

Essex Rural Strategy

Essex Rural Strategy Consultation Findings

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Key conclusions

- People value the landscape and the communities embedded within Rural Essex.
- People in Rural areas either Always or most of the time feel safe.
- General perception is that it costs more money to live in Rural Essex compared to living in towns within Essex.
- Elderly People and people with disabilities living in Rural Essex are the most vulnerable cohort of people in relation to isolation and loneliness.
- People within Rural Essex believe that there is a litter problem within their community.
- That people living in Rural Essex have the same opportunity for recycling as any person living within urban areas of the county.
- High proportion of Rural Essex residents have their own available transport and have no problem accessing services.
- A high number of Rural Essex residents who access voluntary organisation services can do so locally
- A proportion of the Rural Essex residents access leisure facilities outside their community more than once a week.
- The most popular activities that are accessed away from the rural Essex Communities where residents need to travel to a town to access are Theatre/cinema, Swimming Pool/gym and Restaurants

Key conclusions (continued)

- In regards to Accessing goods and services, a high percentage of Rural Essex residents travel outside of their village at least once a week to purchase groceries, Fresh fruit and vegetables, Newspapers, Go to the post office, eat a hot meal and access a cash machine.
- Over half of the Rural Essex respondents believe that they are spending too much money on their energy bills.
- Rural residents believe that local young people struggle to get on the property ladder within their community
- Emerging issues currently within Rural Essex are accessibility of transport, fear of over-development within communities without the transport infrastructure to cope with the demand and lack of public service presence (Police, GP's and Hospitals) within villages.
- The improvements residents within Rural Essex would like to see in relation to topics are:
 - Health and Wellbeing – Better availability of appointments with GP services
 - Access to Services – Improved broadband connectivity
 - Safety – Improved traffic, road safety and speed control
 - Housing supply and affordability – More affordable housing for young people and families

Who gave their views?

The Consultation was created as an online questionnaire where a total of 1,684 people gave their views in the survey, with most (89%) saying that they were responding as people who live or work in rural Essex of which 1143 people declared they were a resident living in Rural Essex .

There were also:

- 178 who said they did not live or work in Rural Essex.
- 328 respondents own or work for a business based in Rural Essex.
- 401 members of parish council within Rural Essex responded.
- 249 employed by or members of public sector organisations
- 115 representatives of charity or voluntary organisations
- 140 business owners.

The locality respondent's breakdown below show the respondent's residence

The home district of respondents is shown in the table below. The sample means that it is possible to provide district level analysis for Braintree, Chelmsford, Colchester, Maldon, Tendring and Uttlesford but it is not robust enough for complete analysis of the findings for the other districts.

Who gave their views? (cont..)

NB: The differences by district may not be statistically significant due to the relatively small sample sizes, and the responses may also be affected by the age profile of respondents in each district.

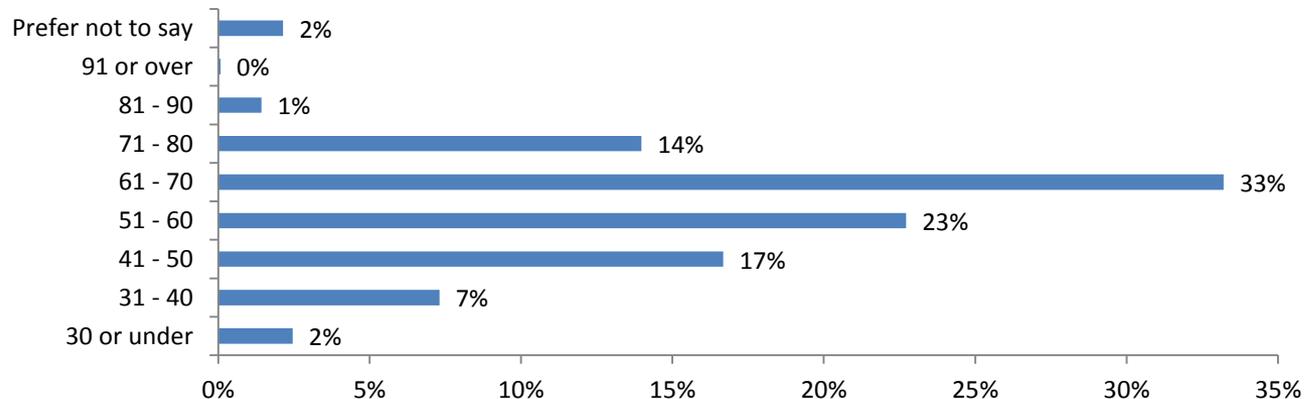
	Number of respondents	%
Basildon	29	2%
Braintree	225	13%
Brentwood	58	3%
Castle Point	4	0%
Chelmsford	138	8%
Colchester	199	12%
Epping Forest	64	4%
Harlow	7	0%
Maldon	128	8%
Rochford	23	1%
Tendring	94	6%
Uttlesford	206	12%
Other	88	5%
Unspecified	321	19%
Total	1,684	

NB: Unspecified district respondents may reside in named district areas but they may have stated the town or village they live in rather than the corresponding district.

Who gave their views? (cont..)

- 54% of respondents were female with 44% being male with the rest preferring not to say.
- 8% of respondents considered themselves to have a physical impairment, 7% believed they had a sensory impairment, 4% considered themselves to have mental health needs and 1% stated that they have a learning disability or difficulties.
- 90% of respondents stated that they were White British.
- 75% respondents were married, 10% were Single and 5% being widowed.
- 85% said “I am a resident living in Rural Essex”, 15% Said they “Worked in Rural Essex”, 10% said they were “A business owner in Rural Essex”, 7% said they were answering on behalf of the parish council and 5% said they were a visitor to Rural Essex.

Age - Percentage of Respondents



Accessing Goods and Services

- **Most common available goods/service of buying a newspaper (55%), Least available was Access to a cashpoint (41%)**
- **A rural resident or worker on average has to travel outside the community to access these services or purchase these goods More than once a week (68%)**
- **A shop is the most desired service or facility that isn't there at the moment (20%) for residents or workers in rural Essex**
- **The Top 3 Improvements Rural Essex residents would like to see to improve access to services would be Improved broadband connectivity (63%), Better availability of public transport (61%) and More shared and multi-purpose provision of services (40%)**

Accessing Leisure Facilities

- **The top 2 leisure facilities that require Rural residents or workers to travel to access was Theatre/Cinema (75%) and Swimming pool/gym (68%)**
- **40% of all respondents travel to access these facilities more than once a week**
- **Only 27% of respondents prioritised “More fitness and healthy living activities” in relation to top 3 improvements to Health and wellbeing in Rural Essex**

Participating in Voluntary activities and local events

- **54% of respondents participated in voluntary activities and local events.**
- **75% attended locally, 15% travelled to next community**
- **Most demanded activity or service unavailable within communities was Physical activity groups.**

Transport

- 83% of people have own transport and have no problems accessing services. 6% have own transport and have trouble accessing services, 4% rely on public transport but services are limited
- 61% wanted improvement in “Better availability of public transport” and 30% wanted “Enhanced provision of community transport”
- 30% of respondents wanted improvements in “Better access to hospital transport services”

Places of Worships

- 16% of people attended regularly a place of worship
- 61% stated their local place of worship was used for other activities and 60% said their local place of worship was open to tourists and visitors outside of service time

Environment

- 86% of people either Strongly agreed or agreed that “Overdevelopment is a threat”
- Only 17% of respondents either Strongly agreed or agreed that “There is a reduction in pollution”
- Most common themed comment was lack of understanding of local area in relation to planning applications.

Waste and Recycling

- 78% of people believe that Rural Essex has a litter problem.
- 96% of people always recycle when they can

Safety

- 30% of people said the “Always” felt safe, 68% said “Most of the time”
- Reflecting on the last 12 months, 62% of people felt unsafe at some point in relation to “Traffic conditions including speed or lack of adequate pavements
- 65% of people wanted to see improvements to “Improved traffic, road safety and speed controls”, 58% want “More visible and accessible police” and 49% stated “More rural special Constables and PCSOs”

What you value most

- 50% of people said they value “The landscape” the most about Rural Essex
- Only 3% said “The Historical Buildings”

Energy

- 51% of people felt that they pay too much for there energy bills
- Themed comments have included Wind turbines disturbing the views of the rural Essex

Demographic Change

- 69% of respondents agreed that “Rural areas have an increasingly ageing population”
- 55% of people believe “Increasing numbers of retired people give a boost to village life and community spirit”
- 57% agreed that “Too many young people are leaving rural areas” . Reasons behind this Young people cannot afford to live in rural Essex (74%) and 58% felt “There aren’t enough jobs for young people in rural Essex”

Cost of Living

- 46% of people believe it cost marginally higher to live in rural Essex than in towns, 30% believe it cost significantly higher to live in rural Essex.

Housing supply and affordability

- 78% believe “Local young people struggle to get on the property ladder”
- 36% feel that “More one and two bedroom houses needed in rural areas”
- Asked about improvements, 65% of respondents want “More affordable housing for young people and families, 50% want “More housing to enable older people to downsize”
- 22% want “More Sheltered Housing” in Rural Essex

Isolation And Loneliness

- 80% of people stated “Elderly people” are the most vulnerable cohort in rural Essex.
- 66% said “People with Disabilities” were vulnerable in Rural Essex

Emerging Issues

- 705 free text comments relating to this topic
- Most common themed responses were Increased traffic within rural areas, Urbanisation of Rural Essex, Decreases in services in Rural Essex and Poor internet and Mobile phone connectivity

Emerging Issues

Here is a selection of comments relating to emerging issues within Rural Areas

- *“The 'rural' feel of villages is quickly becoming less 'rural' due to the significant increase in house building.”*
- *“We are miles from majority of Essex areas and seem to miss out on investment”*
- *“The issues affecting rural Essex is the constant pressure to make it anything other than rural”*
- *“Keep villages, villages. Stop the sprawl of towns engulfing smaller villages. Many rural roads are in a terrible state, flooding can become an issue with vast developments and little consideration of their effect on the environment”*
- *“Employment which will enable people of all ages to afford to live and work in rural areas”*
- *“Voluntary organisations are in decline putting pressure on statutory services and leading to community breakdown”*
- *“Increased traffic/congestion is already having an effect on my village, particularly in recent months when work has been carried out on the roads.”*
- *“Rural areas appear to be being developed with out the infrastructure in place to cope with extra population.”*
- *“The lack of good broadband”*
- *“Ageing population increase disproportionate to the demographic mix with less young families. The disappearance of the Countryside as more development encroaches from towns”*
- *“Uncontrolled migration will obviously cause some displacement thus increasing the pressures on local services and infrastructure”*

Comments in relation to Rural Strategy

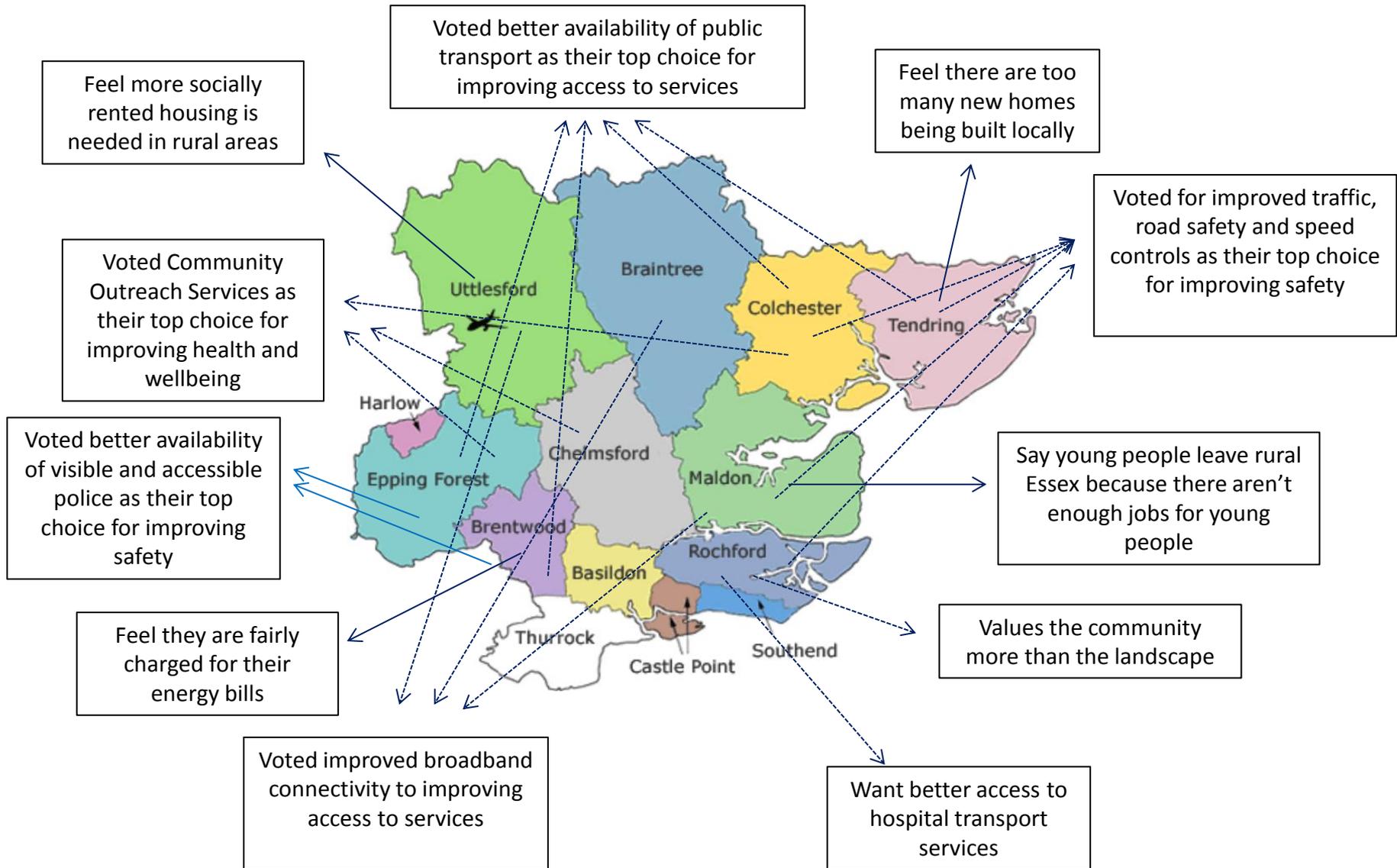
Here is a selection of comments relating to Essex Rural Strategy 2016 - 2020

- *“Safety and Community based services are imperative”*
- *“More notice of the wishes of the community should be taken into consideration when plans for building more houses in their villages are discussed by authorities.”*
- *“I think the overriding strategy should be to maintain rural areas as rural areas. There is constant pressure, not least from central government, to build new housing on green, arable land that produces our food. This should be discouraged at all costs. Once land is under buildings, it is never returned to nature. Also the transport, utilities and other services are often playing catch-up with the ever-increasing population. There seems to be a lack of cohesive thinking and planning to increase housing stock without destroying the countryside and a means of producing food.”*
- *“Rural Essex must have a future strategy that will invigorate the rural economy bring well paid jobs, good housing and a vibrant local rural communities.”*
- *“I think there are several opportunities where services provided by the Local Authority could be devolved to Parishes providing a more efficient service, eg. public rights of way maintenance, grass maintenance, litter picking and vegetation clearance etc. Parish Handyman/Ranger type service.”*

Comments in relation to ‘How respondents can help address the issues highlighted within the consultation’

Here is a selection of comments relating to addressing issues highlighted

- *“Parish Councils and businesses could work together to provide information, but it actions need to be funded. Parish Councils can organise but not fund. Businesses could assist with some funding, but Central Government needs to provide strong financial support especially for retrofitting, renewable energy and integrated public transport”*
- *“The District council and County council MUST become aware of the needs of the village. I feel too many homes are planned and political weight being brought to bear on the planning department”*
- *“We have raised questions with national government regarding the control and price of propane gas (used widely in rural areas) and we will continue to follow this course.”*
- *“As a Parish Councillor I know that the Parish Council are ready to work with anyone who can improve mobile phone and broadband coverage recognising that masts are not popular.”*
- *“Research best practice in other communities to reduce cost of provision of services e.g. waste management. Encourage development of local businesses employing local young people.”*
- *“encourage volunteering amongst the population in the rural villages so the community can help itself and provide for the less able and also all those who live in the village and would enjoy taking part in activities in the village.”*
- *“Twinning association already brings people together for the goodness of the village - we achieve greater things together than we could as individuals.”*
- *“By continuing to try to protect our Green Belt, monitor planning policies and applications, support our Parish Council and promote local services and other community groups.”*



A selection of Headline findings at District level - Basildon

- Highest percentage of respondents in whole consultation that don't belong to a voluntary activity or attend local events (55%)
- 45% of Basildon respondents 'Never' attend a Place of worship
- 82% of people in Basildon district felt unsafe over the last 12 months due to the 'Lack of Police Presence'
- 50% of respondents believed "There is no difference in the cost of living between rural Essex and urban Essex"
- 45% of people from Basildon district wanted "Better availability of appointments with GP services"

A selection of Headline findings at District Level - Braintree

- 76% of Braintree respondents believe there is a litter problem in their rural area
- 70% of people felt unsafe due to traffic conditions
- 56% of people wanted "More Community outreach services"
- 94% of Braintree respondents "Always" Recycle
- In relation to accessing goods, More Braintree respondents had access to hot meals rather than a newspapers in their rural area (55% compared to 50%)

A selection of Headline findings at District level - Brentwood

- **83% of Brentwood respondents felt they could access Groceries, Newspapers and a Hot meal in their local rural community**
- **Only 2% of Respondents said they would have to travel to a town to access a Pub**
- **15% of people said they had their own transport but have trouble accessing services**
- **25% of people wanted “Open access fitness equipment” available in Rural Brentwood**
- **50% of people felt that they were being fairly charged for their energy bills**

A selection of Headline findings at District Level - Chelmsford

- **36% of Chelmsford respondents travel more than once a week to access leisure facilities**
- **31% of respondents “Occasionally” attend a place of worship (The highest district value)**
- **23% of respondents did not want no facilities that was not in their community already**
- **38% of respondents valued “The community” the most about Rural Chelmsford (Highest in district findings)**
- **23% of peoples perception was that “Young people find rural areas boring”**

A selection of Headline findings at District level - Colchester

- **92% of Colchester people have to travel to a town to access a Theatre/Cinema**
- **51% of Colchester are not a member of a voluntary organisation**
- **6% of respondents rely on public transport where services are limited**
- **29% of Rural Colchester respondents would like to have a “Post Office” in their community**
- **64% of respondents wanted “Improved broadband connectivity” in Rural Essex**

A selection of Headline findings at District Level – Epping Forest

- **39% of Epping Forest respondents travel only once a week to access good and services**
- **100% of respondents Recycle when they can (The highest district value)**
- **49% of respondents said they felt unsafe at some point in the last year by “People Loitering or anti-social behaviour” (Highest in district findings)**
- **90% of respondents said “Local young people struggle to get on the property ladder”**
- **57% of people wanted “More community outreach services” in rural Epping Forest**

A selection of Headline findings at District level - Maldon

- 53% of Maldon people had to travel to another community to access a Restaurant
- 19% of Respondents accessed leisure facilities “Less than once a month”
- 66% of respondents believe that “There aren’t enough jobs for young people in rural areas”
- 26% of respondents would like to have a ‘Shop’ in there local community
- 19% of respondents believed there was not a litter problem in Rural Maldon

A selection of Headline findings at District Level – Tendring

- 25% of Tendring respondents accessed Leisure facilities “Less than once a month” (Highest district value)
- 76% of respondents have there own transport and have no problem accessing services in rural Tendring (Lowest district value)
- 80% of respondents said they felt safe at “Most of the time” (Highest in district findings)
- 71% of respondents said “There aren’t enough jobs for young people in rural areas”
- 63% of people wanted “Better availability of public transport” in rural Tendring

A selection of Headline findings at District level - Uttlesford

- Uttlesford respondents could access hot meals (48%) and Groceries (46%) more than any other goods or services in that area
- 70% of Respondents were voluntary members of an organisation in their community (Highest district value)
- 38% of respondents felt unsafe at some point in the last 12 months due to “On-line fraud” (Highest district value)
- 79% of Rural Uttlesford believe “Young people cannot afford to live in rural Essex”
- 21% of respondents believed there was not a litter problem in Rural Uttlesford (Highest district value)
- 77% of people within the Uttlesford district wanted “Improved broadband connectivity”

In review of the consultation, Here are some suggestions to how the consultation could provide more specific robust data to embedding within the strategy in the future

- **Ask respondents to provide postcode details.**
- **Raise awareness around certain demographics (Young people, Learning disabilities)**
- **Liaise closer with more district and borough councils around on-going work relating to Rural Essex**
- **Work closer with more standing groups (At both countywide and District level)**

Quality Assurance

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