

## **Statement of Common Ground Between Essex County Council and Uttlesford District Council Concerning the Uttlesford Local Plan**

### **Introduction**

Both Councils, Essex County Council (ECC) and Uttlesford District Council (UDC; the Councils) have a long history of working closely and successfully together on a number of matters.

This Statement of Common Ground (SOCG) has been prepared to assist the examination of the Uttlesford Local Plan. It establishes areas of agreement between Essex County Council (ECC) and Uttlesford District Council (UDC) in relation to ECC's representations on the Uttlesford Local Plan 2021-2041, Publication – Regulation 19 Version (July 2024).

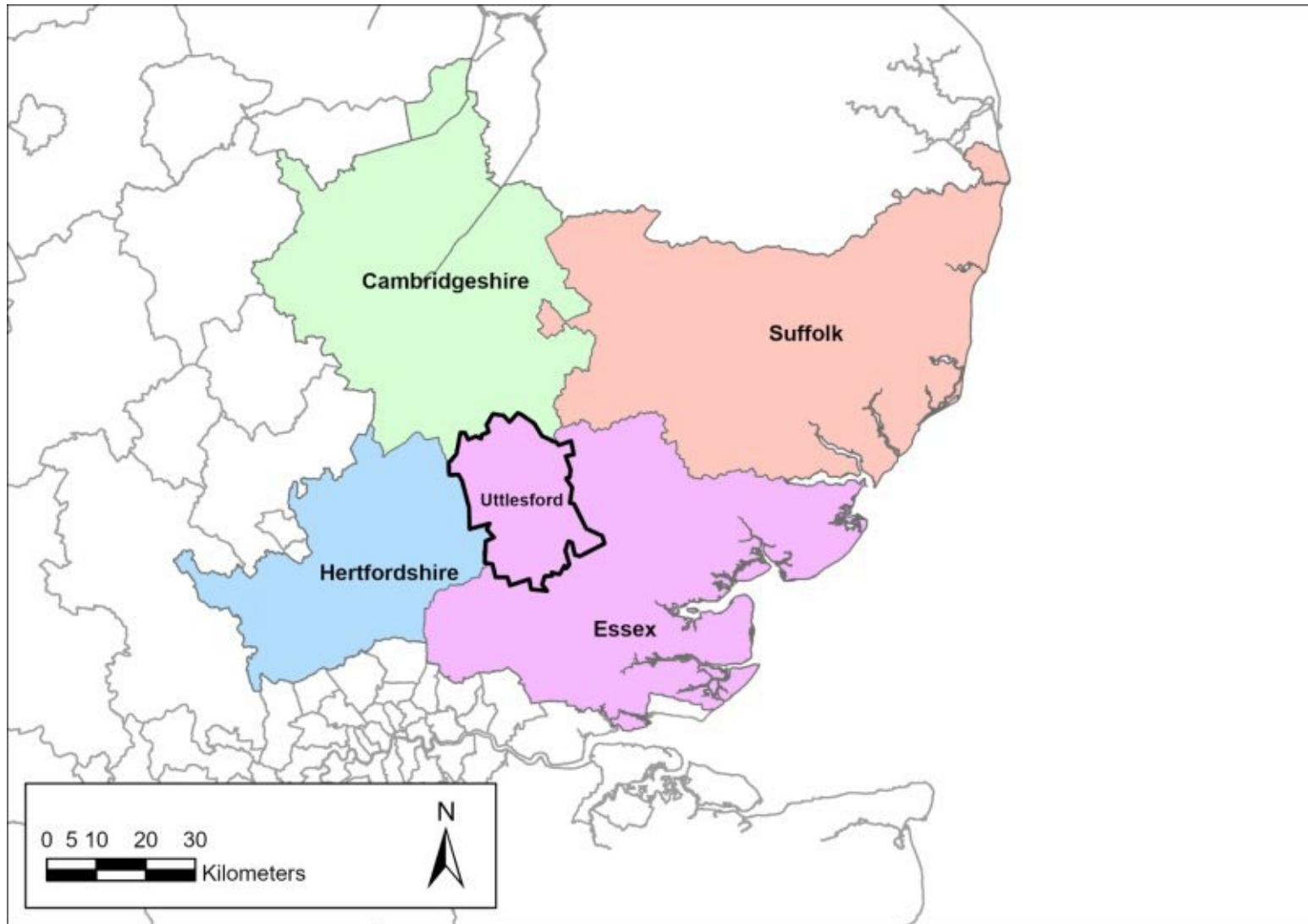
SOCG set out how strategic matters or issues of a common nature between a local authority and a statutory body or organisation are being addressed and progressed throughout the plan-making process to provide transparency, and wherever possible, show where parties are working towards areas of agreement.

ECC is a 'top tier' local authority which incorporates UDC's administrative area. ECC is the local highway and transport authority; lead authority for Education (covering early years and childcare, primary, secondary, Special Education Needs and Disabilities, and Post 16 education); Minerals and Waste Planning Authority; Lead Local Flood Authority; lead advisor on Public Health; provider of libraries; and seeks to influence new development to best meet/has statutory responsibilities for Adult Social Care (Care Act 2014) and Children's services (Children Act 1989). Since 2020, it has worked with all of the Essex authorities in delivering the recommendations of the Essex Climate Action Commission. It is also the responsible Authority for delivering the Greater Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

UDC has engaged with ECC on the development of the Uttlesford Local Plan. In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, ECC has been formally consulted at every stage of consultation on the Local Plan together with its accompanying Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and the Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA).

## Strategic Geography

This map shows the locations and administrative areas covered by the statement.



## Position of both parties

There is a level of agreement between the two councils on the emerging Local Plan. The importance of adopting a Local Plan for Uttlesford quickly is recognised and understood. There has been a protracted period where Uttlesford has not benefitted from an up-to-date Local Plan and the existing plan is from 2005, which pre-dates even the first version of the NPPF. In the period where there has not been an up-to-date plan in Uttlesford, there has been an influx of speculative and piecemeal development that has not supported the principles of sustainable development as effectively as would be liked and has not lent itself to infrastructure being planned for or delivered in the most effective way.

Adopting an up-to-date Local Plan will ensure Uttlesford can benefit from a 'plan-led' approach in accordance with the NPPF, which will in turn facilitate a more effective approach to planning for and delivering infrastructure. An updated suite of policies will ensure development starts to meet updated standards and requirements, for example to help achieve more appropriate standards relating to tackling climate change, health, and wellbeing, delivering biodiversity net gain and more appropriate water efficiency standards.

Both Councils recognise and support the approach being taken by Uttlesford to adopt an updated Local Plan as quickly as possible, thus establishing an updated baseline land supply and policy framework, but then proceeding quickly to prepare the next plan, for adoption within five years of adopting the currently emerging plan. There is scope for the next plan to have a more long-term and strategic approach to planning for the district, but this process will benefit greatly if Uttlesford first adopt an updated, consolidation plan, especially after a 20-year gap.

Both Councils have met throughout the preparation of the Local Plan. ECC have informally at an officer level commented on working draft versions of the Draft Local Plan prior to the Regulation 18 consultation and similarly prior to the Regulation 19 consultation. In both cases, UDC have sought to incorporate the majority of ECC comments.

There were two objections identified by ECC in response to the Regulation 18 Local Plan. One related to proposed development at Thaxted. This proposed allocation has been removed from the Regulation 19 Local Plan in response to the ECC comments. The other related to Stansted Mountfitchet and was made pending a review of the Uttlesford Local Cycling and Walking Implementation Plan.

In terms of the identified Housing and Economic Needs and proposed Spatial Strategy, both Councils agree with these matters as set out in the Regulation 19 Plan. There is a broad level of agreement on the majority of the detail set out in the plan including the majority of the policies. It is recognised that the Local Plan supports a sustainable pattern of development, that seeks to maximise opportunities for support sustainable travel and greatly reduces the quantum of development coming forward in more rural and less sustainable locations, such as in the Smaller Villages. It is agreed that the policy framework will achieve a step change in the quality of development coming forward in Uttlesford, especially in relation to climate change and the environment.

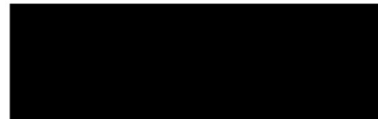
ECC's representations made in response to the Regulation 19 Local Plan are set out in detail in the Appendices to this SOCG, and identifies the position reached by both parties. UDC has indicated its support for many of the ECC representations and UDC sees these falling into the following categories.

1. Comments on the main plan that formed the basis of focused discussions following the consultation covering three education issues and three transport issues. Where there is not agreement between the two councils discussions will continue to seek agreement. See **Appendix 1**.

ECC in its representations made reference to UDC updating evidence ahead of plan submission and/ or actioning modifications ahead of plan submission. ECC is aware that UDC cannot update evidence ahead of submission without repeating the Regulation 19 consultation as this would delay submission by several months, and any Main Modifications fall into the remit of the Inspector. However, discussions between the Councils have enabled an understanding of certain issues raised in the representations, the evidence base and where both councils are still seeking agreement.

2. UDC's view is that the remaining comments fall predominately into an 'additional' modifications category, or in a few cases a 'main' modifications category, but where the proposed change is relatively straightforward. A large proportion of these have been included in the 'Proposed Modifications' schedule that has been published as part of the Submission Local Plan material. These are clearly shown by Appendix 2, which also indicates why the ECC comments have not been included: some as they fall into the matters subject to more focused discussion (Appendix 1), some that generate duplication, and others that can be considered for inclusion in the final 'Additional' modifications schedule to be prepared in due course.

Signed: Uttlesford District Council



**Dean Hermitage**  
**Director of Planning**

17 February 2025

Signed: Essex County Council



**Graham Thomas**  
**Head of Planning and Sustainable Development**

17 February 2024

**Appendix 1: Areas of focused discussion between the councils following the Regulation 19 consultation**

ECC Reg 19 Comments – References	Description	Agreement
09,17,18 & 23	<p>Approach to planning for Secondary School provision for Saffron Walden</p> <p>The Plan suggests that additional capacity can be provided at the existing County High School in Saffron Walden, it refers to the need for additional feasibility work to test this but provides sufficient flexibility that additional capacity could be provided elsewhere should that be necessary.</p>	<p>It is agreed that additional feasibility work is needed to investigate in more detail what additional, if any, secondary capacity should be provided at Saffron Walden and what a ‘preferred’ approach to planning for secondary provision would consist of.</p> <p>It is also agreed that the Local Plan already provides sufficient flexibility to be able to support a number of possible options, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developer contributions to help expand local schools if it is shown that such options are feasible, necessary to meet local demand and aligned with strategies to deliver wider school place planning objectives</li> <li>• Safeguarding land at Stansted Mountfitchet, and</li> <li>• Providing sufficient land for a new secondary school at Takeley to ensure there is sufficient flexibility for a larger school to be delivered at Takeley.</li> </ul> <p>The following wording is agreed for inclusion to replace current wording as a Potential Modification (see below).</p> <p>Both Councils are satisfied with the approach outlined and do not consider any further actions are necessary.</p> <p><b>Resolved.</b></p>
<p>Amend as follows:</p> <p>09 – Amend Figure 4.1 ‘North Uttlesford’, 2<sup>nd</sup> bullet to read as follows.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growth at Saffron Walden will complement the existing settlement, forming high-quality sustainable development, well connected to the wider settlement, providing appropriate services and facilities; <del>including additional capacity for the existing secondary school.</del> <i>School</i></li> </ul>		

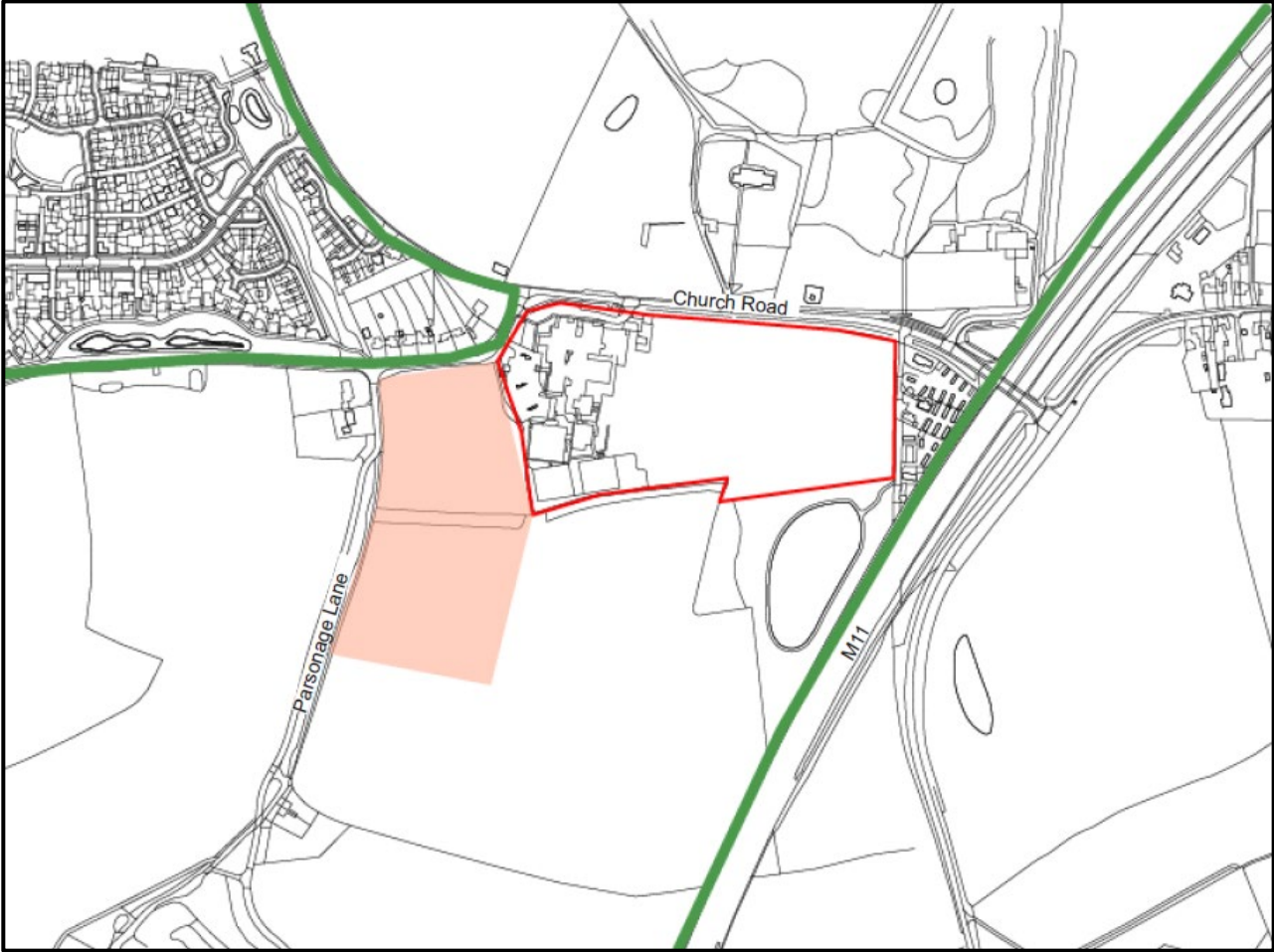
ECC Reg 19 Comments – References	Description	Agreement
	<p><i>expansion(s) in the North Secondary School Planning Group may be supported if it is shown that such options are feasible, necessary to meet local demand and aligned with strategies to deliver wider school place planning objectives.</i></p> <p>17 – Amend paragraph 5.10 as follows: 1<sup>st</sup> bullet point</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the provision of <del>both</del> a new primary school (<del>expected to be three form entry</del><b>3ha</b>) and secondary provision expansion of the existing <del>secondary school</del> in Saffron Walden. <i>School expansion(s) in the North Secondary School Planning Group may be supported if it is shown that such options are feasible, necessary to meet local demand and aligned with strategies to deliver wider school place planning objectives.</i></li> </ul> <p>18 – Amend paragraph 5.13 to delete wording as follows:</p> <p>“Development at Saffron Walden provides an opportunity to provide new education facilities with a new primary school that will provide for some of the recently committed development as well as the newly proposed allocation, <del>along with facilitating an expansion of the existing secondary school in the town (Saffron Walden County High School).</del> The secondary school here is already the largest in the District, <del>but expansion helps to prevent the need for pupils to travel further afield.</del> <i>School expansion(s) in the North Secondary School Planning Group may be supported if it is shown that such options are feasible, necessary to meet local demand and aligned with strategies to deliver wider school place planning objectives.</i>”</p> <p>23 – Amend paragraph 5.23, 3<sup>rd</sup> bullet to read as follows.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a new primary school. (<del>expected to be three form entry</del>) and <del>facilitating expansion of the existing secondary school</del> <i>School expansion(s) in the North Secondary School Planning Group may be supported if it is shown that such options are feasible, necessary to meet local demand and aligned with strategies to deliver wider school place planning objectives.</i></li> </ol> <p>i.e. Delete: ‘(expected to be three form entry)’ and delete: ‘and facilitating expansion of the existing secondary school’.</p>	
30, 34 & 40	<p>Approach to allocating land for Secondary School provision at Takeley.</p> <p>The Local Plan allocates land for a new Secondary (potentially an all-through school combined with a new Primary and early years and childcare) School to be provided within the proposed strategic allocation at</p>	<p>The Councils agree with the need to allocate land for new school provision within the proposed Takeley Allocation. Discussions are ongoing around the matters raised in the ECC Regulation 19 representations.</p> <p>It is fully anticipated matters can be resolved, but they are ongoing at the date of this SOCG.</p>

ECC Reg 19 Comments – References	Description	Agreement
	Takeley. The allocation with the safeguarded land provides sufficient land to meet the expected need over the Plan period.	
51	<p>Approach to safeguarding land to prevent other development precluding the longer-term potential for expansion of Forest Hall School at Stansted Mountfitchet.</p> <p>The Local Plan includes a policy that safeguards land adjoining the existing Forest Hall Secondary School at Stansted Mountfitchet to prevent any other development taking place that would prevent expansion at any point during the Plan period.</p>	<p>Following further discussion, the Councils agree with the approach as set out in the Local Plan, but the area of land to be safeguarded is proposed to be amended as a potential Modification to reflect the map below. This information is highlighted to assist the Inspector, but the Council are satisfied that it should be considered through the normal process of the Examination.</p> <p><b>Resolved.</b></p>
Add Agreed Updated Map as Potential Modification:		

**ECC Reg 19  
Comments –  
References**

**Description**

**Agreement**



36

Evidence relating to Church End Bridge, Great Dunmow.

The Councils are satisfied with the proposed allocation set out in the Local Plan, but also understand that further and



ECC Reg 19 Comments – References	Description	Agreement
	<p>The Local Plan proposes strategic development at Great Dunmow. Some use of Church End Bridge will be necessary for effective traffic flows in proximity to/ from the site.</p>	<p>more detailed evidence will come forward through the Development Management process to support any planning applications. Such evidence will need to meet national and ECC standards and requirements.</p> <p>The Councils and relevant partners are working collaboratively on the matters raised in the ECC Regulation 19 representation.</p> <p>It is fully anticipated these more detailed matters can be resolved, but they are ongoing at the date of this SOCG.</p>
45 & 50	<p>Evidence relating to sustainable travel and the proposed allocations at Stansted Mountfitchet.</p> <p>The Local Plan proposes strategic development at Stansted Mountfitchet. The policy sets out detailed requirements to ensure the allocation is sustainable, but the Plan also identifies opportunities to support sustainable modes as informed by the UDC LCWIP.</p>	<p>The Councils are satisfied with the proposals as set out in the Local Plan. It is recognised that some additional detail will be considered through the Development Management process including the submission of a Transport Assessment, which can address specific details required by the Highway Authority.</p> <p>Both Councils are committed to continue working closely and in partnership to progress the LCWIP work and to maximise opportunities for supporting sustainable and active modes.</p> <p>It is understood that the more detailed feasibility work relating to LCWIP proposals will follow in the future and are unnecessary for the purposes of the Local Plan Examination.</p> <p>The Councils and relevant partners are working collaboratively on the matters raised in the ECC Regulation 19 representation.</p>

ECC Reg 19 Comments – References	Description	Agreement
		It is fully anticipated these more detailed matters can be resolved, but they are ongoing at the date of this SOCG.
48	<p>Evidence relating to highway impacts associated with the proposed allocation at Elsenham.</p> <p>The Local Plan proposes a strategic allocation at Elsenham that unlocks and delivers a primary school, along with early years and childcare facilities.</p>	<p>The Councils are satisfied with the proposal to unlock and deliver a primary school, along with early years and childcare facilities at Elsenham. This is a location that has seen significant speculative development that has not been supported by sufficient infrastructure. The location is in proximity to a railway station and existing bus route, but the new school will help to improve the sustainability of the wider site and to reduce vehicle trips.</p> <p>As for other examples identified above, it is recognised that some additional detail will be considered through the more detailed Development Management process and the submission of a Transport Assessment that follows the Local Plan.</p> <p>There are no further actions relating to this matter.</p> <p><b>Resolved.</b></p>