



UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Felsted & Stebbing Ward

District Councillors John Evans & Richard Silcock



DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT: JUNE 2025

Please find below our monthly Report to the Parish Council.

THE LOCAL PLAN – AT LAST THE EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC (“EiP”) IS HERE !

Members, as well as the Public at large, will wish to know that the Local Plan EiP is finally upon us and hearings will begin next Tuesday, 10 June at 10am, to be held in person at the UDC Council Chamber in Saffron Walden.

The full hearing schedule is available at [017f5b_d21ec72c68cb4e0aac1d6e5ebe38a498.pdf](https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/017f5b_d21ec72c68cb4e0aac1d6e5ebe38a498.pdf) where details are given for the matters/themes to be discussed on given hearing days and the identity of those parties wishing to speak to subject themes etc. The Examination period is between 10 – 19 June 2025 and reserve days of 20 June and 29 - 31 July 2025 have also been set aside in case of need.

Days 2, 3 and 4 of the hearings (11 - 13 June) will include examination on the matters of the District's housing requirement and site allocations. These sessions are expected to draw the most participants, including major developers, site promoters, a few parish councils and others. Some parties will be arguing that the Plan is “unsound” and their legal representatives will be making submissions to that effect. Criticism of the Plan and the work behind it will be strong and, at times, dismissive, but this is typical for examinations of this kind.

We remain confident that the plan is sound and our Planning Policy Team Officers will present clear evidence to support that position throughout the hearings. Each theme is marshalled by a given UDC policy officer and they have prepared themselves in advance for the challenge, supported by a very experienced legal team of the barristers retained by UDC, namely James Findlay KC and Robert Williams. John, as Planning Portfolio Holder, has met them on two occasions (including a field trip/site visits District-wide) and has confidence in their technical knowhow and presentational skills.

The Inspectors have invited John to speak on day 1 of the EiP in his capacity as Planning Portfolio Holder, which will just be by way of scene setting and welcome. Otherwise, Members of UDC are not required to speak as to any matters of relevance to their individual Wards nor generally. The EiP is not, as will be appreciated, a political stage in any sense. It is a technical exercise undertaken by two independent Inspectors, members of the Planning Inspectorate, namely Mr Guy Davies BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI and

Mr William Cooper BA (Hons) MA CMLI. Their task it is to judge whether or not the draft Local Plan, as submitted following the Regulation 19 Consultation last Autumn is “sound”.

What does “sound” mean? The National Planning Policy Framework defines this to mean a Plan which is:

- Positively prepared –
 - the plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, including unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with achieving sustainable development.
- Justified –
 - the plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence.
- Effective –
 - the plan should be deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities.
- Consistent with national policy –
 - the plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the Framework.

That might sound rather generalised but it is not. The underlying work and evidence base will have been already considered by the Inspectors and it is against that mass of written material that their oral questions at the Examination will be directed. The procedure is not adversarial in nature, unlike in Court Proceedings; it is perhaps best described as like a Planning Enquiry on steroids.

Officers have already submitted detailed commentary in support of the plan on the points the Inspectors want to examine. All of this is online at [Uttlesford Local Plan Examination](#).

The public is of course welcome to attend the EiP as observers and a live video feed of each day's proceedings will also be made available. John will attend daily and Richard will be able to do so too when his business commitments permit. We will report further as to how matters will have progressed at the EiP in our July Report.

After a Local Plan is found sound, taking into account any Major Modifications proposed by the Inspectors (which is quite a common place occurrence), it then is for Uttlesford as the planning authority to determine whether and when to adopt it. Such a decision must be taken by the full council, not by Cabinet nor any other Committee. So, all other things being equal, we would expect that this might be in the very early part of 2026.

However, even after adoption, the Local Plan is likely to be reviewed again promptly. This is what Braintree DC, for example, is undertaking in respect of their current Local Plan, which was adopted in July 2022. The Planning Practice Guidance sets out that most plans are likely to need review in whole or part every five years, for example as national policy and economic circumstances change, and so should the forthcoming Uttlesford Local Plan at that point in time.

By then, of course, Local Government will have been reorganised and the extent to which strategic planning will remain within the responsibility of the new Unitary Authorities or will have been assumed by the new Mayoral Body will have been determined.

BUS SERVICE – 133/Braintree to STN via Rayne, Felsted, Dunmow & Takeley

We just touch upon this subject briefly since there has been further publicity released by ECC and Stansted Airport re-confirming that the service is to be continued (but re-numbered) by a different operator on commercial terms but supported by funding from Stansted Airport. This is in fact being provided via funding which is available through the Stansted Transport Forum and intended to encourage sustainable transport to/from the Airport, so should not be regarded as largesse derived from the Airport's own funds.

We would like to refer to this as a demonstration of effective intervention from us and of County Cllr Foley. Sometimes one wonders whether the membership of external bodies and attendance at non UDC Committees is really worthwhile but we have no hesitation in saying that at least on this occasion, John's membership of Stansted Airport Consultative Committee and resulting familiarity with the processes and individuals concerned proved to be most helpful.

ARMED FORCES WEEK



We thought that it would be topical, in light of the Defence Review which was published this week, to refer to this event. UDC raises in front of the offices in Saffron Walden its and the flags of organisations when their national or commemorative day are to be remembered. In this regard, and knowing that there are a number of former Service Personnel living in the Parish, we would like to invite them and any of your membership to join us for the Armed Forces flag raising ceremony at the Council Offices in Saffron Walden, on **Monday 23 June**, 9.45am for 10am start.

The newly appointed Chair of the Council, Cllr Chris Criscione (member for Flitch Green and Little Dunmow), will raise the flag to show UDC's support for [Armed Forces Week](#) (23 to 29 June). Members of the Royal British Legion and other interested residents as well as Parish Councillors are invited to join us in Saffron Walden. Personnel from Carver Barracks will also be in attendance.

After the flag raising, there will be tea, coffee and refreshments in the Council Chamber which will provide an opportunity for an informal get together with Councillors from across the District as well as with senior UDC officers.

NEW GRANT SCHEME TO SUPPORT RURAL BUSINESSES

We have on several previous occasions referred to financial support that has been provided to rural businesses through funding which is made available by Central Government. The subject comes up frequently at UDC Cabinet which has been very supportive of the UDC Economic Team in this regard. Despite being made up of two individuals only, they have been assiduous in following up opportunities

for financial support from Government and successful in applying for and securing bids. UDC has just been awarded £244,000 to invest in projects that address the particular challenges facing rural areas.

The Rural England Prosperity Fund will provide support to the visitor economy and hospitality businesses, food producers and tourist attractions. It will be delivered across the whole of Uttlesford through the funding of capital projects which create lasting/capital type assets, such as in relation to buildings or equipment.

Grants of up to **£25,000** are available.

UDC is promoting the scheme through its usual communications channels but if there any businesses with the Parish which are interested in securing our support for any bid that they propose to submit, we would also be pleased to hear from them further.

Eligibility criteria and full details of how to apply are in any event available on the UDC website at: <https://business.uttlesford.gov.uk/finance>

KEEPING UP TO DATE IN UTTLESFORD

Members and residents might not be familiar with the easy means whereby they can keep themselves up to date on a wide range of subjects and services provided by UDC and its news. The following list is very extensive and it is easy to subscribe to the subject of interest by a tick box exercise through using this handy link: [Subscriber Preferences](#)

Bin Collection Notifications
Building Control news
Business & Economic Development News
Community News
Consultations
Council Tax & Benefits
Economic development
Elections
Emergency Alerts and Extreme Weather
Enforcement
Housing and Council Tenant news
Local Plan
Meetings and agendas
Museum News & Exhibitions
Newsletter and Updates
Objective Consultees

Planning news

Press Releases

Recycling

Recycling and Waste Projects

Zero Carbon Communities

REPRESENTATIONS

As is recalled, we are at the beginning of the new Municipal Year and for UDC, appointment to Committees and external bodies is made. It might not be well known but the role of a District Councillor involves not only the day to day representation of the Ward and of the interests of its residents but it extends to a wider degree of commitment and collaboration with other Members throughout the District too. We have been able by reason of being representatives on several UDC Committees and external bodies, to keep abreast of prospective changes and possible benefits available likely to affect the Ward and residents (as reported above in relation to the 133 Bus Service).

This is the list of these representative and/or membership functions undertaken by Cllr Evans:

Cabinet responsibilities for: Planning, the Local Plan and Stansted Airport..

Member of the following committees and groups: Local Plan Leadership Group, Appeals Committee (Chair), Investment Board, Senior Appointments Committee, Assets of Community Value, Local Heritage and Stansted Airport Consultative Committee.

Member of the following external groups: Stansted Airport Advisory Panel, Strategic Aviation Special Interests Group, Co-operation for Sustainable Development Board, Harlow and Gilston Garden Community Town Board, Local Government Association, SPARSE Rural Assembly, Rural Services Network, Essex County Council Portfolio Holders Group, Essex Coastal Forum and Transport East (Regional Body).

This is the list of these representative and/or membership functions undertaken by Cllr Silcock:

Member of the following Committees and Group:

Audit and Standards Committee, Planning Committee (Reserve), Scrutiny Committee (Reserve), Sustainable Uttlesford Committee and the Community and Achievement Panel.

The proceedings of these bodies are in the public domain of course but if any member of the Parish Council or Resident has a particular interest in any topic or subject matter covered by any of the above, we shall be very pleased to provide them with additional information and materials upon request.

A FURTHER SOLAR FARM (TO BE KNOWN AS HEDGEHOG GROVE SOLAR FARM)

Work on this topic continues as it will for several months and as your Chairman is the Chairman also of the Community Liaison Group, it may be that he will wish to report to you further as to matters.

Meanwhile however, the Government has just published a consultation as to the extent which Community Benefits are to be assessed in future where alternative energy schemes are introduced into the countryside. The value of such benefits and the basis for charging will be considered ie measured upon design capacity, or generating output or indeed extensions/upgrades to design capacity over the life of the project. These subjects are open to consultation by the public as will be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-benefits-and-shared-ownership-for-low-carbon-energy-infrastructure/community-benefits-and-shared-ownership-for-low-carbon-energy-infrastructure-working-paper-accessible-webpage>

We repeat for ready reference the link to the Total materials as submitted to the Planning Inspectorate and the site is worthy of bookmarking. We add also that it is possible to request to receive auto-updating to the site:

<https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN0110021/documents>

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 not be holding our usual monthly surgery this month owing to our attendance being at your Monthly Meeting, to be held at Crix Green Mission Hall, rather than in the URC Hall. 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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