

**Committee:** Local Plan Panel

**Date:** Wednesday  
24 September 2025

**Title:** Local Plan Main Modifications Update

**Report Author:** Dean Hermitage – Strategic Director of  
Planning

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## Summary

1. This report provides an update on the Local Plan, which was subject to Examination in Public (EiP) hearings in June. During the hearings the Examining Inspectors recorded a number of required modifications to the Local Plan.
2. Following those hearings, the appointed Inspectors published a post-hearing note setting out their provisional conclusions and further 'main modifications' to the Local Plan. Those modifications now form the basis of a public consultation after which the inspectors issue their final report on the Local Plan. The Examination remains open.
3. This report is to brief the Panel on those 'main modifications' (MMs). Further detail will be provided verbally at the meeting.

## Recommendations

4. That the Panel notes the update and provides any feedback on progress and next steps.

## Financial Implications

5. Within existing local plan budget.

## Background Papers

6. Inspectors' post-hearing note including main modification requests [017f5b\\_bf62550d1d54440d95d5f919f3641fef.pdf](https://consult.uttlesford.gov.uk/planning-policy/local-plan-main-modifications-consultation).
7. The Schedule of Main Modifications for consultation <https://consult.uttlesford.gov.uk/planning-policy/local-plan-main-modifications-consultation>

Communication / Consultation	The publication version (Regulation 19) Plan was subject to 10 week public consultation. The Main modifications are subject to a further 6 week consultation.
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Community safety	None
Equalities	None
Health & Safety	None
Human Rights / Legal	None
Sustainability	The Local Plan will have positive impacts on sustainability across the district.
Ward-specific Impacts	All wards
Workforce / Workplace	None

## Situation

### *Summary of Current Position*

8. The Local Plan hearings took place between 10 and 19 June and some 100 participants took part. The Inspectors explored 147 lines of inquiry (as set out in their Matters, Issues and Questions letter of 2 April 2025).
9. Throughout the hearings, the Inspectors explored the potential for ‘main modifications’ (MMs) to resolve any soundness and legal compliance issues identified. Following the hearings the Inspectors wrote to the council setting out a number of MMs required. A ‘MM’ is a change to submitted Local Plan that is identified and developed as part of discussions during the examination process. MMs are only put forward if they are necessary to make the submitted plan sound and legally compliant. There are other modifications, known as ‘additional modifications’ and these are not changes of substance. They are generally improvements to wording, correction of typos, etc. This report is concerned only with MMs.
10. The MMs required are a decision for the Inspectors, hence this report is for information only and the Panel is not being asked to consider further changes to them. MMs must be subject to public consultation, which is without prejudice to the Inspectors’ final conclusions.
11. The council is currently consulting on the MMs. Once the consultation is completed, all comments on the Main Modifications will be reviewed by the Planning Inspectors. If they are happy that the Local Plan can then proceed to adoption, they will write their final report, setting out the Main Modifications that the council must make to adopt the Local Plan.
12. The schedule of MMs is published for consultation (see background papers, above). An update to the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations

Assessments have also been produced to ensure the impacts of modifications are fully considered in those terms.

13. Where no modification is sought to a policy, one might reasonably assume that the Inspectors consider that element to be sound and legally compliant without any further changes required.

### *Summary of Key MMs*

14. MM2: The table in Core Policy 2 (CP2) is to be updated with the latest housing completions and commitments figures, and larger village and Newport allocations reduced from 900 to 847 accordingly.
15. MM3: A Local Plan review policy is added as CP2a as while it is expected that an appropriate five-year land supply position will be demonstrated at, or soon after, the adoption of the Local Plan, a Local Plan Review policy is included in case this is not demonstrated around six months after Plan adoption. At the time of the hearings the Inspectors considered the plan demonstrated 4.77 years supply (with the current 20% buffer taken into account). By the time of adoption officers expect the required buffer to be only 5% giving the plan a 5.4 year supply.
16. MM5: Adds a review mechanism (CP6a) so that if Newport Parish Council does not have a 'made' neighbourhood plan with sufficient allocations to deliver its housing requirement within the two years after the local plan is adopted, then the council will instead make the allocations in either a Local Plan Review or other Development Plan Document. This is to ensure the delivery of the Newport housing requirement during the plan period.
17. MM7: CP8 seeks to safeguard land south of Saffron Walden for a future section of link road between Thaxted Road and Newport Road. However, the Inspectors consider the road is not required to deliver any of the strategic site allocations included in the Plan at Saffron Walden. Neither is there any evidence that the land in question is under threat of development for other purposes. The Inspectors consider the policy should be deleted.
18. MM8 and MM9 are updates to the site template maps at Dunmow and Takeley. The Dunmow map is given greater clarity and the Takeley map removes the recently allowed Bulls Field application from the allocation (it has become a 'commitment' and no longer part of the site allocation).
19. MM10: This updates the policy on Stansted Airport, separating aerodrome safeguarding from operational matters into a new Policy CP32a, modifying the reference to parking such that control over off-airport parking becomes part of general parking policies, and simplifying the airport designation in CP11.

20. MM11: Amends CP13 to make provision for safeguarding land between Takeley 4 Ashes and Taylors Farm Employment Area for a shared use cycle/ walking facility, and routes between Takeley to London Stansted Airport. The land safeguarded for a potential road access from Taylors Farm to the A120 is unchanged.
21. MM14: Core Policy 18 proposes to safeguard an area of land adjacent to Forest Hall Secondary School to prevent other development precluding the potential for its future expansion. The Inspectors consider there is insufficient justification to show that there is a need to expand Forest Hall Secondary School during the Plan period and that its safeguarding be removed. CP18 is to be deleted.
22. MM16: CP19 sets out the housing numbers required in larger villages. As we have more permissions and completions since Reg19 these requirements can reduce. All villages numbers are reduced slightly.
23. MM19: CP22 is the policy on Net Zero. There is only a minor change to the wording of this policy. We may therefore assume that the high standards for net zero, energy use and renewable energy set out in the policy are to remain as submitted. The same can be said of our water resource policy.
24. MM40: CP60 concerns Gypsy & Traveller provision. This policy is to be amended to reflect that the Council must prepare a separate Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document that will allocate new Gypsy and Traveller sites sufficient to meet the identified need (which is now greater than identified at Reg19) on new sites.
25. MM63: Changes the map in Annex 9 to remove the Airport's balancing ponds from the CPZ as required by the Inspectors. The remainder of the CPZ remains as submitted.

### *Next Steps*

26. Once the MM consultation closes all responses will be sent to the Local Plan Inspectors to consider before they prepare their final report. In line with the government's examination process, comments should relate only to the identified wording changes in the schedule. Comments on other matters are not being sought.
27. The Inspectors will consider all the representations made on the proposed MMs before finalising their examination report. Further hearing sessions will only be held the Inspectors consider them essential to deal with substantial issues raised in the representations.
28. Assuming there are no further hearings needed, the Inspectors' final report is likely to be received before the end of the calendar year. It will set out the finalised MMs, provide an assessment on 'soundness' and of 'legal compliance'

and include an overall recommendation on whether the plan should be adopted with or without MMs, or that it should not be adopted. Following receipt of the report a further meeting of the Local Plan Panel will be held (likely early in 2026) to review the Inspectors' report and make a recommendation to Cabinet and Council. From there (and assuming the Inspectors consider the plan can be adopted), the matter will be put to full Council for adoption in accordance with the LDS Programme.

## Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Failure to successfully steer the local plan to submission may result in government intervention and continued speculative development in the meantime.	2 – LDS, project plan and LPP in place.	4 - Lack of an adopted (or advanced local plan) leading to potentially unacceptable development.	Various mitigations in place.

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.