Annexe 9

Sustainability Appraisal Adoption Statement

Uttlesford District Council: Local Plan 2021-41

March 2026

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1. Introduction

1.1. It is a requirement that a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is undertaken for the Uttlesford Local Plan 2021-2041 in-line with the procedures prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and Regulation 26 of the Town & Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012.

1.2. Regulation 16 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes 2004 (from here on referred to as the 'EA regulations') sets out the requirements with regard to the adoption procedures of the SA.

1.3. This **Adoption Statement** for the SA of the Uttlesford Local Plan 2021-2041 has been prepared in accordance with the EA regulations. This statement sets out the following:

- How environmental and sustainability considerations have been integrated into the Local Plan;
- How the Environmental Report has been taken into account;
- How the results of consultation have been taken into account;
- Reasons for choosing the Local Plan as adopted, in the light of other reasonable alternatives; and
- Measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant sustainability and environmental effects of the implementation of the Local Plan.

1.4. Uttlesford District Council adopted the Uttlesford Local Plan 2021-2041 on 25th March 2026. The Local Plan period start date is 2021 as this is the base date for the evidence prepared to support the Local Plan. Considerable consultation and policy preparation have since been undertaken to identify and provide for the development needs of the District over the plan period.

1.5. The Local Plan has been produced in line with the requirements of the Town & Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended). It has been subject to independent examination with public hearings in June 2025, culminating in the Planning Inspectorate's Final Report (January 2026)[1]. Throughout this process, the SA informed plan-making and ensured that the process followed the relevant EA regulations.

1.6. The key dates of the Local Plan process are set out in **Table 1**.

Stage	Dates
Issues and Options Consultation	November 2020 – April 2021
Regulation 18 Consultation	November 2023 – December 2023

[1] Planning Inspectorate (2026) Report on the Examination of the Uttlesford Local Plan 2021-2041. https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/media/14064/Local-Plan-Inspectors-Report/pdf/Uttlesford_Local_Plan_2021-2041_Examination_Report.pdf?m=1768841792443

Regulation 19 Consultation	August – October 2024
Submission	December 2024
Examination Hearing Sessions	June 2025
Main Modifications Consultation	September - October 2025
Inspectors Final Report	January 2026
Local Plan Adoption	March 2026

Table 1: Local Plan Process

2. How Environmental and Sustainability Considerations have been Integrated into the Uttlesford Local Plan 2021-2041 and how the Environmental Report has been taken into Account

2.1. The SA of the Uttlesford Local Plan has been an iterative process, undertaken throughout the plan's preparation in accordance with the EA regulations.

SA Scoping Report (August 2021)[2]

2.2. An initial SA scoping report was published for consultation for 6 weeks in August and September 2021. Typically, this consultation would be limited to a small number of statutory consultation bodies (including the Historic England, Environment Agency and Natural England), however, the Council opened this consultation to the wider public to ensure everyone had the opportunity to comment on the scope of social, economic, and environmental matters to be considered. The baseline information included in this report and the responses received informed the scope of the SA and the establishment of a suitable framework to assess the sustainability of the Uttlesford Local Plan. The SA framework that stemmed from this process is shown in **Table 2** below.

SA Topic	Objective
Accessibility	*Ensure good access to existing and planned community infrastructure whilst retaining and protecting settlement identities and rural values.*
Biodiversity	*Maintain and enhance the extent and quality of biodiversity and geodiversity sites and networks within and surrounding the District. Account for recreational pressure on internationally and nationally designated sites as a key issue.*
Climate change adaptation	*Increase resilience to the effects of climate change, including increased flooding, droughts and heatwaves. Explore options for natural flood risk management.*

[2] AECOM (2021) Uttlesford Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/media/11049/UDC-Local-Plan-SA-Scoping-Report-final-draft-for-consultation-Aug-2021/pdf/UDC_Local_Plan_SA_Scoping_Report_final_draft_for_consultation_Aug_2021.pdf?m=1628614581310

Climate change mitigation	*Reduce per capita (i.e. per person) contribution to climate change, with a focus on both built environment and transport emissions.*
Communities, equality, inclusion and health	*Support high quality living environments and strong communities, including good relations fostered between people and groups.* *Support healthy lifestyles for all groups, reducing health inequalities and delivering positive outcomes, including via access to services/facilities and green infrastructure / open space (including with a focus on key groups such as people with restricted mobility and low-income households) and enabling active travel.*
Economy and employment	*Grow a sustainable and inclusive economy, building upon strengths and opportunities and increasing long-term economic resilience.*
Historic environment	*Conserve and enhance valued assets, including their setting, and also conserve / enhance historic character at a range of scales.*
Homes	*Provide for housing needs as far as possible, increase access to high-quality housing of the right type and tenure, including affordable housing.*
Land, soils and resources	*Ensure the efficient and effective use of land, including accounting for the grade of productive agricultural land.*
Landscape	*Protect and enhance the character and quality of the diverse landscapes at a range of scales, e.g. river valleys, chalk influenced landscapes, ancient farmed landscapes, wooded landscapes and settlement gaps. Support strategic green / blue infrastructure, including long distance walk/cycle routes.*
Transport	*Promote modal shift away from the private car and reduce the need to travel, whilst protecting residents and the natural environment from the impacts of congestion, air pollution and noise pollution. Preserve areas of rural tranquillity.*
Water	*Protect and enhance water quality, including by careful consideration of wastewater treatment capacity, and recognising existing issues of water courses not achieving target status. Account for water resource / supply constraints in the context of increasing demand and the importance of water levels for habitats.*

Table 2: Sustainability Assessment Framework

Interim SA Report (October 2023)[3]

2.3. At Regulation 18 stage, an interim SA was carried out to appraise the draft Local Plan and its impacts upon the aforementioned topics (Table 2), specifically under the context of any 'reasonable alternatives' that may exist. The interim SA concluded that the draft Local Plan presented at the time was predicted to have moderate or uncertain positive effects under four topic headings (Accessibility, Biodiversity, Economy/ Employment and Homes), moderate or uncertain negative effects under two headings (Historic Environment and Land/Soils), and broadly neutral effects on the remaining topic headings. Where recommendations were made by the interim SA in relation to mitigating the potential adverse effects caused by plan proposals, these were considered when drafting the 'submission' Regulation 19 Local Plan. The Council considered such recommendations within the context of ensuring the policies of the Local Plan would not jeopardise development viability when taken as a whole.

SA Report of the Submission Local Plan (June 2024)[4]

2.4. For the Regulation 19 'pre-submission' Plan, the final SA report was produced. This reported the work undertaken to examine the 'reasonable alternatives', presented an appraisal of them, and explained the Council's reasons for selecting the preferred growth strategy. This report took a finer grain approach than its interim predecessor, assessing the environmental implications of the plan and 'reasonable alternatives' but with a spatial, site-specific focus. This report again highlighted a mixture of positive, neutral, and negative impacts for all growth scenarios, but demonstrated the justification for the Council's preferred strategy. It was noted within the report that opportunities would exist through the 'Examination in Public' process to make improvements to the Local Plan that could bolster its positive environmental and sustainability impacts.

SA Report Addendum (September 2025)[5]

2.5. During the examination process, several Main Modifications were required by the Inspectors of the Plan. Consequently, a further addendum to the SA was then produced in September 2025 which appraised these modifications and their environmental or sustainability implications. This report clarified that, in relation to the Main Modifications, there were no 'reasonable alternatives'. It also found that none of the

[3] AECOM (2023) Uttlesford Interim Sustainability Appraisal https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/media/12622/Uttlesford-Local-Plan-SA-Interim-SA-Report-231031/pdf/Uttlesford_Local_Plan_SA_-_Interim_SA_Report_231031.pdf?m=1701349884223
[4] AECOM (2024) Uttlesford Sustainability Appraisal https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/media/13249/Uttlesford-Local-Plan-SA-SA-Report-240730/pdf/Uttlesford_Local_Plan_SA_-_SA_Report_240730.pdf?m=1722945798147
[5] AECOM (2025) Uttlesford Sustainability Appraisal Addendum https://consult.uttlesford.gov.uk/planning-policy/local-plan-main-modifications-consultation/supporting_documents/2025-09-15-ulp-main-modifications-sustainability-appraisalpdf

Main Modifications generated significant effects, either alone or in combination, nor did the proposed modifications generate a need to amend the appraisal conclusions previously reached on the Local Plan as a whole within the SA (2024).

2.6. At the end of the examination process, the Inspectors of the Local Plan published their findings in their 'Final Report'.[6] At Paragraph 31 of this report, they considered that: *'we are satisfied that the Plan is informed by suitably robust SA and SEA'*[7]. Consequently, it is deemed that the Local Plan has undergone a robust and dynamic Sustainability Appraisal, ensuring that environmental and sustainability considerations have been integrated into the plan-making process.

3. How Consultation Responses were taken into Account

3.1. Consultation on the SA reports were undertaken in line with the EA regulations, in parallel with the consultation stages of the Uttlesford Local Plan 2021-2041. The consultees included the general public, the relevant statutory consultation bodies of Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency, as well as any other organisation that wished to comment. At each stage of consultation, the representations received were thoroughly considered and amendments made to the Local Plan.

3.2. Further details of consultation procedures, including outreach, key discussions with statutory consultees, and the respective actions taken by the Council, can be found within the Council's 'Consultation Main Report' which formed part of the Local Plan Regulation 19 evidence base.[8] Tangible adjustments were integrated into Local Plan policy on the basis of consultation feedback received at both Regulation 18 and 19 stages. This included, but was not limited to, the addition and removal of site-specific allocations, the addition of new Development Management policies, geographic corrections to many of the Local Plan's mapped policies, and changes to wording to enhance policy effectiveness and clarity.

3.3. Where representations were made during the 'Examination in Public', the Council addressed matters which were critical to Local Plan 'soundness' by preparing a recommended schedule of Main Modifications which it submitted to the Inspectors for their consideration. At the end of the examination process, the Inspectors finalised this schedule, confirming that subject to Main Modification, the Local Plan was sound. This, alongside the Additional Modification and Policy Map Modification schedules prepared

[6] Planning Inspectorate (2026) Report on the Examination of the Uttlesford Local Plan 2021-2041. https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/media/14064/Local-Plan-Inspectors-Report/pdf/Uttlesford_Local_Plan_2021-2041_Examination_Report.pdf?m=1768841792443

[7] Planning Inspectorate (2026) Report on the Examination of the Uttlesford Local Plan 2021-2041. https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/media/14064/Local-Plan-Inspectors-Report/pdf/Uttlesford_Local_Plan_2021-2041_Examination_Report.pdf?m=1768841792443

[8] UDC (2024) Regulation 19 Consultation Report and Appendices https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/media/13537/Regulation-19-consultation-report-and-appendices/pdf/ULP8_2024-12-17_Regulation_19_Final_Report.pdf?m=1734519740827

by the Council, took into account the representations made during the examination, thereby utilising feedback to improve the Local Plan proposals.

4. Reasons for Choosing the Uttlesford Local Plan 2021-2041 as Adopted, in the Light of other Reasonable Alternatives

4.1. At each stage of the preparation of the Uttlesford Local Plan 2021-2041, reasonable alternatives were identified, tested and considered. The findings of the SA, together with the justification for selecting or rejecting the site options set out in the Housing Site Selection Topic Paper, provided the rationale for the Council's preferred growth strategy.

4.2. Principally, the SA assessed multiple options for distributing housing and employment growth across the District. Six growth scenarios were identified as 'reasonable', and these scenarios differed on the basis of the scale and nature of development surrounding Great Dunmow and Thaxted.

4.3. The SA set out a clear appraisal of these scenarios against the framework shown in Table 1 and the preferred scenario was chosen by balancing the need for growth against other environmental and infrastructure considerations. Section 7 of the SA presents the Council's case as to why Growth Scenario 1 is preferred for the Local Plan and why the others were rejected.

- **Managing Growth at Great Dunmow:** This was a key focus of the SA where it explored alternative scenarios that either directed growth to the south-east of Great Dunmow, or directed growth to both the north-east and south-east of Great Dunmow, resulting in a significantly higher quantum of development. Whilst the decision between growth to the north-east and growth to the south-east was finely balanced, it was deemed that the south-eastern site did not relate well to the Great Dunmow settlement edge and would have a lower potential for delivering additional infrastructure that would benefit new and existing residents, despite being considerably larger.
- **Options at Thaxted:** As a 'Local Rural Centre' in the Local Plan Settlement Hierarchy, there was a case for residential growth at Thaxted and the scenarios tested in the SA reflected this. However, owing to the lack of existing primary school capacity at Thaxted, and in the absence of any acceptable solution with regards to new provision, it was deemed that there was a barrier to growth that could not be overcome by this Local Plan.
- **New Settlement Considerations:** The potential suitability of allocating 'new settlement' style growth was considered within Section 5.2 of the SA (2024). The report clarifies the strategic arguments as to why the Council made the decision not to progress any new settlement options, albeit it is important to note that such an option was not considered to be a 'reasonable alternative'.

4.4. On this basis, the Council is satisfied that the plan-making process has considered 'reasonable alternatives' and has established a justified spatial strategy.

5. Measures that are to be taken to Monitor the Significant Sustainability and Environmental Effects of the Implementation of the Local Plan

5.1. The EA Regulations require that significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan should be monitored with the purpose of identifying unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage and being able to undertake appropriate remedial action. The SA (2024) in Section 11 presented several suggestions for monitoring indicators, which influenced the Monitoring Framework held at Appendix 18 of the Local Plan.

5.2. No Main Modifications were required in relation to the Monitoring Framework, with the Local Plan Inspectors concluding at Paragraph 190 of their 'Final Report' that "*the strategy for Monitoring and Implementation is positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy*."

5.3. In summary, measures concerning monitoring are set out in Core Policy 71: Monitoring and Implementation and the supporting Monitoring Framework (**Appendix 18** to the Local Plan). However, the sustainability and environmental topic areas addressed by the SA and their respective links to the Monitoring Framework have been set out within Appendix A below. The plan explains that:

'The Authority Monitoring Report will be produced on an annual basis and will be used to establish whether the implementation of the Plan, either in part or as a whole, is being effectively actioned. Where there is evidence to suggest that policy specific targets listed in the Monitoring Framework have not been met, contingency measures and actions listed in the Monitoring Framework will apply.'

Appendix A: Links Between Sustainability Appraisal Topics and Local Plan Monitoring Framework

SA Topic	Respective Strategic Objective(s) to be Monitored through the Local Plan
Accessibility	• Strategic Objective 10 • Strategic Objective 12
Biodiversity	• Strategic Objective 3 • Strategic Objective 4
Climate change adaptation	• Strategic Objective 1 • Strategic Objective 4
Climate change mitigation	• Strategic Objective 1 • Strategic Objective 3
Communities, equality, inclusion and health	• Strategic Objective 10 • Strategic Objective 11
Economy and employment	• Strategic Objective 7 • Strategic Objective 8 • Strategic Objective 9
Historic environment	• Strategic Objective 6
Homes	• Strategic Objective 11
Land, soils and resources	• Strategic Objective 3 • Strategic Objective 4 • Strategic Objective 5
Landscape	• Strategic Objective 2
Transport	• Strategic Objective 12
Water	• Strategic Objective 4