



UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Felsted & Stebbing Ward

District Councillors John Evans & Richard Silcock



DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT: JULY 2026

Please find below our monthly Report to the Parish Council, much of which is dedicated to topics concerning Planning and associated subjects.

This is in a sense reflective of the very big part that Planning Policy at both National and District levels has in recent years come to play regarding actual and future development in and about our communities and which will continue to come about on our doorstep and in our local areas.

Several new policies, as seen below, were brought into existence/became effective following adoption/approval by UDC Cabinet at its last Meeting in June, which were sponsored by John as Planning Portfolio Holder.

Perhaps consideration might be given to the inclusion of links to some of these policy documents on the PC webpage so that they can provide points of ready reference to residents who may wish to submit representations to Planning Applications.

PLANNING MATTERS – UDC DESIGN CODE – an SPD

We anticipated the likely introduction of the UDC Design Code in our last Report and can now confirm that it has been adopted by UDC as a Supplementary Planning Document ("SPD"). A SPD provides a non-statutory framework which is used to add further detail and practical guidance to policies contained in an adopted Local Plan. SPDs are key "material considerations" when assessing planning applications as regards design, sustainability, and development contributions, so its status should not be underestimated. It might we suggest form part of your Planning Committee's bible of reference documents and available to be consulted when preparing representations upon Planning Applications. The full document is to be found via this link:

<https://uttlesford.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s44299/Uttlesford%20Design%20Code%20SPD.pdf>

The title of the Code does not however do the SPD complete justice, since it also includes a wide range of topic matters such as guidance as to acceptability or otherwise of proposed infill and back land development. Section 2.1 is worthy of close consideration, extracts from which are repeated here, since

it deals with potential development in existing “built up areas” and the “countryside”, both being important policy matters covered in Policy CP3 of the Local Plan:

“EXISTING BUILT AREA

Most new development will take place on allocated sites or sites that form part of the existing built area of a settlement listed in Core Policy 3 of the Local Plan. The Council will assess the built edge by applying planning judgement to the physical and visual circumstances on the ground. No single factor will be decisive. Where a settlement has no defined settlement limits on the Policies Map, applicants must address the following three code tests:

Connection:

The site must appear, in public views, to form a natural part of the settlement. Sites that are separated from the main settlement by a clear visual gap, physical barrier, or open rural land will not normally be treated as part of the existing built area.

Containment:

The site must be visually and physically contained by existing development on more than one side, or by strong and established boundaries such as mature tree belts, historic walls, or ancient hedgerows. Boundaries must provide a clear and durable separation from the wider agricultural landscape.

Pattern:

The site must reflect the historic layout, form, and spacing of the settlement. Development must relate to a compact and coherent group of buildings and must not extend isolated, sporadic, or ribbon development along a rural road. For the purposes of this Code and Core Policy 3 (CP3), open countryside means land within settlements that are not listed in CP3 or land that is outside the existing built area of a settlement listed in CP3.”

PLANNING MATTERS – PLANNING OBLIGATIONS – an SPD

Again, this is an important tool to be applied and whose full provisions are to be found through this link:

https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/media/11897/Planning-Obligations-June-2026/pdf/Planning_Obligations_SPD_-_June_2026.pdf?m=1782123738033

This document has also come into being as a SPD by way of supplement to the Local Plan. It determines the policy that will be applied regarding the application of both Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 (ie site specific) developer contributions on new developments.

It might be asked – why this rash of SPD’s? There is a good explanation and reason for this.

MHCLG determined earlier in the year that SPD’s could no longer be brought into existence post 30 June 2026, considering that many matters could be dealt with by national standards/policies etc rather than ones brought in at local planning authority level. Thus, in order to maintain some local input, the UDC Planning Policy team recommended that these additional SPD’s be brought in before the deadline so as further to bolster the policy position governing in the District. It goes without saying that they were fully consulted upon and representations taken into account in order to enable the SPD’s to be made before the deadline.

PLANNING MATTERS - COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (“CIL”)

The CIL tariffs proposed to be adopted by UDC were the subject of public examination on behalf of PINS and the tariffs for all new developments irrespective of the number of dwellings has been set at £ 150 per

m2, basis greenfield sites. It is anticipated that CIL will generate some £ 1.5m pa towards infrastructure provision.

Parish Councils with made Neighbourhood Plans will be entitled to receive 25% of CIL tariff monies in respect of development occurring within their Parish. A useful Guide to CIL was written for the benefit of Town and Parish Councils in September 2025 and the link to it is repeated here:

https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/media/8538/CIL-Guidance-for-Town-and-Parish-Councils/pdf/CIL-guidance-for-town-and-parish_councils08092025-v2.2_1c2920pkynksg.pdf?m=1757523470817

Again, it will serve as a useful addition to the library of the PC Planning Committee. Apart from explaining how CIL will operate in the context of Parish Council infrastructure, it has in its Appendix an editable Guide for Parish Councils to prepare and keep updated so that they can monitor CIL receipts and disbursements in future which might be book marked by your Clerk:

<http://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/cil>

PLANNING MATTERS – NATIONAL POLICY

It has not yet been confirmed but interested observers had considered that MHCLG might publish the revised National Planning Policy Framework prior to or at about the date of the Parliamentary Recess on 16 July. As you know, this contains further radical policy provisions in favour of “sustainable development”. It is now thought, owing to the anticipated appointment of a new Prime Minister and replacement ministerial appointments, that publication of this critical document is likely to be delayed until the Autumn – we shall have to wait and see!

Again, this will be a yet further new policy document that your Planning Committee will need to get to grips with.

WILLOWS GREEN – UNAUTHORISED DEVELOPMENT

We reported at length in our last Report upon the objectionable circumstances surrounding the wholly unauthorised development that had occurred in the field at Main Road/Milch Hill Road, Willows Green over the first May Bank Holiday, the risk of similar activity at another site at Milch Hill at the time of the second May Bank Holiday and the steps taken by UDC to secure injunctive relief from the High Court in relation to each site.

The Injunction obtained concerning the Main Road site was brought back to the Court for further consideration with the request by UDC that it be continued. This was heard on 18 June at a day long hearing where UDC was represented by a barrister, Ms Caroline Bolton, who is very experienced in this area of law. She has a number of similar instructions where she is instructed by other Local Planning Authorities in similar circumstances to ours at Main Road ie “highly organised invasions”, ground

clearance with heavy plant and equipment and extensive fencing and drainage arrangements introduced by a large labour force/“flying squad” working long hours over a public holiday.

The Defendants were themselves personally present in court but were represented by a solicitor who served their written evidence very late (at midnight of the eve of the hearing) but nonetheless was admitted by the Judge for consideration. After lengthy argument, the Hearing continuing until after 1700, a Judgment was given by the Judge whereby the Injunction was continued for a period of two years and was extended also beyond the named Defendants to “person unknown” (thus including potentially third parties such as contractors). John was able to attend the Hearing as did some other members of the Willows Green community. The continuation of the Milch Hill Injunction will be brought back by UDC to Court on 29 July with a request for its renewal and extension in terms similar to those in place for Main Road.

The channel of advice and the provision of updates will be from UDC to Felsted PC concerning further steps as to potential enforcement of the Court Orders and other planning breaches. We shall of course be pleased to attend all meetings arranged between UDC and Felsted PC. The first of these meetings took place on 9 July and a report has been circulated by the PC already.

These issues will remain challenging and of great concern for quite some time. Members of the public are rightly concerned to see that public policy is observed ie that the planning system is complied with and if development by a land owner or promoter (whoever they may be) is sought, then it should be undertaken in accordance with the prevailing rules, being compliant with planning policy and if it is not, then appropriate enforcement measures should follow.

PARISH FORUM.

This was held at UDC Canfield Depot on 29 June and there was a good turn-out of Parish Councillors and some Clerks from across the District, including your colleagues Cllr Richard Freeman and Cllr Clive Perrins. The topics covered included very informative presentations on the following subjects:

- Essex Association of Local Councils
- UDC Waste/Refuse Plans
- UDC Design Guide SPD
- Community Infrastructure Levy
- Planning Obligations SPD
- Historic Environment & Energy Efficiency in Heritage Buildings
- Planning National Scheme of Delegation

In the latter context, one Parish Councillor asked as to the extent that Planning Officers would come under increasing pressure/work load. That will almost certainly be the case.

It also does mean, as previously advised in these Reports, that the future role of the Planning Committees of Parish Councils will become more significant even than they are today. Representations will need to be more detailed and focussed than ever so that the planning officers considering the application have the fullest picture put before them, this being particularly necessary too since avenues for representations at later stages of Appeal have become curtailed.

As to pressure upon Planning Officers generally, John attended a RTPI Awards Ceremony at Cambridge in June (where the UDC Planning Team came runners up on that occasion) when the RTPI National Vice Chair reported that a recent survey disclosed that some 70% of LPA Planning Officers across the country had been the object of some form of written or oral abuse from members of the public and/or elected members in the past year. That is a chilling and wholly unacceptable statistic.

FLY-TIPPING AND WASTE REMOVAL – STATION HOUSE, FELSTED

Although the large volumes of fly tipped material accumulated upon privately owned land at Station House, Felsted lies in the adjacent Parish of Little Dunmow and Flitch Green, we have reported to you upon its anticipated removal. We are pleased to report that this has now been removed by UDC using its statutory powers and they propose to recover the substantial costs incurred (some £70,000) from the landowner out of the sale proceeds in respect of the property. Arrangements will also be made, pending reoccupation of the property, to secure its boundary with a view to deterring and avoiding further unauthorised deposit of waste.

This will be the third instance of substantial volumes of fly-tipped material being removed by UDC in Felsted (the others being upon the driveways to Grandcourts and Greenfields, properties close to B1256/A120). In those cases, the perpetrators deposited the shredded/still steaming quantities of material from large lorries under cover of darkness and out of sight of the adjacent dwellings and so could not be identified; thus the considerable cost incurred by UDC was in those cases irrecoverable.

STEBBING GREEN CONSERVATION AREA – DESIGNATION (“CA”)

Although this possibly will be of passing interest to Felsted residents, we are very pleased to confirm that a decision was taken by UDC Cabinet on 9 June to designate Stebbing Green as a Conservation Area. This is additional to the existing designation of the historic core of Stebbing as a CA some decades ago.

It is an example of a project whose genesis lay in the preparatory work undertaken as part of the Stebbing Neighbourhood Plan 2022. So, it might be said that the CA is one additional positive outcome resulting from the making of Stebbing Neighbourhood Plan 2022 and will assist in the appropriate protection of an historic open “Green Area”. It is owned by Stebbing Parish Council (having been acquired by it for a peppercorn in 1951 from the manorial waste held by the Earl of Essex). The technical work involved for the designation and its management was undertaken on behalf of Stebbing Parish Council by ECC Place Services.

Recently, members might be interested to know that Pledgdon Green, was also appraised by Place Services, having being commissioned for this purpose by Henham Parish Council. The CA was in turn brought to UDC Cabinet by John as Portfolio Holder and its designation was made.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION (“LGR”)

As previously reported, the Government is still expecting LGR in Essex to mean the creation of 5 Unitary Councils, whereby so far as we are concerned, Uttlesford, Epping Forest and Harlow Councils will “merge”.

However, since the County Council Elections held in May, the new Administrations at both ECC and Harlow Council have each announced their intention to seek to challenge the LGR process agreed by Government for Essex.

We shall have to wait and see whether this attempted challenge will prove to be effective. ECC have recently obtained permission from the Administrative Court to pursue it to the next procedural stage of Judicial Review.

ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL – CLIMATE CHANGE COMMISSION

We have just learned that the new political administration of ECC has announced it has decided to make the climate crisis team redundant. We propose to enquire of our new County Councillor what will be the direct and indirect impact felt in our District resulting. In particular, we would wish to be advised which grant funding available to be drawn from central government in the climate change field will now, in consequence of this policy decision, be forfeit and/or require to be refunded.

It might be useful to remind members and readers as to the work undertaken and reported upon by the Essex Climate Commission in the past year

<https://www.essexclimate.org.uk/sites/default/files/climate-action-report-24-25.pdf>

ELECTORAL ROLL

As required under Electoral Legislation, UDC will be conducting and completing their annual canvass during coming weeks to verify the accuracy of the Electoral Roll. Updates and corrections to the roll can easily be submitted by residents on line to the UDC Electoral Team:

<https://www.householdresponse.com/Home/Welcome>

OUR WARD & MEMBER ACTIVITY

Among other matters including routine correspondence where we have responded to residents’ requests for assistance concerning various different subjects, we have attended several in house meetings at UDC

Saffron Walden and Little Canfield Depot covering different topics, including the Green Festival, Emergency Planning and Domestic Abuse.

A presentation concerning Emergency Planning, which is governed by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, is expected to be given to Parish Councils, including as to their potential contributions, at a forthcoming Parish Forum.

Richard attended the annual mandatory Planning Training for Members of UDC Planning Committee. Attendance is required under UDC's Constitution since in default, the Member is unable to sit. This provision was introduced by UDC three years ago, being considered good practice and is also now (finally) made a requirement under National Rules.

Finally, on a pleasurable note, John was able to attend the UDC annual Staff Garden Party at the end of June (held after close of business incidentally and whose costs were borne in part by the Chief Executive) in the grounds of Saffron Walden Museum and Castle. It was good to greet and chat in an informal context to several UDC Officers across several departments/disciplines whom otherwise elected Members would not have the chance to meet.

DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' AND CONSTITUENTS' SURGERY

We will be holding our usual Surgery at 1730 at URC Hall immediately prior to your monthly 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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