



UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Felsted & Stebbing Ward

District Councillors John Evans & Richard Silcock



DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT: JULY 2025

Please find below our monthly Report to the Parish Council.

THE LOCAL PLAN – THE EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC (“EiP”)

We commenced our last Report with an account of what was expected to take place regarding the EiP and will do so again, although adding that we will be unlikely to comment further on it until after the Summer when further developments will be known. Meanwhile, we make no apology for giving the Local Plan prominence since it sets the policy backdrop for development across the District in residential and commercial terms for the period until 2041. It will determine not only the “look” of the District in spatial terms but also the impact upon all its communities of the forecast developments in terms of infrastructure and other facilities.

As to this, those of us of a certain age will recall that the legislative backdrop to such matters is derived from the Town & Country Planning Act 1947, which was enacted in the immediate post World War Two period. The effect of the Act was actually not to nationalise land *per se*, but it did nationalise the right to control and limit what a land owner might seek to do with their own land in terms of its future use and development. Prior to the 1947 legislation, permission for development had been determined not nationally but was exercised in accordance with the Bye Laws (as well as the legislation dealing with sanitation, housing conditions, ribbon development etc) laid down by the relevant Borough and Rural District Councils (in our case Dunmow Rural).

The EiP went well in the sense that the Inspectors did not give off signs of being unhappy with the Plan’s structure and overall philosophy. John, as the Cabinet Member responsible for Planning, attended the EiP throughout and followed the submissions made to the Inspectors by the UDC planning policy team members and retained consultants and also the representations against its made by national bodies such as The Housebuilders Federation and consultants representing the principal land owners/promoters of schemes. John gave an opening welcome address to the Planning Inspectors which will be found here:

https://www.localplanservices.co.uk/files/ugd/017f5b_001f3ba3b85846c981e021c14875a3b8.pdf

Otherwise, no Member of UDC was required to address the Inspectors. As will be recalled from our last report, the EiP is an inquisitorial (not adversarial as in a Court of Law) process and the attendees are invited to respond to questions posed by the Inspectors rather than to advance their own positive case. As to the latter, they will have already done so in writing which the Inspectors will already have read.

The EiP was concluded in good time on 19 June but some further written representations were invited on for example the sufficiency of Uttlesford's "five year housing land supply" calculations as at the prospective date of adoption of the Local Plan. Under the provisions of the NPPF, this is of course remains at all times an important requirement.

All materials submitted to the Inspectors remains online and may be referred to at [Uttlesford Local Plan Examination](#).

We will continue to keep you updated when there is more to report.

GETTING OUT AND ABOUT

We were pleased to be among a group of our member colleagues last week when a visit was organised by the UDC Chief Executive and Planning Director to view the UDC housing built in 2022 at The Moors, Little Dunmow and also have a guided tour of the development under build out at Woodlands Way, Great Dunmow.

There we met the development director of Wickford Developments and the senior personnel of the retained building contractors. Both sites impressed us as to the build quality/standards although as to the Woodlands development, we noted the delivery rate which is in high single figures only. The scheme was first permissioned as long ago as in 1988 and build out is taking place, we were told, at a rate to meet demand for the size/typology of housing required by the market.

There is a current consultation commissioned by the Government as to build out rates which UDC will be responding to, and we will be suggesting that there indeed should be more clear and positive means of encouraging builders/developers actually to deliver housing so that Districts like ours is not "punished" by Government (ie on the tilted balance test laid down by NPPF) for not having five years' worth of housing actually delivered.

Technical consultation on implementing measures to improve Build Out transparency - GOV.UK

Both opportunities were useful means to broaden members' awareness of development benefits as well as practical difficulties encountered. They do form part of the ongoing "education" provided for members in the Council's business and policy.

John (in his capacity as UDC's member representative to Stansted Airport Consultative Committee) also attended at the Airport on two occasions, one to visit the recycling facility beneath the Terminal, landside, where nearly all the airport's post processed waste was described as being recycled. A further airside visit was undertaken to view the early stages of the reconstruction and extension of the Terminal Building which is proposed (costing some £ 1 bn).

CARBON TARGETS AND THE REFUSE FLEET

Residents might have read in the local press of plans to operate the UDC refuse vehicle fleet on Hydrogenated or Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil ("HVO") in place of diesel. Some residents will applaud and welcome the plan while others might question the cost associated with the scheme and wish to be satisfied that the use of HVO was sustainable. Given the very high temperatures currently experienced, it would be few of us who might wish to challenge the proposition that we are really experiencing climate

change and that increases in global temperatures are upon us, let alone prospectively become even greater.

UDC declared a climate emergency in 2019 immediately after the present Administration was first elected and policies flowing from this have been incorporated in the Council's economic and business Plans since that time. The conversion of the fleet to operate on HVO was discussed at Cabinet on 19 June (which Richard also attended in the absence of his Party's Leader) and it was resolved to operate the fleet on HVO. This proposal had earlier been subject to review also by the Scrutiny Committee and so has had two thorough airings with the positives and minuses thoroughly examined and rehearsed.

The papers brought before Cabinet may be found here:

<https://uttlesford.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s39815/Cabinet%20Paper%20-%20HVO%20Waste%20Fleet.pdf>

The papers contain not only very useful facts and figures but also advert to the requirement for certification of the HVO product as being genuinely sustainable (and not for example the product of palm oil or crops from land which otherwise would be used for food production). The necessity for certification and audit trails in the fuel supply chain are matters familiar to both the Cabinet Member responsible for proposing and monitoring the scheme, Cllr Neil Reeve (he was formerly an engineer employed by Shell Oil) and also John, given his background advising as to legal matters in the deep sea shipping sector. So, there will be close attention paid to this aspect of compliance in procurement and supply.

There will be an enhanced cost associated with the supply of HVO in place of ordinary diesel but this is considered justified in today's world and is in compliance with the Council's policies towards climate change and its mitigation.

Incidentally, on a further topical note, readers might have read that the Royal Train (now to be withdrawn from service) has been operating for quite some time on HVO as have the refuse fleets of a number of other local authorities so there is an established precedent for conversion to this alternative form of fuel.

CLIMATE CHANGE MATTERS

It is very pleasing to report to you and residents that Uttlesford has been recognised in a climate change appraisal where it has been recognised as a 'most improved' council in the latest [Climate Emergency UK Action Scorecards](#). The scorecards rank all UK local authorities on how they are tackling climate change and is an independent assessment across seven key areas (buildings, planning, transport, governance, biodiversity, waste and community engagement).

Uttlesford showed strong improvements in several areas, including a huge 45% improvement in biodiversity – this was the joint second highest of any council in the UK and worthy of a shout-out by the organisers. Overall, Uttlesford scored 47% in the scorecards, which is a 19% improvement on our 2023 result and the best score of any council in Essex.

PLANNING CHANGES AHEAD (AGAIN!!)

Readers might be forgiven for uttering a groan on reading the heading, but yes, major further changes are again ahead in the field of planning development (ie the management of planning applications, as distinct from macro matters such as planning policy). The backdrop is of course the Government's imperative to

have planning permissions for housing granted as quickly as possible so as to secure their manifesto commitment to build 1.5m dwellings in the course of this Parliament.

The prospective changes will have significant impacts upon the way in which Parish Councils and indeed third party representors will be required to manage their representations. These are changes which are expected to come in later in 2025 – they are capable of being introduced unilaterally without further consultation and their purpose is to simplify and speed up the Planning Appeal process. They are set out in the following hyperlink where MHCLG and the Planning Inspectorate have [announced](#) that they would be imposing additional discipline on the parties to planning appeals which proceed by way of written representations. They include (underlining is of particular relevance):

- expanding the use of the simplified written representations procedure so that it will also apply to appeals in relation to the refusal of planning permission or reserved matters, the imposition of conditions on approvals and the refusal of prior notification or prior approval.
- retaining the six months' appeal time limit for these appeals and allow PINS to transfer an appeal to the traditional written representations process where the simplified process *"is not best suited for handling the appeal"*.
- not permitting any further documents to be submitted by an appellant with their appeal beyond a copy of their application, the local planning authority's decision notice and *"a brief statement responding to the LPA's decision and why they disagree."*
- not permitting an appeal statement or any other comments to be submitted by the local planning authority other than a copy of the information that they considered when deciding the application.
- **not permitting any comments by third parties** (although representations made during the application process will be made available to PINS by the local planning authority).

This makes it all the more important that Parish Councils and other third parties will need to be careful to make their views known at application stage, **without the ability to supplement them subsequently**.

ARMED FORCES WEEK

John was able to attend the recent flag raising conducted by the UDC Chairman, Cllr Criscione (Flitch Green and Little Dunmow) at UDC's offices in Saffron Walden in order to mark Armed Forces Week and was pleased to meet representatives of the British Legion branches at Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow.

It was impressive to be told that the BL Saffron Walden branch had raised in excess of £ 50,000 during



“Poppy Week 2024”.

Fittingly, a party of officers and members of the Engineers’ Garrison from Carver Barracks was also in attendance, together with Mrs Lorna Rolfe, one of His Majesty’s Deputy Lieutenants for the County of Essex, supported also by Cllr Lt Col Dan McBirnie (a sitting member in Saffron Walden) who is the member designated as UDC’s Armed Forces Champion.

OUR DISTRICT AND GROWTH

For many residents, it has been difficult to comprehend the extent of the population growth experienced in our District over the past decade. We all have seen development occurring in every direction that we turn. What does all this mean. The Office of National Statistics (“ONS”) digests and analyses not only the decennial Census output but also forecasts among other matters, population growth and its latest statistical material has just been released and may be found here and the level of detail provided will be likely to satisfy the statistically curious among us! The search tool is easily used and it is possible to drill down the raw statistics, district by district:

[Subnational population projections for England - Office for National Statistics](#)

The headline data and figures which may be of interest to us on a local level however is as to the current and expected level of population in Uttlesford. While we are a large district in area terms, and thus sparsely populated relatively, we have already seen unprecedented growth in the past decade (approaching **15%**) and yet there is more to come according to ONS’ predictions and the following headline figures will come as perhaps no surprise but will be unwelcome to those hankering after an unspoiled rural area with little residual change in its composition.

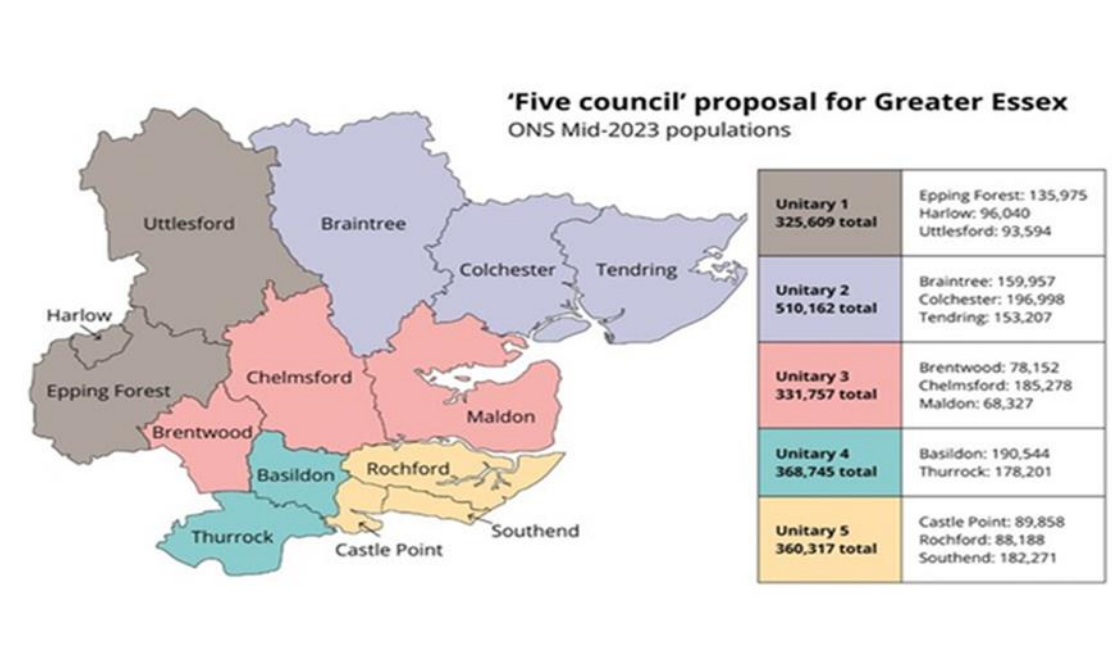
Uttlesford’s population growth until 2032 is now predicted to be a further **13.2%** ie an increase from the 92,965 recorded in 2022 to a projected figure of 104,867. The median age profile also is increasing. Inward migration is predicted to amount to 71,500, while those “moving out” (in every sense) number 59,963 – why the “outs” are precise and the “ins” are rounded can only be guessed at! These growth rates put Uttlesford in the “top league” nationally and readers might like to note comparison with our neighbours and near locations whose predicted growth statistics are as follows:

East Herts 7.5%	Braintree 6.1%	Harlow 5.1%	
Epping 3.6%	Redbridge 4.6%	Waltham Forest 5.7%	Enfield 0.10%

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION (“LGR”)

We are not able as yet to provide more detailed information concerning LGR, which is of course intended, with effect from April 2028, to reshape local government right across the County of Essex, but there is a consultation exercise to which we draw your and residents’ attention. A survey is currently underway as to attitudes/preferences to its potential ramifications, with responses due by **Sunday 20 July 2025**.

UDC prefers the creation of five replacement unitary authorities, while some prefer as few as two or three, and is, with 8 other Districts, working to justify a business case to that effect for presentation to Government by 26 September 2025. We refer residents to the [consultation website](#) (which for convenience is being hosted by Southend-on-Sea City Council) and encourage all residents to take part and have their say.



The map above shows the configuration of the “five council” proposal (showing 2023 ONS population figures, rather than the predicted increases mentioned in the earlier item) which is favoured by Uttlesford and 8 others.

There remain major issues to be overcome in the context of LGR in some other Districts, not the least being the huge (as much as possibly £ 1 bn gross) debt incurred by Thurrock Council and about which much has been written in the Press – the question arises as to who will take that debt obligation over or will it be written off by Government as part of the price to be paid for demanding LGR be put into effect? That certainly remains to be seen. As might be anticipated no other existing District Council wishes the residents in its successor Unitary authority to be landed with any part of such debt obligations.

WARD MEMBER’S INITIATIVE

We are very happy to consider requests for financial support, utilising our Members' Initiative Grant as appropriate and which can be made available to community groups for suitable purposes. We draw to your attention however, as previously reported by us to you, that this will be the last year (2025/2026) that the grant will be available.

DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' AND CONSTITUENTS' SURGERY

We will be holding our usual monthly surgery in the URC Hall at 1730 immediately prior to your PC Meeting. We are always, of course, pleased to meet up by appointment, as required, with any resident who wishes to discuss a matter of concern or indeed anything we have commented upon in our Monthly Reports.

If any resident would like to receive a personal copy of our Monthly Reports, we shall be pleased to send one directly to them by e mail but do remind all concerned that they are published and included by way of a link in each Month's Parish Council Minutes. Back Editions commencing as far ago as June 2019 are available additionally on request !

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