

## **Councillor John Evans, Portfolio Holder for Planning**

### **Report to Full Council – 22 April 2025**

#### **Local Plan**

Since my last update to Council we have received the Stage 1 Matters, Issues & Questions (MIQs) from Inspectors Guy Davies and William Cooper. This sets out the questions and lines of inquiry the Inspectors intend to take at the Examination in Public (EiP).

Messrs G Davies and W Cooper have also set out the EiP programme. Public hearings will be held from 10 to 19 June (with reserve days held on 20 June, and 29 – 31 July). The hearings are likely to be held in the Council Offices in Saffron Walden and will be streamed online. Consideration was given to holding some of the hearings at the council's offices in Little Canfield however, this was found impractical.

To make a submission to the examination, Councillors, residents, and interested parties must have submitted a representation at the Regulation 19 stage raising an objection to the Plan. The schedule of public hearings can be found on our new dedicated website [www.localplanservices.co.uk/uttlesfordlpexamination](http://www.localplanservices.co.uk/uttlesfordlpexamination).

Any representor eligible to make a representation to the examination who wishes to participate at the hearing should advise our programme officer (whose details are on the above website) of their intention in writing no later than **5pm on Wednesday, 7 May 2025**, stating which session(s) they wish to attend.

On 27 March, Cabinet gave formal approval for our officers to proceed to draw up a draft Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule for Uttlesford. The draft schedule will be ready for review by Cabinet by July 2025 with a public consultation to follow. It is intended the final CIL Charging Schedule will be adopted as a supplementary planning document (SPD), that will sit below the local plan and enable the council (and third tier councils) to fund infrastructure across the district.

#### **Development Management**

The latest MHCLG planning performance statistics were published in late March. These show Uttlesford is now performing well-within the levels required and on the right side of the designation threshold. Only 4.5% of the council's major planning decisions were overturned on appeal in the preceding 24 month period. As we know, the threshold for designation is at 10%. We have provided various statistics and other information to MHCLG Officials and await the Secretary of State's consideration of this matter.

Our planning application performance is now strong across all areas (quality and speed of decisions).

In terms of Planning Enforcement, we have two cases currently with the courts for prosecution. These relate to individuals' failure to comply with enforcement notices. In the last month, officers have also served a Temporary Stop Notice on an unauthorised

traveller site, and a Listed Building Enforcement Notice required to correct unauthorised works to an important listed building.

Our Planning Committee Working Group is soon to meet in order to agree the Members' Training Programme for 2025/26 and review our appeals performance. Members and officers remain fully supportive of continuing professional development in the areas of planning law and best practice.

On the heritage front, we are continuing to review means whereby further support can be provided to owners of listed buildings and approval processes possibly streamlined where retrofitting energy saving features are concerned. This is not a straight forward exercise since national policy and statutory considerations need to be taken into account. External guidance will be sought from, among others, Historic England and Place Services so that, when supported by policy and legislation, we can further support the application of new sustainable technologies into our heritage buildings.

### **Building Control**

Our fully qualified and registered Building Control Team maintained our market share of building control work in the district throughout the last municipal year. Our small team accounted for 78% of all building regulations applications in the district with just 22% going to the 32 private companies that are in competition with the council.

In March, the team had to serve a notice on a homeowner in Great Dunmow to correct a fire safety issue in a recently constructed loft conversion, and officers remain on call 24 hours a day for structural emergencies.

The Government recently published its response to the final Grenfell Inquiry Report. Key issues relating specifically to Building Control include that the government's new Building Safety Regulator is also now the building control authority for all decisions relating to higher-risk buildings, meaning these decisions have already been taken out of private-sector hands. Government has set out that it will work with a new independent panel (which will monitor conflicts of interest in the profession), the Building Safety Regulator, and the wider building control sector (including UDC Building Control) to establish a "shared long-term and financially sustainable vision for building control services". It recognises that there needs to be a significant increase in capacity in the building control profession to deliver its ambitions. The government will be working with the sector to support the recruitment and training of significantly greater numbers of building inspectors. Uttlesford is leading the way, already supporting our two trainees through intensive training over the next two and half years, using apprenticeship levy funding.