documents/download/4390>

and

<https://airspacechange.caa.co.uk/documents/download/4298>

The options contained in these documents at pp 173 onwards of the Appraisals Report and pp 289 and pp 311 of the Design Options Report as they affect Stebbing and Felsted might be examined more closely. The preferred options seem to continue to overfly a considerable number of residents in our wards but we shall seek to obtain more detailed mapping so as to express a final view on the matter. We shall study these documents further but any observations which you might have meanwhile would be appreciated as we propose to make further representations on the next consultation stage ourselves.

John participated during 2021 in both virtual and physical meetings with MAG/Stansted airport concerning this subject and one of the submissions made by him was to the effect that routeing should take into account not only the number of dwellings/residents affected by any revised route(s) but also the number of heritage assets which almost universally are not insulated against sound incursion, since double glazing in such properties is not permitted to be installed.

Finally, on the subject of “aircraft overhead”, we are also looking to further our concept work at Uttlesford, jointly with Cllr Foley in his capacity as Chair of the relevant forum and as County Councillor, on seeking a ban on night flights ex Stansted.

PLANNING AND THE LOCAL PLAN

Work by the officers and of course the Local Plan Leadership Group (“LPLG”) continues still and “spatial options” (ie the location of the most suitable and sustainable places for future development district wide) between now and 2040 is being worked up prior to the public consultation under Regulation 18 being opened later in the Summer. We shall provide you with an update as to this as we are able.

As we reported last month, the proposed reforms to the planning system (upon which the Government originally consulted in August-November 2020 and to which UDC contributed detailed responses) will be included in the Queen’s Speech on **10 May** and it will be interesting to see whether or not the Government’s demand for extra housing of 300,000 pa across the country (which leads to the housing requirement for Uttlesford of **701 dwellings pa** in its draft Local Plan) will be watered down or remain extant.

If such large housing requirement, based on the Government’s algorithmic approach persists, quite apart from a large community (or communities) being necessary in order to meet these housing supply numbers and the provision of needed infrastructure, especially schools and roads, it will be necessary for additional

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housing to be allocated to smaller communities in order to “meet the numbers”, rather like the type A and type B village approach which you will recall was described in the withdrawn 2019 Local Plan. Such provision will be likely to come in the more “sustainable” communities ie those with existing facilities and communications. Development in open countryside, without other sustainable features, will we anticipate continue to be outside permissible policy.

Again, we will report in detail on all these matters in our next monthly report by which time there will have been further detailed matters and other progress to report.

OUR ASSISTANCE AND MEMBERS’ INITIATIVE

We have not been approached since our last report for any assistance which might be possible using funds jointly available from our UDC Councillors’ Initiative Allocation. As you know, we are always ready to consider requests for financial support for appropriate projects.

We shall be pleased to resume our pre-COVID use of the URC Hall on the occasion of this month’s meeting and look forward to joining you for the informal gathering beforehand. Of course, we would be very happy to hear from any parish councillors or residents on that occasion and to meet them separately should there be anything they think we can help with or answer any questions.

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