

Felsted Neighbourhood Plan Review Strategy

The Felsted Neighbourhood Plan was 'made' by the full UDC District Council in February 2020.

The initial driver for the parish council to review the neighbourhood plan came from national planning policy (the National Planning Policy Framework / NPPF), which stated that neighbourhood plans in those local planning authority areas that cannot demonstrate an up to date 5 year supply¹ of deliverable housing sites, are considered to be out of date after 3 years. This mechanism is referred to as the 'tilted balance' which weighs in favour of housing development proposals where there is no 5 year supply of housing land.

In Felsted, from February 2023 onwards, the 'tilted balance' was being increasingly relied upon by applicants for planning permission, and the parish council's ability to object to these proposals, even where those proposals conflicted with the neighbourhood plan policies, was becoming limited. This was being confirmed through decision making at both the Uttlesford District Council level and at through planning appeals that are considered by the Planning Inspectorate.

On this basis, the parish council took the decision to review the neighbourhood plan and informed Uttlesford District Council of this intention in October 2023.

In December 2023, the NPPF was amended, and the time period for neighbourhood plan areas (where those made neighbourhood plans identify land for housing) to avoid the 'tilted balance' was extended from 3 years to 5 years, meaning that our parish enjoys the additional protection the plan provides until at least February 2025.

Although the newly formed Review Group had barely commenced and could have adjourned work, UDC, as part of the District's emerging new Local Plan announced a further allocation to Felsted of 84 new homes (initially 95) required by 2041.

Additionally, two major objectives of the made plan (Bury Farm and Sunnybrook Farm) are in development and will be completed within 12 months. It was therefore considered that the Review should continue, in order to keep pace with the progress on the new Local Plan and to consider new opportunities for delivery.

The framework for Review Group's work is as follows:

- The vision and objectives of the 2020 made plan remain relevant, proportionate, and therefore are unchanged.

¹ The '5 Year Housing Supply' is a calculation of whether there is a deliverable supply of homes to meet the identified housing requirement over the next 5 years. The 5 Year Housing Supply is calculated on a rolling basis by the Government, and local planning authorities that do not have an up-to-date local plan which identifies their 5 year supply of housing sites (including housing planning permissions to match), are considered not to meet the requirement for a 5 year supply, and are therefore subject to the tilted balance. In reality, it means that those places are vulnerable to speculative development proposals, with decision-making place significant weight on the delivery of new housing, above other local considerations (including neighbourhood plan policies).

- The review will identify a site or sites to meet the allocation of up to 84 new homes within the Uttlesford Local Plan, but will also take account of windfall developments which could reduce that number.
- Every attempt will be made to develop policies which allow for phased development over the full 17 years of the allocation period and will be guided by the results of Housing Needs Surveys conducted at 5-year intervals, the first have been conducted in 2024.
- The homes permitted will closely reflect the identified housing need.
- Changes to other policies within the made plan will only be made where circumstances have changed, e.g. where planned developments have been or are about to be completed, where experience of planning decisions indicate that the plan could be more effective or circumstances indicate that change is otherwise required.
- Opportunities to achieve other neighbourhood plan objectives will be considered and explored, provided that the overall strategy and key policies of the neighbourhood plan as established in 2020 remain integral to the overall approach.