

Committee: Scrutiny Committee

Date: 3 June 2025

Title: Local Plan: Project Plan Update

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Summary

1. This report provides an update on local plan progress up to mid-May 2025, including risks, mitigations and resourcing. The revised Local Plan timetable (LDS), first established at this Committee in March 2023, is on course and the required actions have been met. Risks have been identified and the risk register updated accordingly.
2. The Local Plan was submitted to government / Planning Inspectorate on 18 December 2024 and Examination in Public Hearings are scheduled between 10 – 20 June (with reserve days in July).

Recommendations

3. That the Committee notes the conclusions of the report on risk and project management and provides its views on the matters covered in the report.

Financial Implications

4. Within existing local plan budget.

Background Papers

5. The Regulation 19 Local Plan can be found at [Local Plan \(Regulation 19\) consultation - Uttlesford District Council](#)
6. All examination paperwork and the hearings schedule can be found at [Uttlesford Local Plan Examination](#)

Impact

Communication / Consultation	The Reg19 Local Plan was subject to a 10 week consultation August to October 2024. Should the Planning Inspectors require main modifications to the plan these too will be subject to consultation in the second half of 2025.
Community safety	None
Equalities	None

Health & Safety	None
Human Rights / Legal	None
Sustainability	The plan will have positive impacts on sustainability and bio-diversity district-wide.
Ward-specific Impacts	All wards
Workforce / Workplace	None

Situation

General Update

7. Since the committee last reviewed progress, a number of key actions have been undertaken as follows:
 - 18 December 2024 – Local Plan submitted to government / PINS
 - 9 January 2025 – Two examining Inspectors appointed by Secretary of State
 - 16 January 2025 – Council finalised a list of suggested modifications to the plan for the Inspectors to consider. This was at the Inspectors' request and based on suggestions and corrections raised by third parties at the Regulation 19 consultation. The Council cannot make main modifications itself at this stage. Only the Inspectors can.
 - 27 January – The Inspectors wrote to the Council with a number of initial questions and points of clarification, giving the Council a tight deadline for response.
 - 12 February – Officers responded on behalf of Council after briefing key Members (Cabinet Member and Local Plan Panel Chair).
 - 3 April – Inspectors wrote to the Council and all other interested parties with almost 200 further questions and points of clarification. These are known as the Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs). Inspectors identified 7 main matters which will form the basis for the June hearings.
 - 14 May – Officers responded to all questions on behalf of the Council after briefing key Members.
8. All of the above has been / will be published online on the Uttlesford Examination website localplanservices.co.uk/uttlesfordlpexamination. This website is hosted independently of the Council by an external programme officer. Council officers do not administer the website, nor can they make changes to it, or the documents posted on it.
9. Various interested parties (consultees, developers, residents, parish councils, etc that had been involved previously) were given the opportunity to make further representations on the issues and questions raised by the Inspectors via the MIQ consultation referred to above. Copies of all responses will be published

on the abovementioned website (they were not published at time of writing). To ensure transparency everyone will be able to see everyone else's comments, including the Council's, ahead of the Examination Hearings.

10. In response to the above, one of the risk register risks (ID12) has been updated to reflect that further issues to be addressed may be raised in the soon-to-be-published interested party responses. The Risk Register is appended as **Appendix 1**.

Risks

11. The Risk Register is up to date with the latest position. All but one risk is now green. Risk ID01 pertaining to staffing and resources has been suitably mitigated as per the register. In terms of ID02 (evidence base), further work is being produced to support supplementary elements of the plan. For example, the district's gypsy and traveller needs are already evolving since the Reg18 work was carried out and will likely require a further development plan document (DPD) to be produced following adoption of the Local Plan document.
12. Risk ID 05, the choice of proposed sites, is being closely monitored. It is expected the MIQ responses by interested parties, and statements made during the hearings, will robustly test the sites chosen in the Local Plan. Officers will continue to consider any new information that arises and have negotiated further Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) with key stakeholders, including National Highways, Essex Country Council, the National Trust, and Manchester Airports Group.
13. In terms of risks around the changing national policy landscape (Risk ID 08b), the Inspectors have noted (in their letter of 2 April 2025) that subject to any contrary view, the Local Plan will be examined under the December 2023 version of the NPPF. This is as per the government's transitional arrangements which the Council was able to take advantage of by progressing to submission promptly in 2024. This risk remains open in the event an interested party challenges that point. Of course, if that point is successfully challenged (which is very unlikely), the Local Plan may have to make provision for increased housing requirements.
14. As referred to above, Risk ID 12 is the only risk that remains 'amber'. The Council can expect a number of responses from interest parties to the issues and questions raised in the Inspectors' MIQ letter of 2 April. Those responses are expected to be published w/c 30 May. Officers will then have just two weeks to ensure all those points are reviewed and can be robustly responded to by the time the hearings commence on Tuesday 10 June. All plans normally require some form of modification as a result of the initial EIP hearings and there will no doubt be some made to our Local Plan. Ministers expect issues to be resolved quickly through the modifications process. This risk will thus be updated during the summer once issues are known and, crucially, the timescales are known.

15. A specific project plan for the modifications period will be drawn-up as required following June. The need for significant numbers of modifications will also have budgetary implications. Officers have made some contingency for this.

Conclusion

16. The Council has made meaningful progress on the Local Plan, meeting critical deadlines and addressing initial scrutiny from Inspectors. Although the risk environment has stabilised significantly the outcome of pending stakeholder responses (MIQs) remains the key focus. Officers are preparing for hearings set to begin on 10 June 2025, with a project plan to be developed for the post-hearing modification phase. We now need to ensure the Local Plan passes through examination without triggering substantial delays that require withdrawal.
17. It is considered that the Council remains well placed to be able to deliver an up-to-date local plan by 2026, as planned.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Failure to successfully Project Manage the Local Plan will result in an unsound Plan or inability to adopt the plan within government deadlines.	1 – various elements of risk involved (see appendix 1)	4 - Lack of an adopted (or advanced local plan) leading to potentially unacceptable development and government intervention.	Various mitigations in place. No risks rated RED.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Local Plan Risk Register