



# Uttlesford Economic Development Plan

2025-29



**UTTLESFORD  
BUSINESS >>**

## Contents

Introduction.....	2
Uttlesford in context.....	3
Strengths and challenges of the district .....	6
Economic baseline .....	7
Growth .....	8
Growth and Development sites .....	9
Key developments: .....	9
London Stansted Airport.....	9
Chesterford Research Park.....	9
Northside, London Stansted Airport.....	10
Digital infrastructure .....	11
Mobile connectivity .....	11
Broadband coverage.....	11
National and regional economic policy context .....	13
UK Government.....	13
Essex County Council sector development strategy .....	13
The North Essex Economic Board (NEEB) .....	13
Action plan .....	15
1. Supporting Town Centre economies .....	15
2. Rural business: villages and open countryside.....	15
3. Small business growth support .....	16
4. Promotion of entrepreneurship and business start-up support.....	17
5. Business sustainability and the green agenda.....	17
6. Tourism and the visitor economy .....	18
7. Skills and apprenticeships .....	18
8. Strategic level inward investment .....	19
9. Digital connectivity .....	20
References .....	21

# Introduction

The Corporate Plan 2023-27 outlines the Council's long term economic vision:

*“We will support and promote a vibrant and diverse economy by attracting investment, facilitating business growth, enhancing skills and employability, and improving connectivity and infrastructure.”*

The Economic Development Plan 2025-29 puts in place a framework to create an environment which is supportive of local businesses. Uttlesford is open for business, and we are keen to create a district where business leaders and entrepreneurs can be confident to make their home. We want to help budding entrepreneurs to start-up, support businesses already based here to flourish and attract new investment.

As a small team with limited financial resources success will only be achieved through effective partnership working with our business community, partner organisations, the UK Innovation Corridor, other local authorities and key stakeholders including schools, residents, town and parish councils.

At the time of developing this plan the council is in the process of reviewing Regulation 19 consultation responses to the new Local Plan. The emerging local plan will deliver significant new growth in the district with a proposed 14,741 new houses and 57.5 hectares of employment land. This strategy is also consistent with new, extended housebuilding targets emerging from the new Government, as well as the general direction of travel on planning reform.

Nine priority areas have been identified that will positively impact sustainable economic growth. In some cases, our role in these priority areas will be to lead, sometimes to support others to achieve shared goals and on other occasions it will be to influence. These priority areas will form the focus of the Economic Development teams work over the period 2025-29, the action plan on pages 15 to 20 provides full details on what we will do to deliver on these priorities:

1. Supporting Town Centre economies
2. Rural business: Villages and open countryside
3. Small business growth support
4. Promotion of entrepreneurship and business start-up support
5. Business sustainability and the green agenda
6. Tourism and the visitor economy
7. Skills and apprenticeships
8. Strategic level inward investment
9. Digital connectivity

## Uttlesford in context

Uttlesford district is situated in the north west of the county of Essex, within a nationally significant functional economic growth area, the London – Stansted – Cambridge Corridor.

It is a rural district; the most rural in Essex with only one larger settlement over 15,000 in population. It covers a total land area of around 250 square miles and has a population of just over 91,000.

Uttlesford is categorised as one of the most rural areas in England by DEFRA, with more than 80% of the population living in rural settlements.

Since 2011, the population of Uttlesford has grown at a rate of 14.9%; faster than the average for England as a whole, which has grown by 6.6%.

The proportion of people aged 65 and over has increased by 36%, since 2011. In 2021, 20.2% of people in Uttlesford were aged 65 and over, compared to England's average of 18.6%.

ONS data shows Uttlesford has the smallest working age population in comparison to neighbouring Local Authority Districts. It also records a high level of dependency at 65.7%. Dependency ratios are calculated by dividing the size of the dependent population (those not typically in the labour force) by the size of the working age population (16-64 year olds).

Uttlesford is an affluent area, which is ranked the 8th least deprived local authority in England. There has been a sharp increase in house prices, in line with the national trend, which has worsened the ratio between house prices and fulltime earnings in the district, as measured in terms of wages. This has meant that the median house price in Uttlesford has become 13.2 times higher than median full-time earnings.

The character and appearance of the countryside changes from one area of the district to another, but the landscape is predominantly agricultural. Approximately 97% of the land in the district is agricultural land, and it is mostly arable. Farming remains an important part of the rural economy. In recent years there has been a degree of diversification into new areas of activity.

The district has rail links to London and Cambridge, and the M11 and A120 offer good transport links but local roads are often congested, and public transport limited. ONS data shows that 47.6% of travel to work trips are car or van based.

The pandemic saw an increase in residents primarily working from home with 39.4% of census respondents in 2021 stating they work mainly at or from home. No recent data is available to indicate whether this trend has continued as we recover from the pandemic.

Unemployment is low in the district. In September 2024 this stood at 2.1%, compared to 4.3% in the UK.

According to the ONS data, Uttlesford has 63.2% of its population recorded as economically active. This means that Uttlesford has 45,738 employees, of which the largest sector is wholesale and retail (12.7%), followed by construction (11.1 %). This is then followed by other sectors such as real estate, education, and scientific/technical activities.

London Stansted Airport is the biggest single-site employer in the East of England and is currently the fourth busiest airport in the UK, providing over 12,000 jobs across over 200 companies and contributing £1 billion annually to the national economy. Recently announced growth plans indicate another 5,000 jobs will be created over the next five years.

Stansted Airport also contributes to education provision in the district with the opening of Stansted Airport College in 2019. The college is a partnership with Harlow College, and runs courses in aviation and business services, engineering and aircraft maintenance, hospitality, retail, and events management. The college offers opportunities for people to improve their career prospects and access jobs at the airport.

Uttlesford residents are more highly qualified than the average in the UK. 54.3% are qualified at NVQ Level 4 or above in Uttlesford, compared with 47.3% in the UK.

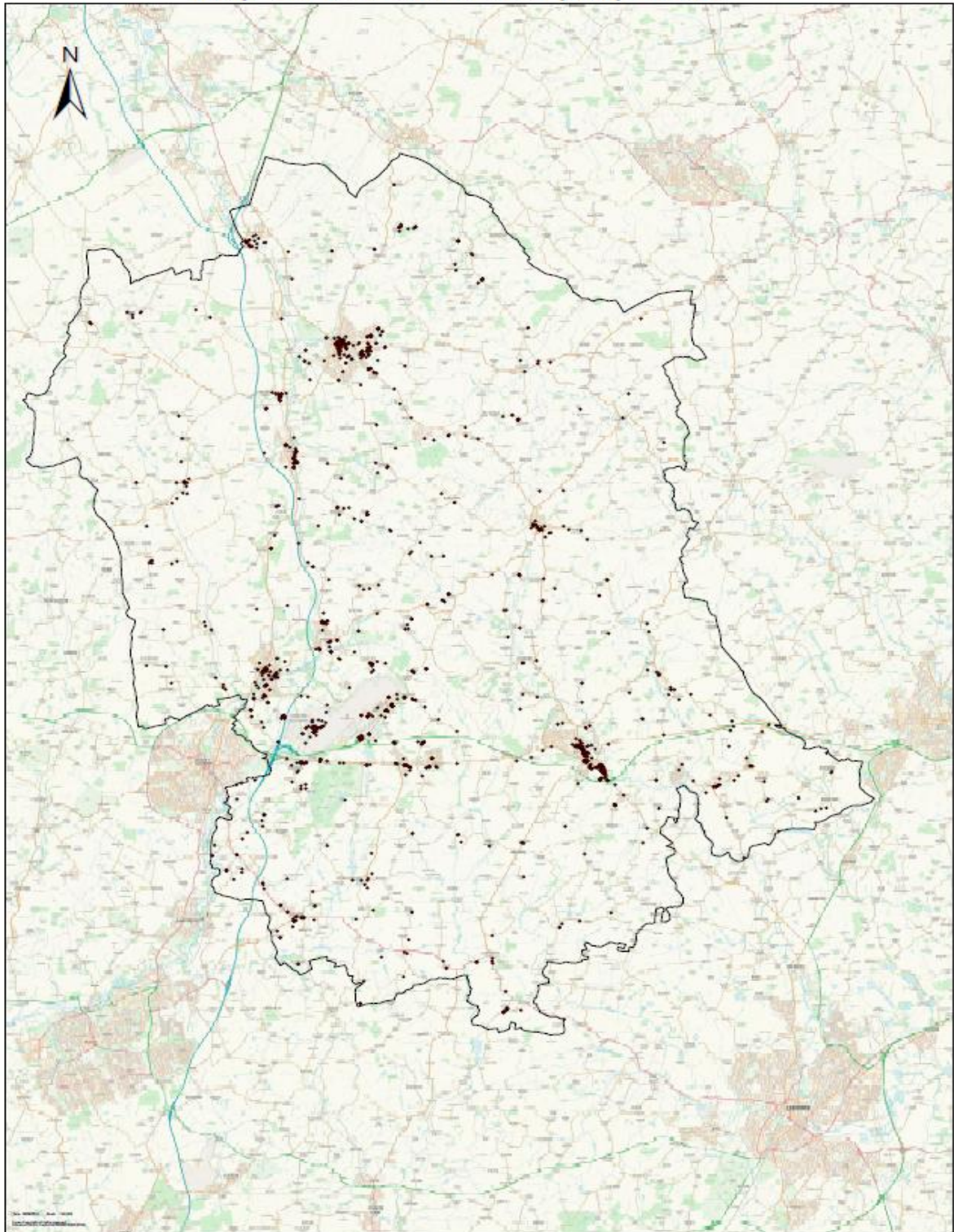
Uttlesford residents have higher earnings than average in the UK - on average full time Uttlesford residents earn £791.50 gross per week, compared with £682.60 in the UK.

However, data from Uttlesford Foodbank shows high levels of food bank usage in parts of the district by working families. This highlights the need for upskilling residents into better paid work.

ONS data shows there are 5,710 businesses in the district. Of these, 1,840 are outside the largest settlements of Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow and Stansted Mountfitchet.

Some 90.5% of Uttlesford-based businesses are micro, i.e. they employ between one and nine people. Only 75 businesses have over 50 employees.

## Map of non-domestic properties



This map supports us in identifying the 'out of town' non domestic properties. Our action plan includes how we will work with and support rural businesses, village pubs and shops, including industrial estates.

## Strengths and challenges of the district

Strengths	Challenges
Location - home to London Stansted Airport and easy access to other international gateways	Lack of new employment sites to meet future need
Attractive environment and high quality of life	Lack of public transport and reliance on car-based transport
Highly skilled residents (71.8% Level 3 or above)	Aging population
Low levels of unemployment	Rural isolation
High levels of micro businesses (0-9 employees)	High housing prices
Town centres with high proportion of independent traders	Limited Higher Education provision
High average earnings of residents	Recruitment challenges
Arts, culture and heritage assets	Small working population compared to surrounding local authority districts and high levels of dependency
	Not eligible for many public funding opportunities due to perceived affluence
	Limited access to good quality internet and phone signals

## Economic baseline

<b>Economic Indicator</b>	<b>Latest data for Uttlesford</b>	<b>East of England</b>	<b>UK</b>
Active businesses	5,630	269,575	n/a
Gross value added (£) per hour worked	30.7	Not available	39.7
Median Gross Weekly Full-time Earnings (£) by Residence	791.5	705.7	682.6
Economic Inactivity Rate (%)	18.1	19.9	21.4
Unemployment Rate (%)	2.1	3.5	4.3
National Vocational Qualification Level 3+ (%)	64.7	64.7	67.8
National Vocational Qualification Level 4+ (%)	54.3	42.8	47.3



## Growth

Between 2015 and 2019, Uttlesford saw relatively rapid employment growth of 5%. This expectedly levelled off between 2019-2021 due to the pandemic.

Development of the district's rural economy is essential for sustainable business growth, maximising opportunities for residents to work near to where they live.

Businesses in our smaller settlements and rural areas play a very important role in the local economy but often, because of their dispersed nature, do not have a significant profile.

Uttlesford has a higher proportion of micro businesses than the UK average. These small businesses support not only local growth but also form the backbone of our communities, providing employment, goods and services to local people.

The high levels of micro businesses illustrate the entrepreneurial nature of the residents. In 2023 a report by [money.co.uk](https://www.money.co.uk) revealed that Uttlesford was the district with the most opportunities for female entrepreneurs in the UK.

Uttlesford plays a valuable part in the UK Innovation Corridor, an economic region of global significance and the leading location for life sciences and knowledge-based industry. Chesterford Research Park, located in the north of the district, forms part of the Cambridge Cluster of life sciences and healthcare businesses within 20 miles of the centre of Cambridge. The cluster as a whole comprises 25,583 companies and in 2022/23 recorded a total turnover of £51bn.

The Uttlesford Employment Needs Report 2023 indicates that Transport, Warehouse and Postal will see the greatest increase in employment and growth in percentage (+29%) with an increase of 2,486 jobs between 2021-2041. Other high growth sectors include Professional and Scientific Services (+1,355 jobs), Accommodation and Food Services (1,057 jobs), Health (1,005 jobs) and Construction (+826 jobs).

The visitor economy is a key sector for the Uttlesford district. The total value of tourism to the district in 2022 was £189,541,000 and equated for 9.3% of all employment.

The visitor economy in Uttlesford is made up of:

- Visitors – leisure, business, shoppers, visitors to the town centres. Day and overnight stays
- Core supply chain – accommodation, attractions, bars and restaurants
- Related supply chain – retail, transport, other services i.e. food suppliers

The district's visitor economy represents the second most important income strand for the district after retail spending.

The historic town centres in both Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow are a draw for local shoppers and visitors alike. Both offer a range of independent stores, alongside friendly cafes and service businesses providing an enjoyable day out and the opportunity to acquire products that cannot be found elsewhere. The challenges facing retailers from the rise of online shopping are well documented and town centres must adapt to be resilient.

In addition to the town centres and villages the district contains a number of regionally and nationally important visitor attractions including Saffron Hall, Audley End House and Gardens, Audley End Miniature Railway, Mountfitchet Castle and Toy Museum and Hatfield Forest.

As a council UDC has pledged to take local action to prevent a climate and ecological crisis through the development of practices and policies, with an aim to achieving net-zero carbon status by 2030 and to protect and enhance biodiversity in the district.

Encouraging all businesses to cut carbon emissions will help UDC achieve its net zero ambitions and, as a consequence, help reduce global warming and the effects of climate change.

## Growth and Development sites

The emerging local plan identifies two main sites for commercial development:

- Chesterford Research Park
- Northside, London Stansted Airport

No further large sites will be made available under the emerging local plan.

The focus will be on attracting SME's to the district, urban infill and rural diversification projects centred on conversion of redundant agricultural buildings.

## Key developments:

### London Stansted Airport

London Stansted Airport has a significant impact on the district, with the area around it experiencing considerable housing and employment pressure, with accompanying transport challenges.

Owned by Manchester Airport Group (MAG) it is the biggest single-site employer in the East of England and is currently the fourth busiest airport in the UK, providing over 12,000 jobs across over 200 companies and contributing £1 billion annually to the national economy

MAG have recently unveiled a five-year £1.1bn investment programme that will deliver wide-ranging benefits to passengers and help secure links to even more global destinations.

The terminal development will help enable the airport serve up to 43 million passengers a year, which in turn will create up to 5,000 new on-site jobs and see the airport's economic contribution double to £2 billion annually.

In January 2025 Manchester Airport Group will be launching a consultation on the draft Sustainable Development Plan which sets out the context and approach to growing the airport over the next 20 years. The UDC response to this plan, and any subsequent planning application, will be assessed in line with the emerging local plan core policy 11.

### Chesterford Research Park

This research park located in the north of the district forms part of the high skilled Cambridge Cluster that relates to the high-skilled/ technical sector linked to Cambridge and its university.

The park is made up of 250 acres of parkland that contains facilities for various biotechnical, pharmaceutical, and technical research and development companies of many sizes. There is currently around 32,000 m<sup>2</sup> of commercial floorspace occupied by 27 tenants. Current occupiers include AstraZeneca, Isogenica, Microbiotica and Biomodal.

Chesterford Research Park is working closely with Granta Park, Babraham Research Park and the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute (in South Cambridgeshire) as part of the South East Cambridge Cluster. Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire form a world leading cluster of life sciences research institutes including Addenbrookes Hospital and Cambridge University. The evidence base for the Greater Cambridge authorities suggests a very positive outlook for the life sciences sector which will facilitate employment growth and floorspace demand.

The Park's masterplan sets out around 1m sq. ft for research and development uses of which approximately 350,000 sq. ft of space is already occupied.

Around 650,000 sq. ft (c.60,000 sq. m) is currently under construction. In addition, there is a hybrid application awaiting decision for approximately 22,000 sq. m (234,000 sq. ft).

Based on growth in recent years in the sector and high rates of demand for such accommodation, it would be reasonable to expect that by the end of the planned period the masterplan could have been developed in full. Assuming the 60,000 sq. m of remaining floorspace is built out in the planned period, at a density of 36 sq. m per FTE (Gross Internal Area), this would support around 1,700 additional jobs direct.

## Northside, London Stansted Airport

Led by Columbia Threadneedle Investments and its partners.

The site has an outline planning consent for the redevelopment of 61.88 Ha at Stansted Business Park, providing 195,100 sq. m of commercial/employment development predominantly storage and distribution and industrial. The planning consent includes supporting retail/food/beverage/nursery uses and associated highway works, substation, strategic landscaping and cycle route. The site will offer design and build packages for warehouse, industrial and office buildings ranging from 9,000 to 37,000 sq. ft. Discussions with the developers indicate an intent for the early phases to provide very large buildings over 200,000 sq. ft for national logistics type operators. Further phases will have a more diverse offer for mid and smaller units supporting airport and other businesses.

Oxford Economics, acting for the scheme promoters, estimate that the scheme will deliver 2,650 net additional local jobs, 2,010 of which will be based at the development and £81.4 million net GVA contributions per annum locally, phased from 2024 to 2028. This suggests employment densities of around 75 sq. m per FTE however larger units may be closer to 95 sq. m per FTE whilst smaller units could be lower. There are also expected to be temporary construction benefits of around 1,990 temporary jobs (2022-2028) that are likely to involve trades from around the region.

## Digital infrastructure

Businesses and homes throughout the district require access to appropriate superfast broadband and mobile communication. Any lack of availability of superfast broadband and 4th and 5th Generation mobile communication appropriate to business requirements is a barrier to business success and to the attraction of new investment into the district.

### Mobile connectivity

The [Ofcom Connected Nations data](#) shows that 4G mobile coverage is generally good across the district but some areas are only able to access coverage from one operator. Only 92% of premises receive coverage from all four major operators. This means that there is a chance that residents and businesses could be on the ‘wrong network’ adding to levels of exclusion and isolation for residents and reduced productivity levels for businesses.

3% of premises are unable to access 4G indoors from any of the four major mobile operators. This figure rises to 7% of premises in rural areas. Of most concern is the ‘flat’ trend for Indoors coverage with little or no change in the levels of indoors coverage for all four operators over the last 3 years.

5G coverage lags behind considerably with only 56% of premises receiving coverage from at least one operator.

With the switch from the copper network and 3G networks imminent, mobile network connectivity is vital as a form of emergency contact as power cuts could render ‘landline’ technologies dependent on fixed broadband connectivity out of action.

### Broadband coverage

Ofcom data shows a high level of superfast broadband across the district and the wider north Essex area, but the region is behind other comparable parts of the country for Ultrafast broadband.

<b>Superfast Broadband</b>	
<b>Authority</b>	<b>Premises %</b>
Tendring	97.8
Essex	96.9
Braintree	96.8
Colchester	96.2
Chelmsford	96.1
Maldon	96
Uttlesford	94.5

<b>Ultrafast Broadband</b>	
<b>Authority</b>	<b>Premises %</b>
Tendring	66.2
Essex	63
Braintree	59.4
Colchester	58.7
Chelmsford	58.1
Maldon	48.6
Uttlesford	14.8

## National and regional economic policy context

The economy in Uttlesford does not exist in isolation and alongside government strategy, Essex County Council and the North Essex Economic Board are of the greatest significance locally.

### UK Government

At the time of writing this report the UK Government are out to consultation on their new industrial strategy: Invest 2035. The report is expected in Spring 2025. The strategy will channel support to eight growth driving sectors to create the right conditions for increased investment, high quality jobs and ensuring tangible impact in communities.

The Small Business Strategy is also due in early 2025 and will set out measures to support SME's (small and medium enterprises) and drive growth across the country. Supporting small businesses on the high street will be at the heart of this vision, which will include measures to lower business tax rates for retail, hospitality and leisure properties, and help SMEs access finance. This is in addition to the action already announced to tackle the scourge of late payments that impact so many small firms, as well as new targeted advice and support for small exporters looking to trade around the world.

### Essex County Council sector development strategy

ECC published a 10-year strategy in 2022 with an ambition to create a stronger, more equal, and more sustainable economy.

5 economic sectors with opportunities for growth were identified:

- Construction and retrofit
- Clean energy
- Advanced manufacturing and engineering
- Digital Tech
- Life Sciences

In 2024 ECC took over responsibilities previously held by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) around business support and skills. The newly created Greater Essex Business Board comprises businesses from across Essex to steer the direction of business support and skills provision.

Since 2020 ECC also lead on the recommendations made by the Essex Climate Change Commission which includes working with local business to reduce carbon emissions. The Essex Climate Change team will be key partners for delivering messages to our business community.

### The North Essex Economic Board (NEEB)

The NEEB are the economic arm of the North Essex Councils and represents the economic ambitions of eight North Essex authorities: Braintree District Council, Chelmsford City Council, Colchester City Council, Essex County Council, Maldon District Council, Tendring District Council, Epping Forest District Council and Uttlesford District Council.

The aim is to use collective action to drive economic prosperity within all parts of the urban, rural and coastal regions. It provides the strategic oversight of North Essex's diverse, inclusive

and productive economic priorities, ensuring tangible actions are delivered to support residents' and businesses' goals and aspirations. Promoting the region's potential, the NEEB presents the strong strategic rationale for further central government and private sector investment, needed to deliver North Essex's long-term ambitions.

The economic strategy *Delivering for North Essex* was published in 2023, followed by a 4-year action plan outlining four key strategic priorities:

1. Innovative businesses and skilled residents
2. A green and high growth economy
3. A dynamic and connected region
4. Prosperous and inclusive communities

# Action plan

Nine priority areas have been identified that will positively impact sustainable economic growth. These priority areas will form the focus of the Economic Development Plan 2024-2029:

1. Supporting Town Centre economies
2. Rural business: villages and open countryside
3. Small business growth support
4. Promotion of entrepreneurship and business start-up support
5. Business sustainability and the green agenda
6. Tourism and the visitor economy
7. Skills and apprenticeships
8. Strategic level inward investment
9. Digital connectivity

Much of this work will be in partnership with other organisations. Together, we will build on the strengths of the economy as well as tackle any barriers that inhibit a stronger Uttlesford.

## 1. Supporting Town Centre economies

What we will do:

Support town centre businesses by:

- Working with all stakeholders, including town and parish councils, business groups and voluntary sector organisations to understand the challenges being faced by town centres and provide effective solutions
- Promotion of the town centres as a key part of our visitor offer
- Working with business support agencies to provide targeted support for town centre businesses
- Regular engagement with Saffron Walden BID, Great Dunmow Town Team, Stansted Business Forum and other business groups to promote what support, advice and funding is available to local businesses
- Provide networking opportunities to convene local businesses
- Ensure the district's parking provision supports economic growth

## 2. Rural business: villages and open countryside

What we will do:

- Recognising the importance individual shops, small parades of shops and other facilities such as pubs play in smaller settlements we will work with all stakeholders, including parish councils, business groups and voluntary sector organisations to understand the challenges being faced by rural business and provide effective solutions
- Support proposals for new shops and cafes or extensions to existing shops in smaller settlements where appropriate (Local Plan Development Policy 7)
- Rural business engagement programme:



- Engagement programme actively visiting businesses, particularly ‘last asset in village’ pubs and shops to understand needs of those businesses and offer signposting and support
- Support for pubs to diversify their services, perhaps hosting community events, workshops or hosting pop up services that are difficult to access elsewhere in a rural community/village.
- Identify opportunities for Health and Wellbeing activities in pubs that could be supported by a range of providers and through social prescribing
- Work with Parishes and community groups to facilitate applications where appropriate to become assets of community value
- Support and provide information for community takeovers of pubs where there is an interest and need
- Support planning applications to convert redundant agricultural buildings to commercial units (Emerging local plan core policy 21)
- Provide networking opportunities to convene local businesses

### 3. Small business growth support

What we will do:

- Build and maintain relationships with businesses to ensure they are aware of what support is on offer
- Develop relationships with businesses based in our industrial estates
- Provide a procurement pipeline by publishing our contract register on the Uttlesford Business Website, supporting local businesses to bid for Council contracts
- Provide networking opportunities to bring local business owners together and provide access to business support providers
- Promotion of the benefits of businesses adopting green practices to help the district achieve net zero status by 2030
- Championing Uttlesford businesses whilst working in partnership with NEEB, ECC and Visit Essex
- Working with business support agencies to provide targeted support for rural business
- Horizon scanning for opportunities of interest to local businesses
- Signpost to relevant support by keeping the UDC Business Support Guide and business website regularly updated
- Promote the Uttlesford Business Directory which helps to promote inter-trading and assists the generation of business growth in the district
- Carry out a bi-annual business needs survey to include health of business, skills and infrastructure requirements. This will help us understand and quantify the specific needs of micro, small and medium employers
- Maintain and develop effective ways of engaging with local businesses including e-newsletters, online webinars, drop-in sessions, events and social media

## 4. Promotion of entrepreneurship and business start-up support

What we will do:

- Signpost to relevant support by keeping the UDC Business Start-up guide and business website regularly updated
- Work with support agencies providing support and advice for budding entrepreneurs
- Provide opportunities for budding entrepreneurs to meet up in a supportive environment
- Promote entrepreneurialism as a career pathway, particularly for young people
- Actively engage with Let's do Business' annual Start-up September campaign with networking events to promote business support programmes to assist those looking to start their business by being able to access expert advice before and in the early stages of establishing their business
- Work with the North Essex Economic Board on the *Young Entrepreneurs* programme; a training course for budding entrepreneurs and a series of youth markets across North Essex in association with National Market Traders Federation
- Seek to retain talent in the district with a school engagement programme, including attendance at careers fairs, promoting entrepreneurialism as a career pathway

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*Key partner:*

*North Essex Economic Board – partnership fee £10,000 pa*

*A young entrepreneurs programme is in development as part of the NEEB action plan which includes training courses for budding entrepreneurs, delivered by Earniversity and The Rebel Business School, a series of youth markets across north Essex in association with the National Market Traders Federation.*

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## 5. Business sustainability and the green agenda

What we will do:

- Provide guidance and support for businesses to reduce their energy consumption and adopt more environmentally friendly solutions, and seize opportunities where the environment can be improved via grants or new ways of working.
- Support for the circular economy
- Work with colleagues in the UDC Climate Team, ECC and NEEB promoting initiatives aimed at small business owners
- Work with waste team developing commercial recycling
- Encourage the use of active travel

## 6. Tourism and the visitor economy

What we will do:

- Be a member of Visit Essex marketing the district to visitors
- Support Visit Essex with the development of a destination management plan to align with the recently achieved Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) accreditation
- Continue with the *Discover Uttlesford* initiative promoting the district's visitor economy via the website, Discover App and social media
- Promote Uttlesford as a place for day visits and overnight stays
- Promotion of our town centres and independent businesses as a key part of our visitor offer
- Promotion of digital walking trails on the *Discover Uttlesford* website and app
- Engagement with visitor economy businesses to understand needs, promote *Discover Uttlesford* as an initiative, promote business support agencies and facilitate collaboration with other visitor economy businesses
- Support new development to advance tourism and the visitor economy as set out in the emerging Local Plan ((Emerging local plan core policy 21)

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### *Key Partner:*

*Visit Essex - £2,445 pa membership fee*

In 2024 Visit Essex received accreditation as a Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP). LVEP's are administered by Visit England and formed part of the UK Government's response to the recommendations of the independent review of Destination Management Organisations in England to reduce fragmentation and provide a more cohesive vehicle for developing local visitor economies across England. Visit Essex are working on a destination management plan with a clear vision, objectives and actions to drive the growth of the visitor economy. The aim is to design a plan that all the industry inputs into, agrees and shares, including all local authorities.

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## 7. Skills and apprenticeships

What we will do:

- Engagement with Essex Chambers on the formation and delivery of the Local Skills Improvement Plan
- Work with ECC to identify future skills opportunities and promote programmes to address skills gaps
- Work with ECC and Greater Essex Careers Hub to develop a programme encouraging local business and trades to take on apprenticeships and work experience
- Ensure developers deliver site specific Employment and Skills Plans for large scale developments as part of their s106 obligations (Emerging Local Plan core policy 49)

- Promotion and signposting of national initiatives, including the recently announced Skills England
- Attend careers fairs and support Stansted Airport College

## 8. Strategic level inward investment

What we will do:

- Build strategic relationships with neighbouring authorities within our region
- Membership of the UK Innovation Corridor
- Support the development and promotion of ECC's 'This is Essex' Inward Investment website and publicity campaign
- Work with partners in the North Essex Economic Board on an inward investment platform proposition for the North Essex region
- Support planning applications to convert redundant agricultural buildings to commercial units and applications for employment land on windfall sites (Emerging local plan policies 45)
- Work with colleagues in the Planning department to deliver good quality commercial schemes that deliver employment and benefit local communities
- Focus on attracting SME's by utilising the Uttlesford Business website to promote the district and recognising and celebrating business success in the district
- Attend events to promote the district as a place to do business

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*Key Partners:*

*UK Innovation Corridor - £10,000 pa partnership fee*

*A partnership bringing together local government, private business, universities and colleges in a strategic partnership joining the country's two most productive cities, London and Cambridge which host clusters of hi-tech businesses in sectors such as life, health and data sciences, aggrotech and advanced manufacturing*

*Essex County Council*

*ECC are launching a new Inward Investment platform in 2024, This is Essex, which will have 5 key focus areas: Invest, Study, Film, Visit, Live*

*NEEB - £20,000 pa partnership fee*

*A scoping project is underway for an inward investment proposition for the region*

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## 9. Digital connectivity

What we will do:

- Encourage greater take-up of digital engagement not only with council services but also as a means to reduce social isolation and help residents get better value for money on products and services.
- Promote skills courses and initiatives to tackle digital exclusion.  
*NOTE: The Council is currently funding the [WECAN Digital Inclusion project](#). This is a project to help residents get online, dispel fears about using the internet and also make best use of being online. Donated IT equipment, such as smartphones and laptops are repurposed and provided free of charge to those who need them, alongside data cards. Over the last 12 months the programme has focused on Uttlesford residents who are both digitally excluded and rurally isolated, including residents in Council run sheltered housing schemes*
- Engage with ECC's Digital Essex team on the *Digital Strategy for Essex* to ensure that no individual or business is excluded from digital opportunities due to lack of high-speed and affordable broadband connections, equipment, or skills
- Work with key partners to identify funding opportunities to improve connectivity in the district
- Ensure all new development proposals demonstrate suitable broadband connectivity (Emerging local plan policy 70)

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*Key partner:*

*Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ) - £10,000 pa partnership fee*

*The Council is an active partner in the [DIZ](#), established to ensure the benefits of digital investment are harnessed, maximised and shared across residents, commuters and businesses. The DIZ comprises 7 local authority partners from the functional economic area between London and Cambridge.*

*The DIZ host monthly online meetings aimed at public and private sector organisations focusing on new and innovative ways to use technology. In 2023/24, meetings were attended by over 130 attendees from 36 organisations.*

*The 2024-26 Strategy identifies initiatives to run across the geography of the partner districts including a mobile connectivity mapping project to identify not just where mobile operators claim there is service but the speed and signal strength. It would allow residents and businesses to make informed choices about their mobile connectivity options and could form part of evidence base for funding opportunities.*

*The DIZ works alongside ECC and Hertfordshire County Council on funding bids to support the implementation of digital connectivity infrastructure such as 5G masts or small cell technology installed on street furniture, such as lampposts. There has been a recent unsuccessful bid, but future funding opportunities are expected to arise.*

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## References

NOMIS Uttlesford Profile 2024

Regulation 19 Uttlesford Local Plan 2021-2041

Sustainable Transport Evidence Base and Strategy 2024

Uttlesford Employment Needs Update 2023

Uttlesford Employment Land Review 2024

The Essex Sector Development Report: Autumn 2023

North Essex Economic Board: Delivering for North Essex 2023

Digital Innovation Zone Master Connectivity Digest 2023

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