

EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on WEDNESDAY, 25 MARCH 2026 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor C Criscione (Chairman)
Councillors M Ahmed, H Asker, G Bagnall, S Barker, N Church, A Coote, J Davey, A Dean, B Donald, G Driscoll (elected Vice-Chairman), J Emanuel, J Evans, C Fiddy, M Foley, R Freeman, R Gooding, N Gregory, N Hargreaves, R Haynes, P Lees, M Lemon, T Loveday, S Luck, C Martin, D McBirnie, J Moran, E Oliver, R Pavitt, A Reeve, N Reeve, G Sell, R Silcock, M Sutton and M Tayler

Officers in attendance: P Holt (Chief Executive), B Ferguson (Democratic Services Manager) and C Forster (Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer)

Also in attendance: Mr Boyle, Mr A Colocasidou, Mr T Colocasidou, Mr Critchley, Mrs Evans, Councillor Frater (Chair of Thaxted Parish Council), Dr Johnson, Mr Ketteridge, Mr Thompson and Mrs Merifield.

C74 PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Chairman opened the meeting and invited the Monitoring Officer to address Council in respect of declarations of interest.

The Monitoring Officer provided declarations of interest advice to Council.

The Chairman said due to the extraordinary nature of the meeting he had expanded the public speaking time available to 30 minutes. In addition to the ten public speakers, he said Councillor Bagnall had been granted a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer to address Council as a member of the public.

Mrs Evans, Dr Johnson, Mr T Colocasidou, Mr Boyle, Mr Critchley, Mr Thompson, Mr Ketteridge, Councillor Frater (Chair of Thaxted Parish Council), Mrs Merifield, Mr A Colocasidou and Mr Bagnall addressed Council in regards to the Local Plan. Summaries of their statements have been appended to the minutes.

C75 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Armstrong, Coletta, Loughlin and Regan.

Councillor Bagnall declared a pecuniary interest in respect of Item 2 – Uttlesford Local Plan 2021-2041 and said he would recuse himself from the meeting for this item.

Councillor Criscione declared a pecuniary interest in respect of Item 2 – Uttlesford Local Plan 2021-2041 and said he would recuse himself from the meeting for this item.

Councillors Barker, Foley and Gooding declared other registrable interests as members of Essex County Council in respect of Item 2 – Uttlesford Local Plan 2021-2041.

C76 ELECTION OF A VICE-CHAIRMAN

The Chairman noted Councillor Armstrong's apologies and said a Vice-Chairman would need to be elected for this meeting only.

Councillor Lees nominated Councillor Driscoll as Vice-Chairman.

Councillor Alex Reeve seconded the nomination.

There were no further nominations.

The Chairman announced that Councillor Driscoll had been elected Vice-Chairman for the meeting.

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Driscoll as Vice-Chairman for the meeting.

C77 POLITICAL BALANCE MARCH 2026

The Chairman re-ordered the agenda and took Item 3, Political Balance and Committee Appointments, next in proceedings.

Councillor Lees proposed approval of the recommendation set-out in the report.

Councillor Alex Reeve seconded the proposal.

The proposal was carried.

RESOLVED to approve:

- I. The political balance and the allocation of seats on its committees as detailed in the report.
- II. The appointments to committees of Council as per Group Leader nominations set-out in Appendix A.

C78 WAIVER OF SIX MONTH COUNCILLOR ATTENDANCE RULE (SECTION 85 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972)

The Chairman took Item 4 next in proceedings regarding Councillor Loughlin and permitting her absence from meetings for a period exceeding six months in accordance with Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972. The reason

for the requested dispensation was medical. On behalf of the Council, he commended Councillor Loughlin as a stalwart and longtime member of UDC and put on record Council's best wishes in respect of her recovery.

Councillor Sell proposed approval of the dispensation. He said Councillor Loughlin, ward member for Stort Valley, had first been elected in April 2000 and had successfully held the seat since. She had served the Council exceptionally for nearly 26 years and was a dedicated ward member for her constituents.

Councillor Lees seconded the proposal.

The vote was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED to approve the dispensation for Councillor Janice Loughlin, in accordance with Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, permitting her absence from council meetings for a period exceeding six months.

C79 **UTTLESFORD LOCAL PLAN 2021 - 2041**

Councillors Bagnall and Criscione recused themselves from meeting and took no part in the discussion or vote for this item.

The Vice-Chairman took the chair.

Councillor Evans, Portfolio Holder for Planning, introduced the report regarding the Uttlesford Local Plan 2021-2041. He said he was not presenting the plan with any sense of triumph, but rather with a feeling of achievement. He said that getting to this point had taken considerable time and effort and he thanked the Strategic Director of Planning and the team for their hard work. He said that the Local Plan had been independently verified and had been found sound, and that the Local Plan had been recommended to Council with the cross-party support of the Local Plan Panel. He acknowledged that the Local Plan would not be universally popular, as it would bring inevitable change with impact on some communities, but the Council had a responsibility to adopt an up-to-date Local Plan as a matter of priority, as the previous Local Plan was now extremely out-of-date. He outlined several reasons for adoption, including restoring development plan-led control, enabling robust planning decisions, avoiding Government intervention, reducing speculative development applications, and strengthening infrastructure delivery. He said the residents of Uttlesford deserved a Local Plan and proposed approval of the recommendations set-out in the report.

Councillor Freeman seconded the proposal.

Councillor Asker was invited to table her amendment put on notice. She said the Council needed a Local Plan in order to prevent speculative development without the necessary infrastructure. She said the amendment, which proposed establishing a working group to look at safeguarded land included in the Local Plan, would not negate the substantive proposals but would add a positive action

that could reassure residents in impacted areas. She proposed approval of the amendment set-out in the supplementary pack.

Councillor Sell seconded the amendment. He said he wanted to get things right for Takeley residents and said that Councillor Colletta, ward member for Takeley, had approached the council's planning department at the Regulation 18 consultation stage with a proposal for a link road. He said a link road would reduce pressures on impacted villages and Junction 8 of the M11.

Councillor Freeman and Evans spoke against the amendment, with both highlighting the Local Plan Panel as an existing and appropriate working group for Local Plan matters. Councillor Evans added that a feasibility study had also been commissioned in regards to access around the proposed sites in and around Takeley. They urged members to vote against the amendment.

The Chairman took the amendment to a vote.

The amendment was defeated with 12 votes for, 16 against and 5 abstentions.

The Chairman opened the substantive proposal for debate.

Councillor Sutton spoke in support of adopting the Local Plan. She outlined her commitment to the Takeley community and acknowledged the concerns about development and two large warehousing allocations proposed for her ward. However, she said that voting against the Local Plan would be counterproductive, as it would allow the government to take control and fast-track a plan without the benefits of section 106 contributions, negotiating rights, or protection from speculative development. She said that rejecting the Local Plan would not protect Takeley or the district. Instead, she highlighted the opportunities the plan provided, such as strengthening countryside protection policies, shaping neighbourhood development and providing infrastructure. She said she would vote to adopt the new plan to help retain Uttlesford's unique character.

Councillor Barker said she had several concerns about the Local Plan. She noted that by the time the call for sites was made, all but 4,500 of the required homes already had planning permission, and almost half of the remaining allocations were concentrated in the Dunmow division. She was also concerned that recent decisions supporting greenbelt development in Hatfield Heath and Little Hallingbury, which were not in the Local Plan but were approved by committee, would undermine the plan's protective value. Furthermore, she highlighted specific transport issues, particularly in regards to access to sites in Church End in Great Dunmow, Takeley and Little Canfield. She said in conclusion that a new settlement would have been better than the piecemeal approach adopted.

Councillor Sell said he was "a veteran of the Local Plan" from twenty years ago and noted that much development had already occurred in the district without an up-to-date plan in place. However, he praised Councillor Evans' measured tone and approach to the matter and, that while the Local Plan was not perfect, the Liberal Democrat Group would be voting in support of the proposal.

Councillor Fiddy urged support and praised the environmental and energy efficient measures contained within the updated Local Plan.

Councillor Emanuel said she had become a councillor due to planning matters and that development without the required infrastructure had to be stopped in the district. She said adoption of a new Local Plan would provide members of the Planning Committee certainty and rejection of the plan would not make development pressures disappear. She said a 5-year land supply was also required but the Council were dependent on Government publishing the relevant figures. She urged members to support adoption.

Councillor Alex Reeve praised the Design Code and said adoption of this Local Plan could lead to beautiful homes in the district.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting for a comfort break at 8.20pm.

The meeting was reconvened at 8.30pm.

Councillor Moran acknowledged the impact the Local Plan would have on residents of Takeley and Great Dunmow, but said he had duty to protect his own ward from further speculative development. Therefore, he would be supporting adoption of the Local Plan.

Councillor Gooding said the district needed a Local Plan and that the Conservative Group had been given a free vote on this important matter. He said the Local Plan was good in part but some members would have a difficult decision between their wards and the entire district.

The Chairman asked for Council's consent to proceed beyond 9.00pm; Council provided its consent.

Councillor Neil Reeve said he was not totally happy with the Local Plan but there were real benefits in adoption, such as green policies that were being held up as exemplar measures to other Local Authorities in Essex going through the same process. He urged members to support.

Councillor Coote spoke in support of the Local Plan from his perspective as Housing Portfolio Holder and said developer contributions to infrastructure were very much needed.

Councillor Luck said this Local Plan would improve the chances of getting schools, doctor surgeries and infrastructure to accompany development in the district.

Councillor Hargreaves highlighted CIL and said a vote against the Local Plan would mean less money received from developers. He also referenced the neighbourhood planning process and said government changes meant the Neighbourhood Plan groups would have greater flexibility going forward.

Councillor Asker said she supported the Local Plan but the additional houses in Saffron Walden would result in a huge increase in traffic movements in the town. However, she also acknowledged that homes had to be built in order for young people to afford to live in the district.

Councillor Lees said she was sincerely grateful to Councillor Evans, the Strategic Director of Planning and the team for their diligent work on the Local Plan, describing it as the first successful Local Plan since 2005 in Uttlesford, if adopted. She said that disagreement on the plan did not mean people had not been listened to, as every public consultation comment had been considered and responded to. She stressed that the council had no political red lines for the Local Plan and had been committed to evidence-based decision-making. She said it was incorrect to refer to “secret meetings” as early stage discussions were handled with care in order to not cause unnecessary anxiety or uncertainty, and such information became publicly available in due course. She highlighted that without a Local Plan, a £200 million infrastructure deficit had arisen from 9,000 houses permitted since 2021, whereas a fit for purpose Local Plan would have provided direct contributions to infrastructure. She said sites included in the Local Plan did not equate to the granting of planning permission, but established the principle of development, with detailed site-specific matters properly considered at the planning application stage. She said in conclusion that there were many positive aspects of the Local Plan and she urged members to support adoption.

Councillor Freeman said planning decision making without a Local Plan was extremely challenging and compared it to playing a football match without a goalkeeper. He said the Local Plan was a sound investment and cited Edmund Burke in respect of an elected member’s duty to exercise their own judgement on such an important matter. He commended the Local Plan to Council.

Councillor Evans was given right of reply and thanked members and the public speakers for the quality of debate and points raised. He said that many concerns raised by the Takeley community would be addressed through the planning application process, and in regards to the Land North of Taylor’s Farm site, he said that only 18 of the 27 hectares had been considered developable, and noted that transport modelling involved input from the County Highways Authority and National Highways on matters such as traffic lights, turn directions, and vehicle access periods. In regards to a link road to the A120, he said this would be examined further but noted it involved land outside Uttlesford's control. In regards to developing a new settlement in the district, he said that large garden community schemes had been tried previously without success due to lack of certainty of housing delivery, which is why this Local Plan utilised a range of large and small sites. He also encouraged more communities to develop neighbourhood plans. He concluded by thanking the Strategic Director of Planning and colleagues for their diligent work in preparing the Local Plan. He requested a recorded vote on the recommendations set-out in the report.

COUNCILLOR	FOR / AGAINST / ABSTAIN
Cllr Ahmed	For
Cllr Asker	Abstain
Cllr Barker	Abstain
Cllr Church	Abstain
Cllr Coote	For
Cllr Davey	For
Cllr Dean	For
Cllr Donald	For
Cllr Emanuel	For
Cllr Evans	For
Cllr Fiddy	For
Cllr Foley	For
Cllr Freeman	For
Cllr Gooding	For
Cllr Gregory	For
Cllr Hargreaves	For
Cllr Haynes	For
Cllr Lees	For
Cllr Lemon	For
Cllr Loveday	Abstain
Cllr Luck	For
Cllr Martin	Abstain
Cllr McBirnie	For
Cllr Moran	For

COUNCILLOR	FOR / AGAINST / ABSTAIN
Cllr Oliver	Against
Cllr Pavitt	For
Cllr Alex Reeve	For
Cllr Neil Reeve	For
Cllr Sell	For
Cllr Silcock	For
Cllr Sutton	For
Cllr Tayler	For
Chairman (Cllr Driscoll)	Abstain

The Local Plan was approved with 26 votes for, 1 against and 6 abstentions.

RESOLVED to:

- i. Note the content and scope of the Inspectors' Final Report dated 16 January, including the Main Modifications (appendix to the Inspectors' Report).
- ii. Adopt and formally publish the Uttlesford Local Plan (2021 2041), as amended by the main modifications set out in the Inspectors' Final Report.
- iii. Publish the Adoption Statement and Sustainability Appraisal adoption statement along with the Local Plan, in accordance with regulations 26 and 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- iv. Delegate the correction of any further minor typing or formatting errors going forward to the Strategic Director of Planning and Cabinet Member for Planning as required.
- v. Express the Council's thanks to the Inspectors, and the Examination Programme Officer for their positive approach throughout the examination process.

The meeting was closed at 9.20pm.

Summary of Public Statements: Extraordinary Council, 25 March 2026

Mrs A Evans

Mrs Evans raised concerns about the Land North of Taylors Farm site and focused particularly on wastewater management and airport safety issues. She also disputed the claim that wastewater issues were properly explored during the examination stage of the process and said that the evidence presented to Inspectors was incorrect, as it would be impossible for wastewater works to be connected to Bishops Stortford. She highlighted that the Takeley sewage system were already overburdened, with significant recent discharges, and argued it could not support the planned housing developments. She said the use of underground tanks conflicted with policy (CP34) and potentially caused environmental harm to Hatfield Forest. Furthermore, she questioned why such a constrained site had been promoted, while an alternative at Northside was not considered. She urged councillors to make their decision independently, without pressure or influence, and asked members to consider the long-term legacy of the decision.

Dr Johnson

Dr Johnson raised concerns that both the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) and councillors had relied on inaccurate information regarding the Land North of Taylors Farm site in the Local Plan. She asked why such a site had been promoted and argued that it would not have been supported had it been made clear that access points would accommodate up to 12,000 traffic movements a day, directly opposite existing homes. In addition to concerns regarding access, Dr Johnson said the scale of the proposal was excessive, arguing that most of the projected 1,100 workers would not come from the local area, making the economic benefits overstated. She also raised concerns about a nearby Scout Camp that served approximately 3,000 children each year, and warned that it could be forced to close due to safeguarding risks and disturbance if development proceeded, and noted that the camp was not mentioned during site selection.

Tasos Colocasidou

Mr Colocasidou said he opposed the proposal for a 67-acre employment site at Land North of Taylors Farm unless access was provided directly from the A120. He argued that if an A120 junction could not be delivered, the site was unsuitable and should be refused. He said that relying on the B1256 would create serious safety risks and highlighted the developer's own report, which acknowledged a "significant road safety impact". He outlined the consequences for residents living along the B1256: constant HGV noise, vibration, headlights shining into homes, sleep disturbance, and the risks and adverse impact on children living in the area. He said that Takeley Street Action Group insisted that access must come from the A120. He concluded that although the plan may appear technically acceptable on paper, it would fail the community in practice, and therefore he urged councillors to reject the Local Plan as currently designed.

Mr Boyle

Mr Boyle, a member of Takeley Parish Council speaking on a personal basis, expressed general support for the proposed Local Plan. However, he raised specific concerns about the disproportionate allocation of housing and industrial employment sites to the south of the district, particularly around Takeley. He highlighted the proposed 28-hectare industrial warehousing facility at land North of Taylor's Farm as a particular concern, questioning its rationale on economic, transport, infrastructure and environmental grounds. He noted that Uttlesford District Council had safeguarded land to enable a direct A120 connection for the site, rather than using the B1256 as the developer proposed, and that a feasibility study was commissioned to investigate this. He said he was puzzled that the feasibility study discussed in December 2024 would not be available until before Easter 2026, and noted that the developer had made clear the A120 access was not required. He said there was a fundamental disconnect between developer interests and benefits for Takeley residents.

Mr Critchley

Mr Critchley raised significant concerns about the Local Plan's ability to deliver sustainable development and said the plan would not achieve the required 5-year housing supply, that the homes around Takeley could not be delivered until sewage treatment plant capacity was increased. He questioned whether the Taylor's Farm site complied with many core policies, and said 65-foot tall industrial sheds were unsuitable in a residential area. He also shared his environmental concerns, particularly the failure to protect Hatfield Forest for future generations. He also pointed to infrastructure issues, such as no road improvements despite traffic from the Stansted Airport development increasing the impact on residents. He concluded by questioning whether this was the legacy councillors wanted to leave for the district, as the Local Plan failed to address significant infrastructure deficits.

Mr Thompson

Mr Thompson spoke in support of the Local Plan and said the district needed a Local Plan as a matter of priority. He said the draft document was well-constructed with strong policies, and particularly commended the environmental policies, which positioned Uttlesford as a leader across Essex. He acknowledged that Easton Park had not been allocated for development, addressing his group's previous concerns, and highlighted the commitment to creating a country park, which effectively precluded development for the foreseeable future. He said that whilst some allocations caused concern (including the 750 dwellings proposed for land northeast of Great Dunmow, near his own home), the appropriate time to argue against such allocations was through the planning process. He emphasised that the district required a Local Plan and urged members to vote in favour of it.

Mr Ketteridge

Mr Ketteridge raised concerns about the Local Plan process based on transparency and governance issues. He said that officers had entered into secret negotiations with landowners between 2021 and 2022 about development

possibilities, particularly regarding land to the south of Saffron Walden for a new road and housing development. He said these negotiations were never mentioned in public council meetings and questioned whether similar secret meetings had occurred for other sites in the district. He said that he believed that while the council undertook a call for sites process publicly, the administration had already predetermined where development should occur at leadership level, specifically deciding to develop the east side of Saffron Walden. He said the council had denied these predetermined site selections when they were leaked by a consultant. He also argued the council had created a narrative about "infrastructure first" and during public consultations claimed there would be a new road in Saffron Walden, but this was never included in the final plan. He said this represented hypocrisy from the R4U group, considering their previous position when in opposition.

Councillor Frater (Thaxted Parish Council)

Councillor Frater, speaking as Chair of Thaxted Parish Council, expressed support for the Local Plan. He said that Thaxted had previously raised concerns about a large strategic allocation in earlier versions of the plan, particularly regarding roads, schools and the town's character. He said that those concerns were listened to, and the document now reflected a more measured approach with the large strategic site removed. He said this provided Thaxted with certainty, allowed engagement with proposals within a clear framework, and reassured residents that growth would be managed rather than imposed while respecting heritage and a sense of place. He acknowledged that the Local Plan was not perfect, but described it as sound, and urged the council to support adoption so the community could move forward with clarity.

Mrs Merifield

Mrs Merrifield, speaking as a resident and former Chair of the Planning Committee, said she supported the Local Plan. She said that having an up-to-date adopted Local Plan would enable the Planning Committee to be proactive and strategic in their decision-making, and noted that this Plan represented the first adopted Local Plan since 2005, which was a significant achievement. She acknowledged that no plan was perfect and that some people would feel aggrieved, but argued that as elected councillors, members had a duty to make difficult decisions in the best interests of the whole district, rather than voting based on party politics, personal interests, or political ambition. She concluded by congratulating the officers for their hard work and the administration for keeping their promise to bring forward an inspector-approved plan after 20 years.

Adam Colocasidou

Adam Colocasidou spoke against the proposed industrial warehousing development on Takeley Street, stating he had lived there all his life. He strongly disagreed with plans for industrial warehouses on his road, which would harm traffic, air quality, and wildlife zones and questioned whether proper scrutiny was taking place. He expressed concern about the transformation of Takeley into multiple large-scale development sites followed by industrialisation. He also

highlighted personal safety concerns, referencing a previous incident where his family was injured by a lorry at the Junction 8 roundabout. He called for proper infrastructure if the development was to proceed, including operational restrictions, such as weekdays 9 to 5 only, and direct A120 access rather than routing through Takeley. He said that his generation would pay the price for the "134 acre massacre" and questioned why they should bear the consequences of decisions made by the Council.

Mr Bagnall

Mr Bagnall, speaking as a member of the public with a dispensation granted by the Monitoring Officer, expressed frustration with the planning process, describing it as "like fighting a machine" due to the complexity of planning law, the NPPF and the planning inspectorate.

He acknowledged the previous speakers' concerns and the administration's ambition to prevent speculative development through a strategic Local Plan. However, he highlighted what he saw as key problems: the plan did not adequately protect against speculative development if the district lacked a five-year housing supply, and there were two major industrial sites along the B1256 with no proposed A120 access. He thanked officers for allowing an amendment to examine access issues properly and urged members to vote for the amendment to address these concerns. He concluded by expressing concern that without proper protection from speculative development, having a Local Plan was no better than having no plan at all, and called on members to reconsider their positions in light of the speakers' concerns about over-development in the south of the district.