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Uttlesford District Council

Chief Executive: Peter Holt

Cabinet

Date: Thursday, 2nd November, 2023

Time: 7.00 pm

Venue: Council Chamber - Council Offices, London Road, Saffron Walden, CB11 4ER

Broadcast:

<https://uttlesford.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=136&MId=6149>

Leader and Chair: Councillor P Lees

Members: Councillors A Coote, J Evans, N Hargreaves (Vice-Chair), N Reeve and M Sutton

Other Attendees: Councillors S Barker (Conservative Party Group Leader), N Gregory (Chair of Scrutiny Committee), R Pavitt (Uttlesford Independent Party Group Leader) and G Sell (Liberal Democrat Group Leader),

Public Speaking

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AGENDA

PART 1

Open to Public and Press

1 Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

To receive any apologies for absence and declarations of interest.

2 Minutes of the previous meeting

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To consider the minutes of the previous meeting on 29 June 2023 and the extraordinary meeting on 23 August 2023.

3 Questions or Statements from Non-Executive Members of the Council (standing item)

To receive questions or statements from non-executive members on matters included on the agenda.

4 Report of Delegated Decisions taken by Cabinet Members (standing item)

To receive for information any delegated decisions taken by Cabinet Members since the previous Cabinet meeting.

5 Report on assets of community value determined by the Assets of Community Value and Local Heritage List Committee (standing item)

To receive for information any decisions made by the Assets of Community Value committee since the previous Cabinet meeting.

6 Matters Referred to the Executive by the Scrutiny Committee or by the Council (standing item)

To consider matters referred to the Executive for reconsideration in accordance with the provisions of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules or the Budget and Policy Framework Rules.

7 Consideration of reports from overview and scrutiny committees (standing item)

To consider any reports from Scrutiny Committee.

8 Corporate Plan

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	To consider the Corporate Plan.	
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	To consider the Local Council Tax Support Scheme Proposals 2024/25.	
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CABINET held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on WEDNESDAY, 23 AUGUST 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor P Lees (Chair)
Councillors J Evans, N Hargreaves and M Sutton

Officers in attendance: P Holt (Chief Executive), J Etherington (Director of Finance, Revenues and Benefits), B Ferguson (Democratic Services Manager), D Hermitage (Strategic Director of Planning) and A Webb (Strategic Director of Finance, Commercialisation and Corporate Services).

Also Present: Councillors R Freeman (Ward member for Saffron Walden, Castle Ward), N Gregory (Chair of Scrutiny Committee) and G Sell (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group)

CAB18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Councillors Reeve and Coote as members of Cabinet.

Apologies were received from Councillors Barker and Pavitt as leaders of the opposition groups.

There were no declarations of interest.

CAB19 REQUEST FROM ASPIRE (CRP) LTD FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT AT CHESTERFORD RESEARCH PARK

Councillor Evans presented the report regarding the request from Aspire (CRP) Ltd for funding to further develop Chesterford Research Park. He said the request was to facilitate the building of Unit 800 and a solar farm, for which planning permission had already been obtained, and that the Council's partner, Aviva, had committed to the proposal. He said if the Council were not willing to permit additional funding, the Council's percentage of the land holding in the joint venture would be diluted. In regards to the terms of borrowing, the loan would be borrowed on an interest only basis and the funds would be taken in tranches. He asked that the minutes of the Investment Board meeting held on 22 August 2023 be appended to the minutes to evidence that the risks and benefits of the investment had been fully considered. He proposed approval of the recommendations set out in the report.

Councillor Hargreaves seconded the recommendation. He said the valuation of the Council's asset would increase following the proposed works on the park.

For clarity, the Strategic Director of Finance, Commercialisation and Corporate Services said it would be the Director of Finance Revenues and Benefits, not the

S151 Officer, who would have delegated authority to finalise the terms of the loan facility, due to a conflict of interest.

Councillor Sell said he supported Chesterford Research Park but was concerned with the costs of borrowing and the impact on Blueprint Uttlesford.

In response, the Strategic Director of Finance, Commercialisation and Corporate Services said a report would be considered by the Investment Board regarding the pros and cons, and the valuation, of each of the Council's investment assets. He said the cost of the loan for the first three years was £2.3million as set out in paragraph 45 of the report.

The Chief Executive highlighted the use of reserves and said it was not in place solely to fund repayments but also to mitigate against any potential loss of future rental income. He said the reserves would be increased by £1million annually.

In response to a question from the Leader, the Strategic Director of Finance, Commercialisation and Corporate Services said this borrowing would not jeopardise the Housing Revenue Account, nor council house building targets, as the Council would look for alternative means of funding other than the Public Works Loan Board if necessary.

The proposal was approved unanimously.

RESOLVED to:

- I. Approve a new loan facility of up to £21,060,000 be made available to Aspire (CRP) Ltd, to be drawn down in tranches over a period of up to 2 years, subject to Full Council agreeing to make funding available for this purpose;
- II. note the implications of making the loan on the Council's access to Public Works Loan Board, as set out in paragraphs 50 to 57 of the report, and;
- III. delegate authority to the Director of Finance, Revenues & Benefits (in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Economy and the Council's external treasury advisers) to agree the final terms of the loan facility, including the interest rate to be charged (such rate to be no less than 7.5%).

CAB20 **PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ISSUE – ELECTRICITY SUB-STATION, MORTIMER'S GATE, SAFFRON WALDEN**

The Leader said Cabinet would adjourn and reconvene on the rise of the Extraordinary Council meeting scheduled for 24 August to consider the recommendation of Council regarding the environmental health problem at Mortimer's Gate, Saffron Walden.

The meeting was adjourned at 7.30pm.

The meeting was reconvened on 24 August at 8.15pm. Councillors Lees, Hargreaves and Evans were present as members of Cabinet.

Councillors Freeman (ward member for Castle Ward, where the sub-station was located), Gregory and Sell were also in attendance.

The Leader said the meeting had been reconvened following the recommendation of Full Council to fund the Mortimer's Gate remedial works without acceptance of liability. She proposed approval of the recommendation.

Councillor Evans seconded the proposal. He said the Council's view mirrored that of Cabinet members and the administration would ensure planning measures were in place so such a situation could not happen again.

Councillor Sell said he was disappointed with the developer and wondered what could be done to point out to them that the Council was not happy with having to pick up the cost.

Councillor Gregory requested that developer obligations be looked at on an overall level, for instance, the placement of playgrounds in new developments.

Councillor Hargreaves said the developer made no mention of the statutory noise nuisance emanating from the electricity sub-station in their own noise assessment of the site. He said this was not good enough.

The Leader thanked officers and the Chief Executive for bringing this long standing matter to a close. The proposal was approved unanimously.

RESOLVED to agree to fund the remedial works without acceptance of liability up to the cash maximum provided for by Full Council, detailed in appendix C of the report.

The meeting was closed at 8.25pm.

CABINET held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on THURSDAY, 29 JUNE 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor P Lees (Chair)
Councillors A Coote, J Evans, N Hargreaves, N Reeve and M Sutton.

Officers in attendance: P Holt (Chief Executive), J Etherington (Assistant Director of Finance), B Ferguson (Democratic Services Manager) and A Knight (Assistant Director - Business and Change Management).

Also in attendance: Councillors S Barker (Leader of the Conservative Group), C Criscione, N Gregory (Chair of the Scrutiny Committee) and G Sell (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group).

J Sharp (Public Speaker).

CAB1 PUBLIC SPEAKING

Mrs Jane Sharp addressed Cabinet on the matter of the electricity sub-station at Mortimer's Gate, Saffron Walden. A summary of her statement has been appended to these minutes.

CAB2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no apologies for absence.

There were no declarations of interest.

CAB3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2023 were approved as a correct record.

CAB4 QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS FROM NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (STANDING ITEM)

In response to a question from Councillor Sell regarding commercial tenants in the council's offices, the Chief Executive confirmed that a list of tenants could be shared with members but this would not include commercially sensitive data.

CAB6 CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES (STANDING ITEM)

No reports received.

CAB7 REPORT OF DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET MEMBERS (STANDING ITEM)

Cabinet noted the delegated decisions made since the previous meeting:

- [Appointments to North Essex Parking Partnership](#) – 2 June 2023
- [Appointments to Outside Bodies](#) – 2 June 2023
- [Response to DLUHC consultation on Planning Fees and Performance](#) – 18 April 2023

CAB8 REPORT ON ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE DETERMINED BY THE ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE AND LOCAL HERITAGE LIST COMMITTEE (STANDING ITEM)

There had been no determinations of Assets of Community Value to report.

CAB9 APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES OF CABINET 2023/24

The Leader proposed taking Items 8-11 en bloc as they all related to member appointments within the remit of Cabinet.

Councillor Evans proposed approval of the member appointments set out in the reports. Councillor Reeve duly seconded.

Councillor Barker noted the appointment to the Parking and Traffic Regulation outside London Adjudication Committee and said she would advise the relevant member to check the papers before travelling to any such meetings, as they were not always relevant to Uttlesford.

RESOLVED to approve appointments to committees of Cabinet for 2023/24:

Assets of Community Value and Local Heritage List Committee:

Cllrs M Sutton (C), J Evans, N Reeve

Voluntary Support Grants Committee:

Cllrs N Hargreaves (C), P Lees, M Sutton and N Reeve

CAB10 APPOINTMENTS TO WORKING GROUPS OF CABINET 2023/24

RESOLVED to approve the terms of reference and appointments to Working Groups of Cabinet for 2023/24 [as set out in the report](#).

CAB11 **OUTSIDE BODIES APPOINTMENTS 2023/24**

RESOLVED to approve appointments to Outside Bodies for 2023/24:

Organisation	Number	Representative (s)
Armed Forces and Community Covenant	1	Daniel McBirnie
Board of Turpins Indoor Bowling Club	1	Alex Reeve
Campaign to Protect Rural Essex	1	Martin Foley
Committee of the Friends of the Maltings	1	Alex Armstrong
Community Safety Partnership	1	Maggie Sutton
Cooperation for Sustainable Development Board	1	John Evans
Dunmow Day Centre Management Cttee	1	John Davey
Dunmow Museum Management Cttee	1	John Davey
Dunmow Town Strategy Group		Alex Armstrong
Essex County Traveller Unit	1	Chris Criscione
Essex Coastal Forum	1	John Evans
Essex Councils Climate Forum	1	Neil Reeve
Essex Flood Partnership Board	1	Richard Pavitt
Essex Waste Partnership Board	1	Neil Reeve
Friends of Bridge End Gardens	1	Richard Freeman
Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Board	1	John Evans
Historic England Heritage Champion	1	Geoffrey Sell
Local Government Association - General Assembly	1	Petrina Lees
LGA – SPARSE Rural Assembly	1	John Evans
Local Strategic Partnership	1	Maggie Sutton
UK Innovation Corridor	1	Petrina Lees
Parking and Traffic Regulation outside London Adjudication Committee	1	Geof Driscoll
Saffron Walden Arts Trust	1	Chloe Fiddy
Saffron Walden Business Improvement District (SW BID)	1	Neil Hargreaves
Saffron Walden Museum Society	1	Maggie Sutton
Stansted Airport Consultative Committee	1	John Evans
Stansted Airport Community Trust Fund		Maggie Sutton
Strategic Aviation Special Interest Group	1	John Evans
Thaxted Guildhall Management Cttee	1	Mike Taylor
Uttlesford Association of Local Councils	1	Petrina Lees
Uttlesford Citizens' Advice Bureau	1	Richard Freeman
Uttlesford Community Travel	1	Geoffrey Sell
Uttlesford Norse Services Ltd Board	1	Petrina Lees
Uttlesford Norse Services Ltd Liaison	1	Arthur Coote

CAB12 APPOINTMENTS TO THE NORTH ESSEX PARKING PARTNERSHIP AND THE WEST ESSEX WELLBEING JOINT COMMITTEE

RESOLVED to approve appointments to Joint Committees for 2023/24:

North Essex Parking Partnership:

Substantive Member: Cllr N Hargreaves

Substitute Member: Cllr N Reeve

West Essex Wellbeing Joint Committee:

Cllrs M Tayler and M Sutton

CAB13 OFFICER DECISIONS - WRITE OFFS 2022/23

Councillor Hargreaves presented the report regarding Officer Decisions – Write Offs 2022/23, which detailed Officers decisions under delegated powers to authorise write offs less than £10,000 in line with the constitution and the Financial Regulations. He said the amounts written off had been through the council’s recovery process and proved to be either unrecoverable or uneconomical to pursue any further.

In response to a question from Councillor Sell regarding the 50% increase in write-offs’ and whether this was indicative of an ongoing trend, Councillor Hargreaves said he hoped there would be no further economic impact from Covid-19, but the country was contending with high interest rates and this would have a delayed impact.

In response to a question from Councillor Sell regarding a contingency plan for council tax collection in light of high interest rates and the negative impact this would have on residents coming off fixed rate mortgages, the Assistant Director of Business and Change Management said debt provision was always factored in during the budget setting process.

In response to a question from Councillor Barker regarding the increase in ‘write-offs’ in the previous financial year, the Assistant Director of Business and Change Management said the previous year was very low as there had been a freeze on collection during the pandemic.

The report was noted.

CAB14 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME PROPOSALS - 2024/25

Councillor Hargreaves presented the report on the Local Council Tax Support Scheme Proposals 2024/25, which were reviewed on an annual basis before being circulated for consultation. He said the proposal was similar to last year’s scheme and highlighted the Exceptional Hardship Fund and the Cost of Living

Support Fund as additional measures of support. He moved that Cabinet agree the proposals for consultation. This was seconded by Councillor Sutton.

In response to a question from Councillor Reeve regarding assistance to residents who did not have the correct paperwork, the Assistant Director of Business and Change Management said there were dedicated hardship officers who would make numerous attempts to contact applicants to provide help where required on applications.

The Chief Executive added that the general approach was to maximise the entitlement of claimants.

Councillor Barker requested that details on the Scheme be circulated to all members.

In response to a question from Councillor Sell, the Leader confirmed the Council was in contact with the Department for Work and Pensions.

In response to a question from Councillor Coote, the Assistant Director of Business and Change Management said home visits were assessed on a case by case basis.

RESOLVED to agree the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2024/25 is consulted on the following basis:

- I. The contribution rate is frozen at 12.5% for 2024/25.
- II. The Council continues to protect Pensioners, Vulnerable and Disabled Residents and their Carer's on a low income

CAB15 **2022/23 FINANCIAL OUTTURN**

Councillor Criscione arrived at 7.55pm.

Councillor Hargreaves presented the Financial Outturn 2022/23 report, which provided the outturn position for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital Programme. It also provided an update on the Council's reserve position, and a brief summary of treasury management activity for the year. He highlighted the HRA deficit position and the significant service variances which were not funded through ear-marked reserves in the form of underspends and increased income, and overspends and reduced income. He proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Councillor Coote seconded the proposal.

In response to a question regarding borrowing, Councillor Hargreaves said this would be addressed during the Treasury Management item.

In response to a question regarding the Superfast Broadband reserve, it was confirmed that £600,000 would be held in reserve until the project had been

delivered. It was confirmed that Essex County Council was the contracting party.

In response to a question regarding the Sports Grants reserve, Councillor Hargreaves confirmed a small amount would be carried forward but the funds would be released when the agreed criteria had been delivered by the relevant organisations.

Councillor Barker said the Climate Change reserves had increased; she asked why this was the case.

Councillor Reeve said the climate change budget would be spent and the administration would continue with its current commitments. However, the three year programme would not solve climate change and the council needed to ensure all schemes were sustainable.

Councillor Gregory said the HRA was in a “sensitive” position and asked for assurances that further issues with the housing portfolio would not be found in future.

The Assistant Director – Finance said there were two relevant but separate issues regarding the HRA; the HRA budget for the current year and the 5 year MTFFS forecasted an operating surplus year-on-year, and therefore he was comfortable that the HRA was financially sustainable in terms of day-to-day operations. The other issue was in relation to capital expenditure. He said officers were looking at how capital expenditure for new developments would be financed in future and the 30 year plan was under review.

In response to a question regarding sports grants, it was confirmed that £55,000 had not yet been allocated.

RESOLVED to:

- I. Note the contents of this report, including the General Fund, HRA and Capital Programme outturn positions and Medium Term Financial Strategy update;
- II. Approve the proposed General Fund reserve movements set out in the table at paragraph 21, and approve placing the General Fund underspend amount of £342,000 in the Medium Term Financial Strategy reserve;
- III. Approve the proposed Housing Revenue Account reserve movements set out in the table at paragraph 33, and approve funding the Housing Revenue Account deficit amount of £91,000 from the Housing Revenue Account Revenue Reserves; and
- IV. Approve the capital slippage requests totalling £14.442 million as set out at paragraph 40.

Councillor Hargreaves presented the report regarding Treasury Management Outturn 2022/23, which outlined the Council's borrowings, investments and the associated risk controls related to such treasury activity.

In response to a question, the Assistant Director of Finance said he and the Director of Finance and Corporate Services had taken advantage of borrowing rates in the lead-up to the September 2022 'mini-budget' of the former Prime Minister Liz Truss. This was subsequently proven to be the correct course of action as borrowing rates increased sharply in the following days.

The Assistant Director of Finance was commended for the report.

The report was noted.

CAB17 HOUSING UPDATE - REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

Councillor Coote presented the Housing Update report, which provided an update on the current status of the repairs and maintenance services provided by Uttlesford Norse Services Ltd (UNSL) and the work being delivered by the council in working with UNSL to drive up performance and increase tenant satisfaction. He highlighted details relating to health and safety compliance and performance following the self-referral to the housing regulator in August 2022, and the stock survey and remediation work for issues such as damp and mould that followed. In regards to general maintenance performance, he said that UNSL were underperforming in the management of voids and responsive repairs. He provided an update on the Fire Safety issues at Reynolds Court, whereby the original developer had been held to account and had now completed the remedial works, subject to resolving the findings of an independent safety review. Other sheltered schemes in the district would also be inspected.

The Chief Executive said there were no other builds in the district that resembled the Reynolds Court but due diligence would be carried out on other units; the Council would be as sure as possible to pick up any unknown issues.

Councillor Gregory asked how the back-log of maintenance work would be paid for and how sure was the Portfolio Holder for Housing that there were no further "unknown unknowns".

Councillor Coote said he hoped there would be a change in funding from central Government and that the Council's review of the issues had been robust. He would report back to Scrutiny Committee in due course to provide a progress report.

In response to a question from Councillor Barker regarding tenants in private rented accommodation, the Chief Executive confirmed that the Council owed its highest duty to tenants in council housing, as it was the landlord. Councillor Coote added that he did want to help other tenants and planned to speak to local Housing Associations in future.

The report was noted.

CAB18 **BLUEPRINT UTTLESFORD - UPDATE**

Councillor Gregory left the meeting at 21.05.

The Leader presented the report on Blueprint Uttlesford, which provided detail on the Council's overarching corporate change programme. Progress on the Workforce Plan was highlighted, as were the overarching principles the programme which would guide Blueprint Uttlesford as the Council moved forward.

The Chief Executive was invited to speak to the service review schedule, whereby each Council service or function would be reviewed once over the next four years, and said the intention was to avoid "salami slicing" and to increase sustainable income streams, such as car parking, where possible. The document was live and subject to change, and important decisions would be brought to the consideration of members as individual items, such as investment decisions, as well as part of the Budget setting process. He said the range of savings required were between £6.4 – 8.1 million as stipulated in the MTFS 2023 – 2028, and there would be fewer staff working for the council in four years' time. Resilience needed to be built into the Council in order to avoid single points of failure.

Councillor Barker left the meeting at 21.25.

The Leader proposed approval of the recommendations set-out in the report; this was seconded by Councillor Reeve.

RESOLVED:

- I. To note the progress in developing the Workforce Plan, as set out in paragraphs 11-12 of the report.
- II. To approve the overarching principles to be applied throughout the Blueprint Uttlesford programme, as set out in section 13-17 of the report.
- III. To approve the schedule of service reviews for the next four financial years as set out in section 18 to 19 of the report.
- IV. Cabinet is asked to note the structure in place to deliver the Blueprint Uttlesford change programme as set out in sections 20 to 32 of the report.

The meeting was closed at 21.30.

Summary of Statement for UDC Cabinet Meeting of 29 June 2023 – Mrs. Jane Sharp, Mortimer’s Gate Electricity Substation

Mrs. Sharp addressed Cabinet on the issue of Mortimer’s Gate, an electricity sub-station in Saffron Walden. She said that in September 2022 the Ombudsman had ruled that UDC was at fault for failing to properly discharge a planning condition about noise mitigation relating to the Mortimer’s Gate substation. The failure, which the Council agreed to remedy, continued to impact on the health and welfare of residents.

She said she had moved near to the sub-station in order to return to Saffron Walden to be close to her family, and there was nothing else affordable on the market. She had been promised by the developer an acoustic fence which would reduce the noise; she said this had made no difference. Residents in the social housing were also affected by the noise.

She said the situation could have been avoided if UDC had taken 3 vital steps.

1. Carried out a proper on site noise risk assessment.
2. Consulted with UK Power (UKPN) who would have advised them of the necessary action to take.
3. Put in place an adequate planning condition which considered the type and construction of the proposed fence and whether or not it would be effective.

She said Council tax payers should not have to foot the bill; this should fall to the developer, who had built social housing around the sub-station and provided an ineffective acoustic fence, which showed scant regard for the welfare of tenants.

She said that the Ombudsman had ruled that the council was at fault, and recommended that UDC should work with the developer to implement the mitigation measures.

As the developer had refused to contribute, it was down to the council to fund these measures. She said she understood the financial constraints the council was under but if the council was unable to fund these measures they should have not have agreed to the Ombudsman’s final decision last September.

She said it had taken three years of endless complaint processes, correspondence to arrive at this stage and residents had now had to put up with the constant noise nuisance for 4 years. It was unreasonable and unfair to residents to delay any longer.

Agenda Item 8

Committee:	Cabinet	Date:	Thursday, 2 November 2023
Title:	Corporate Plan		
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Petrina Lees, Leader of the Council		
Report Author:	Richard Auty, Director of Corporate Services rauty@uttlesford.gov.uk	Key decision:	No

Summary

1. This report presents the Corporate Plan 2023-27, which sets out the council's key priorities.

Recommendations

2. Cabinet approves the Corporate Plan.

Financial Implications

3. There are none arising directly from the Corporate Plan, but the council's budget will reflect allocations for members' priorities.

Background Papers

4. None

Impact

- 5.

Communication/Consultation	Corporate priorities are shaped in part by consultation activity
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	None

Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	The Corporate Plan sets out the priority areas of work for the council's staff

Situation

6. The Corporate Plan sets out the vision for the next four years and the priority areas of work to deliver that vision. As is customary, the Corporate Plan undergoes a comprehensive rewrite following the election to ensure it reflects the priorities of the new administration.
7. The new Corporate Plan 2023-27 adopts a template that is not dissimilar to that used by many other local authorities. It provides continuation from the previous Plan by identifying four key priority areas, although these do not necessarily have the same names as in the previous Plan. The Plan is consciously more streamlined than the previous Plan, focusing tightly on key priorities and setting out measurable delivery targets. As a result of this, it is not proposed to develop a separate delivery plan. Progress on meeting the Corporate Plan priorities will however still be reported.
8. Members will note that various targets are deadline dates for the production of particular pieces of work; this is an inevitable consequence of this being the first year of a new four-year plan – the “setting up” phase.
9. The four priority areas are:
 - Protecting & Enhancing Our Environment
 - Building Strong Communities
 - Encouraging Economic Growth
 - Putting Residents First
10. The priorities reflected in the Corporate Plan demonstrate a considerable degree of continuity with the Corporate Plan for the previous four years, though the new plan reflects up to date circumstances, national context, and progress made by the authority over the previous four years.
11. As well as these refreshed priorities, there is one new priority – the explicit focus on the rural character of our district. It has been a central focus of Uttlesford District Council ever since its creation in 1974 to serve the specific challenges and nature of our beautiful rural district of 247 square miles, with two historic market towns, and our many villages and smaller countryside settlements.
12. What is new about this new Corporate Plan priority is the emphasis on holistically drawing together a focus on all of these rural-specific initiatives and working patterns, both across council services and more broadly across partner agencies. This way, it will pull together into one place an holistic

overview of rural issues, identify any possible gaps (or overlaps), and stimulate a more over-arching discussion about future priorities.

13. The Corporate Plan is reviewed annually but the expectation is that after adoption of this new Plan, subsequent revisions will be lighter touch and focus mainly on the third and fourth columns which detail mostly in-year activity to meet the priorities.
14. There are several key council plans and documents referenced in the Corporate Plan which set out in greater detail how certain workstreams will be delivered. These include the Local Plan, the Economic Development Recovery Plan, the Climate Crisis Action Plan and the Blueprint Uttlesford transformation programme. Content of these documents is not replicated in the Plan.
15. The Corporate Plan was reviewed by Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 11 October 2023. The Chair of the Committee will attend Cabinet to relay the views of Scrutiny.
16. Following Cabinet consideration, an updated version of this Corporate Plan will be presented alongside the Budget papers at the Full Council meeting in February 2024.

Risk Analysis

17.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
The council fails to deliver on its priorities	1	3	The Corporate Plan clearly sets out deliverable priorities

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.



Corporate Plan 2023-27

Making Uttlesford the best place to live, work and visit





Protecting & enhancing our environment

We will protect and improve our environment by reducing our carbon footprint, promoting biodiversity, managing waste and recycling, and supporting green initiatives.



Building strong communities

We will build strong and resilient communities by engaging with our residents, plan effectively for new housing and tackling social isolation.



Encouraging economic growth

We will support and promote a vibrant and diverse economy by attracting investment, facilitating business growth, enhancing skills and employability, and improving connectivity and infrastructure.



Putting residents first

We will deliver excellent services for the benefit of our residents by ensuring budgetary stability and value for money, embracing new technology and developing our workforce.



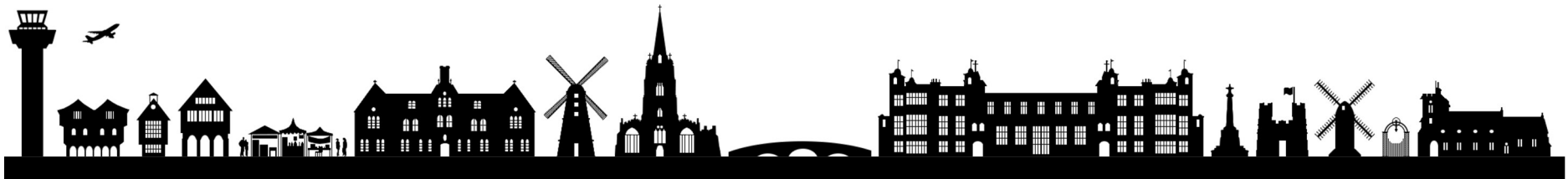
<https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/corporate-plan>



Introduction

This plan sets out the vision and priorities of Uttlesford District Council for the next four years. It also outlines how the council will deliver its services, measure its performance, and manage its resources in a challenging and changing environment.

Our vision is to make Uttlesford the best place to live, work and visit. We want to preserve and enhance the natural beauty and rural character of our district, while supporting sustainable growth and development that meets the needs and aspirations of our communities. We want to provide high quality and accessible services that are responsive to local needs and deliver value for money. We want to work with our partners and residents to tackle the key challenges and opportunities facing our district.



Priorities

To achieve our vision, we have four strategic priorities that will guide our work over the next four years:



Protecting and enhancing our environment



Encouraging economic growth



Building strong communities



Putting residents first

Delivery

To deliver this corporate plan, we will:

- Develop annual service plans that detail how each service area will contribute to the corporate priorities
- Monitor and report on our performance against key indicators and targets on a quarterly basis
- Review our financial position regularly and ensure effective budget management and control
- Engage with our stakeholders, including residents, businesses, partners, staff and councillors on a regular basis
- Review this corporate plan annually and update it as necessary to reflect changing circumstances

Our four-year plan will be delivered during challenging financial times in which we need to reduce our budget by around 25 percent.



Protecting and enhancing our environment

We will protect and improve our environment by reducing our carbon footprint, promoting biodiversity, managing waste and recycling, and supporting green initiatives.

Priority	What we will do	How we will do it	How we will measure it
Take action on climate change	Clearly set out and publicise our priorities for the coming years to meet our net zero by 2030 pledge, including reducing emissions from our vehicle fleet and corporate buildings.	We will refresh the Climate Change Action Plan, which will set out the major projects we will deliver in order to reduce our carbon emissions and support work in the community.	We will complete the Action Plan refresh by March 2024 and then monitor successful completion of activities with the Action Plan and provide quarterly updates on progress.
	Reduce direct emissions from council housing stock. This includes new-build homes being planned/developed.	We will install clean-air heating solutions and develop measures to retro-fit homes to improve sustainability and contribute towards meeting the 2030 pledge.	We will ensure we have up to date information on the energy efficiency of the housing stock by March 2024, and a programme of work to deliver on our commitments will follow from 2024/25.
	Deliver sustainable ways of working across the council to reduce the carbon impact of business activities.	We will deliver Carbon Literacy training for our Leadership and Senior Management team to support embedding sustainability and climate change into key decision making across the council.	Training will be developed and delivered to the council's management team by the end of October 2023.

	Provide community leadership and enable local action on climate change.	We will provide community grants via the Zero Carbon Communities fund to deliver community projects that are focused on carbon emission reduction and biodiversity restoration or enhancement.	A second round of grant funding will be available to community groups, with applications required by 23 December 2023 and a decision made in the early part of 2024.
Manage waste in a sustainable way	<p>Work with partners across Essex on a new waste strategy for the county.</p> <p>Review our domestic recycling and waste services to make sure they are as efficient as possible and review and improve our waste service for businesses.</p>	<p>Following national policy, we will treat the waste and recycling we collect as a resource. We will contribute to the development of the new Waste Strategy for Essex which will determine how we will manage waste for the next generation.</p> <p>We will conduct a detailed review of all our waste and recycling services through the change programme Blueprint Uttlesford to ensure they are operating efficiently and effectively.</p>	<p>We will play an active role in the development of the county-wide strategy through attendance at appropriate meetings and forums, ensuring the views of this district are taken into account. We anticipate the strategy being approved during 2024.</p> <p>The review of Environmental Services is scheduled for 2024/25. In the meantime, opportunities for service improvement will continue to be explored.</p>
Conserve and enhance the quality and diversity of the district's natural habitats and wildlife	Fulfil our bio-diversity duty by using the planning system to conserve, enhance and create new ecological habitat.	We will support and promote the public consultation on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Uttlesford, to ensure widespread reach and engagement.	We will promote the consultation, which runs from November to December 2023, through our communication channels to drive engagement among district residents.

		<p>We will develop robust planning policies as part of the Local Plan relevant to habitat protection, enhancement and creation.</p> <p>We will require and monitor bio-diversity net gain in relation to new development and ensure the council has access to specialist advice from a qualified ecologist.</p>	<p>Relevant policies will be included within a Reg 18 Local Plan by November 2023.</p> <p>Bio-diversity net gain data will be monitored for every major planning decision from November 2024 with a rolling target of 100% of schemes to include bio-diversity net gain.</p>
<p>Work with partners to deliver sustainable transport</p>	<p>Work with Essex County Council and other stakeholders to promote and facilitate sustainable, reliable, and adaptable transport infrastructure.</p> <p>Steer development to the most sustainable locations using the Local Plan and via planning decisions.</p>	<p>Complete the Uttlesford Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan.</p> <p>Deliver the active travel and shared transport pilot schemes in Saffron Walden as part of the DEFRA funded Clean Air project, to build evidence to support roll out of schemes elsewhere in the district.</p> <p>Develop a spatial development strategy and robust planning policies as part of the Local Plan in order to support sustainable travel.</p>	<p>We will complete the Plan by March 2024 and develop from it a priority list of schemes for investment.</p> <p>EV Car Club and Community Cargo Bike schemes will launch by November 2023 and uptake will be monitored and evaluated during the two year trial period.</p> <p>A Reg 18 Local Plan with an agreed draft spatial strategy will be published by November 2023.</p>



Encouraging economic growth

We will support and promote a vibrant and diverse economy by attracting investment, facilitating business growth, enhancing skills and employability, and improving connectivity and infrastructure.

Priority	What we will do	How we will do it	How we will measure it
Support the resilience and growth of the local economy	<p>Provide business support, information and advice to help the business community recover and grow.</p> <p>Enhance the skills and employability of local residents. Attract tourism and investment to the district.</p>	<p>We will complete the actions set out in the Economic Development Recovery Delivery Plan which contains detailed information about the way the council supports the business community.</p> <p>We will work with partners including other Essex councils to deliver economic priorities across a wider area, benefitting from economies of scale in procurement and scope of delivery.</p>	<p>We will deliver the schemes as set out in the Economic Development Recovery Plan, progress on which will be reported to the Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>We will play an active role in relevant county and regional forums including the London Stansted Cambridge Consortium, the Innovation Core Group and the North Essex Economic Board, ensuring at least one council attendee at all relevant meetings to ensure the district's views and priorities are represented.</p>
Improve connectivity infrastructure	<p>Support work to ensure residents and businesses benefit from superfast broadband.</p>	<p>We will continue to work with Essex County Council on the Superfast Essex project, particularly targeting areas where major broadband suppliers cannot deliver service.</p>	<p>We will have an officer representative is in attendance at all Gigaclear Project Board Meetings to ensure our position is presented against the delivery plan outcome for the district.</p>

	Identify opportunities to improve connectivity, including 5G technology.	Work as part of the Essex and Herts Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ) to ensure residents and businesses get maximum benefit from superfast/gigabit broadband and 5G delivery.	We will continue to have a member and an officer in attendance at the DIZ meetings and regular engagement with Digital Essex, ensuring we have early access to information and initiatives available to enhance connectivity across the district.
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Building Strong Communities

We will build strong and resilient communities by engaging with our residents, delivering new housing and tackling social isolation.

Priority	What we will do	How we will do it	How we will measure it
Provide and maintain quality homes and invest in thriving communities	Commit to improving the condition of our homes by investing in our housing stock.	Develop an Asset Management Strategy aligned to the HRA Business Plan that delivers Decent Homes compliance through planned work programmes.	We will publish and maintain a five-year Capital Works Programme and our progress against it by March 2024.
	Provide quality homes through managed growth.	Seek development opportunities and work with other social housing providers to maximise the delivery of affordable housing.	We will refresh asset data through stock condition surveys, asset grading and maintain a validated compliance register. This is an ongoing process.
	Deliver high-quality housing management services to empower our tenants and ensure communities prosper.	Use customer feedback and engagement to shape the services we provide and continue our multi-agency community events.	We will publish the HRA 30-year business plan to identify capacity for investment in new and affordable housing by March 2024. We will then draft and publish an Asset Management Strategy in 2024/25. We will produce and deliver a Tenant Engagement Strategy to include scrutiny of services by March 2024.

<p>Plan for future housing needs in a sustainable way</p>	<p>Deliver a robust Local Plan that sets out a vision, and objectives, for addressing climate change, meeting future development needs in a planned and managed way, and setting out policies and standards to ensure that our historic and natural environment is conserved and enhanced.</p> <p>Introduce a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to support the Local Plan and fund new infrastructure in the district.</p>	<p>Prepare a draft Local Plan, for public consultation, utilising a range of approaches to resident engagement to ensure that all who want to contribute are able to do so. Use the outcome of consultations and best possible evidence to produce final plan for submission to government.</p> <p>Work with a range of stakeholders, including Essex County Council, the NHS, water companies, and neighbouring councils to ensure adequate provision of infrastructure is made to support new development.</p>	<p>We will have an agreed Local Plan timetable by November 2023 that will lead us to submission to government by December 2024.</p> <p>We will have an agreed Local Plan timetable by November 2023 and demonstrate collaboration with stakeholders in the lead up to submission in December 2024.</p>
<p>Tackle rural priorities</p>	<p>Draw together our understanding of issues and challenges particularly facing our villages and rural communities – including rural isolation, rural poverty and homelessness, rural economy, rural crime and safety issues etc.</p> <p>Develop this into a coherent plan across of the range of interventions we and other partners both currently make and can potentially introduce to serve our rural communities to the fullest.</p>	<p>Work with our partner agencies, councils and communities to map out the issues and the interventions, and to stimulate a debate around priorities, leading to a new and coordinated plan.</p>	<p>The project’s priorities will be mapped out in a three-stage discovery, challenge and action process involving stakeholder representatives, from September 2023 to April 2024.</p> <p>Progress with the mapping of issues and services will then be tracked against the project plan developed.</p> <p>The ultimate product of this work is improved opportunities and outcomes for local communities, and those measures will be identified along the way as part of the process.</p>



Putting Residents First

We will deliver excellent services for the benefit of our residents by ensuring budgetary stability and value for money, embracing new technology and developing our workforce.

Priority	What we will do	How we will do it	How we will measure it
Ensure financial stability	<p>Deliver a balanced budget every year.</p> <p>Review services through a structured programme to ensure efficiency and value for money.</p> <p>Prioritise money towards the areas of greatest need and impact.</p>	<p>The required budget savings of £6.6 million over four years will be delivered through the Blueprint Uttlesford programme, through which every council service will be reviewed. Savings will come from a combination of increased income and budget reductions.</p>	<p>A separate workstream of benefit realisation and cost control has been established and will be led by the Director of Finance and Revenues and Benefits. This will ensure financial changes are logged and maintained.</p>
Use commercial assets to fund services	<p>Manage the commercial asset portfolio to maximise income for the council to be used on services for residents.</p> <p>Review the portfolio to ensure it represents best value for the council.</p>	<p>The commercial asset portfolio generates income to support the council's services. Regular reviews will continue to be undertaken to ensure it still provides the best value.</p>	<p>The CIPFA Prudential Code requires an annual report on commercial investments and option appraisals. This report will be presented to the Investment Board and as necessary to Cabinet and Council.</p>
Enhance digital access and innovation across council services	<p>Consider emerging technology, such as AI, when redesigning services.</p>	<p>Through the Blueprint Uttlesford programme, service reviews will include consideration of the best way to deploy value for money technology to ensure we can continue to deliver the services on which our residents rely.</p>	<p>Each Blueprint Uttlesford review has a set review methodology and template. Through this it will be possible to demonstrate how technology has been used to maintain or enhance service delivery. The Blueprint Uttlesford programme will last for four years.</p>

	Review our online services to ensure they are helping residents do what they need to do, within the council's financial constraints.	We will consider implementing chatbot and AI technology to deal with simple requests from customers in a quick and efficient way, starting with a chatbot function for LiveChat via the website.	A decision on whether to proceed with the LiveChat chatbot project will be taken by December 2023.
Further develop a skilled, motivated and diverse workforce	<p>Review our recruitment, onboarding, induction and retention processes to ensure we attract and retain a workforce that is representative of our community. Promote an inclusive workplace to help us recruit the best people in line with our values and behaviours.</p> <p>Ensure our learning and development offer is accessible to all, affordable, efficiently delivered and aligned to emerging developmental priorities.</p>	We will monitor progress against the activities set out in the Workforce Action Plan and will use self and external assessments to measure success such as Disability Confident and Armed Forces accreditation, an increased number of candidates for jobs, a reduction in staff turnover rates, targeted training for our priority areas and improved compliance with mandatory training.	This priority will be delivered through the Workforce Plan and Action Plan 2023-2027, which will be regularly reviewed and updated according to corporate priorities and engagement with staff.

Agenda Item 9

Committee:	Cabinet	Date: Thursday, 2 November 2023
Title:	Conservation Area Appraisal, Smiths Green Takeley	
Report author:	Bruce Tice, Principal Website and Consultation Officer	
	btice@uttlesford.gov.uk	Key decision: No

Summary

1. A new conservation area at Smiths Green Takeley is proposed.
2. A Heritage Assessment and Audit was commissioned in 2022 by Takeley Parish Council as part of their Neighbourhood Plan. This assessment highlighted the potential to designate Smiths Green as a Conservation Area.
3. Takeley Parish Council commissioned Place Services in 2023 to undertake a conservation area appraisal of Smiths Green. The appraisal recommends the designation of a conservation area and identifies the extent of a proposed conservation area boundary. The parish council considers the appraisal a worthwhile document which is likely to strengthen the control of development. This comment is valuable and is one shared by officers.
4. Takeley Parish Council approached Uttlesford District Council officers to request the designation of a conservation area at Smiths Green. As the LPA the council is required to carry out a public consultation on the proposed conservation area. The consultation included holding a public meeting in the settlement.
5. This report considers the results of the consultation and recommends a course of action.

Recommendations

6. That the Smiths Green Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan be approved and used to assist in the process of determining planning applications and for implementing management proposals.
7. That the Smiths Green Conservation Area be formally designated.

Financial Implications

8. The recommendation would require the advertising of the designated boundary which would cost in the region of £600 - 700. This can be met from existing budgets for Conservation.

Background Papers

9. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report:
 - Smiths Green Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan

- notes of the public exhibition held on Saturday 9 September 2023 and all representations received during the consultation period

Impact

10.

Communication/Consultation	Full consultation undertaken.
Community Safety	Not affected.
Equalities	Not affected.
Finance	Advertising costs can be met from existing budgets. The document will be disseminated through the website.
Health and Safety	Not affected.
Human Rights/Legal Implications	Not affected.
Sustainability	The report focuses on environmental issues seeking to preserve the environment of the respective communities, including their buildings and open spaces.
Ward-specific impacts	Takeley - various proposals as amended and as contained in the report.
Workforce/Workplace	Existing staff resources.

Situation

11. Takeley Parish Council approached District Council officers in 2023 with a request to consider the designation of a Conservation Area at Smiths Green. The council has a duty within section 69 of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Area Act 1990 to consider the designation of conservation areas and to undertake periodic reviews. As part of this work the council has undertaken a number of conservation area appraisals of existing conservation areas. In this case Place Services has produced an appraisal which recommends the designation of a new conservation area at Smiths Green.
12. This report sets out the key issues within the attached Smiths Green Conservation Area Appraisal and records the results of the consultation exercise and the changes proposed.
13. The principal issues and recommendations set out in the document are:

A conservation area is proposed to include properties to the east and west of Smiths Green Lane and bounded at the south by the B1256 with the Flich Way country park beyond.

The appraisal also identifies a number of heritage assets not included within the

current Uttlesford Local Heritage List, which make a positive contribution to the conservation area and should be considered for local listing in the future.

A number of opportunities for enhancement and management actions are recommended by the appraisal including a proposal to introduce Article 4 Directions to provide additional control over the types of development which are potentially the most harmful to the area's significance.

Note: As a result of the consultation a number of points were raised by respondents relating to issues raised in the appraisal report. These representations are included in the table below with appropriate comment.

10. Consultation results

The comments received at the public exhibition and during the consultation period are set out in the table arranged in the subject order above. Those responses which noted minor inaccuracies in the text of the initial Draft Conservation Area Appraisal, such as the misspelling of building names, corrections to descriptions or attributed dates are not included here.

As the appraisal document is owned by Takeley Parish Council, this report includes comments on representations, where relevant, from the parish council and their heritage advisor, Place Services.

Issue	Representations made	Takeley Parish Council / Place Services comment and recommendation
General	<p>Historic England welcome the production of this appraisal and management plan for the Smiths Green Conservation Area and are reassured by considered and sound approach outlined within the document, and clear and accessible presentation which expresses a compelling narrative of Smiths Green's history, character and heritage.</p> <p>Historic England also suggest a number of minor revisions to the content and format of the appraisal.</p> <p>The Hundred Parish Society support the proposed conservation area.</p> <p>Bill Critchley Support for the designation of Smiths Green as a conservation area.</p>	<p>Takeley Parish Council supports the Place Services draft document in its entirety, subject to inclusion of the minor points made by Historic England and any appropriate changes to individual property descriptions that have been provided by residents.</p>

<p>Character analysis of Smiths Green</p>	<p>The Hundred Parish Society note the importance of the rural landscape and heritage at Smiths Green and that walk route 158 passes through the northern part of the settlement.</p> <p>Jackie Cheetham suggests a revision to the description of Beech Cottage as given in the appraisal from one storey with attics to two storeys with attic.</p> <p>Bill Critchley supports the preservation of the unique nature and qualities of the area.</p> <p>Anthony Johnson notes that the area should be preserved / maintained and not developed.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Place Services advise to not revise the description of Beech Cottage. This will keep the description in line to that on the NHLE (list entry number: 1112212).</p> <p>Noted</p>
<p>Designation of the conservation area boundary</p>	<p>National Highways do not have any comment.</p> <p>The Rural Planning Practice on behalf of the Executors of Margaret Haynes suggest that the proposed conservation area boundary should exclude land formerly used for agricultural purposes and situated to the rear of The Croft. The stated reason is that the enclosed paddock has no views into or out of the site and does not add in any way to the value and significance of the conservation area or to the setting of The Croft. The suggestion is that the conservation area boundary should be drawn to follow the natural boundary that encloses The Croft and its former garden.</p> <p>Bill Critchley suggests that should the conservation area should be extended to include Warish Hall Lane to a point north of the entrance to Warish Hall. The wood, copse to the north of Jacks Lane behind The Limes, a non listed heritage asset, should be included as this forms an important aspect of the rural area.</p>	<p>Takeley Parish Council note that there is a comment to extend the boundary to just north of Warish Hall and to the east along Jacks Lane, and a request to redraw the boundary to exclude a domestic garden, to bring it outside the proposed boundary on the edge of the conservation area.</p> <p>Neither request for boundary changes would seem to meet the criteria carefully followed by Place Services and there has been no suggestion by Historic England that the boundary should be amended.</p> <p>Takeley Parish Council does not believe that there is merit in changing the proposed boundary to suit an individual owner.</p> <p>Place Services have agreed with this approach and do</p>

	<p>RPS Group on behalf of Weston Homes agree that the southern part of the proposed conservation area (between Dunmow Road/Stane Street and 1&2 Bulls Cottages) has a distinct character and, as such is worthy of designation.</p> <p>RPS Group on behalf of Weston Homes, however, question the inclusion of the northern section of the proposed conservation area (Jack's Lane north of Woodside). They note that the area is entirely different in character and does not demonstrably have a relationship with the green either historically or at present.</p> <p>RPS Group further suggest that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the relationship between the arable land to the north and the rurality of the village green / the whole of the proposed conservation area be clarified • as demonstrated by the views noted in the appraisal, the contribution that arable land makes to the proposed conservation area is negligible • that the setting and surviving landscape features, especially that at Warish Hall, do not share a functional link with the proposed conservation area • only a minority of buildings identified in the appraisal as potential assets for inclusion on the Uttlesford Local Heritage List should be considered as such • opportunity sites within the proposed conservation area should be considered as to not do so would be at 	<p>not consider that that a boundary change would strengthen the conservation area as a whole.</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Takeley Parish Council and Place Services agree that no modifications are required in response to comments received from Weston Homes.</p> <p>All noted</p>
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	<p>variance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> potential development sites within Takeley in the Uttlesford draft Regulation 18 Local Plan should be noted by the appraisal 	
Buildings that make an important architectural or historical contribution	National Highways do not have any comment.	
Management plan actions	<p>Historic England welcome the opportunity for enhancements in relation to 'wayfinding on the approach to and within the settlement' and removal of overgrown vegetation to reveal the 19th century listed pump.</p> <p>Historic England recommend regular periodic monitoring of existing street furniture to ensure these items are routinely maintained and do not fall into disrepair and negatively impact the village green.</p> <p>National Highways note that as all roads belong to the local highways authority, any integration may require collaboration between the local highways department and the local planning authority within this proposed conservation area.</p> <p>The Rural Planning Practice note that much of the rural character of Smiths Green has been lost by the erecting of excessive highways signage and that any extraneous signage should be removed following discussion with Essex Highways.</p> <p>Anthony Johnson notes the detrimental effect of bus routes, disabled access provision, street signage and light pollution on the character rural areas such as Smiths Green.</p>	<p>Takeley Parish Council would support an ambition that future improvements could include removal of modern highways road signs, subject to highways safety considerations.</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>

11. Conclusion

The public consultation raised a number of useful points which have been incorporated into the conservation area appraisal. The document should be amended to incorporate the above comments and use of the document should commence immediately to assist in the determination of planning applications and for implementing the management proposals as set out.

Formal designation of the conservation area boundary will need to be advertised prior to them coming into force. It is necessary to inform the Secretary of State and Historic England and place an advert in the Gazette and local newspapers.

12. Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Revisions to the conservation area	1 There is some risk that revisions will be approved which cannot be justified by the guidelines provided by Historic England.	2 If revisions to the conservation area are approved which the Council cannot justify through good practice guidelines, the report and its recommendations will be unsound. Planning officers and applicants will then be without any up to date guidance and applications will be determined against out of date resources.	The report has been carefully produced and amended where any inaccuracies were noted. Consultation has been carried out with statutory bodies, Takeley Parish Council and local residents and advice sought from Place Services, specialist officers and experts to support the findings.

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.

Report of Public Participation on Smiths Green Draft Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan 31 July to 29 September 2023

Report One Comments made at the public exhibition and during the consultation period



**Uttesford District Council
September 2023**

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Copy of letter to Smiths Green residents

Appendix 2 – Smiths Green consultation form (the council's standard equalities monitoring forms were also made available)

Introduction

This report outlines the responses received from the public exhibition held at the The Old School Community Centre, Brewers End, Takeley on Saturday 9 September 10am to 1pm and all responses received during the consultation period 31 July to 29 September.

A Heritage Assessment and Audit was commissioned in 2022 by Takeley Parish Council as part of their Neighbourhood Plan. This assessment highlighted the potential to designate Smiths Green as a Conservation Area.

Takeley Parish Council commissioned Place Services in 2023 to undertake a conservation area appraisal of Smiths Green. The appraisal recommends the designation of a conservation area and identifies the extent of a proposed conservation area boundary. The parish council considers the appraisal a worthwhile document which is likely to strengthen the control of development. This comment is valuable and is one shared by Uttlesford District Council officers.

Takeley Parish Council approached Uttlesford District Council officers to request the designation of a conservation area at Smiths Green. As the LPA the council is required to carry out a public consultation on the proposed conservation area. The consultation included holding a public meeting in the settlement.

Following the consultation Uttlesford District Council will take into account all comments and consider for approval and designation a document that will be an important material consideration when processing applications.

Summary of findings of the Smiths Green Conservation Area Appraisal

A conservation area is proposed to include properties to the east and west of Smiths Green Lane and bounded at the south by the B1256 with the Flich Way country park beyond.

The appraisal also identifies a number of heritage assets not included within the current Uttlesford Local Heritage List, which make a positive contribution to the conservation area and should be considered for local listing in the future.

A number of opportunities for enhancement and management actions are recommended by the appraisal including a proposal to introduce Article 4 Directions to provide additional control over the types of development which are potentially the most harmful to the area's significance.

Publicity

Publicity was carried out to advise all possible respondents of the publication of the appraisal, the duration of the consultation period, ways of making a response and the details of the public exhibition held in the village.

Parish Council – Takeley Parish Council were notified of the council's intention to consult on the draft appraisal. The parish council were actively involved in promoting the consultation.

Information letters were delivered to all properties within the conservation area and in any other areas affected by any amendments. Copies were also supplied for the public meeting. A copy is included in Appendix 1.

Website – a dedicated page (<https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/smiths-green-conservation-area>) was created on the council's website from which links were supplied to enable access to pdf and online interactive versions (via the council's Objective consultation portal) of the appraisal. Summary information on the report was given on the page. An email address and postal address were also given for consultees who wished to send comments by alternative routes.

Direct Mailing - key consultees on the Council's database (Objective) were emailed advising them of the new consultation event.

Public exhibition – a public exhibition was held at The Old School Community Centre, Brewers End, Takeley on Saturday 9 September 10am to 1pm and was attended by XX people. The exhibition was attended by the UDC Head of Development Management & Enforcement and Thomas Muston, Built Heritage Consultant at Place Services, who had undertaken the appraisal and who was on hand to answer enquiries. Maps, plans, a selection of images of important local buildings and copies of the appraisal were available as were paper copies of the response forms.

Press release and online promotions – a press release was issued on 31 July to all local media. It was also available on the council's website and via its Twitter and Facebook pages.

Promotion via e-newsletters included content in the planning and general newsletters reaching 10,393 people.

A reminder about the public exhibition was issued via social media in the days leading up to the public exhibition.

Copies of the Appraisal - The appraisal document was available online, as previously noted. Paper copies could be inspected at the Council Offices in Saffron Walden, Saffron Walden Library, Great Dunmow Library, The Old School Community Centre and from the Takeley Parish Clerk.

Results of the consultation on the Smiths Green Conservation Area Appraisal

All responses are reproduced here.



Dear Mr Tice,

Draft Smiths Green Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan consultation

Thank you for notifying Historic England about the above consultation. As the Government's adviser on the historic environment, Historic England is keen to ensure that the protection of the historic environment is fully taken into account at all stages and levels of the local planning process.

We welcome the production of this appraisal and management plan for the Smiths Green Conservation Area and are reassured by considered and sound approach outlined within the document, and clear and accessible presentation which expresses a compelling narrative of Smiths Green's history, character and heritage.

Due to the thorough nature of the appraisal and management plan, our feedback can be considered minor observations or suggestions:

- The use of an information panel on p.12 is a helpful addition to the document. If there is opportunity to add one or two more to add context to other aspects of the appraisal, this would only add value.
- Inclusion of a photograph of Moat Cottage to be included within the heading 'Key Buildings – Designated' to remain consistent.
- We welcome the opportunity for enhancements in relation to 'wayfinding on the approach to and within the settlement' (p.36), removal of overgrown vegetation to reveal the 19th century listed pump (p.37), as we believe this will further enhance and promote the historic environment and the importance of Smiths Green's heritage.
- In relation to the 6.2 Public Realm, we would recommend regular periodic monitoring of existing street furniture shown in fig.17 to ensure these items are routinely maintained and do not fall into disrepair and negatively impact the village green. Further guidance on signage and street furniture can be found in Historic England's 2018 [Streets for All](#)

One additional point to add is on p.43 'Funding Opportunities', while the Partnership Scheme in Conservation Areas is still in place, like all funding streams, it is subject to review, and it may be that other heritage focused funding streams may be more suitable. We would however, be happy to discuss and advise on potential funding routes in the future.

To avoid any doubt, this does not reflect our obligation to provide further advice on or, potentially, object to specific proposals which may subsequently arise as a result of the proposed conservation area appraisal, where we consider these would have an adverse effect on the historic environment.

Historic England, Brooklands, 24 Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge CB2 8BU
Telephone 01223 58 2749 HistoricEngland.org.uk
Please note that Historic England operates an access to information policy.
Correspondence or information which you send us may therefore become publicly available.



Uttlesford District Council
Smiths Green Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals consultation



Historic England

If you have any queries about this matter or would like to discuss anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Ross McGivern
Historic Places Advisor, East of England

Historic England, Brooklands, 24 Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge CB2 8BU
Telephone 01223 58 2749 HistoricEngland.org.uk
Please note that Historic England operates an access to information policy.
Correspondence or information which you send us may therefore become publicly available.



Takeley Parish Council

The Parish Council supports the Place Services draft document in its entirety, subject to inclusion of the minor points made by Historic England and any appropriate changes to individual property descriptions that have been provided by residents.

Submissions have included historic maps and photographs which could be added, if appropriate, and the Parish Council would support an ambition that future improvements could include removal of modern highways road signs, subject to highways safety considerations.

There is a comment to extend the boundary to just north of Warish Hall and to the east along Jacks Lane, and a request to redraw the boundary to exclude a domestic garden, to bring it outside the proposed boundary on the edge of the Conservation Area. Neither request for boundary changes would seem to meet the criteria carefully followed by Place Services and there has been no suggestion by Historic England that the boundary should be amended. The Parish Council does not believe that there is merit in changing the proposed boundary to suit an individual owner, unless Place Services consider that that a boundary change would strengthen the Conservation Area as a whole.

Environment Agency

Smiths Green Conservation Area Appraisal

Thank you for consulting us on the below document.

We have no comments on this particular document as heritage conservation falls outside of our remit.

NationalHighways



Our ref: NH/23/02095 Smiths Green Conservation
Your ref: Draft Conservation Smiths Green, Takeley

Shamsul Hoque
National Highways
Spatial Planning
Operations (East)
Woodlands
Manton Lane
Bedford MK41 7LW

Uttlesford District Council
Council Offices
London Road
Saffron
Walden
CB11 4ER

01 September 2023

Via email to: [REDACTED]

Dear Sir/Madam,

**DRAFT CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL FOR SMITHS GREEN TAKELEY
– SMITHS GREEN CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL AND
MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Thank you for your correspondence, received on 31 July 2023, notifying National Highways of the consultation above.

National Highways is responsible for the operation, maintenance, and improvement of the Strategic Road Network (SRN) in England on behalf of the Secretary of the State. In general, a conservation area appraisal looks at the character, appearance and special interest of a conservation area or group of conservation areas. In the area within and surrounding the Smiths Green Conservation Area, National Highways have responsibility for the trunk road A120, part of the Strategic Road Network (SRN).

Smiths Green is located at the east extent of Takeley and to the west of Little Canfield. The proposed conservation area is accessed from the B1256 (Dunnmow Road), which forms its southern boundary. The conservation area is dissected by Smiths Green Lane which routes north over the A120 to Bambers Green. Jacks Lane (Byway 25) leads from a road junction, located in the north of the Conservation Area.

We have reviewed the supporting document related to the 'Smiths Green Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan', dated May 2023.

First, in relation to the extent of the proposed conservation area boundary or the proposed new conservation area for Smiths Green in Takeley, National Highways do not have any comment. Second, for the 10 listed buildings or other structures identified within the area,



National Highways do not have any comment. Third, as for the Smiths Green area, all roads belong to local highways authority; therefore, any access and integration may require collaboration between the local Highways Department and Local Planning Authority within this proposed conservation area.

We do not have any more comments on this.

Please contact us at PlanningEE@nationalhighways.co.uk if you require any clarification.

Yours faithfully,



Shamsul Hoque
Assistant Spatial Planner

Standing advice to the local planning authority

The Climate Change Committee's [2022 Report to Parliament](#) notes that for the UK to achieve net zero carbon status by 2050, action is needed to support a modal shift away from car travel. The NPPF supports this position, with paragraphs 73 and 105 prescribing that significant development should offer a genuine choice of transport modes, while paragraphs 104 and 110 advise that appropriate opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport should be taken up.

Moreover, the build clever and build efficiently criteria as set out in clause 6.1.4 of [PAS2080](#) promote the use of low carbon materials and products, innovative design solutions and construction methods to minimise resource consumption.

These considerations should be weighed alongside any relevant Local Plan policies to ensure that planning decisions are in line with the necessary transition to net zero carbon.

The Rural Planning Practice on behalf of the Executors of Margaret Haynes



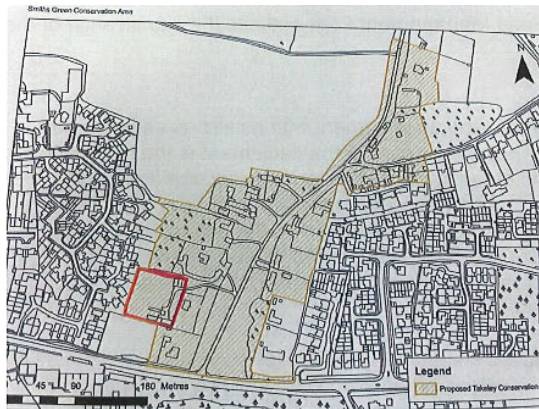
The Director of Planning
Uttlesford District Council
Uttlesford
Essex

Date 12 September 2023

Dear Sir

Proposed Conservation Area at Smiths Green Takeley

Following the launch of the public consultation relating to the proposed Conservation Area (CA) at Smiths Green Takeley we are writing on behalf of the Executors of Margaret Haynes to request the proposed CA boundary should exclude the land in red to the rear of The Croft illustrated below.



Proposed Area to be Removed from Smiths Green Conservation Area

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The Rural Planning Practice | VAT Registration Number: 230 4780 30
Partnership Number: OC403453 England and Wales

South Wing
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01285 323200

The Croft is mentioned as a listed building in the written draft Character Appraisal but no reference is made to it thereafter as being of any sort of importance to the CA.



The Croft

The land we are seeking to remove is discrete with a tall hedge demarcating the boundary. There are some existing relatively modern farm buildings originally used for the pigs and hens kept on the site. This land does not relate visually to any part of the proposed CA.

Stated Significance

The draft Character Appraisal and Management Plan outlines the significance of the proposed CA broadly as follows:

Smiths Green is of a typical hamlet type arrangement with dwellings set back from the large central village green. The historic core of the settlement is the Green itself with a scattering of cottages and bungalows of varying age arranged around its perimeter with the unclassified road running south/north through its centre. This protected lane connects to Jacks Green and Warish Hall, the centrepiece of the original estate. The proposed Conservation Area boundary encompasses the buildings along the green and northwards towards Warish Hall, whilst permitting views across the wider rural landscape.

The area's special architectural and historic interest derives from the development of the small rural hamlet around the village green which has evolved over time and is, in parts, relatively unchanged. Smiths Green contains a high proportion of historic buildings, both listed and unlisted, which makes a contribution to the historic and architectural interest of the proposed Conservation Area. As the appraisal says, the

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composition of the many historic buildings flanking the village green evokes a strong rural character which is reinforced by the openness and generally loose grain of development with much of the rural characteristic drawn from the wide-open village green, mature hedgerows and trees. The origins of the hamlet and its connection to the agricultural landscape remain appreciable but unfortunately, late twentieth century development has intruded upon the setting of Smiths Green as it has upon the character of some individual properties.



© Place Services 2023

The Croft

The Croft is identified within the Appraisal as one of Smith's Green's listed buildings but no further commentary is provided relating to it. At its core is a 'two up/two down' cottage constructed during the late 19th century of timber frame, which was originally weatherboarded, under a shallow pitch slated roof. (The list description is wrong in describing it as of brick with a tiled roof) A stock brick extension was added in 1949 and the weatherboarding was removed at the time of further extension works during the 1970s. The elevations currently, are modern pargetted render on metal lathes fixed to the 19th century and later timber frame.

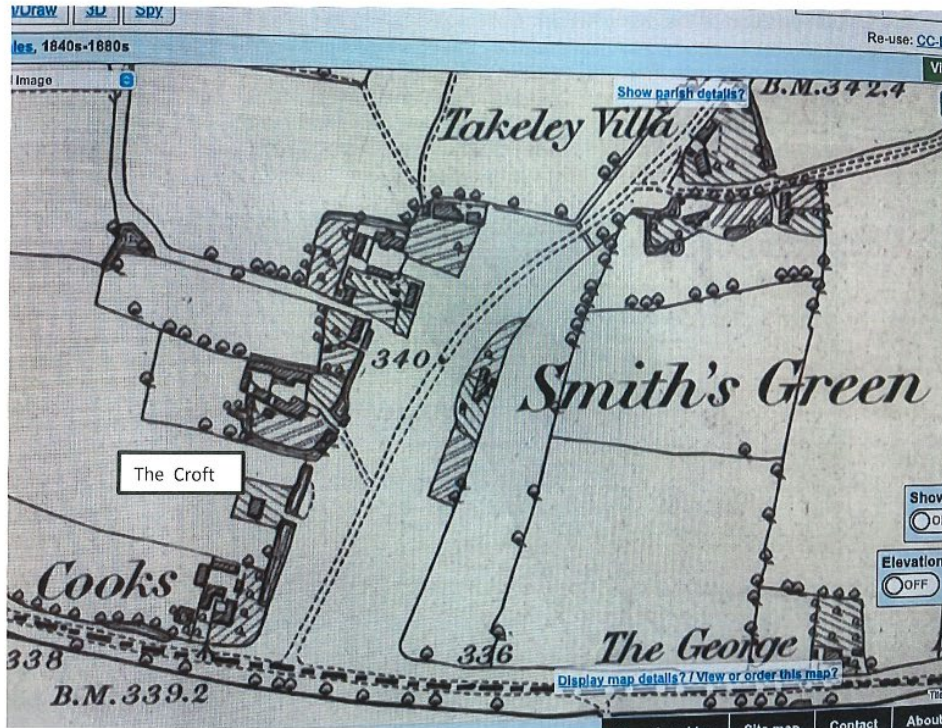
Historic maps show the curtilage of The Croft to be tightly drawn, the field boundaries reflect twentieth century changes and are not historic as the 1840- 1880 map shows below:

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1880-1840 County Series Map

Whilst it is inoffensive and well screened by trees and hedging it is not considered that The Croft contributes greatly to the character of the area. It is to all intents and purposes, a nineteenth century building with little historic or architectural merit.

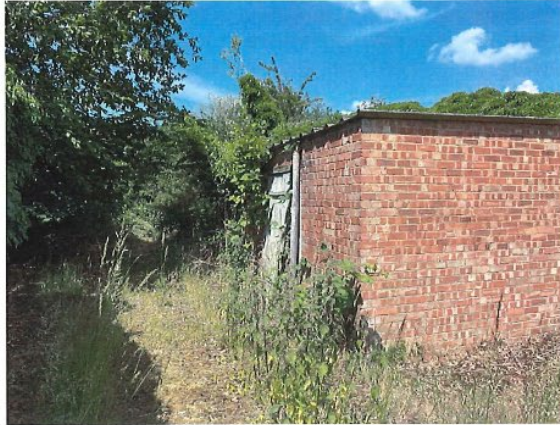
Up until the 1950s The Croft was run as a small farm. To the rear of the house and separated by a tall hedge is the remnant of the farming enterprise; one small paddock together with now derelict brick-built farm buildings used originally for poultry and latterly for pigs

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Redundant Farm Buildings

In this part of the property are a pair of asbestos-clad Nissen huts, formerly poultry units.



Nissen Hut

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The enclosed paddock has no views into or out of the site and does not add in any way to the value and significance of the Conservation Area or to the setting of The Croft. The land is largely surrounded by modern housing development, and the derelict farm buildings are an eyesore and should not be included in the CA.

It has been suggested that the field's inclusion is due to its historic association with The Croft and in turn with the Green. This is presumably based on the fact that it originally formed a part of the Warish Hall estate. We would submit however that this can form no justification for its inclusion with the CA. The modern housing development to the west of The Croft known as Roseacres was also formerly within the ownership of the estate and in fact, latterly, within the ownership of The Croft. No case could be made for its inclusion within the CA. The character of this former farmyard parcel of land to the rear of The Croft has completely altered over time. It consists now of a small piece of grassland and derelict farm buildings. There is no inter-visibility with Smith's Green and it contributes nothing to the character of the proposed CA.

We propose that the boundary of the CA should be drawn to follow the natural boundary which encloses The Croft and its former garden. This is provided by the hedgeline to the rear of the house and its continuation to the north to follow the edge of the Nissen huts.

Unrelated to The Croft we would also like to point out that a lot of the rural character of Smith's Green has been lost by the erection in recent years of a large amount of highways signage, much of it entirely unnecessary. We would suggest that as a part of a programme of improvement, discussions should take place with Essex Highways to have much of this removed.

Yours faithfully



Judith Norris BSc MSc FRICS IHBC FBIAC

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Our ref: JCH02027

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Date: 27th September 2023

Uttlesford District Council
Council Offices
London Road
Saffron Walden
CB11 4ER

Dear Sir/Madam,

Draft Smiths Green Takeley Conservation Area Appraisal

We write in response to the consultation on the above document on behalf of our client, Weston Homes. Weston Homes was formed in 1987, and now has a diverse portfolio of projects including large scale residential schemes including new build as well as the restoration of historical and listed buildings. Weston Homes' Head Office has been based in Takeley, on Parsonage Road since 2003 and as such have an interest in the area.

Accordingly, we have conducted a detailed review of the draft Smiths Green Takeley Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) and request that these comments be fully considered, reviewed and the CCA be revised accordingly following our comments below.

Proposed Boundary

The southern part of the proposed conservation area (CA) (between Dunmow Road/Stane Street and 1 & 2 Bulls Cottages) comprises the green and dwellings on either side. There is a clear, distinct character to this area which differentiates it from its surroundings, and as such has significance as a legible hamlet surrounding a green. We agree that this part of the CA is worthy of designation.

However, we question the inclusion of the northern parts of the proposed CA, including the section along Jack's Lane north to Woodside. This area is entirely different in character and does not demonstrably have a relationship with the green at present or historically. Rather, it comprises linear development on roads which approach Smiths Green. The setting of the southern part of the CA around the green is also at variance with that of the northern part of the CA, and their settings do not appear to inter-relate with each other based on the available evidence forming the appraisal. The inclusion of the northern area confuses the character of the proposed CA and evidently weakens the defined character of the area of the southern part.

Character Appraisal

The character appraisal focusses on the rural character of the proposed CA, however, additional clarity is needed to define more critically this 'rural character'. At times it is suggested that this is derived from an association with the arable land to the north (page 7), whereas elsewhere it is states that the rural character stems from the openness of the village green and loose grain of development (page 20). This also relates to our comments on the proposed boundary above and the differing character between the southern and northern parts of the proposed CA. As there is no known historical functional relationship between the proposed CA and the arable land to the north, we suggest that this rural character is derived from the village green as per page 20 and would support this clarity being provided.

Our ref: JCH02027

With this in mind, the draft CAA may also need to clarify the relationship between the proposed CA and the land to the north. While Smiths Green was originally an isolated rural hamlet (page 7) it is now arguably experienced as part of Takeley and thus is not appreciated as such in the present day. While the CAA discusses the 'connection to the agricultural landscape remaining appreciable', this is no longer the case for the southern part of the proposed CA given there is no visual intervisibility and due to the separation in excess of c.280m. The northern part of the proposed CA is well enclosed by mature hedges and trees which limit the extent of the visual relationship between it and the arable land. As such, while one may be aware of moving through a rural landscape to reach the proposed CA from the north, that rural landscape evidently does not have a strong association with the proposed CA.

In general, the built form in the southern part of the proposed CA is insular and 'inward looking', as discussed on page 22 of the CAA, and does not draw its significance from its surroundings, rather from the pattern of development set back from and around the central green which has remained undeveloped. It is noted in the summary of special interest (page 5) that there is an enclosed character to the southern part of the proposed CA. This does not allow for any perceptible connection to the land to the north. While development on Jacks Lane is not focussed around a green there is a strong sense of enclosure due to the mature hedges and trees which prevent any long views from this part of the proposed CA. The character of the built form is distinctly different from that of the southern part of Smiths Green, with much smaller driveways, and a more tightly compact grain, much more reflective of the modern linear development to the east. The northern most section of the proposed CA, along Smith's Green Lane, is also insular in nature in that the built form is set back from the road behind mature hedges and trees limiting any visual relationship between the dwellings and the land. At this point Smiths Green Lane is lined by smaller but notable verges and mature hedges which further separate the built form from the arable land.

The CAA also stipulates that the linear layout of the settlement is 'reinforced by its agrarian context' (page 21). We wholly disagree with this statement as the linear layout is currently reinforced by the 20th century residential development to the east and west which flanks the southern part of the proposed CA and forms much of the setting of the proposed CA.

Views

The CAA identifies key views within the CA (Section 5.4, pages 29-33). It is noted that these are not exhaustive but they highlight the views of primary importance. View 1 looks north from Stane Street through the proposed CA. The green is the primary part of this view and its openness can be readily appreciated. It is not possible to see beyond the boundaries of the proposed CA in this view. View 2 also looks north and is taken from further north along Smiths Green Lane. The built form along the edge of Smiths Green can be appreciated in this view, but once again it is not possible to see beyond the boundaries of the proposed CA. View 3 is taken from a similar location but looking southwards to Stane Street, while View 4 is once again taken from further northwards on Smiths Green Lane. As with view 2, the built form along the edge of Smiths Green can be appreciated in this view, but it is not possible to see beyond the boundary of the proposed CA. Views 1-4 follow the line of Smiths Green Road and would be appreciated by pedestrians and vehicle users on Smiths Green Lane.

View 5 is taken from the junction of Jacks Lane looking west. It shows the enclosed nature of Jacks Lane and the prominence of The Limes. View 6 is also taken from this junction and looks across arable land. This is an incidental view with hedging providing separation. This view was taken during the winter months with no leaves and so shows the maximum visibility. Views 7 and 8 are taken from the northern extent of the proposed CA looking southwards. They show the open character of Smiths Green Lane with its wide verges and mature hedgerows (again, these are winter views showing the maximum visibility). View 8 is taken from outside the proposed CA. Arable land is appreciable in the periphery of the view but this is not a planned view and the arable land makes a limited contribution to the view.

Overall, only the views taken from the periphery of the CA include any views of arable land, but these are incidental views in which the arable land is not the focal point. The contribution the arable land makes to the significance of the proposed CA is, therefore, limited.

Setting

Section 5.5 (page 34) discusses the setting of the proposed CA, however, it should be noted that the setting of a conservation area is not statutorily protected in the same way as it is for listed buildings. The CAA states

Our ref: JCH02027

that the arable land has a 'close functional relationship' with Smiths Green, but no evidence is supplied to support this statement. We are not aware of any such relationship. The CAA also states that 'Agriculture has played a vital part in the historic development and economy of the settlement', but this is true of almost every settlement in Essex and is not unique to Smiths Green or any special character derived from it.

This section also includes a discussion of 'positive buildings in the conservation area's setting' (page 35) and states they contribute to the proposed CA's setting. This appears to be a clear misapplication of GPA3 terminology rather, the buildings form part of the setting and the opinion is that the setting contributes to the significance of the CA.

This Section also refers to '*The open setting of Warish Hall makes a significant contribution to the moated site and long uninterrupted views to Prior's Wood and Smiths Green are important to understanding the visual and historic functional links*'. However, the listed building at Warish Hall is completely enclosed with mature trees and hedgerows surrounding it. In addition, there is a collection of light industrial buildings to the immediate north beyond which is the busy A120 dual carriageway.

This was supported by the Inspector at a recent Appeal Decision that the CAA references on page 40 who stated that with regard to the Grade I listed Warish Hall: '*The setting is well contained within the moated site given the sense of enclosure created by the surrounding mature trees. The contribution of setting to its significance is high given it is part of a planned medieval moated complex but the setting is very much confined within the immediate area of the hall and bridge.*' (paragraph 40 Appeal Decision APP/C1570/W/22/3291524)

The designated scheduled monument at Warish Hall: Warish Hall moated site and remains of Takeley Priory is enclosed by the same planting referenced above, thus any visual links to Prior's Wood is obscured by dense planting and; historic field boundaries (since removed) would have obscured long range views. In terms of historic functional links it is unclear how the scheduled monument retains a functional association with surrounding landscape features as it is no longer a defensive structure and the original built form within the moated area has been lost. The Grade I listed Warish Hall that now sits within the moated area is a later addition which the Inspector confirmed would not have been impacted by the proposed development of the appeal scheme. While the surviving landscape features would make some contribution to its historic interest, they do not share a current functional link.

Management Proposals

Section 7.1: Local Heritage List (page 39) includes a list of several buildings the CAA recommends should be included on the Local List. However, it is not clear why this recommendation has been made. In order to help inform future decisions it is important that buildings that have a potential to be included on the Local List are assessed to ensure they meet the necessary criteria. *A substantial majority of buildings have little or no heritage significance and thus do not constitute heritage assets. Only a minority have enough heritage significance to merit identification as non-designated heritage assets*' (Paragraph: 039 Reference ID: 18a-039-20190723). i.e. not all buildings that possess any degree of heritage interest have '*enough heritage significance*' to be considered non-designated heritage assets.

Section 7.2: Managing future change (page 40) states that there are no opportunity sites within the proposed CA or its 'immediate and adjacent environs', which is at odds with NPPF paragraph 206: *Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.*

This section also discusses the recent appeal decision: *A recent Appeal Decision for the proposed residential development upon the fields adjacent to and north of the Conservation Area established that the loss of the agrarian landscape would be harmful to the significance of several listed buildings within Smiths Green (Ref: APP/C1570/W/22/3291524).* However, the decision was much more nuanced than this with an assessment and corresponding conclusions drawn for each of the relevant heritage assets within the vicinity of Smiths Green. The potential for the significance of these assets to be impacted depends on the special interest of the individual asset, its location and the nature of any future proposed development. It is also important to note that since the appeal case referenced above, an application for development to the north west of Smiths Green (Ref: UTT/22/2744/FUL) has been consented. An application for development at a field parcel to the north of

Our ref: JCH02027

Jacks Lane has been submitted and a recent PINS decision (Ref: S62A/2023/0016) has clarified that there is scope for development of the site subject to the details of certain lighting and byway improvements.

In addition the Council is intended to publish its draft Regulation 18 Local Plan for publication which includes additional development within Takeley and specifically to the north of Smiths Green and south of Prior's Wood. This should also be referenced within the CAA's management proposals and in the context of opportunity sites (section 7.2).

The CAA is a comprehensive document which is intended to be an informative tool for any *future change, development and design* (CAA page 5). The key is to ensure that it does not inadvertently prohibit or frustrate potential development that will come with wider benefits for the area a whole.

Yours sincerely,



Jennifer Cooke
Director



Ken McDonald: The Hundred Parishes Society

The trustees of The Hundred Parishes Society support this proposal. This small area retains the rural landscape and heritage that has otherwise been seriously eroded by the 21st-century residential development to its east and west. The conservation area will provide a small 'green lung' for local residents. Hundred Parishes walk route number 158 passes through the northern part of the proposed designation area; we would like to retain this route intact as an attractive opportunity for healthy recreation.

Jackie Cheetham

Please may I correct your description of Beech Cottage Smiths Green. You describe the cottage as one storey with attics, in fact it is two story with attic.

Bill Critchley

Introduction

I support the introduction of a conservation area for the hamlet of Smiths Green.

1 Smiths Green Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan 2023

It is crucial that areas of historical importance are preserved and protected against inappropriate developments and the greed and avarice of developers. These areas have stood for many hundreds of years. We have a duty to protect them for future generations. Many of the buildings built today will not survive this long - look at RAAC.

2 Smiths Green Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan initial draft

We must preserve the unique nature and qualities of this area. This area has remained unchanged for many years but it is now under huge threat from invasive developments against which we must use all of our resources to protect the unique rural nature of the Smiths Green and its environs.

3 Proposed Smiths Green Conservation Area location

Much is made in the proposals of the agrarian setting of the area. The historic importance of Warish Hall, St Valerys Priory and the evidence of additional moats, including opposite Maggots Cottage, indicating areas of previous habitation. To assist in preserving the settings I believe the Conservation area should be extended to include Warish Hall Lane to a point north of the entrance to Warish Hall. The wood, copse to the north of Jacks Lane behind The Limes, a non listed heritage asset, should be included as this forms an important aspect of the rural area.

Anthony Johnson

The area is one that should, by its very nature, be an area to be preserved / maintained. Not developed. The number and extent of new properties has already changed the surrounding area considerably. And in adding new dwellings, minor (very narrow and convoluted) road patterns have been established to the detriment

of both the area and those that live within. To make matters worse bus routes are directed around some of these roads instead of favoring a convenient bus stop on the serving main road. The effect of sending buses into modern developments tends to bring noise pollution / vibration and congestion (time specific to the bus presence). Micro roundabouts do not help, as the effect is to aim like searchlights headlights into the windows of every property adjacent. These convoluted bus routes are by definition both long in journey time and infrequent in service pattern. When looking at land, the land use / method of access to the land, the historic nature of same and the needs for access (if any) must be fully considered.

The original nature of the land use, and historic built environment should not be overridden by political measures, however well meaningful they might be ie. disabled access tends to equal- urbanisation. Hard surfaces, kerbs and bollards (width restrictions). Signage where none was needed perviously. Epping Forest which is not that far away has suffered some urbanisation by simply changing muddy parking areas into formal parking zones with kerbs and signage which tends to limit the actual spaces available. The effect is to spread the parking into adjacent areas. I expect lighting next. Light pollution is a thing which appears to have been ignored I live on a road over lit by lamp posts. This is Essex not central London though the difference is harder to notice with property being built up to back of the pavement line on occasion.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Copy of information sheet sent to Smiths Green residents

Smiths Green Takeley Conservation Area Appraisal

A heritage assessment and audit was commissioned in 2022 by Takeley Parish Council as part of the Takeley Neighbourhood Plan.

This assessment highlighted the potential to designate Smiths Green as a conservation area.

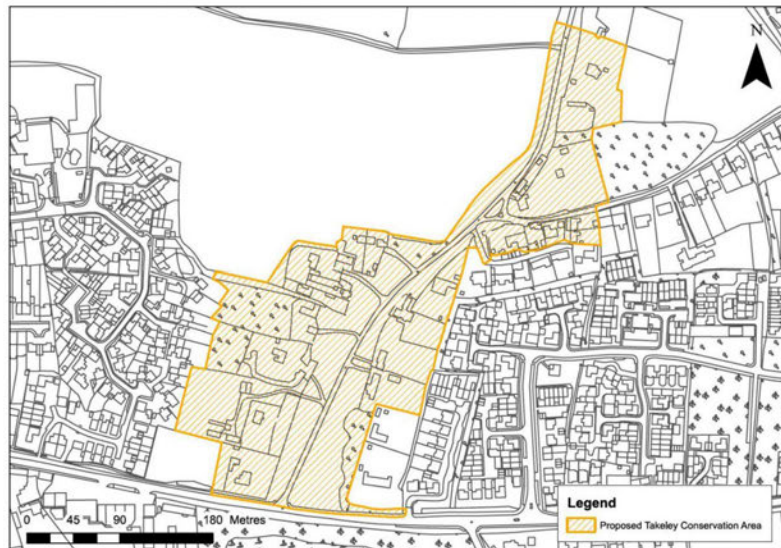
The draft appraisal

The appraisal proposes to designate a new conservation area at Smiths Green Takeley.

Extent

The proposed conservation area is dissected by Smiths Green Lane and is bounded at the south by the B1256 with the Flitch Way country park beyond.

Smiths Green Conservation Area



Appraisal

The appraisal also includes a history of the area, assessment of significance and suggested management proposals to address a number of issues identified by the document.

There are 10 listed buildings or other structures within the area. The appraisal also identifies a number of other historic buildings which make a positive contribution.

You can read a copy of the appraisal on our website:
www.uttlesford.gov.uk/smiths-green-conservation-area



Uttlesford District Council, London Road, Saffron Walden CB11 4ER

Smiths Green Takeley Conservation Area Appraisal

You can also read paper copies of the appraisal at:

- Uttlesford District Council Offices in Saffron Walden
- Saffron Walden library
- Dunmow library

Consultation

We are asking you to share your thoughts on the appraisal and the proposed conservation area.

Consultation dates

The consultation will run from 8:30am on Monday 31 July to 4:30pm on Friday 29 September.

How to give us your comments

You can comment online, by email or by writing to us.

Online

Comment online on our planning consultation portal at:

www.uttlesford.gov.uk/smiths-green-conservation-area

Email

Email any comments to: consultation@uttlesford.gov.uk

Post

Send any comments by post to: Uttlesford District Council, Council Offices, London Road, Saffron Walden CB11 4ER

Engagement event

We are hosting an event to provide you with an opportunity to learn more about the appraisal, to ask questions and to provide feedback.

Date and time

Saturday 9 September from 10am to 1pm

Where

The Old School Community Centre, Brewers End, Takeley CM22 6SB

If you need any further information or help with the consultation, please do contact us.

Bruce Tice

Uttlesford District Council

Email: consultation@uttlesford.gov.uk

Telephone: 01799 510510



Uttlesford District Council, London Road, Saffron Walden CB11 4ER

Appendix 2 – Smiths Green consultation form available online and as a paper form (the council’s standard equalities monitoring forms were also made available)

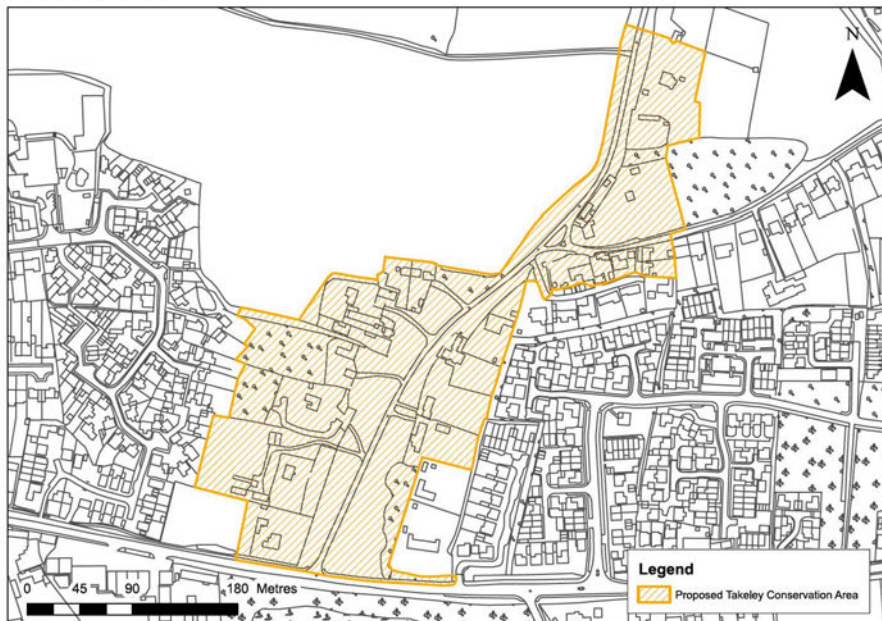
**Comments form - Smiths Green Takeley
Conservation Area Appraisal**



**We are asking for your feedback on a proposed new
conservation area for Smiths Green in Takeley.**

A conservation area appraisal looks at the character, appearance and special interest of a conservation area or group of conservation areas.

Smiths Green Conservation Area




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Your information

1

Information you provide will be treated in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679. Your contact details will be used solely for the purpose of contacting you about this survey. You should refer to our Corporate consultation privacy notice for an explanation as to what we do with your personal information, how long we keep it and your right to withdraw your consent at any time you choose.

Your comments

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for users to enter their comments on the document.

Uttlesford District Council
Smiths Green Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals consultation

Your name

Your address

Return comments to: Uttlesford District Council, London Road, Saffron Walden CB11 4ER
The consultation closes at 4:30pm on Friday 29 September

More information: www.uttlesford.gov.uk/smiths-green-conservation-area

Smiths Green Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan

Client:
Takeley Parish Council

Date:
October 2023



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Smiths Green Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan Final Draft

Project Details

Disclaimer

Client: Takeley Parish Council
Address: The Old School Community Centre, Brewers End,
Takeley CM22 6SB
Prepared by: Place Services
Address: County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 1QH

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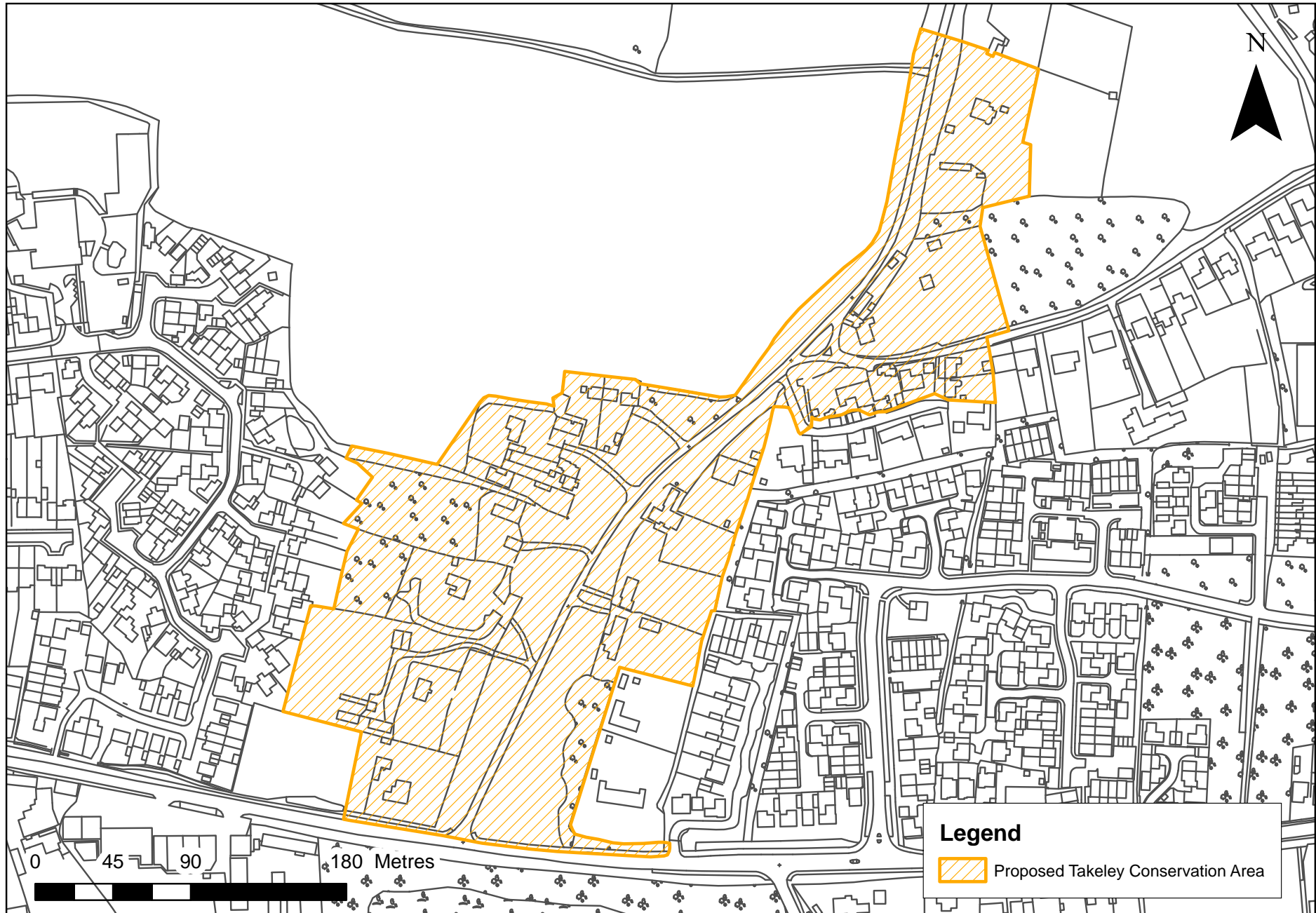
Quality Assurance - Approval Status

Issue: Final Draft
Date: October 2023
Prepared By: Thomas Muston BA MSc
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1. Introduction

1.1 Summary of Special Interest

The Conservation Area can be broadly defined as a concentration of predominantly detached historic structures around a historic green and protected lane. The group around the green form a distinctive collection, typical of a historic agrarian hamlet. The aesthetic is reinforced with some examples of high-quality landscape boundaries of specimen trees and hedges.

Whilst many of the buildings are post medieval in date, the origins of settlement here is earlier, with moated sites located within the Conservation Area and its immediate environs. There has been minimal modern intervention in the Conservation Area and a high number of the buildings are of architectural interest.

Smiths Green has, in recent years, been coalesced to some degree into the growing settlement of Takeley. However, the small hamlet is still very distinct and legible. The open land flanking Smiths Green Lane, the protected lane and the historic structures present a character and appearance of historic and architectural interest. This composition, within its agrarian setting, provides an understanding and experience which enhances an appreciation of the historic environment. The special interest here is importantly found not only in the individual buildings but also all of the open spaces between, the quality of the green, the landscaping and its agrarian setting.

Key characteristics which contribute to special interest include:

- The topography is level within the Conservation Area, and its environs.
- Properties located on the boundary of the green create an enclosed character in the southern part of the Conservation Area.
- Existing buildings are predominantly residential and detached.
- There is a loose grain of built development.
- Buildings are 1-2 storeys in height.
- The general high quality of landscaping and boundary treatments.
- Varied building line.
- Varied permeability of boundary treatments.
- Relationship with agrarian landscape and setting to the north.
- Different character at the north of designation in transition to the open agrarian landscape.

1.2 Purpose of the Appraisal

This document is to be used as a baseline to inform future change, development and design with regard to the sensitivities of the Conservation Area and its unique character.

The appraisal recognises designated and non-designated heritage assets within the area which contribute to its special interest, along with their setting. It will consider how the area developed, and its building styles, forms, materials, scale, density, roads, footpaths, streetscapes, open spaces, views, landscape, landmarks, and topography. These qualities will be used to assess the key characteristics of the area, highlighting potential impact future developments may have upon the significance of heritage assets and the character of the Smiths Green Conservation Area. This assessment is based on information derived from documentary research and site analysis of the area. This appraisal will enhance understanding of Smiths Green Conservation Area and its

development, informing future change. Applications that demonstrate an understanding of the character of a Conservation Area are more likely to produce appropriate design and positive outcomes for agents and their clients.

It is expected that applications for planning permission will also consult and follow the best practice guidance outlined in the bibliography.

1.3 Location

Smiths Green is located at the east extent of Takeley and to the west of Little Canfield. The Conservation Area is accessed from the B1256 (Dunnmow Road), which forms its southern boundary.

The Conservation Area is dissected by Smiths Green Lane which routes north over the A120 to Bambers Green. Jacks Lane (Byway 25) leads from a road junction, located in the north of the Conservation Area. A footpath from this road provides access to the adjacent Priors Green residential estate. At the junction to Jacks Lane, Smiths Green Lane changes to Warish Hall Road.

The Conservation Area is bounded at the south by the B1256 with the Flich Way country park beyond. The southern portion of the Conservation Area is flanked by modern residential housing development, although this is not connected or accessed from the Conservation Area. The northern portion of the Conservation Area is surrounded by fields which are in agrarian use.



Figure 1 Aerial map showing Smiths Green Conservation Area within its wider setting



2. Planning Policy Context

2.1 Planning Policy and Guidance

National Policy

The national legislative framework for the conservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (HMSO 1990). In particular, Section 69 of this act requires Local Planning Authorities to designate areas which they consider to be of architectural and historic interest as Conservation Areas, and Section 72 requires that special attention should be paid to ensuring that the character and appearance of these areas is preserved or enhanced. Section 71 also requires the Local Planning Authority to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these areas.

National planning policy in relation to the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets is outlined in Chapter 16 of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework, or NPPF (DCLG 2021). The NPPF highlights good design as one of twelve core principals of sustainable development. Sustainable development relies on sympathetic design, achieved through an understanding of context, along with the appreciation of the immediate and larger character of the area in which new development is sited.

Local Policy

The Smiths Green Conservation Area is located within Uttlesford District. Local planning policy is set out in the Uttlesford Local Plan, adopted 2005. Uttlesford is currently working towards a new Local Plan. Saved policies which are relevant to the historic environment include:

- ENV1 – Design of Development within Conservation Areas
- ENV2 – Development affecting Listed Buildings
- ENV3 – Open Spaces and Trees
- ENV4 – Ancient Monuments and Sites of Archaeological Importance
- ENV9 – Historic Landscapes
- GEN2 – Design

2.2 Designation of the Conservation Area

This document, once adopted, establishes the first Conservation Area designation for Smiths Green.

A Heritage Assessment and Audit was commissioned in 2022 by Takeley Parish Council as part of the Neighbourhood Plan. This assessment, completed by Brighter Planning Consultancy, highlighted the potential to designate Smiths Green as a Conservation Area.

Takeley Parish Council commissioned Place Services in 2023 to undertake a Conservation Area Appraisal, this included identifying the extent of the proposed Conservation Area boundary.

The following sections describe the architectural and historic interest of the area which make it worthy of designation. Good practice guidance, outlined in the bibliography, has been followed in this assessment.

No Article 4 Directions have been proposed as part of this appraisal.

It is recommended that this appraisal be updated every 5-10 years or when significant change has occurred.



3. Heritage Assets

3.1 Designated Heritage Assets

There are 10 designated heritage assets located within the Smiths Green Conservation Area boundary. These comprise of residential dwellings with exception of a listed pump.

Listed structures include:

- Hollow Elm, Grade II Listed (List Entry ID: 1112220)
- Cheerups Cottage, Grade II Listed (List Entry ID: 1112207)
- Pump at Pippins. Grade II Listed (List Entry ID: 1112210)
- The Gages, Grade II Listed (List Entry ID: 1168954)
- Goar Lodge, Grade II Listed (List Entry ID: 1168972)
- Beech Cottage, Grade II Listed (List Entry ID: 1112212)
- The Cottage, Grade II Listed (List Entry ID: 1306743)
- Moat Cottage, Grade II* Listed (List Entry ID: 1112211)
- The Croft, Grade II Listed (List Entry ID: 1168964)
- White House, Grade II Listed (List Entry ID: 1322592)

These buildings and structures have been listed due to their special historic and architectural interest under Section 1 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Further information about the listing process can be found on the Historic England website, and a link is included in Section 6.3 of this document: Legislation, Policy, and Guidance.

Listed buildings are protected by government legislation and there are policies in place to ensure that any alterations to a listed building will not affect its special interest. It maybe possible to alter, extend or demolish a listed building but this requires listed building consent and sometimes planning permission. More details on applying for listed building consent can be found in Historic England's Advice Note 16 Listed Building Consent. A full list of all the designated assets within the Conservation Area is included in Appendix 8.3.

3.2 Non-Designated Heritage Assets

All buildings, features and planned landscapes within a Conservation Area make a contribution to its significance. These can be measured on a sliding scale of positive, to neutral, to negative contributors.

Heritage assets are defined in Planning Policy Legislation as 'a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest.'

Not all heritage assets are designated, yet although a building may not be included on the list, this does not mean it is of no heritage value. Buildings and other smaller features can make a positive contribution to the appreciation of an area's historic interest and its general appearance.

Local listing is an important tool for local planning authorities to identify non-listed buildings and heritage assets which make a positive contribution to the locality. Uttlesford has compiled a Local List, which sets out the criteria for listing within the document dated 2018 (updated 2021). Non-Designated Heritage Assets may also be identified as part of the decision-making process on planning applications, for example, following archaeological investigations.¹

As part of the appraisal of the Conservation Area, this document has identified heritage assets not included within the current Local List, which make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area and should be considered for local listing in the future, as non-designated heritage assets. These are identified below and a full description of each is given within Section 5:

- Woodside
- The Limes
- The Limes Cottage
- Bull Cottages
- Smiths Cottage/South Cottage

¹ NPPG. Paragraph: 40 Reference ID:18a-040-20190723. July 2019.



The current Uttlesford Local List 2018 and the updated list in 2021 is available here: <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/local-heritage-list>

Warish Hall Road is, in part, a protected lane. This is considered a non-designated heritage asset.

The Essex Design Guide provides a description of protected lanes.²

“The greater part of the road network in the Essex countryside derives from at least as far back as the medieval period. Much of it undoubtedly existed in Saxon times and it is likely that many roads and lanes were formed long before that. These lanes are part of what was once an immense mileage of minor roads and track-ways connecting villages, hamlets and scattered farms and cottages. Many were used for agricultural purposes, linking settlements to arable fields, grazing on pasture, heaths and greens; and other resources such as woodland and coastal marsh. Generally these roads were not deliberately designed and constructed; written records of the establishment of roads during the medieval period are rare (Rackham, 1986, 264). Instead they would have started life as track-ways without a bearing surface, although often with defined boundaries including hedgerows, ditches and banks.”

Warish Hall Road is included in the Uttlesford Protected Lane Assessment as UTTLANE166.³

Whilst not considered a heritage asset, Smiths Green is afforded a Village Green designation. This has been shown on the map as this designation can be useful to inform future management of the Conservation Area.

² <https://www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/understanding-context/historic-context/protected-lanes/>

³ Essex County Council, Uttlesford Protected Lanes Assessment, March 2012

3.3 Archaeological Potential

The following provides a broad indication of the potential for archaeological features within the Conservation area and its immediate area based on the information held in the Historic Environment Record. The Conservation Area comprises the historic Core of the settlement of Smiths Green which has its origins in the medieval period. There has been limited previous archaeological fieldwork within the Conservation Area. However, there have been extensive investigations in the immediate environs of Smiths Green.

Prehistoric

Extensive excavation adjacent to the east of the Conservation Area, in advance of the Prior’s Green development, recorded prehistoric water holes dating from the Neolithic through to the Early Iron Age and traces of contemporary settlement and cemetery evidence. It is likely that this form of activity extends into the Conservation Area.

Roman

The southern boundary of the Conservation Area abuts the main Roman road, Stane Street, from Colchester to Braughing (B1256), and it has been postulated that this route is a survival of an earlier Iron Age routeway. There is extensive excavation evidence for Roman settlement and agricultural activity from both sides of the Roman road and it is probable that some form of activity extends into the Conservation Area, particularly along the southern boundary.

Anglo-Saxon

Despite the extensive excavations in and around Takeley and Stansted Airport there has only been limited evidence revealed from this period, except in the vicinity of the Church. It is considered that the potential for evidence of Anglo-Saxon activity being present within the Conservation Area is low.



Medieval

Smiths Green has developed around the junction of the Warish Hall Road with the historic route of Stane Street. The Conservation Area contains two moated sites, at Moat Cottage and Cheerups Cottage. Immediately to the north is the Scheduled late thirteenth century moated site of Warish Hall (List Entry Number: 1007834), formerly the site of the Benedictine St Valery's Priory. To the east of the Conservation Area, along Jacks Lane, there are a further moated sites (now largely encircled by Priors Green development). The moated sites at Warish Hall Road and Jacks Lane all had their origins in the twelfth to thirteenth century. Warish Hall Road had linear greens along both sides which survive well today. All of these moats have the potential to have earlier structures beneath the existing buildings on the site, as well as the potential for waterlogged deposits within the moats. Excavation immediately adjacent to the Conservation Area, to the rear of The White House, recorded a small thirteenth century farmstead, and it is probable that there are other medieval remains bordering Smiths Green. The Conservation Area has a high potential for below-ground archaeology dating to the medieval period.

Post-medieval

The historic settlement pattern in the post medieval period comprises dispersed moated sites and cottages located along the historic routes of Jacks Lane, Warish Hall Road and Stane Street. The areas between the moated sites were gradually infilled during the post medieval period as represented by the many listed buildings which are protected within the modern settlement. The Conservation Area has therefore high potential for both above-ground and below-ground archaeology dating to the post-medieval period.

3.4 Heritage at Risk

Historic England publishes a yearly list of Heritage at Risk. To be included on the list, buildings must be Grade II* listed or above, with the exception of Grade II listed places of worship and Grade II listed buildings in London.

Other designated heritage assets can also be included on Historic England's register, including Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments and Wreck Sites. Non-designated heritage assets are not considered by Historic England for inclusion on the Heritage at Risk Register.

At the time of assessment there were no assets within the Conservation Area on the At Risk Register.



4. Historical Development

The following section provides an overview of the history of Smiths Green Conservation Area and its environs.

Smiths Green is located within a landscape that has been extensively studied through archaeological investigations, with excavations associated with Stansted Airport, recent housing developments and the development of the A120 road.

Prehistory (500,000 BC – 43 AD)

There is evidence from excavations of activity beginning in the Early Neolithic Period, with a number of post and stake holes, pits which produced worked flint and Mildenhall Ware pottery.

Flint manufacture, cereal and animal bones indicate that this was an area of agricultural occupation and of a low population density.

During the Bronze Age and Iron Age a number of large waterholes were identified with Middle Iron Age stock enclosures. Settlements of Bronze Age and Iron Age date have been identified during excavations for Stansted Airport and the A120.

Roman (43 – 410 AD)

The Trinovantes Celtic tribe inhabited much of Essex and Suffolk. After the Roman invasion of Britain, the Romans established the first town and their rule in Britain at Colchester (Camulodunum).

The Roman period within Takeley and Smiths Green is represented by the Roman Road from Braughing to Colchester (Stane Street) which runs along the southern edge of Smiths Green. This is thought to have its origins in the Late Iron Age and formed a main communication route.

Early Medieval & Medieval (410 – 1540 AD)

There is currently no known evidence of early medieval activity within the Conservation Area, or its immediate environs.

The Domesday Survey (1086) recorded *Tacheleia* (Takeley) was held by Thorkell before 1066. Following the Norman conquest, Warish Hall moated site and Takeley Priory was founded by William the Conqueror as a Benedictine priory. This was recorded by Charter dated 19 October 1068. William I gave two-and-a-half hides in *Thakeleya* to the monks of the Abbey of St Valery in Picardy. Warish Hall is noted as part of the St Valery possessions, the aisled hall being of late thirteenth century construction. No record of the community's size is given but in the fourteenth century there were two or three monks.

The name Takeley is thought to derive from *teg leah* meaning 'pasture for young sheep'⁴ or from a personal name *Taecca*.⁵

Moated sites were likely the principal medieval settlement type in this area with a number in and around Smiths Green, including Moat Cottage. Moated sites were commonly established during this period as they offered protection to those living within its curtilage. Takeley and Smiths Green during this period would have remained a small rural community, concentrated around the moated sites.

Jacks Lane, partly included within the Conservation Area, leads to 'Jacks Green' medieval moated site, the remains of which are preserved within the modern development of Priors Green. Jacks Lane is of at least medieval origins, and originated as a byway used for farm access. It is now part of the local route network.

4 Ekwall, E., 1960. Dictionary of English Place-names. Oxford

5 Reaney, P.H., 1935. Place-names of Essex. Cambridge



To the north of Smiths Green are three further moats, one no longer visible, the second being the Scheduled Monument of Warish Hall and the third Parkers Farm. Warish Hall has a water filled moat surrounding a thirteenth century aisled Hall House. Many of the moated sites were linked by tracks, some of which likely influenced the existing road alignments. Historically a footpath also connected the site of Warish Hall to Holy Trinity Church when Warish Hall was the site of St Valery's Priory.

The development of Smiths Green during this period would have been that of a few dwellings, of a rural hamlet type arrangement. It is likely that the mid-sixteenth century Moat Cottage, within the Conservation Area, is located upon the foundations of an earlier structure.

Associated archaeological findings from this period include a twelfth century settlement compound containing pits and at least one post-hole building, located to the east of Jacks Green moated site and flanking the south side of Jacks Lane. There is also evidence of a slightly later ditched compound with a later pond cut by a building, to the north of Jacks Lane and the moated site. Surrounding these were a sequence of medieval parallel field systems. Excavations to the west of White House, near to the junction of Smiths Green Lane, found evidence of a thirteenth century building fronting onto Stane Street.

Post-Medieval (1540 – 1901 AD)

Takeley was a dispersed rural settlement, and this is reflected by the earliest detailed historic mapping of the area, the 1777 Chapman and Andre map of Essex (Figure 2). The presence of four country manors in the area illustrate the rural context. Waltham Hall was ruined in the eighteenth century and rebuilt as a farmhouse at Green End. Colchester Hall was demolished in 1987 for Stansted Airport and Bassingbourn Hall was demolished in 1813, the historic later site cleared for the expansion of Stansted Airport. It is notable that the south aisle of the Parish Church Holy Trinity is known as the Bassingbourn Chapel. Warish Hall is the only surviving manorial site and the historic site of St Valery's Priory.

Moated sites

In terms of wider typological context, moated sites or homestead moats were concentrated particularly in the eastern counties of England. There are approximately 850 moated sites recorded on the Essex Historic Environment Record, of which 105 are Scheduled Monuments and 125 are Listed, some are both Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings. Most examples had their origins in the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries. It has been suggested that the earliest moats were circular in emulation of the moats of motte and bailey castles, but this has not been proved. The majority of moated sites consist of a rectangular ditch or moat enclosing a raised platform, although circular, triangular, irregular and many partially-moated examples are also known. The platform would have contained a house or range of buildings and while many now appear as cropmarks, they constitute the most common form of earthwork in the county. A number of double-moated enclosures are also recorded, here it is possible that one of the enclosures contained the principal dwelling-house and the second enclosure contained either the farmyard or the garden.⁶ The example at Warish Hall has a double moat, much of which is still filled with water.

⁶ Hunter, J. 1999 The Essex Landscape, Essex Record Office, pp.126-129

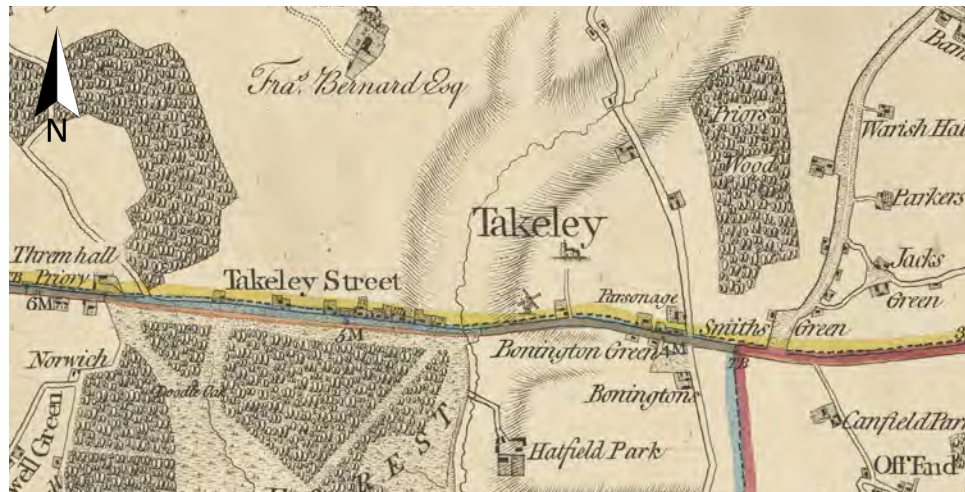


Figure 2 Excerpt of the Chapman and Andre Map 1777

The c.1838 Tith Map (Figure 3) shows the Conservation Area with almost all the existing historic buildings being constructed by this time, many being late sixteenth or seventeenth century in date. Buildings surveyed on the map include Bull Cottages, Goat Lodge, Smiths/South Cottage, Beech Cottage, The Cottage, Moat Cottage, Gages, Cheerups, Conniston/Lizard Cottage, The Limes/Limes Cottage and Hollow Elm Cottage. A building is visible within the plot of The White House of a different footprint, The White House is thought to date from the seventeenth century.



Figure 3 Excerpt of the Tithe Map 1838

The Tith Map shows that the Conservation Area is accessed from the south (Stane Street) and the road through Smiths Green legibly connects the historic moated sites of Moat Cottage, Jacks and Warish Hall, the moated sites being the foci of development within the rural landscape. The surrounding land is agricultural and the social importance of agriculture to the development of Smiths Green is apparent, a track from the centre of the Green leading to Plot 570 (Nine Acres) likely served as both access for workers and livestock. The Tith Apportionment shows the land was in the ownership of a Robert Hilder. The village green is shown as a wide-open space, with no formal pathways. Hollow Elm Cottage is located on the periphery of Smiths Green, the land to the north being agricultural with the moated site of Maggots visible.



Smiths Green presents a typical hamlet arrangement with surrounding agricultural land. The origin of the name Smiths Green is likely in reference to the common belief that the area was the site of an early smithy. The earliest reference to a *Smythesgrene* dates from 1383 within the Court Rolls;⁷ by the time of the Tithe Map this had changed to Smiths Green. The toponymy of name derivations in the local area is similar to land use with Brewers End, within Takeley, deriving from the Brewer family who were brewers.

The First Edition Ordnance Survey (1875) shows Smiths Green as an isolated rural settlement, of a loose linear development. Stane Street to the south is densely tree-lined and the Green itself has no formal pathways however access to Moat Cottage is shown. Interestingly, The Limes is known at this time as Takeley Villa and The White House is noted as Cooks. The historic access to Nine Acres is still visible and domestic curtilages are influenced by the plot boundary of the adjacent field system. The land to the immediate rear of The Gages is agricultural and trees lined the field boundary nearby Cheerups. Overall, little change can be viewed during this period in terms of the building stock, The Croft, as the only visible addition. The mapping illustrates the importance of the moated sites to the development of Smiths Green, with the furthest extent of development within Smiths Green being Hollow Elm Cottage and Conniston/Lizard Cottage to the north and east. Beyond the Conservation Area, three small cottages at Maggots are present.

The Second Edition Ordnance Survey (1890) shows little change, with the exception of a building upon the footprint of Pippins. Smiths Green is that of a small rural community with a close social and functional link to the rural landscape. It is at this time that Takeley Villa changed its name to The Limes and Cooks to the south was now known as Sunnyside. Buildings within the Conservation Area are afforded large defined plots, clearly separate to the open and verdant character of the village green. The only surveyed formal access to a dwelling from the green is to Moat Cottage. Jacks Lane, with its medieval origins, is that of a road rather than a track with the junction to Smiths

Green Lane depicted. It appears that Cheerups was partially moated, the building previously being two separate tenements. Pathways across the fields to the north connected Smiths Green through the rural landscape to the Holy Trinity Church and to the ancient woodland of Prior's Wood, which would have provided opportunities to experience the rural character of the area.

Modern (1902-Present)

The Third Edition OS Map (1923), shows little change within the Conservation Area. Limited infill can be seen, a building within the plot of Homelands is present and The Limes has been subject to extensions. A new access to Goar Lodge leading from the road through Smiths Green is visible however it has otherwise remained unchanged. The greatest change during this period is outside of the Conservation Area with development along Stane Street to the east and Takeley Nursery adjacent to Jacks Green moated site. The dwellings along Broadfield Road, leading from Stane Street, are established with a road and pathway connecting to Jacks Lane. Whilst there had been change to the wider setting, the historic importance and development of Smiths Green can still be legibly traced to the medieval moated sites with development concentrated around them and the important role of agriculture to the social and economic development of Smiths Green.

Aerial photography from the late twentieth century, 1960 onwards, shows that Smiths Green, and the buildings along the lane, are experienced in a rural setting, with open agricultural land to the north along Warish Hall Road. Development along Jacks Lane and the addition of Woodside to the northernmost extent of the Conservation Area is shown. These dwellings are afforded large plots and those along Jacks Lane are mostly single storey bungalows. During this period Warren Close and the two dwellings to the rear of Cheerups were constructed.

7 P.H. Reaney., *The Place-Names of Essex*. 1969. Cambridge, P536



Figure 6 Third Edition Ordnance Survey Map (1923)



Figure 7 1960 Aerial (© Essex County Council)



Figure 8 1970 Aerial (© Essex County Council)



Figure 9 1980 Aerial (© Essex County Council)

Driveways to dwellings such as The Gages, The Cottage, Bull Cottages and Homelands leading from Smiths Green Lane across the village green are visible, as is an informal pathway to the southeast. To the southeast and outside the Conservation Area boundary, The Foxes and Chadhurst were also built. The series of aerial photographs show the gradual development of residential estates around Smiths Green. By 1980 Warren Close and the development along Jacks Lane had increased in density however Smiths Green remained a well treed area with the boundaries of the properties legibly tracing that of the historic field system and there is a field gap between Smiths Green and the development of wider Takeley.

By 1990 residential development to the west had increased, coalescing the historically isolated rural hamlet of Smiths Green into Takeley. The 2014 aerial photograph shows the most dramatic impact of modern development to the east, which infilled the spacious field gap, the newly constructed dwellings being tall and prominent in views within the Conservation Area. The modern development has had an adverse impact upon the rural character of Smiths Green, with the agricultural land to the north now being of significant import to the rural character and our understanding towards the social and economic development of Smiths Green.

Historic England's Red Boxes contains photographs of listed buildings within the Conservation Area from 1975. The images include The Cottage, Beech Cottage and Goar Lodge. In 1983 Moat Cottage underwent repairs, the exposed timber frame can be seen in the photograph below.



Figure 10 1990 Aerial (© Essex County Council)



Figure 11 2014 Aerial (© Essex County Council)



Figure 12 Moat Cottage 1983 (© Essex County Council)



Figure 13 Beech Cottage 1975 (© Historic England)



Figure 15 Goar Cottage 1975 (© Historic England)



Figure 14 The Cottage 1975 (© Historic England)

5. Assessment of Significance

5.1 Architectural and Historic Interest

Smiths Green is of a typical hamlet type arrangement with dwellings set back from the large central village green. The historic core of the settlement is concentrated around the medieval moated site of Moat Cottage, which connects along the protected lane to the moated sites of Jacks Green and Warish Hall. The Conservation Area boundary encompasses the historic buildings along the green and northwards along the protected lane towards Warish Hall, permitting views across the rural landscape.

Smiths Green Conservation Area's special architectural and historic interest lies in the development of the small rural hamlet around the village green which is relatively unchanged. Smiths Green contains a high proportion of historic buildings, both listed and unlisted within it, which make a contribution to the historic and architectural interest of the Conservation Area. The composition of the many historic buildings flanking the village green evokes a strong rural character which is reinforced by the openness and generally loose grain of development throughout Smiths Green. Access is provided from Stane Street with the road orientated in a north to south direction, past the junction to Jacks Lane.

Much of the rural characteristics of the Conservation Area is drawn from the wide-open village green with mature hedgerows and trees throughout. The settlement has been subject to little change over time, its medieval origins and connection to the agricultural landscape remaining appreciable. Unfortunately, late twentieth century development has intruded upon the setting of Smiths Green. However, the small rural hamlet is still very distinct with the open land of the village green and the composition with the many historic structures providing an understanding of its historic significance. To the north, the agricultural land with views across it permits the rural character to be appreciated and understood.



Figure 16 Views north across the Green towards agricultural land



5.2 Character Analysis

Summary of character

Smiths Green is a small, historic settlement and the character of the Conservation Area derives from its hamlet type arrangement, of a loose grain along the historic village green. The settlement has a linear layout, with buildings set back from the village green and road, this is reinforced by its agrarian context and setting.

The significance of the Conservation Area is in its small size and high proportion of historic buildings along the village green which permit an understanding of the observable historic building techniques and architectural forms. Given the scale of the Smiths Green Conservation Area, there are no defined character areas identified. Many of the buildings within the Conservation Area date from the sixteenth to nineteenth century, presenting an evolution of rural settlement in this area.

Designated buildings or structures which make a notable contribution to the Smiths Green Conservation Area are described in the following section, however the omission of any buildings from the description does not mean they make no contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area. An assessment of the significance of relevant heritage assets, and the contribution they make to the special interest of the Conservation Area, should be made when development or alterations are proposed.

Non-designated buildings or features deemed to reflect and enhance the special interest of the Conservation Area are also identified in the following section. Key views have been identified from within Smiths Green Conservation Area, and views from outside the Conservation Area from which its special interest can be recognised are also highlighted where appropriate. There may, nevertheless, be other views of significance within or beyond the Conservation Area's boundary which

contribute to how it is appreciated, experienced and understood. Any proposals for development within the Conservation Area, or its environs, should not only consider the views identified within this document but also any others which may be relevant or highlighted as part of a bespoke assessment of that proposal.

Layout and Land Usage

The Smiths Green Conservation Area is entirely residential in use, with the exception of the village green itself which is designated and forms the majority of the public realm within the Conservation Area.

The layout of the Conservation Area has been subject to little change over time, being reflective of historic field system and the historically important. Access is provided from the centre of the village green to the agricultural fields to the north, reinforcing the historic connection of the settlement to its agrarian context. Two Public Rights of Way are accessed from the Conservation Area, both are to the north and within the field adjacent to Bull Cottages.

There has been limited infill development within the Conservation Area and the grain of development is loose with dwellings which are generally afforded large spacious plots.

Landscaping, Open Spaces and Public Realm

Almost all of the public realm, with the exception of Jacks Lane and the Protected Lane to the north (Warish Hall Road), in the Conservation Area is located within the village green and along Smiths Green Lane. The road is tarmacked and without pavements, with deep ditches and wide verges running along the lane. The lack of formalised footpaths and road markings is positive in the characteristic. Mature trees on the green and hedgerows marking residential curtilages positively contribute to sense of place and rural character.



Figure 17 Grassed triangle at the junction to Jacks Lane

The wide and verdant village green, designated VG117, dominates much of the Conservation Area and stretches along Warish Hall Road to Bambers Green. The village green has informed the layout and development of Smiths Green, being distinct in character to the surrounding agrarian context of the hamlet. The pattern of development here, as shown above in Section 4, is that of dispersed isolated settlements around greens, connected through the rural landscape by historic routes and pathways. There are no formal footpaths across the green which reinforces its verdant character. Dwellings are orientated towards the village green and its open character provides opportunities to appreciate views of the historic buildings flanking the green which form an attractive composition. This contributes to our ability to further understand the architectural and historic interest of the area.

The Protected Lane which is located to the north of the Conservation Area, adjacent to The Limes Cottage, is one such historic route through the rural landscape connecting to other isolated settlements (such as Warish Hall, Jacks and Bambers Green). The Protected Lane also encompasses the verges (which are registered as village green) and the hedgerows, ditches/ponds as they are an intrinsic part of the Protected Lane, as established by the Inspector at Appeal (Ref: APP/C1570/W/22/3291524). The Protected Lane has a strong visual and functional relationship to the surrounding agricultural land and to the small settlements which it connects.

There is no streetlighting and the only areas with street furniture include a bench and bin to the south of the green fronting Stane Street and a bin on the grassed triangle at the junction to Jacks Lane.

Key Buildings

Designated

There is high concentration of statutorily listed buildings within the Smiths Green Conservation Area, which provide architectural and historic evidence and are varied in character and derivation, furthering understanding of the settlement's development.

The oldest building within the Conservation Area is Grade II* **Moat Cottage**, a mid-sixteenth century Wealden House. Wealden Hall Houses are a distinctive medieval type commonly found in the East of England, particularly Kent and Sussex. This building, and many others of this type are reflective of the Yeoman class during this period, as landowners below the class of gentry. The building contributes to the historic interest and our understanding of the development and origins of Smiths Green.

Beech Cottage is a sixteenth or early seventeenth century house of one storey and attics with red plain tile roof. The architectural interest of the asset is primarily expressed as a small rural dwelling within an early phase of development for Smiths Green. **Goar Lodge** to the northwest of Smiths Green Conservation Area is a late sixteenth or early seventeenth building. It is an attractive house within a large plot with ditch to the north, serving as the boundary for the residential curtilage. The use of ditches is observed across Smiths Green, with the settlement itself containing a moated site.

The seventeenth century was a significant phase of development at Smiths Green. The buildings, **Cheerups Cottage** and **Hollow Elm Cottage** are both seventeenth century in derivation. The open and rural setting, with views across the fields to the north, greatly contributes to their individual rural character and the character of the Conservation Area.



Figure 18 Moat Cottage



Figure 19 Beech Cottage



Figure 20 Goar Lodge



Figure 21 Cheerups

From the seventeenth to eighteenth century, it can be observed that the western side of Smiths Green Lane was more developed with **The Cottage** and **The White House** to the south near Stane Street both present at this time. The Cottage is similar in type to Hollow Elm Cottage, being a small rural thatched structure, which is likely indicative of the status of the original inhabitants.

Almost all of the buildings within Smiths Green are noted upon nineteenth century mapping and this has been subject to little fundamental change. **The Croft** which is an early nineteenth century house of rendered brick and is square in plan, is the latest dwelling to be erected to the western portion of Smiths Green. **The Gages**, a nineteenth century house to the east of Smiths Green Lane with bay and sliding sash windows, overlooks the village green. The residential curtilage remains set back with a mature hedgerow which preserves and contributes to the rural character of the Conservation Area.

A cast iron nineteenth-century pump is present and this would have served the community at the centre of the hamlet.

Non-designated

The following non-designated heritage assets are considered to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area:

Woodside is an interwar building of red brick and clay tile roof, one storey with attic and dormers. There is also a large extension to the rear. It is set within a generous plot with a well. It is set within a rural tranquil character, positioned at the entrance into the Conservation Area. Original early twentieth century windows are present which make a significant contribution to its architectural interest and to the Conservation Area. Whilst there is a large rear extension, the building as an early twentieth century addition makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area.



Figure 22 Hollow Elm Cottage



Figure 23 The Cottage



Figure 24 The Gages



Figure 25 Woodside

The Limes Cottage is a nineteenth century house of rendered brick with slate roof, rectilinear plan form. Single storey addition to the north. Windows are of an irregular style and are UPVC, there is an opportunity for enhancement through replacement with traditionally detailed windows. The attractive brick boundary wall along Smiths Green Lane (Protected Lane) is prominent in views to the north of the Conservation Area. Despite the unsympathetic windows, the historic and architectural interest of the building results in a positive addition to the Conservation Area.

The Limes is large nineteenth century house, previously known as Takeley Villa, it is of stock brick and render with a slate roof. There are two canted bay windows to the ground and first floor, with a central multi-paned door with fanlight above. There is a small timber balcony above the central doorway upon timber posts. The boundary is formed of an iron railing and iron gate upon a low brick wall. The building, due to its historic and architectural interest, makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area and aids our understanding of its development.

Bull Cottages is a nineteenth century pair of timber-framed cottages of rendered red brick, with a half hipped slate roof with one large central chimney and a chimney to each gable. Casement windows and a small porch can be viewed upon No.1 Bull Cottage. The cottages were likely a pair of agricultural workers cottages and No.2 was also previously a Public House. The cottages are set within a large plot and garden, with views across the agricultural land to the north. The buildings historic interest as a dwelling for agricultural workers contributes to our understanding of the development of Smiths Green and its agrarian context.

Smiths Cottage and **South Cottage** are a nineteenth century pair of rendered and slate cottages, they were previously four tenements and are now two. The windows throughout are modern in style and material, including UPVC. South Cottage has enlarged windows and a flat roofed addition which are unsympathetic additions. The buildings likely housed agricultural workers and their location within the centre of Smiths Green indicates a close functional social history. Whilst there are unsympathetic additions, the cottages are of sufficient historical character to contribute positively to the Conservation Area. The buildings are of group value, being prominent in views from the village green.



Figure 26 Limes Cottage



Figure 27 The Limes



Figure 28 Bull Cottages



Figure 29 South and Smiths Cottage

Building Materials

Traditional building materials are prominent within the Smiths Green Conservation Area, which is indicative of the traditional construction methods and age of the buildings throughout.

Roofs

Thatch, and in particular long straw thatch, is a material commonplace in Essex, often reserved for smaller, lower status, dwellings such as The Cottage and Hollow Elm Cottage. More common traditional materials, such as plain clay tiles and slate, are observed across the Conservation Area. The use of slate is largely observed on nineteenth century buildings due to the expansion of the railways and the ability to transport alternative building materials. Early buildings, such as the sixteenth century Moat Cottage, feature clay tiles and these would have been sourced locally.

Walls

The buildings within the Conservation Area from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries are timber framed and rendered. Moat Cottage presents some of the earliest vernacular construction techniques in the Conservation Area. Later buildings, such as those from the nineteenth century are of brick, which has often been rendered. Both The Gages and The Limes typify the later nineteenth century phase of the Conservation Area and are prominent structures, vernacular in appearance and construction.

Windows and Doors

Windows and doors throughout the Conservation Area are largely timber, either sashes or casement. Many buildings feature windows which have glazing bars, which emphasises the traditional appearance of the area. Where traditionally detailed windows have been replaced with UPVC, or windows of an unsympathetic design or size, this often detracts from the architectural quality of the building and makes a negative contribution to the character of the area.



Figure 30 Materials found within the Conservation Area (clay tiles, brick and flint walls and iron railings)



Boundary Treatments

Brick and flint walling is present within the Conservation Area, observed at Beech Cottage. Flint is a less common material in this area of London Clay geology. As such, it is typically reserved for buildings of higher status as a decorative material.

Mature hedgerows are also located throughout the Conservation Area as a boundary treatment. These are prevalent along the village green and contribute to the rural character. Brick walls, with iron railings, can be observed at The Limes and The Limes Cottage. Timber and picket fencing is also present however this is often accompanied with hedging and serves to reinforce hedgerows.

5.3 Positive, Neutral or Negative Elements

The map opposite (Figure 30) should be read in conjunction with the key notes below. These outline the broad descriptions of positive, neutral and negative attributed to buildings within the Conservation Area. It should be noted that just because a building is positive it does not mean it cannot be enhanced. Some positive buildings may have intrusive aspects but these are more widespread across the Conservation Area and are addressed in the management plan. The buildings identified as 'Positive with opportunity for enhancement' tend to have more bespoke or fundamental issues that are not generally observed or widespread across the area.

- **Positive:** these are buildings that have been identified as positive contributors to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. Whilst identified as positive there are likely to be enhancements which can be made to better reveal the architectural interest of the building and improve its contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. These general enhancements are noted in the management plan. One example would be the replacement of unsympathetic windows for traditionally detailed windows. Additionally, the majority of the buildings in the Conservation Area feature timber windows with glazing bars, as a general rule the replacement of any UPVC would be an enhancement.
- **Positive with opportunity for enhancement:** these are buildings which have been highlighted as they are positive contributors, however, they have been compromised due to intrusive alterations or additions. These buildings can be enhanced through the removal, replacement or redesign of intrusive or unsympathetic alterations. In the case of Limes Cottage and South Cottage, the buildings have been subject to unsympathetic additions or alterations. There is an opportunity here to enhance the buildings and their contribution to the Conservation Area. Other issues highlighted which require changes that go further than inappropriate windows can include buildings with unsympathetic extensions, aerials, rooflights and other domestic paraphernalia.
- **Neutral:** These buildings make no beneficial or adverse contribution to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.
- **Negative:** These buildings make an adverse or intrusive contribution to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

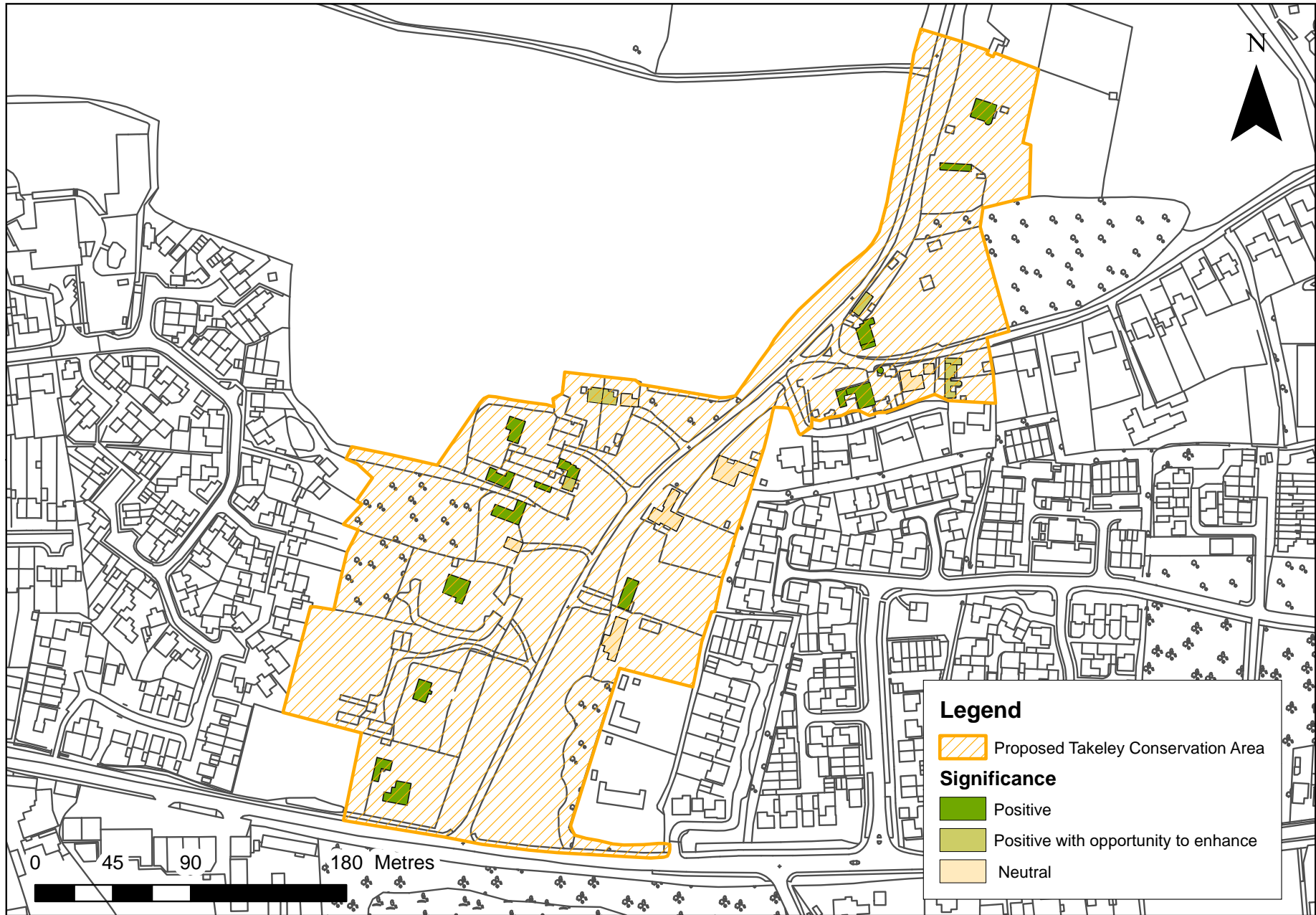


Figure 31 Map showing significance of buildings within the Smiths Green Conservation Area

5.4 Key Views

Key views are identified on Figure 39. The views included are a selection of key views; this list is not exhaustive and there may be other views of significance. Any proposals for development within the Conservation Area, or its environs, should consider the views below and any others which may be relevant or highlighted as part of a bespoke assessment of that proposal.

View 1

This view is of the village green looking north from Stane Street. The wide and open village green can be observed within, with mature trees and hedgerows forming the extent of its boundary. Dwellings flanking the green such as The Gages, Smiths/South Cottage and Bull Cottages are the principal buildings observed from this area. This view contributes to our appreciation and understanding of Smiths Green and the verdant and open character of the village green, which informed the development of the hamlet and its contribution to sense of place.

View 2

This view is from Smiths Green Lane looking north. This view contains several historic buildings which form an attractive composition, and they are orientated to the village green. Mature trees, hedgerows and ditches contribute to rural character. The openness of the village green and its relationship to the historic development of Smiths Green is appreciated here.



Figure 32 View 1 - The village green looking north from Stane Street



Figure 33 View 2 - From Smiths Green Lane looking north

View 3

This view is from Smiths Green Lane, looking southwards to Stane Street. The twentieth century building 'Old Orchard' can be seen and the village green is bounded by mature hedgerows. The southern boundary, across Stane Street, is well planted with trees, this preserves the rural characteristics of Smiths Green. The verdant and open character of the village green is appreciable within this view, the lack of road markings and the informality of the lane is a positive and in keeping with the historic route's aesthetic.



Figure 34 View 3 - From Smiths Green Lane, looking southwards to Stane Street

View 4

This view is centrally located within Smiths Green Lane. Several historic buildings can be seen and as a composition aids towards our understanding of the varied architectural forms and the historic interest of the area. Kinetic views as one travels along Smith Green Lane further contribute to our appreciation of the village green and its close social and functional relationship to the area.



Figure 35 View 4 - Smiths Green Lane

View 5

This view is looking west from the junction to Jacks Lane and serves to highlight the development of the hamlet as a whole and its relationship with the surrounding rural landscape, which many buildings have views across including The Limes and Cheerups. The wide verges of the village green contribute to the rural characteristics of the area.



Figure 36 View 5 - Looking west from the junction to Jacks Lane

View 6

This view is from the junction to Jacks Lane, looking across the surrounding agricultural land and northwards along the Protected Lane within the Conservation Area boundary. To the east is The Limes and Limes Cottage. The view illustrates the strong visual and functional relationship of Smiths Green to its agrarian context (the fields to the north) and the Protected Lane which historically has connected the hamlet to nearby settlements. The grassed verges, hedgerows and ditches are important to the rural character of the area, the village green and Protected Lane. Public footpaths cross the field and mature trees compliment the rural character of the area.



Figure 37 View 6 - From the junction to Jacks Lane looking northwards

View 7

This view is from the north extent of the Conservation Area, orientated in a southerly direction towards the rear elevation of Bull Cottages, The Limes and glimpsed views of Goar Lodge are appreciable. Similar to the above, this view permits an understanding towards the close functional and historic relationship of the surrounding agricultural land and the historic development of Smiths Green along the lane.



Figure 38 View 7 - From the north extent of the Conservation Area looking south

View 8

This view is located outside the Conservation Area to the north, looking towards Smiths Green. This is an important view as it is from the north entrance into the Conservation Area and kinetic views across the rural landscape can be experienced. The village green and Protected Lane (including verge and ditch) significantly contribute to the rural characteristics of the area. Views of the historic buildings and their relationship within the rural landscape has been subject to little change over time. The agricultural land and its open character contributes to the historic interest of Smiths Green and the individual buildings within it.



Figure 39 View 8 - North of the Conservation Area looking south towards Smiths Green

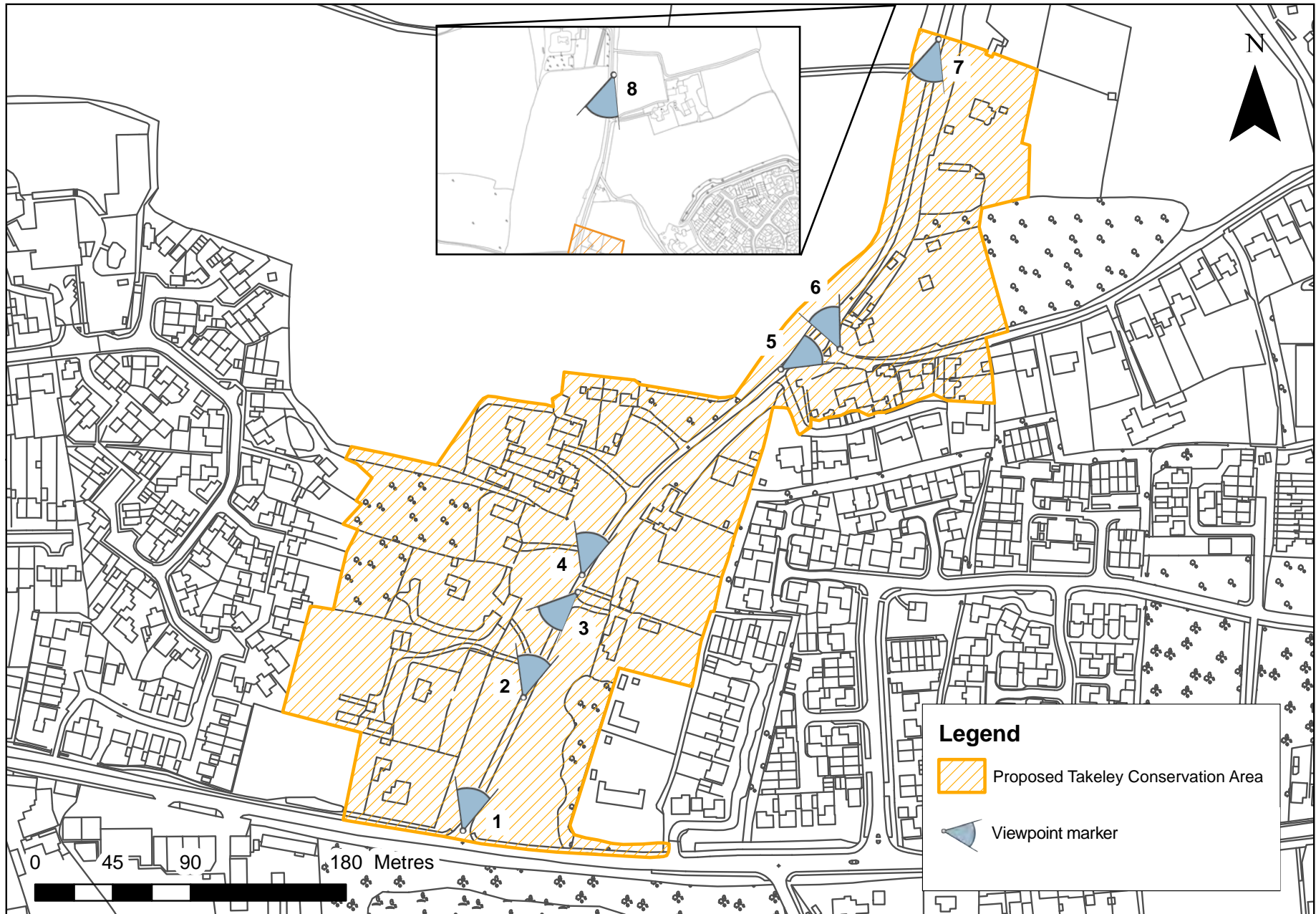


Figure 40 Map showing key views

5.5 Setting of Smiths Green Conservation Area

The setting of the Conservation Area is a contributor to its significance, enhancing how the Conservation Area is understood and appreciated. Setting is defined within the NPPF as:

The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral. (NPPF: Annex 2: Glossary).

Historic England Good Practice Advice Note 3: Setting of Heritage Assets (2017) notes that where the experience of a heritage asset ‘...is capable of being affected by a proposed development (in any way) then the proposed development can be said to affect the setting of that asset’.

Historic England’s advice note on setting recommends a ‘(non-exhaustive) check-list of potential attributes of a setting that may help to elucidate its contribution to significance’. As the advice note states, ‘only a limited selection of the attributes listed will be of a particular relevance to an asset’. Historic England’s recommendations have been used to inform this assessment.

Setting

The Conservation Area draws significance from its setting, particularly to the north. The flat and open fields permit views when travelling to and from the Conservation Area, here the rural character is prominent and particularly important. The surrounding agricultural land has a close functional relationship to Smiths Green and contributes to our experience of the Conservation Area, including our understanding of the surrounding landscape and tranquillity. Within the views towards the Conservation Area, several buildings can be viewed and the Protected Lane, with grassed verge and ditch, reinforces the rural character.



Figure 41 Setting of the Conservation Area appreciated along pedestrian rights of way

Agriculture has played a vital part in the historic development and the economy of the settlement and continues to do so, with Parkers Farm still in agricultural production today. The fields and Public Footpaths within this setting provide opportunities to appreciate the historic significance of the Conservation Area in its agrarian context.

Kinetic views from the Public Footpaths at the north across the fields towards the Conservation Area contribute to our appreciation and understanding of the close functional relationship and rural character. The open green space contributes to our experience and understanding of Smiths Green and the heritage assets within it, with views across the landscape being subject to little change over time.

In the immediate area to the south of the Conservation Area, along Stane Street, prominent and recent development to the east and west has intruded upon its setting. There is a distinct separation between the modern residential development and the Conservation Area due to the density and scale of the development. The dense treed verge is important to preserving the rural characteristics of the area.



Figure 42 Densely planted rear gardens of properties within the Conservation Area shielding views of modern development

The modern development to the east can be viewed from within the Conservation Area, the new dwellings on the site have had a negative impact on the character of the Conservation Area, due to factors including contrasting size and fenestration. The modern development to the west cannot be readily viewed from within the Conservation Area due to distance and the densely planted rear gardens of properties within the Conservation Area, mitigating impacts such as visual prominence and other environmental effects including noise, movement and activity.

The modern development along Jacks Lane and to the rear of Cheerups Cottage has had a neutral impact, the predominantly one-a-half-storey dwellings has mitigated the visual prominence of these additions within the immediate setting of the Conservation Area.

Positive buildings in the Conservation Area's setting

There are buildings of interest to the north of the Conservation Area which contribute to its setting. Warish Hall Farm and the Scheduled Moated site formed an important part in the development of this landscape and Smiths Green. Warish Hall from its original foundation by William the Conqueror and the development of Takeley Priory is a site of significant archaeological interest and this has been recognised by its designation. Warish Hall and the toponymy of features such as the nearby Priors Woods and the footpaths which lead to the Church indicate functional links to Smiths Green and Takeley. The agrarian landscape surrounding Warish Hall has remained unchanged and has a strong historic functional link to the moated site, moated sites being constructed in the rural landscape (see also Smiths Green and Jacks). The open setting of Warish Hall makes a significant contribution to the moated site and long uninterrupted views to Prior's Wood and Smiths Green are important to understanding the visual and historic functional links. The open agrarian landscape contributes to the tranquillity of the Scheduled Moated site and Smiths Green.

Parkers Farm, along with its historic barns, is also considered to positively contribute to the setting of the Conservation Area. Once a moated site, the close functional relationship to the surrounding agricultural land is appreciable and viewed today by its continued operation as a working farm. The farm has remained isolated, indicative of the wider rural landscape containing several other moated sites connected by historic routes and pathways, this being the Protected Lane. Parkers Farm contributes to our understanding of the historic interest of Smiths Green, the development of the settlement and its social development within the agrarian landscape. The physical separation of the farmstead within the surrounding open landscape positively contributes to the rural characteristics, tranquillity and to the grain of surrounding landscape.



6. Opportunities for Enhancement

6.1 Overview

The following key issues have been identified and are summarised below in brief. The list is in no way exhaustive and neither are the issues identified unique to Smiths Green Conservation Area, with many being shared with other conservation areas.

6.2 Access and Integration

The Smiths Green Conservation Area is easily accessed from Stane Street to the south, with the A120 nearby. Smiths Green Lane runs in a northerly direction across the A120 to Bambers Green. There is scope for enhancement in terms of wayfinding on the approach to and within the settlement such as bespoke signage and the signposting of Public Rights of Way to enhance the link between Smiths Green and its surrounding countryside and landscape.

6.3 Car Parking

Car parking can have an adverse effect on the character of a conservation area and any historic settlement, impacting the street scene and how the area is experienced. Smiths Green is entirely residential with a limited amount of traffic, most using the lane to access Stane Street to the south and wider Takeley.

There are no formal parking spaces on the village green, which preserves the rural character of the Conservation Area. Across the Conservation Area, a pressure is the provision of parking for visitors of residents given the limited driveway space afforded to dwellings. A small area of informal parking is present adjacent to the junction to Jacks Lane however there is evidence for the negative impact of such use, with large unsightly tracks upon the village green. Care must also be taken to avoid the widening or painting of excessive road markings along the lane.

6.4 Inappropriate and Unsympathetic Alterations

As highlighted within the appraisal, some buildings within the Conservation Area have been subject to unsympathetic alterations and additions which has resulted in the gradual loss of architectural detailing which would positively contribute to the character of Smiths Green. Two key examples are the loss of historic and traditionally detailed timber windows with modern UPVC replacements.

Historic England's Traditional Windows: Their Care, Repair and Upgrading (2017) advises that:

'The loss of traditional windows from our older buildings poses one of the major threats to our heritage. Traditional windows and their glazing make an important contribution to the significance of historic areas. They are an integral part of the design of older buildings and can be important artefacts in their own right.... The distinctive appearance of historic hand-made glass is not easily imitated in modern glazing.'

The loss of historic joinery such as sash and casement windows results in a degree of harm to the significance of an historic building, and the loss of crown or other early glass can also cause harm to the significance of the buildings. Historic England's 2017 advice recommends that *'Surviving historic fenestration is an irreplaceable resource which should be conserved and repaired whenever possible.'*

Another issue within the Conservation Area is the addition of unsympathetic extensions and items which can have a cumulative impact such as the installation of TV aerials, alarm boxes and other domestic paraphernalia. When future proposals come forward, these should be approached in a manner which preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.



6.5 Maintenance

Routine maintenance is required to prevent further deterioration of historic boundary walls and buildings throughout the Conservation Area. Historic England defines maintenance within Conservation Principles as “routine work necessary to keep the fabric of a place in good order”. The importance of preventative maintenance cannot be over-emphasised, as ongoing maintenance can not only limit, or even prevent, the need for repairs later, but it will also avoid the loss of original fabric and is cost-effective. Commons areas which benefit from routine and preventative maintenance are that of:

- External walls, windows and doors;
- Fascia boards, eaves or guttering;
- Boundary treatments and fencing;
- Roof slates or tiles;
- Driveways and garden spaces.

Of importance to Smiths Green is the continued appropriate maintenance of the village green and the wide grassed verges of the lane to a high standard.

6.6 Neutral Contributors

A proportion of buildings make a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area as shown on the Figure 30. The dilution of positive buildings amongst those which are neutral leads to an underwhelming and indistinctive overall character. The quality of the Conservation Area and the buildings within it must not be ‘averaged down’ by the neutral or negative elements of the built environment. Future proposals should seek to enhance the built environment, as outlined in the Management Plan Section 7.2.

6.7 Public Realm

Street Furniture (Lampposts, benches, signage, bins, bike stands, bollards etc.)

One of the main characteristics of Smiths Green is that it has remained uncluttered from street furniture and where street furniture is present, this is limited and subtle. This is positive as the lack of lampposts, street furniture and other paraphernalia contributes to the character of the street scene.

There is the opportunity for a limited quantity of additional street furniture by the statutorily listed nineteenth-century pump, as this area would benefit from general enhancement. The Pump is hidden within overgrown hedging and telephone pole lines also obstruct views to the heritage asset. Opening up of this area and the placement of a physical interpretation board of Smiths Green’s history would benefit the Conservation Area.

It should be ensured that street furniture is routinely maintained, so not to fall into disrepair as this has the potential to negatively impact the Conservation Area. Further guidance on signage and street furniture can be found in Historic England’s 2018 “Streets for All”.

Hard Landscaping

The road surface is of tarmac, the narrow and secondary nature of Smiths Green Lane from Stane Steet has meant it is without road markings or paving. The underdeveloped road makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area and is similar to the historic track/lane that was present.

Open Spaces

The Conservation Area is dominated by the open space of the village green which significantly contributes to the character of the area. Any development upon the village green should be resisted and it should remain an open informal space.

Trees and Planting

Matures trees and hedgerows can be observed throughout the Conservation Area, which positively contribute to its rural character. Invasive foreign species should resisted and there is limited opportunity for planting upon the village green as it should remain an informal and open space.

6.8 Interpretation

There is currently no heritage interpretation in Smiths Green, through either physical interpretation or digital resource. Increased awareness or acknowledgement of the Conservation Area would be beneficial, although this should not be at the detriment of the area's character.

The area adjacent to the Pump would present an opportunity to enhance this space and to provide a physical interpretation board.



Figure 43 Potential for interpretation to enhance awareness and understanding of the history of Smiths Green



7. Management Proposals

There are a wide range of issues facing the Smiths Green Conservation Area, many of which share common themes. This section seeks to recommend management proposals which can address these issues in both the short and long term. The proposals are divided into themes in the sections below and area in no particular order.

7.1 Development Management Tools

Enforcement

Where the necessary permission has not been sought for alterations, such as advertising signage and building alterations which are not contained within the General Permitted Development Order, the Local Planning Authority's powers of enforcement should be considered. This could assist in reinstating any lost character or architectural features whose loss may have a negative cumulative effect on the Conservation Area, as well as avoiding a precedence being set for similar, uncharacteristic works.

Article 4 Directions

An Article 4 Direction removes specified permitted development rights and means that planning permission will be needed for certain works and, in granting or refusing planning permission, consideration will be given to the proposed works to ensure they preserve, or where possible enhance, the special interest of the Conservation Area.

An Article 4 Direction would introduce additional control over the types of development which are potentially the most harmful to the area's significance. It would allow change to be managed to the area's houses, ensuring any alterations or additions are appropriate and sympathetic. Further details on the additional controls within the Uttlesford District can be found on the Council's [website](#).

It is recommended that the appropriateness of an Article 4 Direction to remove specified permitted development rights, particularly under Part 1, Class A of the General Permitted Development Order, is considered by the Local Planning Authority.

Heritage Statements, Heritage Impact Assessments and Archaeological Assessments

In accordance with the NPPF (Para. 194), applicants must describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

All applications within the Conservation Area and immediate setting require an appropriately detailed Heritage Statement. Any application which has failed to have assessed any impact upon views, setting and significance should not be validated.

The key views analysed within this document are in no way exhaustive. The impact of any addition, alteration or removal of buildings, structures, trees or highways on key views should be considered to aid decision making. This includes development outside the conservation area. Where appropriate, views must be considered within Design and Access or Heritage Statements. This should be in accordance with Historic England's Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (2019).

Local Heritage List

A Local List identifies buildings and structures of local architectural and/or historic interest, and these are considered to be 'non-designated heritage assets' under the provisions of the NPPF. Local Lists can be beneficial in ensuring the upkeep and maintenance of historic buildings that contribute to the character of the settlements.



Uttlesford has a Local List which was last updated in 2021, available on the [website](#).

This appraisal has identified several buildings as non-designated heritage assets and recommends that these are included within the updated Local List. The buildings include:

- Woodside
- The Limes
- The Limes Cottage
- Bull Cottages
- Smiths Cottage/South Cottage

Character Appraisal and Management Plan

The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan should be reviewed regularly to monitor change and inform management proposals including amendments to the management plan.

Conservation Area Boundary

The Conservation Area boundary should continue to be assessed as part of future reviews of the Management Plan to ensure it is robust and adequately protects the significance of the area.

7.2 Managing Future Change

Opportunity Sites

There are no opportunity sites within the Conservation Area or its immediate and adjacent environs for development. The erosion of the surrounding agrarian landscape would be harmful to the character of the Conservation Area.

New Development

There is limited opportunity for residential development in the setting of the Conservation Area. A recent Appeal Decision for the proposed residential development upon the fields adjacent to and north of the Conservation Area established that the loss of the agrarian landscape would be harmful to the significance of several listed buildings within Smiths Green (Ref: APP/C1570/W/22/3291524). The surrounding agrarian landscape is intrinsic to our understanding of Smiths Green development and the historic buildings within it.

It is important that any proposed development give due consideration to the Conservation Area its historic buildings, to ideally result in no harm.

Successful new development will:

- Relate to the geography and history of the place and the lie of the land,
- Sit happily in the pattern of existing development and routes through and around it (including public footpaths)
- Respect important views,
- Respect the scale of neighbouring buildings,
- Use materials and building methods which as high in quality of those used in existing buildings, and
- Create new views and juxtapositions which add to the variety and texture of their setting.



Uttlesford District Council should guide development in a positive manner by:

- Engaging with developers at an early stage through the Pre-Application Process to ensure modern development is high quality in design, detail and materials.
- Ensuring medium-large scale development schemes are referred to a Design Review to ensure that new buildings, additions and alterations are designed to be in sympathy with the established character of the area. The choice of materials and the detailed design of building features are important in making sure it's appropriate to a conservation area.
- Seeking opportunities for developers to make a positive contribution to the wider historic environment through Section 106 Agreements.

Views and setting

Some buildings and spaces fall outside the Conservation Area as they do not directly contribute to its historic or architectural interest, however, they will form an important part of the area and contribute to its setting (refer to Section 5.5 for further detail). Redevelopment or alteration to these buildings and spaces outside the conservation area's boundary must carefully consider any potential impacts on the conservation area's character or local distinctiveness, including the uniformity of groups of buildings within the setting of the conservation area. Developments must also be sensitively designed to have no resultant harm.

The key views analysed in Section 5.3 of this document are in no way exhaustive. The impact of any addition, alteration or removal of buildings, structures, trees, or highways on key views should be considered to aid decision making. Where appropriate, views must be considered within Design and Access or Heritage Statements. This should be in accordance with Historic England's Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (2017). Applications which fail to have assessed any impact upon views and setting should not be validated.

Sustainability and Green Infrastructure

Climate change and renewable energy are growing considerations around change in the built environment. Some forms of renewable energy are less compatible with conservation areas, especially is implemented unsympathetically. Solar panels, alternative heat and energy sources and air conditioning units installed in prominent locations would be intrusive to the character and appearance of Smiths Green. Retrofit of houses within the Conservation Area, with triple glazing or external cladding, for example, is likely to be harmful to the significance of the Conservation Area and would not be considered a suitable solution. The Essex Design Guide has been updated (2022) with guidance upon Climate Change and the Historic Environment, [website](#).

Energy efficiency

Historic England are currently undertaking research into the role that cultural heritage and historic buildings can play in climate change mitigation and adaptation, and have produced a suite of guidance documents which support decision making including:

- Historic England Advice Note 14: Energy Efficiency and Traditional Homes (2020)
- Historic England, Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: How to Improve Energy Efficiency (2018)
- Historic England, Traditional Windows: their care, repair and upgrading (2017).

These guidance documents should be used and promoted within the Conservation Area, using a holistic, 'whole building' approach when tackling these issues.



Neutral Elements

The dilution of positive buildings amongst those which are neutral leads to an underwhelming and indistinctive overall character, as noted in Section 6.6.

Uttlesford District Council should not allow for the quality of design to be 'averaged down' by the neutral and negative elements of the built environment. Officers must where possible seek schemes which enhance the built environment and look to conserve and reinstate historic features. It is also considered that poor-quality or unsympathetic schemes should not be allowed, both within the Conservation Area and its setting.

7.3 Public Realm and Highways

Access and Integration

There should be collaboration between the Highways Department and Local Planning Authority to ensure that the maintenance and replacement programme for street furniture and hard surfacing reflects the character and local distinctiveness of the Conservation Area. Excessive street signage and the use of road markings should be avoided along Smiths Green Lane.

There is the potential for a limited quantity of street furniture to the area by the Pump, as it would benefit from enhancement including the removal of the telephone pole lines.

Car Parking

Given the small scale of the Conservation Area which is dominated by the village green, there is no opportunity for additional parking which would not have a negative effect. Parking should be upon existing driveways and the use of the green for parking should be resisted.

Tree Management

In line with the Town and Country Planning Act, all trees in Conservation Areas are afforded the same protection as a Tree Preservation Order. Trees which have a trunk diameter of more than 75mm, at a height of 1.5m from the ground, may not be felled or lopped unless six weeks written notice has been given to the Council. Six weeks notice has to be given to the council under S211 of the Act.

It is also considered that any prominent trees, street trees, and trees with amenity value on private land throughout the Conservation Area should be monitored and maintained appropriately. This will ensure the symmetry along tree lined streets and visual rhythm, as well as maintain the green character of the area. Any tree that makes a positive contribution to the area should be retained, maintained and, if felled (only if dead, dying or dangerous) replaced with an appropriate new tree.

Public resources

The preservation and enhancement of private properties can be improved through the publishing of resources aimed to inform property owners and members of the public. An introductory summary of the Conservation Area Appraisal in the form of a leaflet or factsheet(s) is a simple way to communicate the significance of the area and ensure members of the public are aware of the implications of owning a property within a conservation area. In addition, a maintenance guide would assist property owners in caring for their property in an appropriate manner. A single Good Practice Design Guide on standard alterations such as windows, doors, rainwater goods, boundaries and roof extensions will ensure inappropriate development does not continue to be the accepted norm.



Design guidance for Smiths Green Conservation Area could:

- Provide guidance on appropriate design and materials for windows and doors and encouraging the retention or reinstatement of historic glazing patterns and door designs and the use of appropriate materials.
- Provide guidance on the traditional form of boundary treatments and encourage their reinstatement where they have been removed or compromised.
- Provide guidance on traditional roofing materials and encouraging the reinstatement of good quality slate and the removal of unsympathetic modern materials such as interlocking concrete tiles.

Poor maintenance leads to the deterioration of the fabric of the built environment and results in a loss of architectural details. Improved awareness of simple maintenance and repair would be conducive with the preservation of Smith Greens' built heritage.

7.4. Funding Opportunities

There are three main funding opportunities which would assist in the execution of these plans:

National Heritage Lottery Fund

The National Heritage Lottery Fund is the single largest dedicated funder of heritage in the UK and therefore is the most obvious potential source of funding. Funding is provided in specific circumstances and is often targeted at schemes which preserve, enhance and better reveal the special interest of the area whilst also improving public awareness and understanding.

Section 106 Agreements

Planning obligations, also known as Section 106 agreements, can be used by the local authority to ensure any future development has a positive impact upon the Conservation Area. These agreements could be used to fund public realm or site specific improvements.

Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas (Historic England)

Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas is a programme run by Historic England to target funding for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. As the name suggests, the scheme forms partnerships with local authorities (along with any additional funding partners) to facilitate the regeneration of an area through the conservation of its built heritage. The scheme makes funds available to individuals to enable them to carry out repairs or improvement works to their property to enhance the area. This would be suitable to preserve and enhance either the shop frontages or the architectural detailing.

The partnership scheme in Conservation Areas is subject to review and further guidance and advice should be sought by Historic England.



8. Appendices

8.1 Bibliography

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Ekwall, E., 1960. Dictionary of English Place-names. Oxford.

Reaney, P.H., 1935. Place-names of Essex. Cambridge

Hunter, J. 1999. The Essex Landscape, Essex Record Office

Essex County Council. Essex Place Names, Online Archive: <https://www.esah1852.org.uk/research/place-names> accessed 14/04/2023

Brighter Planning, 2022. Heritage Assessment and Audit. Great Chesterford

8.2 Legislation, Policy and Guidance

LEGISLATION/POLICY/GUIDANCE	DOCUMENT	SECTION/POLICY
Primary Legislation	Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990	66: General duty as respects listed buildings in exercise of planning functions. 72: General duty as respects conservation areas in exercise of planning functions.
National Planning Policy	Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. National Planning Policy Framework. London: UK Government, 2021.	Section 16; Annex 2
National Guidance	Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. National Planning Practice Guidance. London: UK Government, 2014.	ID: 18a
National Guidance	Historic England, Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management Historic England Advice Note 1. Second Edition. Swindon: Historic England, 2019.	
National Guidance	Historic England, The Setting of Heritage Assets Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3. Second Edition. Swindon: Historic England, 2017.	
Local Supplementary Planning Document	Uttlesford District Local Plan (2005)	ENV1– Design of Development within Conservation Areas ENV2– Development affecting Listed Buildings ENV3– Open Spaces and Trees ENV4– Ancient Monuments and Sites of Archaeological Importance ENV9– Historic Landscapes GEN2– Design



8.3 List of All Designated Heritage Assets within the Conservation Area

List Entry Number	Address	Grade	Date of Designation
1322592	White House, Smiths Green	II	10-Sept-1981
1168964	The Croft	II	10-Sept-1981
1112211	Moat Cottage	II*	10-Sept-1981
1306743	The Cottage	II	10-Sept-1981
1112212	Beech Cottage	II	10-Sept-1981
1168972	Goar Lodge	II	10-Sept-1981
1168954	The Gages	II	10-Sept-1981
1112210	Pump at Pippins	II	10-Sept-1981
1112207	Cheerups Cottage, Jacks Lane	II	10-Sept-1981
1112220	Hollow Elm Cottage, Warish Hall Road	II	10-Sept-1981



8.4 Frequently Asked Questions

A selection of frequently asked questions are below. If you require further advice, please contact Uttlesford District Council's planning department.

What is a conservation area?

Conservation areas are designated by the Local Planning Authority as areas of special architectural and historic interest. There are many different types of conservation area, which vary in size and character, and range from historic town centres to country houses set in historic parks. Conservation area designation introduces additional planning controls and considerations, which exist to protect an area's special character and appearance and the features that make it unique and distinctive. Although designation introduces controls over the way that owners can develop their properties, it is generally considered that these controls are beneficial as they sustain and/or enhance the value of properties within conservation areas.

The National Planning Policy Framework regards conservation areas as 'designated heritage assets'.

The 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act specifies the general duty of Local Authorities, in the exercise of planning functions (Section 72). The 1990 Act states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

How are conservation areas designated and managed?

The designation process includes detailed analysis of the proposed conservation area and adoption by the local planning authority. A review process should be periodically undertaken, and the Conservation Area assessed to safeguard that it retains special

architectural or historic interest. Threats can be identified, and the boundary reviewed, to ensure it is still relevant and appropriate.

This Conservation Area is supported by an appraisal and management plan. The appraisal describes the importance of an area in terms of its character, architecture, history, development form and landscaping. The management plan, included within the appraisal, sets out various positive proposals to improve, enhance and protect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

How can I find out if I live in a conservation area?

Boundary maps of all conservation areas in the district can be found on Uttlesford District Council's website. The council also has an online interactive map search function, which allows you to search for a specific property. Full details, including contact details for the local authority, can be accessed via this [link](#).

What are the Council's duties regarding development in conservation areas?

The Local Authority must follow the guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). These set out in clear terms how development proposals within Conservation Areas should be considered on the basis of whether they preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the area. Applications which fail to preserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area are likely to be refused as a result. An authority's Local Plan also typically includes a specific policy on Conservation Areas.

Do I need permission to alter a property in a conservation area?

Under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015, certain minor works and alterations are considered



'permitted development' and can be carried out without planning permission. However, some permitted developments rights do not apply in conservation areas, and some buildings may not have any permitted development rights at all, such as blocks of flats. Different rules also apply if a building is listed.

Permission is required for any external alterations which involve cladding, rendering, or adding pebble dash, artificial stone or tiles to the exterior of a dwelling within a conservation area. All alterations to the roof of a dwelling within a conservation area also require planning permission.

Extensions to the side of buildings in conservation areas will need planning permission, as will all two storey rear extensions. Porches, subject to size and relationship to the highway, may need planning permission. In all cases, the Local Planning Authority will be able to provide advice as to how to proceed.

What is an Article 4 Direction?

Some conservation areas are covered by an Article 4 Direction, which brings certain types of permitted development back under the control of a local planning authority. This allows potentially harmful proposals to be considered on a case by case basis through planning applications.

Article 4 Directions are written specifically for the area they apply to and are used to control specific works that could threaten the character of an area. As an example, in some conservation areas, an Article 4 direction will remove permitted development rights for the replacement of windows and doors, as these are architectural features which contribute positively to the special interest of the conservation area. The loss of these features would be considered harmful, therefore an Article 4 direction would require that a planning application is required for these works, and the proposals considered by the local planning authority and approved before conducted. Historic

England provides information on Article 4 Directions on their [website](#), and the local planning authority will also publish information regarding any Article 4 directions in their district.

Do I need to make an application for routine maintenance work?

If routine maintenance works are to be carried out using authentic materials and traditional craft techniques, on a like-for-like basis, it is unlikely that you will need to apply for permission from the local authority. However, it is strongly recommended that you contact the local planning authority for clarification before commencing any works. The use of a contractor with the necessary skills and experience of working on historic buildings is essential. Inappropriate maintenance works and the use of the wrong materials will cause damage to the fabric of a historic building.

Will I need to apply for permission for a new or replacement garage, fence, boundary wall or garden structure?

Any demolition, development or construction in conservation areas will generally need planning permission. A replacement boundary, garage, cartlodge or greenhouse will need to be designed with the special historic and architectural interest of the Conservation Area in mind. Uttlesford District Council will provide advice as to how to proceed with an application.

Can I demolish a building in a conservation area?

Demolition, or substantial removal of part of a building within a conservation area, will usually require permission from the local planning authority. It is important to speak to them before beginning any demolition works, to clarify if permission is required.



Can I remove a tree within a conservation area?

If you are thinking of cutting down a tree or doing any pruning work, the local planning authority must be notified six weeks before any work begins. This enables the authority to assess the contribution the tree makes to the character of the conservation area and, if necessary, create a specific Tree Preservation Order (TPO) to protect it.

The legislation relating to trees is included within Part VIII of the Town and Planning Act 1990 which is supplemented by the The Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012.

Further information on TPOs and trees in conservation areas can be found on Historic England's [website](#).

How do I find out more about a conservation area?

Historic England's website has information on conservation areas and their designation. Further information on the importance of conservation areas, and what it means to live in one, can also be accessed via their [website](#).

Historic England has also published an advice note called Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management which sets out advice on the appraisal of conservation areas and managing change in conservation areas.

In addition, local planning authorities have information on the conservation areas within their boundaries available on their websites. They will have information pertaining to when the conservation area was designated, how far it extends and the reason for its designation.

What is Setting?

The NPPF defines within Annex 2: Glossary, the definition of setting as:

'The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.'

The PPG also sets out the definition of setting and how it is taken into account including that the local planning authority may need to consider the implications of cumulative change (Paragraph: 013 Reference ID: 18a-013-20190723).

The potential impact of future proposals upon setting and the significance of heritage assets should be assessed within any future application, Historic England provides a stepped approach to this assessment (Historic England's Guidance Note 3: Setting of Heritage Assets (2017)).



8.5 Glossary

Term	Description
Archaeological interest	There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.
Conservation (for heritage policy)	The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.
Designated heritage asset	A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.
Heritage asset	A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).
Historic environment	All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.
Historic environment record	Information services that seek to provide access to comprehensive and dynamic resources relating to the historic environment of a defined geographic area for public benefit and use.
Local List	Local listing is a concept that is designed to ensure that the historic and architectural interest of buildings that are of local importance but do not meet the criteria for being nationally listed is taken account of during the planning process. Local lists can be used to identify significant local heritage assets to support the development of Local Plans.
Non-Designated heritage asset	Non-designated heritage assets are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets. Only a minority of buildings have enough heritage significance to merit identification as non-designated heritage assets.
Setting of a heritage asset	The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.
Significance (for heritage policy)	The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

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Decision Maker:	Cabinet	Date: Thursday, 2 November 2023
Title:	Local Council Tax Support Scheme Proposals 2024/25 and Consultation Responses	
Portfolio Holder:	Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economy Cllr Neil Hargreaves	
Report Author:	Angela Knight, Director – Business Performance and People aknight@uttlesford.gov.uk	Key decision: No

Summary

1. There is a requirement to annually review the Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) Scheme and propose changes to the scheme for the following financial year. The decisions made, even if no change is proposed, must then be consulted upon before a decision is taken at Full Council in December on the final scheme for the following financial year.
2. A consultation was carried out during the summer of 2023 on the scheme proposals to set a contribution rate and continue to protect Vulnerable and Disabled residents and Carer's on a low income.
3. The consultation ran from 3 July to 4 September 2023 and received the highest number of responses compared to previous years. A total of 70 responses were received, which gives a 46% increase on the number of responses received in 2022.
4. The responses show that 62.8% of respondents fully or partly support the proposed scheme.
5. As can be seen from the table in paragraph 16 Uttlesford has administered the scheme with the lowest percentage contribution requirement of any authority in Essex for ten years. This demonstrates that whilst the council has had sufficient funds to support the scheme it has done so.
6. In 2013/14 when the original scheme was introduced the contribution rate was set at 8.5%. This increased in 2014/15 to 12.5% and it has remained at this rate for each subsequent year.
7. The Exceptional Hardship Fund is available to support residents and claimants who are suffering financial hardship. For 2023/24 the Council has set up a new one year, Cost of Living Support Fund providing financial assistance to those who are struggling with increased costs and inflation.

Recommendations

8. The Cabinet is requested to recommend Council approve the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2023/24 as set out below:
 - I. The contribution rate is frozen at 12.5% for 2024/25.
 - II. The Council continues to protect Pensioners, Vulnerable and Disabled Residents and their Carer's on a low income.

Financial Implications

9. Detailed in the main body of this report.

Background Papers

10. None

Impact

Communication/Consultation	Proposals subject to public consultation and discussions with major preceptors
Community Safety	None.
Equalities	An equalities impact assessment has been attached as Appendix B to this report
Health and Safety	None.
Human Rights/Legal Implications	Compliance with relevant legislation.
Sustainability	The objective is to achieve a financially sustainable set of arrangements.
Ward-specific impacts	None.
Workforce/Workplace	Ongoing demands on the Revenues & Benefits, Housing and Customer Service teams

Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) current scheme

11. LCTS replaced Council Tax Benefit (CTB) from 1 April 2013. The Council has adopted a scheme which has the following key elements:
 - a) Pensioners on low income protected from adverse changes (as required by Government)
 - b) Disabled people, Carer's and blind people on a low income receive discretionary protection from adverse changes
 - c) Working age people previously on full CTB pay no more than 12.5% of the council tax bill

- d) £25 per week of earned wages income disregarded from assessment (to provide a work incentive)
- e) Child Benefit and Child Maintenance disregarded from assessment (to minimise exacerbation of child poverty, or accusations of same)
- f) Hardship Policy to enable additional support for genuine extreme hardship cases.

Essex Sharing Agreement

- 12. An Essex wide income sharing agreement was entered into with all billing authorities and major preceptors at the time of implementation of the new LCTS scheme.
- 13. The main principles of the agreement are to ensure a joint approach in maximising income collection, reduce fraud, ensure compliance, and increase the taxbase.
- 14. By working proactively on fraud this ensures that our tax base is maintained at the maximum level generating extra revenue for both the major preceptors and billing authorities.
- 15. Preceptors receive a share of all income generated for Council Tax and this is allocated through the Collection Fund at year end.
- 16. The increased income generated specifically from these activities and internal decisions made by UDC each year is monitored by ECC, and the preceptors have agreed to share their element of the increased income with the Local Authorities.
- 17. The major preceptors also provide funding through this agreement for;
 - an officer to ensure the efficient administration of the LCTS scheme and provide claimants with dedicated support in debt management.
 - two officers to work directly on all areas of fraud and compliance within Council Tax.
 - contributions towards the Exceptional Hardship Scheme which has a £17,000 annual budget (£10,000 UDC element), plus Essex County Council provide an additional £5,000 for admin support.

Contribution Rates across Essex

- 18. The council has the lowest percentage contribution rate within Essex with the highest being set at 30%. Colchester reduced their contribution rate for 2023/24 from 20% to 15%.
- 19. It is too early to tell if any other Local Authorities will reduce their contribution rates for the next financial year, this information should be available for the November Cabinet report along with the main consultation responses.

Contribution Rates 2023/24			
	%		%
Basildon	25	Harlow	24
Braintree	24	Maldon	20
Brentwood	25	Rochford	25
Castle Point	30	Southend-on-Sea	25
Chelmsford	23	Tendring	20
Colchester	15	Thurrock	25
Epping Forest	25	Uttlesford	12.5

Consultation

20. The consultation ran for the period 3 July to 4 September 2023 and the full consultation report is attached as Appendix A.
21. The survey was run online through the Uttlesford District Council “Let’s talk” consultation platform. This could be accessed via the main council website home page, from the consultation platform home page, or from direct links sent out in various promotions, publicity and newsletters. A paper copy of the survey was also available on request.
22. At the start of the consultation period emails inviting participation in the survey were sent directly to all preceptors. The survey was widely publicised to the citizens of Uttlesford who were encouraged to take part. A press release was distributed to all local media and newspapers on 4 July. It was included in the *District News* e-newsletter on 28 July that was sent to a total of 10,349 recipients. Social media promotion via Facebook, X (Twitter) and Instagram went on throughout the consultation period reaching some 824 people.
23. A total of 70 responses were received (compared to 48 in 2022), giving a 46% increase, and all responses were received electronically. Of the total responses 68 included commentary and all the comments received have been included in the full report (Appendix A).
24. A breakdown of the responses is shown in the table below.

Responses	Number received
Fully or partly support the proposed scheme	44 (62.8%)
Do not support the proposed scheme	16 (22.9%)
Comments received on other related matters including suggesting additional support/widening the scheme	8 (11.4%)
Responses containing no comments	2 (2.9%)

25. There were no responses from any preceptors this year although we did receive a number of responses from Local Organisations and Charities.
26. A number of the responses referenced the current cost of living crisis and commented on whether the council could provide additional support to not only those on low incomes but also middle income families and households.

27. The council provides a range of additional support which is available to all residents suffering financial hardship

- Two dedicated officers who provide a range of support including early intervention and advice on debt management
- Council Tax Support Fund and Exceptional Hardship Fund (further details of these funds are set out in paragraphs 37- 41)

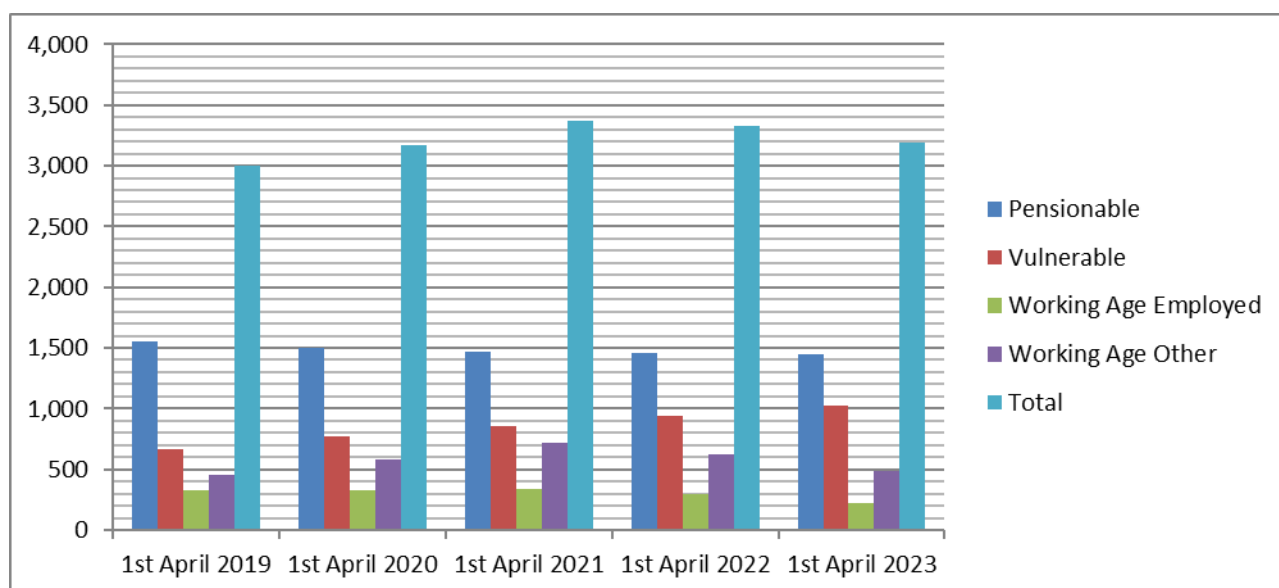
Claimant Caseload

28. The data and figures used in the following tables are based on 2023/24 caseload information on 1 April 2023.

29. The following table and graph provide an analysis of each category of claimant and how the caseloads have changed over the past 5 years.

	1st April 2019	1st April 2020	1st April 2021	1st April 2022	1st April 2023
Pensionable	1,557	1,497	1,466	1,458	1,452
Vulnerable	664	766	851	943	1,027
Working Age Employed	323	331	337	297	223
Working Age Other	452	577	714	627	485
Total	2,996	3,171	3,368	3,325	3,187

	1/4/19	1/4/20	In year movement	1/4/21	In year movement	1/4/22	In year movement	1/4/23	In year movement
Pensionable	1,557	1,497	-60	1,466	-31	1,458	-8	1,452	-6
Vulnerable/Disabled	664	766	102	851	85	943	92	1,027	84
Working Age - Employed	323	331	8	337	6	297	-40	223	-74
Working Age - unemployed	452	577	125	714	137	627	-87	485	-142
Total Claimants	2,996	3,171	175	3,368	197	3,325	-43	3,187	-138



30. The overall number of claimants has reduced for the second year in a row, with the biggest decrease seen in the working age category. This category was expected to decrease as we came out of the Pandemic and people were able to engage with businesses and organisations to gain employment.

31. The overall decrease in caseload is offset by the vulnerable and disabled category where there is a further increase this year in the numbers of people requiring support. This category has shown an annual increase year on year for five years.

Contribution Rate

32. The contribution rate at 12.5% currently generates approximately £188,191 per year for the Council and the major preceptors, of the total income generated the council receives approximately £26,347 in line with their percentage share of the overall council tax income. This calculation uses an average award, so depending on caseload this income figure could increase or decrease over the year.
33. The table below sets out the additional income of an increase to the contribution rate to preceptors and is shown in 2.5% increments. Each 2.5% increase will generate additional income of £37,638, of which the council will receive £5,269 in line with their percentage share of the overall council tax income.

Income increases to preceptors.

Percentage Contribution	Average liability income due £'000	Increased income @ 2.5% increments £'000	UDC share of increased income @ 2.5% increment £'000
12.50%	£188,191	-	-
15%	£225,830	£37,638	£5,269
17.50%	£263,468	£75,277	£10,539
20%	£301,106	£112,915	£15,808

*Income collection ranges from 87% to 90% so the actual income received is likely to be lower than the figures in the above table.

Cost impact to claimants.

34. It is impossible to identify and calculate precise figures for each claimant as the contribution level varies dependant on the claimant's financial circumstances and this can change multiple times during the year.
35. The figures in the table below are shown for a working age unemployed person in receipt of full LCTS support, 87.5% discount. So this is the impact of the minimum payment that would be required to be made.

Percentage Contribution	Total cost per year £	Total cost per week £	Increase @ 2.5% per year £	Increase @ 2.5% per week £
12.50%	265.81	5.11	-	-
15%	318.97	6.13	£53.16	£1.02
17.50%	372.13	7.16	£106.32	£2.04
20%	425.29	8.18	£159.48	£3.07

36. The table in paragraph 29 shows the number of people in receipt of LCTS support, for the working age categories, 485 unemployed compared to 223 in work (low income and/or part time). The increase in the contribution rate will affect both working age categories.

Exceptional Hardship Fund (EHF) and Cost of Living Support

37. The Council holds a ring-fenced budget specifically to support all residents who are suffering financial hardship due to unforeseen circumstances, and you do not have to be eligible for LCTS to make an EHF claim. The EHF is supported by the major preceptors as part of the Essex Sharing Agreement.

38. The annual budget held for this fund is £17,000 with UDC contributing £10,000 and the major preceptors contributing £7,000, Essex County Council also provide a further £5,000 to support the administration of the fund.

39. The EHF is subject to award criteria and supports all residents who find themselves in financial difficulties, you do not have to be in receipt of LCTS to qualify, making this scheme fully inclusive to all residents. Full details can be found using the following link: <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/ehf>

40. It is recommended that the EHF fund is used to provide additional financial support to residents rather than reducing the contribution rate.

41. In addition the Council has set up a specific one year Cost of Living Support Fund providing £195,000 additional financial support to residents who are struggling financially, again this scheme is not limited to those already in receipt of benefits. The scheme is inclusive for all residents who find themselves in financial hardship during this difficult period of increased costs and inflation. Full details of the fund can be found using the following link: [Cost of living support fund - Uttlesford District Council](#)

Full cost of LCTS scheme (estimated)

42. The following table shows that the forecast financial position for UDC in 2024/25 will be an estimated net cost of £315,335. The costing has been based on the current caseload expenditure as of 1 April 2023 and the preceptor share back estimate on 2023/24 predicted collection rates.

43. The expenditure figure in the table is based on the contribution rate of 12.5%.

LCTS Expenditure 2022/23 £'000	County, Fire and Police Share 2022/23 £'000	UDC Share 2022/23 £'000		LCTS Expenditure 2023/24 £'000	County, Fire and Police Share 2023/24 £'000	UDC Share 2023/24 £'000
3,975,729	3,419,127	556,602	LCTS Discounts	4,015,237	3,453,104	562,133
0	0	(210,049)	Major Preceptors Income share back (12%)	0	0	(246,820)
3,975,729	3,419,127	346,553	Net of LCTS Scheme & Discounts	4,015,237	3,453,104	315,313
120	103	17	Staff support costs (Fraud, Compliance and Recovery)	120	103	17
17	7	10	LCTS Hardship Scheme	17	7	10
0	0	(5)	LCTS Hardship Scheme - ECC Admin support	0	0	(5)
3,975,866	3,419,237	346,575	Total Net Cost	4,015,374	3,453,214	315,335

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Assumptions about costs and income levels are incorrect	3 - a high degree of variability and estimation is involved	3 - adverse or favourable cost affecting the council budget/collection fund	Monitor trends closely and review scheme each year to make necessary adjustments.
Cost of living and the effect of inflation on the economy longer term	2 - possible that there will be more claims by residents struggling with everyday costs	2 – cost of the scheme will increase	Monitor caseload and work with preceptors on managing the scheme and impacts

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.



Uttlesford District Council September 2023

Local Council Tax Support (LCTS)

A summary report of the survey about the proposed Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme for Uttlesford for the financial year 2024/2025.

In April 2013 Council Tax Benefit was abolished and replaced by the Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme. The government required councils to protect pensioners so that they would receive the same level of support as they did under Council Tax Benefit.

The proposed scheme

Uttlesford District Council has been consulting local residents on the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for Uttlesford since 2012 during which time the scheme has undergone various changes. For the financial year 2024/2025 the council has proposed that the scheme is set on the same basis as that for 2023/2024, namely to:

- freeze the contribution rate so that the amount that LCTS claimants pay towards their Council Tax bill will be kept at 12.5%. This remains the lowest contribution rate in Essex
- continue to protect pensioners, the vulnerable and disabled residents and their carers on a low income

Consultation

As in previous consultations, respondents were asked to consider the proposals and provide their views in an 'open text box'.

The survey also invited (but did not require) participants to provide their name and a contact email address so that they



can be kept up to date with the results and the final decision on the proposed scheme. Participants were also asked to state if their response was on behalf of an organisation (such as a town or parish council).

The survey was run online through the Uttlesford District Council “Let’s talk” consultation platform. This could be accessed via the main council website home page, from the consultation platform home page, or from direct links sent out in various promotions, publicity and newsletters. A paper copy of the survey was also available on request.

Promotion

The survey ran from 3 July to 4 September 2023.

At the start of the consultation period emails inviting participation in the survey were sent directly to:

- Essex County Council
- Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority
- Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Essex - Policing and Community Safety
- all town and parish councils in the district

The survey was widely publicised to the citizens of Uttlesford who were encouraged to take part.

A press release was distributed to all local media and newspapers on 4 July. It was included in the *District News* e-newsletter on 28 July that was sent to a total of 10,349 recipients. Social media promotion via Facebook, X (Twitter) and Instagram went on throughout the consultation period reaching some 824 people.

Those people who do not use digital services were offered the option of asking for a paper copy of the survey and proposals to be sent to them by post (details were provided on the website, in the press releases and in all publicity).



Uttlesford District Council
26 July · 🌐

Uttlesford residents are being invited to have their say on how much support the council should give to people who might struggle to pay their Council Tax bill.

Councils run a scheme called Local Council Tax Support which is designed to help the most vulnerable. For 2025/25, we are proposing to maintain the current scheme on the same basis as this year.

This means that we... See more

Proposed Local Council Tax Support Scheme for Uttlesford 2024-25

We're asking you for your views on how much support we should give to people who might struggle to pay their Council Tax bill.

letstalk.uttlesford.gov.uk/lcts-scheme

Uttlesford Local Council Tax Support - have your say!

We're asking you for your views on how much support we should give to people who might struggle to pay their Council Tax bill.

Councils run a scheme called Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) which is designed to help the most vulnerable.

The 2024/25 scheme

The pandemic has left us facing some very big financial challenges. Our population is growing, people are generally living longer and the type of services that people need is changing. The cost of living is going up and as things become more expensive, we also have higher costs.

That's why we want to help to protect the most vulnerable people in our district. For 2024/25, we are proposing to maintain the scheme on the same basis as this year.

- This means that we are proposing to:
- freeze the contribution rate so that the amount that LCTS claimants pay towards their Council Tax bill will be kept at 12.5%. This remains the lowest contribution rate in Essex
 - continue to protect pensioners, vulnerable and disabled residents and their carers on a low income

How to have your say

You can now give your views on the proposals using this form, or online at <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/lcts-consultation>

Looking after your data

All the information you provide in this questionnaire will be treated in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679. Your contact details will be used solely for the purpose of this consultation. You should refer to our privacy notice for more information.

Uttlesford District Council

DISTRICT NEWS

Annual canvass is underway

Every year we contact residents to check the details on the electoral register are correct as part of the annual canvass.

We have sent out 37,000 emails and 30,000 letters so far. If you have received either from us, please follow the instructions carefully.

[Find out more about the annual canvass](#)

The annual canvass is in progress!



Council Tax Support scheme consultation

There is still time for Uttlesford residents to have their say on how much support we should give to people who might struggle to pay their Council Tax bill.

The Local Council Tax Support scheme (LCTS) is designed to help the most vulnerable. For 2025/25, we're proposing to maintain the current scheme on the same basis as this year.

- This means that we:
- freeze the contribution rate so the amount that LCTS claimants pay towards their Council Tax bill will be kept at 12.5%. This remains the lowest contribution rate in Essex
 - continue to protect pensioners, the vulnerable and disabled residents and their carers on a low income

The consultation closes 4 September.

[Find out more about the LCTS scheme and how to have your say](#)

[Home](#) / Proposed LCTS 2024/25 scheme for Uttlesford

Proposed LCTS 2024/25 scheme for Uttlesford



We're asking you for your views on how much support we should give to people who might struggle to pay their Council Tax bill.

Councils run a scheme called Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) which is designed to help the most vulnerable.



Key dates

- 📅 Consultation starts
03 July 2023
- 📅 Consultation closes
04 September 2023



Results: overall submission rate

The overall response rate for the survey was up 41.6% on that undertaken in 2022.

Overall submissions	Result counts 2023 (percentage)	Result counts 2022 (percentage)
Total number of paper forms returned	0	3 (6.25% of total responses)
Total number of web forms / direct emails submitted	70 (100% of total responses)	45 (93.75% of total responses)
Total number of comments received	70	48



Results: submitted comments summary

Of the submitted comments, 44 (or 62.8% of all the comments received) either directly supported the proposals for 2024/2025 or could clearly be interpreted as such. This is slight increase on the 58.3% support registered for the 2023/2024 scheme in the 2022 survey.

Overall submissions	Result counts 2023 (percentage)
Fully or partly support the proposed scheme	44 (62.8%)
Do not support the proposed scheme	16 (22.9%)
Comments received on other related matters including suggesting additional support/widening the scheme	8 (11.4%)
Responses containing no comments	2 (2.9%)

Notable this year are the number of references to the cost of living crisis and suggestions for providing additional support to a wider range of people in the district.

Preceptors and identified local organisations

No preceptors responded to the consultation this year. Local organisations who did respond include Uttlesford Foodbank, St James Church Swards End and local charities.



Comments received

Comments generally in favour of the proposed scheme

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1. On paper, the proposals on paper seem to be fair and a positive step.
2. I think it should stay at the 12.5%
3. To continue the support as it is now
4. Fully approve the scheme.
5. All pensioners should qualify for reduced council tax
6. I feel disabled and also pensioners should receive help and a reduction but not people on benefits that don't work who can work just because they have children as it is unfair on those who do work and still have to pay full tax
7. Freeze at 12%
8. This county can afford to support more of those in need than it is currently doing, but overall this plan seems to provide some support.
9. I welcome the fact that the council is maintaining the scheme. The cost of living crisis is hitting so many people in so many ways. This initiative, although limited in its scope, can at least help some of the most vulnerable in the district.
10. I believe that those most in need - the unemployed, those of limited means, carers, etc. - should receive the maximum support possible.
11. People need support in these difficult times. Let's try and keep the level of support as high as can be afforded.
12. Good, continue
13. Makes sense to me
14. Everyone (bar property investors etc.) has faced falling real incomes; those on benefits, the long-term sick, and the disabled significantly more so than the population as a whole (see, for example, research by The Joseph Rowntree Foundation). These groups desperately need all the help they can get.
15. I support totally the scheme. I wish you could do more, I understand the limitations. Please ask the Government for more help.
16. Remain as previous years
17. I would be happy to contribute more, to help those who are vulnerable, caring for others.



18. In these difficult times I would be prepared to pay more council tax if it helps people who are really in need.
19. Support should be at least the same level, and preferably higher. Not all pensioners need support.
20. I support the scheme to give as much as practical support where required
21. Confirm my total support on the councils proposals to continue support to the low income groups
22. At this time of serious hardship caused by the 'Cost of Living Crisis', exacerbated by high interest rates, there is an urgent need to support those in financial distress. The net is widening with the threat of negative equity looming.
It is not just those with mortgages, but also those in private rented accommodation who are in desperate need of financial help. Landlords are passing on their mortgage liabilities on to their tenants who are now facing the prospect of becoming homeless.
Those who are in need of care, or who are hanging on to an independent life in their twilight years, are being bombarded by ever increasing bad news of issues beyond their control.
The need for Council properties for rent is becoming of a contentious topic with many such buildings in serious disrepair, leaving a safety net missing for those in desperate need.
I believe that the above situation has created a vicious circle of high interests breeding greater levels of debt and that any assistance on Council Tax will make a valuable contribution to the mental, and physical, wellbeing of those caught in this financial trap.
I am willing to support the continuance of the LCTS scheme at 12.5% but, if matters get worse prior to April 2024, then I believe a reduction to 10% should be considered as a possibility.
23. I agree the UDC proposal to keep at the same rate as this year.
24. I am in agreement with the proposal to maintain the scheme at its current level
25. I think that continuing this scheme is the right thing to do. Every civilised society should support its more vulnerable/less able members.
26. As a higher rate tax payer I fully support this scheme.
27. This is great help for those that can access it, but how will folk find out about the support and apply for it if they don't have the technology needed? Also, they have to prove their financial situation and this is ok for those who have ordered lives, but many struggling won't have and therefore won't be able to provided the necessary documentation needed? Reaching the most vulnerable and needy is always difficult - would the CAB &/or libraries &/or charities such as Touchpoint be able to help?



28. I agree in principle.

However, I fail to see how young renters on low wages can be expected to pay high council tax bands on ridiculously small apartments.

Please reexamine Flat 5 The Pines, Wendens Ambo as an example.

This has been appealed by the managing agent but not been successful.

On top of £995 rent, the tenants have to pay over £200 council tax... for what?! Pure madness that needs addressing.

29. As long as the help is properly targeted to those most in need, I am fine with the scheme.

30. It should be retained

31. The on-going support is welcome.

While 12.5% reflects a substantial reduction, there are other Districts across the UK where this has been reduced to zero. The rural nature of Uttlesford means that many household costs are consuming an ever larger portion of residents' household income, for example travel, access to services, access to affordable supermarkets.

DWP data relating to Child Poverty in Uttlesford (StatXplore) indicates that 7 in 10 children living in relative poverty are in working families. According to the Uttlesford Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the total number of children in this position = 3270. Schools across the district are noting increased use of discretionary bursaries (beyond those families already in receipt of PPG and free school meals) to support families who are struggling. Again the rural nature of our district means that working families often bear increasing costs related to attending work. Hyper local employment opportunities are limited, meaning that more money needs to be spent on getting to work - via public or private transport. This same challenge is encountered by older children who may be seeking part-time weekend employment. Rurality adds a level of complexity for working families and this can go unnoticed. Creating a protocol to support the challenges of 'in-work poverty' would mean more money in pockets to address other costs.

In summary, the rural nature of our District brings an additional challenge in relation to the financial wellbeing of households. It amplifies existing pressures and this is something which is important when developing local welfare protocols.

32. I fully support the proposals. The more help that can be given to people on benefits the better.

33. I agree



34. I realise UDC has more aspirations than funding to pay for them. However, ideally, I'd like the 12.5% to be reduced to 0%. I certainly would not support an increase of the 12.5%.

I congratulate the UDC on the exceptional hardship fund, and cost of living support fund

35. If it's been satisfactory previously, I think it should be continued similarly. You know your financial position and if it is still affordable, go ahead.

36. Agree proposal - maintain levels as they currently stand

37. Maintain the current level of support as a minimum, but consider a council tax holiday for 1 year for people eligible for the scheme given the cost of living crisis, energy inflation and delays to the welfare payment system.

38. I wholeheartedly agree with supporting the vulnerable in our community and wish the LCTS scheme to continue for 2024/25

39. I am happy with the levels put forward

40. Maintain scheme as present

41. I would support maintaining the current level of LCTS into 2024/25. As an adviser at Citizens Advice, I am very aware that the scheme is a good way of targeting support at the most vulnerable in Uttlesford. It is particularly helpful in supporting those on very low incomes/pensions who do not have access to other means tested benefits e.g. housing benefit.

42. Fully support the proposal.

43. I support it

44. It should be available for everyone that is unemployed and on low income



Comments generally not supporting the proposed scheme

Comments opposing the proposals for 2024-2025 or making suggestions for amendments to the scheme.

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1. I feel that central government via universal credit should be supporting those unable to pay council tax. A charge of 25% would be more appropriate given the burden the current rate places on other council tax payers and given the other financial pressures on current council finances to maintain statutory support in other areas.
2. The cost of living is squeezing everybody, more help needs to be available for middle earners, not just lower who often end up with more disposable income after benefits and tax are taken into account.
3. I do not agree, what percentage of my full paying council tax is paying for this subsidy?
4. Council should consider increasing the level. Inflation is still at a high level and although it is hopeful it will be lower next year it will still impact on those in greatest need. Keeping the benefit at the same level would represent a decrease in its value.
5. Where is the support for working people who are not entitled to working tax credits etc?
6. Reduce Council Tax instead. The top tier of managers are paid far too much. Chief Executive £130k is criminal plus other senior managers. The quality of the management and staff is very low and productivity non-existent.
7. Don't give the scroungers anything. Make them pay like the rest of us.
8. It will end up costing everyone else more to cover those that cannot pay, so not happy to pay more.
9. The lowest rate of council tax should be 15%. This will still be lower than any other council except Colchester. It would also be a modest increase of roughly £1 per week. Council tax rates for other residents in Uttlesford are very high and I believe that the lower rate should be increased slightly. If people in other areas can afford 25% I'm not sure why people in Uttlesford are different. A £1 a week increase is very modest.
10. 12.5% seems too low, perhaps increase by RPI.
11. I think the scheme should only be for carers and the disabled. The government and councils do not have the money to spend and something has to give. If I were the owner of this policy, I would be stating that it's a shame that everyone cannot be helped, but hard choices require hard decisions. The elderly are already advantaged by the triple lock pension. The youngsters need to know how hard life truly is, but the carers and disabled will struggle to find employment and/or further employment.
12. They do not take into consideration people's individual circumstances.
13. No support should be provided as the priority should be essential services and road maintenance.
14. Same old same old can't work in these inflammatory inflationary times working families must be included into LCTS.



15. I would increase the rate and support for those on low incomes and the elderly

16. Why does Uttlesford only give 12.5% surely it should be more. This is a rich area and prices are high for people who do an ordinary job. Come on be more generous and spend money where it is really needed rather than on wasteful vanity projects.



Comments received making general points

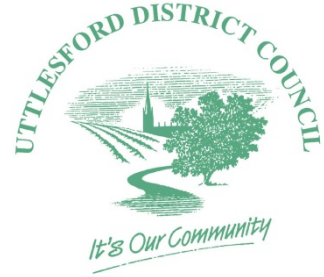
Comments on the cost of living crisis, making general points or querying some other support provided by Uttlesford District Council.

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1. It is difficult to judge the proposal without other information such as how many claimants Uttlesford has, the ratio of claimants to full payers etc. The information that Uttlesford is more generous than the rest of Essex is difficult to interpret - is Essex in line with the national average, for example. It seems good that Uttlesford has a scheme, and it also seems good that the claimants still pay something. I cannot judge if the proposed level of support is a fair balance between the needs of the claimants and Uttlesford's overall needs.
2. I have not been aware of the LCTS until now, and it appears quite a complex set of means tested criteria. 12.5% seems very low and appears to be more generous compared to other local authorities. It could be steadily raised to 20 and 25% over a number of years. It is not obvious whether owning property would stop a person being eligible (previous comments suggest it doesn't), but property owners should certainly be excluded.
3. I do not claim any benefits and so do not receive help other than the 25% discount as a single person. I'm 80 years old, live on my own and believe that because of the reduced services that I need, this discount should be more. My bins are not even half full on collection day and yet apart from the 25% discount my council tax is the same as a much larger family pays.
4. I am 77 yrs old, married and a home owner with paid off mortgage and in good health I but now living off a diminishing pension.
5. I wish somebody would give me a load of money we all have to make sacrifices and judgement on what we spend our cash on it sickens me to see some people asking for money when they're fancy mobiles contracts on their phones contracts on their TV is going on holidays plenty of kids that I can't afford to keep fancy carThe list could go on
6. Refer to World Bank reports from 1947 to up to date. And you will find an answer.
7. Whilst I understand the LCTS scheme and who it is trying to support I have to say my finances are dwindling rapidly due increasing electric/gas/water and many other costs.I am not alone in this however on the horizon their is a time not to far away where my wife and I have got to seriously think of away to a cheaper area,wherever that is. We have lived in THX for 38yrs.



8. Does this scheme support people from Ukraine or refugees from Afghanistan? It makes no mention of these vulnerable groups so I suspect not. There are also other refugees in the district who need help. I think that it should be expanded to help as many people as possible and there are enough well-off tax payers who can afford to give a bit extra. And what is the Government doing to support these groups. They make a lot of fuss and then just abandon people. This leaves people like us to step up and help when millions of pounds are wasted on vanity projects.



Uttlesford District Council

Equality & Health Impact Assessment (EqHIA)

Document control

Title of activity:	<i>Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25</i>
Lead officer:	<i>Angela Knight, Director – Business Performance and People</i>
Approved by:	<i>Adrian Webb, Director of Finance and Corporate Services (S151 Officer)</i>
Date completed:	<i>25 September 2023</i>
Scheduled date for review:	<i>Reviewed annually in line with the annual consultation and scheme proposals</i>

Does the EqHIA contain any confidential or exempt information that would prevent you publishing it on the Council's website?	No
---	----

Please note that EqHIAs are **public** documents and must be made available on the Council's [EqHIA webpage](#).

When completed, a copy of this form should be saved with the activity a policy, strategy, procedure, project, new or change in service, initiative or other's file for audit purposes and in case it is requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

When the EqHIA is completed send a copy to the following email address - EqHIA@Uttlesford.gov.uk

1. Equality & Health Impact Assessment Checklist

Please complete the following checklist to determine whether or not you will need to complete an EqHIA and ensure you keep this section for your audit trail. If you have any questions, please contact your Divisional Equality Lead. Please refer to the Guidance in Appendix 1 on how to complete this form. **When EqHIA is completed send a copy to the following email address EqHIA@Uttlesford.gov.uk**

About your activity

1	Title of activity	Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25		
2	Type of activity	To set the annual criteria for the scheme		
3	Scope of activity	The scheme criteria are reviewed annually, and proposals are subject to consultation with all residents and preceptors in the district.		
4a	Are you changing, introducing a new, or removing a service, policy, strategy or function?	No	If the answer to <u>any</u> of these questions is 'YES', please continue to question 5.	If the answer to <u>all</u> of the questions (4a, 4b & 4c) is 'NO', please go to question 6.
4b	Does this activity have the potential to impact (either positively or negatively) upon people (9 protected characteristics)?	Yes		
4c	Does the activity have the potential to impact (either positively or negatively) upon any factors which determine people's health and wellbeing?	Yes		
5	If you answered YES:	Please complete the EqHIA in Section 2 of this document. Please see Appendix 1 for Guidance.		
6	If you answered NO:	<p><i>Please provide a clear and robust explanation on why your activity does not require an EqHIA. This is essential in case the activity is challenged under the Equality Act 2010.</i></p> <p><i>Please keep this checklist for your audit trail.</i></p>		

Completed by:	Angela Knight, Director – Business Performance and People
Date:	21 October 2022

2. The EqHIA – How will the strategy, policy, plan, procedure and/or service impact on people?

Background/context:

The Local Council Tax Support Scheme sets the criteria for reduced payments of council tax for households on low incomes. It also includes additional support for pensioners, vulnerable and disabled residents, and their carer's.

Who will be affected by the activity?

The scheme is available to all households in the district subject to meeting the eligibility criteria.

Protected Characteristic - Age: Consider the full range of age groups

Please tick (✓) the relevant box:

Positive

Neutral

Negative

Overall impact:

**Expand box as required*

Evidence:

The scheme is available to all ages who are liable for payment of council tax.

**Expand box as required*

Sources used:

**Expand box as required*

Protected Characteristic - Disability: Consider the full range of disabilities; including physical mental, sensory and progressive conditions

Please tick (✓) the relevant box:

Positive

Neutral

Overall impact:

Negative		<i>*Expand box as required</i>
Evidence:		
The scheme is available to all vulnerable and disabled residents who are liable for payment of council tax.		
<i>*Expand box as required</i>		
Sources used:		
<i>*Expand box as required</i>		

Protected Characteristic - Sex/gender: Consider both men and women		
<i>Please tick (✓) the relevant box:</i>		Overall impact:
Positive		
Neutral	✓	
Negative		
		<i>*Expand box as required</i>
Evidence:		
The scheme does not include any criteria relating to sex or gender.		
<i>*Expand box as required</i>		
Sources used:		
<i>*Expand box as required</i>		

Protected Characteristic - Ethnicity/race: Consider the impact on different ethnic groups and nationalities		
<i>Please tick (✓) the relevant box:</i>		Overall impact:
Positive		
Neutral	✓	
Negative		
		<i>*Expand box as required</i>
Evidence:		
The scheme does not include any criteria relating to Ethnicity or race.		
<i>*Expand box as required</i>		
Sources used:		

**Expand box as required*

Protected Characteristic - Religion/faith: Consider people from different religions or beliefs including those with no religion or belief

Please tick (✓) the relevant box:

Overall impact:

Positive

Neutral

✓

Negative

**Expand box as required*

Evidence:

The scheme does not include any criteria relating to Religion or Faith.

**Expand box as required*

Sources used:

**Expand box as required*

Protected Characteristic - Sexual orientation: Consider people who are heterosexual, lesbian, gay or bisexual

Please tick (✓) the relevant box:

Overall impact:

Positive

Neutral

✓

Negative

**Expand box as required*

Evidence:

The scheme does not include any criteria relating to Religion or Faith.

**Expand box as required*

Sources used:

**Expand box as required*

Protected Characteristic - Gender reassignment: Consider people who are seeking, undergoing or have received gender reassignment surgery, as well as people whose gender identity is different from their gender at birth

Please tick (✓) the relevant box:

Overall impact:

Positive

Neutral

✓

Negative		<i>*Expand box as required</i>
Evidence:		
The scheme does not include any criteria relating to Religion or Faith.		
<i>*Expand box as required</i>		
Sources used:		
<i>*Expand box as required</i>		

Protected Characteristic - Marriage/civil partnership: Consider people in a marriage or civil partnership		
<i>Please tick (✓) the relevant box:</i>		Overall impact:
Positive		
Neutral	✓	
Negative		
		<i>*Expand box as required</i>
Evidence:		
The scheme does not include any criteria relating to marriage or civil partnerships.		
<i>*Expand box as required</i>		
Sources used:		
<i>*Expand box as required</i>		

Protected Characteristic - Pregnancy, maternity and paternity: Consider those who are pregnant and those who are undertaking maternity or paternity leave		
<i>Please tick (✓) the relevant box:</i>		Overall impact:
Positive		
Neutral	✓	
Negative		
		<i>*Expand box as required</i>
Evidence:		
The scheme does not include any criteria relating to pregnancy, maternity or paternity		
<i>*Expand box as required</i>		
Sources used:		
<i>*Expand box as required</i>		




Socio-economic status: Consider those who are from low income or financially excluded backgrounds	
<i>Please tick (✓) the relevant box:</i>	Overall impact:
Positive	
Neutral	✓
Negative	
<i>*Expand box as required</i>	
Evidence:	
<p>The scheme is focused on supporting households who are on low incomes.</p> <p>The cost of living crisis is causing more households in the middle income bracket to suffer financial hardship. To help address this the council has set up a new one year Council Tax Support Fund, this runs alongside the current Exceptional Hardship Fund (EHF), both funds are open to all residents who find themselves struggling financially.</p>	
<i>*Expand box as required</i>	
Sources used:	
<i>*Expand box as required</i>	

Health & Wellbeing Impact: Consider both short and long-term impacts of the activity on a person's physical and mental health, particularly for disadvantaged, vulnerable or at-risk groups. Can health and wellbeing be positively promoted through this activity? Please use the Health and Wellbeing Impact Tool in Appendix 2 to help you answer this question.	
<i>Please tick (✓) all the relevant boxes that apply:</i>	Overall impact:
Positive	✓
Neutral	
Negative	✓
<i>*Expand box as required</i>	
<p>Do you consider that a more in-depth HIA is required as a result of this brief assessment? Please tick (✓) the relevant box</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	
Evidence:	
<p>The scheme provides financial support to low-income households which is aimed at reducing the financial burden and stress on households who are struggling financially.</p>	
<i>*Expand box as required</i>	
Sources used:	
<i>*Expand box as required</i>	

3. Outcome of the Assessment

The EqHIA assessment is intended to be used as an improvement tool to make sure the activity maximises the positive impacts and eliminates or minimises the negative impacts. The possible outcomes of the assessment are listed below and what the next steps to take are:

Please tick (✓) what the overall outcome of your assessment was:

	<p>1. The EqHIA identified <u>no significant concerns</u> OR the identified <u>negative concerns</u> have already been <u>addressed</u></p>		<p>Proceed with implementation of your activity</p>
	<p>2. The EqHIA identified some <u>negative impact</u> which still needs to be <u>addressed</u></p>		<p>COMPLETE SECTION 4: Complete action plan and finalise the EqHIA</p>
	<p>3. The EqHIA identified some <u>major concerns</u> and showed that it is <u>impossible to diminish negative impacts</u> from the activity to an acceptable or even lawful level</p>		<p>Stop and remove the activity or revise the activity thoroughly. Complete an EqHIA on the revised proposal.</p>

4. Action Plan

The real value of completing an EqHIA comes from the identifying the actions that can be taken to eliminate/minimise negative impacts and enhance/optimize positive impacts. In this section you should list the specific actions that set out how you will address any negative equality and health & wellbeing impacts you have identified in this assessment. Please ensure that your action plan is: more than just a list of proposals and good intentions; sets ambitious yet achievable outcomes and timescales; and is clear about resource implications.

Protected characteristic / health & wellbeing impact	Identified Negative or Positive impact	Recommended actions to mitigate Negative impact* or further promote Positive impact	Outcomes and monitoring**	Timescale	Lead officer
Health & Wellbeing Impact	Both positive and negative	<p>The scheme aims to support households on low income, so provides a positive impact although there are some households who do not qualify but may still be struggling financially</p> <p>The council has set up a new one year Council Tax</p>	<p>The outcome is to support low income households in payment of council tax and minimise council tax arrears and residents' debt levels.</p> <p>This is monitored quarterly by the KPI/PI's on collection rates and debt levels. Also, data on the number of claims for additional support.</p>	The indicators are monitored quarterly and the scheme is reviewed annually.	Angela Knight – Director – Business Performance and People

		Support Fund to run alongside the current Exceptional Hardship Fund (EHF) which is open to all households who find themselves struggling financially.			
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Add further rows as necessary

* You should include details of any future consultations and any actions to be undertaken to mitigate negative impacts

** Monitoring: You should state how the impact (positive or negative) will be monitored; what outcome measures will be used; the known (or likely) data source for outcome measurements; how regularly it will be monitored; and who will be monitoring it (if this is different from the lead officer).

5. Review

In this section you should identify how frequently the EqHIA will be reviewed; the date for next review; and who will be reviewing it.

Review:

The review will be conducted annually in line with the review of the scheme proposals and consultation process.

Scheduled date of review:

October 2023

Lead Officer conducting the review:

Angela Knight – Assistant Director – Business and Change Management

Committee:	Cabinet	Date:	Thursday, 2 November 2023
Title:	Revenue Bid – Reporting Tool for Development Management, Enforcement, Building Control, Environmental Services including Licensing		
Portfolio Holder:	Planning – Councillor Evans, Portfolio for Planning		
Report Author:	Ann Howells, Performance and Business Manager (Planning). ahowells@uttlesford.gov.uk	Key decision:	No

Summary

1. The council has been approached by an IT Service provider – IDOX plc. IDOX provides the database and document management systems, remotely for Development Management including Enforcement and Building Control, Licensing and Environmental Services.
2. IDOX have created a powerful performance tool called Idox Insights – basically Power BI where *'create rich, interactive data visualisations from multiple data sources and share important business insights that drive success/es.'* The initial creation is for Development Management.
3. This report considers the benefits of this opportunity and any risks.

Recommendations

4. Cabinet approves the opportunity and agree to the funding of £45,600 which covers a two-year period from the MTFS reserve.

Financial Implications

5. Cost of £45,600 to be paid in phases:
 - £22,800 in year 2023/24
 - £22,800 in year 2024/25From the Revenue MTFS reserve which supports the wider change of Blueprint Uttlesford.

Background Papers

6. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.
 - Uttlesford Peer Review Report – June 2023

Impact

7.

Communication/Consultation	Communication with relevant Service Heads of departments, approval from Cllr Evans, approval from Strategic Director of Planning. Discussions with IDOX
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	Any legal agreement of the new contract will mirror previous agreements entered into with IDOX
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	Will improve performance reporting across the relevant departments.

Situation

8. Reporting from IDOX is mostly through Microsoft Access reports. These are written, run and then pasted into an excel spreadsheet to interrogate the data. At best the existing data is siloed, disparate and out of date as soon as the report has been run. At worse, data is clunky and inaccessible. The absence of an effective reporting tool prevents effective performance management.
9. Power BI (or IDOX Insights) will turn this around and at the press of a button, the most up to date information will be at officers and management fingers. Working better and more efficiently.
10. Planning recently had a Peer Review and one mention was of the manual processes which impede the service having up to date data. An example from another local authority showed exactly how the software would become key to effective management and provide accountability, transparency and democracy across the services using IDOX.
11. IDOX have created a reporting tool for Development Management and are seeking a local authority to work with them to carry out a 'case study' on how

we have used the tool, created other relevant reporting and how it has improved or performance and become more efficient.

12. Alongside the 'case study' they are seeking an authority who will help them develop the 'tool' to other service users – Building Control, Enforcement, Licensing and Environmental Services. There would be a dedicated 'project team' to move this program forward. IDOX would support the team and teach them how to create these 'tools'. All of which will mean that moving ahead the authority could become quite self-sufficient.

13. To be funded from MTFS reserve.

14. Council Priority – Corporate Plan 2023 – 2027

- Implement a corporate change programme to increase accountability, transparency and democracy at the council
- Deliver cost-effective and efficient services that live within the council's means
- Constantly seek to improve the quality of our services whether provided in-house, in partnership or contracted out

15. Benefits:

- More reliable data
- Enhanced analysis
- Cost cutting by automating routine tasks
- Improved staff efficiency
- Increased or measured office productivity
- Low cost at this stage, the Authority is seen as taking a lead in a project – good publicity.
- It is anticipated that there will be considerable officer time saved, not having to write, run and integrate the data as well as management time.
- Improved assessment of time spent on task that facilitate/improve cost recovery and the setting of fees and charges
- Allow managers to immediately address workload imbalances
- Provides managers to allow rapid reporting
- Effective oversight of officer workloads that will reduce the number of complaints from delayed or unactioned service requests
- Provides managers with the tools to realise the service demands allowing for better planning and management of workstreams
- Quicker access to performance data at service, team and individual level

16. If we do not accept this opportunity the authority misses out on the chance to formulate/mold the software and the potential cost is likely to increase because we would need to pay for each module which could see an increase in cost to the authority of approx.. £26,000 per annum on top of the £22,800.

Risk Analysis

17.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Not accepting the opportunity to work with the provider at this time will eventually cost UDC more money in the future.	2	2	Accept the opportunity and work with the provider.

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.

Committee:	Cabinet	Date:	Thursday, 2 November 2023
Title:	Audio Visual system replacement		
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Neil Hargreaves, Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Economy		
Report Author:	Adrian Webb, Strategic Director of Finance, Commercialisation and Corporate Services awebb@uttlesford.gov.uk Tel: 01799 510421	Key decision:	Yes

Summary

1. The current audio visual systems in place at Saffron Walden need upgrading. The microphones are at end of life and the camera was a Covid installation to enable people to see the meetings when public attendance was restricted. In addition, the conference facility needs to be fitted out with audio visual equipment, so as to enable council meetings to be held there, along with the potential to hire the facility to external users.
2. A capital budget is available, but following a procurement exercise the sum needs to be increased. In addition, a new revenue budget needs to be identified for the ongoing licensing, maintenance and support costs.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that
 - a. The capital budget is increased by £50,000; and
 - b. A new revenue budget is established at a full year cost of £56,088

Financial Implications

4. The additional capital funding to be financed from the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Reserve, as will any revenue cost in the remainder of 2023/24, as this project will support the wider transformation objectives of Blueprint Uttlesford.

Background Papers

5. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

None

Impact

Communication/Consultation	A specification was prepared following discussion with industry specialists, Democratic Services staff and using general feedback from councillors.
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	The system is set up to enable hybrid meetings to take place. In addition, it will be possible, legislation permitting, for a single meeting to be held across two sites (London Road and Little Canfield), thereby cutting travel requirements for attendees.
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	A new system will be more effective and efficient for Democratic Services.

Situation

London Road

6. The existing system has been developed piecemeal over the last 11 years. The current microphones were purchased in 2012 and are no longer supported, in terms of security and operating upgrades. More modern microphones are much more capable of avoiding interference from the numerous competing devices, such as mobile phones.
7. In, or about, 2015 the council introduced audio broadcasting, linked to the ModGov committee system. This was replaced around 2020 as the council moved to a camera based YouTube channel. The camera though is a single wide angle version, which met the needs of the council during Covid but is not a suitable ongoing solution.
8. Presentations, mainly at Planning Committee, are currently done using a projector and screen, which is outdated given the now wide use of platforms such as Microsoft Teams.

Little Canfield

9. The council has developed a brand new, three room conference facility, with the aim of holding council meetings as well as hiring out the facility to external users. To enable this to happen an audio visual installation is required.

The Process

10. Following discussion with industry experts, the council produced a specification for the new audio visual solution, with a five year support requirement, which was then put to the market through a Procurement Framework. Ten companies expressed an interest and after verifying their capability to meet the requirements, were sent the tender pack.
11. The chosen supplier, who was the best fit for quality of offering and price, is [Civico](#) who have done similar recent installs for Camden Council and Oadby and Wigston Council, as well as supporting for some time Westminster and Croydon councils.
12. The key elements of the new system include
 - a. New microphones at each site, with voting capability
 - b. A mix of fixed and mobile 86" screens
 - c. Multiple cameras in each room to enable enhanced visual experience for the viewing public
 - d. New speakers at London Road
 - e. Microsoft Teams usage for Planning Committee meetings, to enable councillors to view the presentations on their laptops.
 - f. As legislation allows, the ability to hold a single meeting across the two sites (London Road and Little Canfield) thereby reducing travel.
 - g. Realtime support and monitoring for the following meetings, to fix problems before they impact the meeting;
 - i. Full council
 - ii. Cabinet
 - iii. Planning Committee
 - iv. Other meetings as the 100 hour contract per annum permits

Pricing

13. The original capital budget identified was £165,000 with only a small revenue budget, previously used for maintenance of the system.
14. The capital cost for the successful tenderer is approximately £50,000 greater than this sum. In addition, software licensing means there is a requirement for

an annual revenue budget of £56,088, which will be built into future years budgets.

15. A number of the companies who expressed an interest in the tender opportunity but did not submit a final bid were asked why they hadn't, and the answer was in the main cost, with an indication that they were looking for a budget circa twice the size of that available to the council.

Timescale

16. The installation will likely be in two phases with Little Canfield fitted out first. That will enable the work at London Road to be undertaken, with any scheduled meetings being redirected to Little Canfield. The new system should be in place by the end of February 2024.

Blueprint Uttlesford

17. The council's transformation programme does not only look at reducing the costs of services but also looks to enhance the quality of service that is offered to the public.

Risk Analysis

18.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Hardware supply delays the project	2 – computer chips remain in short supply and lead times are longer than would be ideal	2 – the existing system would need to remain in place	The order will be placed as soon as practicable following Cabinet approval

- 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.

Committee:	Cabinet	Date:	Thursday, 2 November 2023
Title:	Quarter 1 Financial Forecast - 2023/24		
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Neil Hargreaves, Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Economy		
Report Author:	Jody Etherington, Director of Finance, Revenues and Benefits JEtherington@uttlesford.gov.uk	Key decision:	No

Summary

1. This report sets out the latest forecast financial performance of the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, and capital programme, together with a summary of the Council's treasury management position and updated prudential indicators. It is based upon actual income and expenditure from April to June 2023, together with forecasts for the remainder of the financial year.
2. Since this report covers the first 3 months of the year, it does not yet take into account the financial impact of the following decisions which were taken by the Council and Cabinet in August, which will be fully reflected in the Quarter 2 Financial Forecast:
 - The decision to approve a new loan facility of £21.060 million to Aspire (CRP) Ltd, to be funded through additional General Fund borrowing;
 - The decision to fund remedial works at Mortimer's Gate, Saffron Walden.
3. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the forecasts within this report are as accurate as possible, it should be noted that this has been prepared at a relatively early stage in the financial year, using only 3 months' of actual financial data. Significant inherent uncertainty therefore remains, and actual outturn is likely to differ from forecasts.
4. At present, there is a forecast net underspend on the General Fund of £786,000. This should be seen in the context of a budgeted General Fund deficit (to be funded from reserves) of £2.667 million – the forecast underspend therefore reduces this deficit to £1.881 million. Further details are set out in paragraphs 14 to 28.
5. The Housing Revenue Account is forecasting a net underspend of £652,000. This includes an underspend on depreciation charges of £456,000. Whilst this represents a revenue saving, it will result in less money being transferred to the Major Repairs Reserve to finance capital improvements on the existing housing stock in future years. As a result, it is possible that additional revenue contributions may need to be made to finance the capital programme in the

future. Excluding this amount, the adjusted net underspend on the HRA is £196,000. Further details are set out in paragraphs 29 to 38.

6. The current year approved capital programme totals £23.070 million. Forecast capital expenditure is now £25.165 million. This includes forecast expenditure of £2.091 million on car park works at Little Canfield, and £237,000 on air quality initiatives, both of which are additional projects which have arisen in year and for which a capital budget bid has not yet been submitted. Excluding these amounts, there is a net overspend on the approved capital programme of £238,000 (after taking into account slippage). Further details are set out in paragraphs 39 to 42.
7. Throughout the period, the Council's treasury management activities have been carried out in accordance with the Treasury Management Strategy approved by Council in February 2023. Further details are set out at paragraphs 43 to 46 below, and in the Treasury Management Q1 Outturn report presented to Cabinet alongside this report.
8. From 1 April 2023, local authorities are now required to report their key prudential indicators on at least a quarterly basis. Prudential indicators which relate to treasury management are reported separately within the Treasury Management Q1 Report. Other prudential indicators are set out at paragraphs 47 to 50 of this report.
9. A small number of General Fund revenue and capital virements have been put forward for Cabinet approval as part of this report – see paragraphs 27 and 41.

Recommendations

10. The Cabinet is recommended to:
 - i. Note the contents of this report, in particular the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and capital programme forecast outturn positions, and updated prudential indicators;
 - ii. Approve the General Fund revenue virements set out at paragraph 27; and
 - iii. Approve the General Fund capital virements set out at paragraph 41.

Financial Implications

11. Financial implications are set out throughout this report.

Background Papers

12. None

Impact

13.

Communication/Consultation	Corporate Management Team (CMT) and Informal Cabinet Briefing (ICB)
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	N/A
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal Implications	N/A
Sustainability	N/A
Ward-specific impacts	N/A
Workforce/Workplace	N/A

General Fund

14. The forecast outturn on the General Fund is a net underspend of £786,000, as set out in the table below. A more detailed breakdown is provided at Appendix A.

General Fund 2023/24 - Q1 Forecast	2022/23	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24
	Outturn	Original Budget	Current Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Service portfolios	18,008	19,251	19,251	18,672	(579)
Investment property					
Investment property income (net of management costs)	(11,462)	(11,974)	(11,974)	(12,022)	(48)
Borrowing costs	4,434	8,410	8,410	8,668	258
Minimum revenue provision (MRP)	2,211	2,804	2,804	2,516	(288)
Subtotal - Investment property	(4,817)	(760)	(760)	(838)	(78)
Corporate items					
Capital financing	1,711	2,441	2,441	2,555	114
Leisure PFI interest	348	334	334	334	-
Corporate pension costs (added years and deficit repair)	168	545	545	540	(5)
Treasury investment income	(375)	(337)	(337)	(502)	(165)
Net recharges to Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	(1,870)	(1,967)	(1,967)	(1,974)	(7)
Bad debt costs	(17)	-	-	-	-
Subtotal - Corporate items	(35)	1,016	1,016	953	(63)
External funding					
Retained business rates (including S31 grants)	(4,372)	(5,272)	(5,272)	(5,436)	(164)
Collection fund (surplus)/deficit	(560)	249	249	249	-
New Homes Bonus	(1,343)	(432)	(432)	(432)	-
Other government grants	(1,861)	(2,901)	(2,901)	(2,901)	-
Subtotal - External funding	(8,136)	(8,356)	(8,356)	(8,520)	(164)
Subtotal - Net operating expenditure	5,020	11,151	11,151	10,267	(884)
Transfers to/(from) earmarked reserves	1,042	(4,457)	(4,457)	(4,359)	98
Total - Council tax requirement	6,062	6,694	6,694	5,908	(786)
Council tax	(6,404)	(6,694)	(6,694)	(6,694)	-
Over/(under)spend	(342)	-	-	(786)	(786)

15. It should be noted that the original budget for 2023/24 included a planned deficit of £2.667 million to be funded from the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) reserve. The forecast underspend of £786,000 against this budget therefore indicates a true deficit on the General Fund this year of £1.881 million.

Service Portfolios

16. Service budgets for 2023/24 were set in February 2023 in accordance with the Council's governance structure at the time. Following the election in May 2023, Cabinet portfolios were restructured, and service budgets have now been restated to align with the new portfolios. There are no changes to the budgets themselves, other than as set out elsewhere in this report.

17. Where services are funded from earmarked reserves (such as ringfenced grants or other resources specifically allocated by members), any under or overspend will be matched by a corresponding transfer to or from the relevant reserve. The table below summarises the forecast outturn on services by portfolio, before and after any such movements on earmarked reserves:

GF Services - Q1 Forecast	2022/23 Outturn	2023/24 Original Budget	2023/24 Current Budget	2023/24 Forecast Outturn	2023/24 Forecast Variance	2023/24 Variance to Earmarked Reserves	2023/24 Forecast Net Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Service portfolios							
Communities and Local Partnerships	1,300	1,463	1,463	1,514	51	(123)	(72)
Environment and Climate Change	2,776	3,529	3,529	3,755	226	182	408
Finance and the Economy	1,353	1,614	1,614	1,751	137	(37)	100
Housing and Equalities	194	263	263	266	3	(3)	-
Planning	4,545	2,650	2,650	2,800	150	(209)	(59)
Strategy and Governance	3,075	4,240	4,240	3,424	(816)	94	(722)
Corporate Services	4,765	5,492	5,492	5,162	(330)	(9)	(339)
Subtotal - Service portfolios	18,008	19,251	19,251	18,672	(579)	(105)	(684)

18. The largest forecast service variances not funded through earmarked reserves are as follows:-

Overspends and reduced income

- Waste management – overspend of £464,000 on waste processing and disposal costs due mainly to higher than anticipated external processing charges. These so-called ‘gate fees’ are driven by market forces and are highly volatile and difficult to predict.

Underspends and increased income

- Agency staff – in setting the 2023/24 budget a central contingency of £516,000 was set aside for the excess cost of employing agency staff in hard to recruit areas (Planning, Legal and Finance). The latest forecast suggests that only £273,000 of this contingency will be required, resulting in a underspend of £243,000.
- Council offices – one-off additional income of £132,000 relating to rental income at Little Canfield. This is a technical accounting adjustment in respect of income which should have been recognised in 2022/23 but was omitted in error.
- Building control – unbudgeted income of £120,000 relating to new commercial income streams.
- Kitchen waste – increased income of £105,000 is currently being forecast based upon prior year actual experience.
- Corporate management – saving of £104,000 due to vacancy in and subsequent deletion of Assistant Director – Legal post.
- Local Highways Panel – underspend of £100,000 due to withdrawal from Local Highways Panel.

19. All individual forecast service variances >£30,000 are set out in detail at Appendix B.

Investment Property

20. The Council's investment property portfolio is projected to return a net positive contribution of £838,000 to the General Fund in 2023/24, against a budget of £760,000 (i.e. increased income of £78,000). The largest components of the variance are as follows:-

- An underspend of £288,000 on minimum revenue provision (MRP). This is mainly due to a delay to the completion of the Council's final commercial unit – since this was completed after 1 April 2023, there will now be no MRP charge in respect of this asset in 2023/24. MRP will instead commence at 1 April 2024 – the same total amount of MRP will need to be charged over the life of the asset.
- An overspend of £258,000 on borrowing costs due to higher than anticipated interest rates – this is offset to some extent by higher than anticipated treasury investment income of £165,000 included in corporate items below.

Corporate Items

21. The forecast net overspend of £114,000 on capital financing includes the following significant variances:-

- An overspend of £174,000 on capital costs to be funded from revenue in respect of professional services relating to the final stages of construction of the Council's commercial property portfolio.
- An underspend of £100,000 due to project slippage on the superfast broadband project – this amount is anticipated to be carried forward to be spent in future years, and therefore a corresponding transfer to the slippage reserve has been forecast.

22. Treasury investment income is forecast to be £165,000 higher than budget due to higher than anticipated interest rates.

External Funding

23. The forecast favourable variance on business rate income of £164,000 is due to higher than expected section 31 grant income in year. This is income which the Council receives from government as compensation for centrally determined business rate reliefs (such as expanded retail discount). Increased income in one year is usually offset by a larger deficit on the collection fund at year-end – for this reason it is Council policy that any additional income be transferred to the Business Rates reserve at year-end to fund future deficit repayments.

General Fund Reserves

24. The total General Fund reserves balance at 1 April 2023 was £25.207 million. The current budget includes a net draw on reserves of £4.457 million.

However, due to the variances in year set out above, the forecast net draw on specific earmarked reserves is now £4.359 million. This, together with the forecast net underspend of £786,000, leaves a forecast closing reserve balance of £21.634 million.

25. Variances between budgeted reserve movements and the current forecast are set out in the following table:

Movement in Reserves - Forecast Variance in Net Transfers	Drawdowns £'000	Additions £'000	Net Total £'000	Comments
Budgeted net use of earmarked reserves			(4,457)	
Reserve variances relating to direct services				
Community grants and contributions	(238)			Drawdown of amounts set aside in 2022/23 for grants which had been committed but not yet paid out by year-end
Local Plan	(135)			Drawdown of additional unbudgeted grant received in 2022/23 to fund associated expenditure this year
Community safety		117		Net underspend against grants received for asylum seekers and domestic abuse support, to be carried forward for future years
Local Highway Panel		100		Budgeted contribution from reserves no longer required as Council has withdrawn from Local Highway Panel
Climate change		80		Revenue underspend against 3 year Climate Change Programme - some will be used to fund capital projects as below, with unspent amount to remain in reserves to be used in future years
Licensing		55		Variance in net expenditure on ringfenced licensing activities to be funded from previous surpluses held in reserves
Shared Prosperity Fund	(38)			Drawdown of grant received in 2022/23 to fund expenditure in year
Public health grants		18		Lower than budgeted drawdown of grants received in 2022/23 due to lower than anticipated spend
Planning specialists	(18)			Drawdown of unspent grant amount from 2022/23 to fund expenditure in year
Air quality grant	(15)			Higher than anticipated drawdown of grant received in 2022/23 to fund spend in year
Neighbourhood Planning	(15)			Unbudgeted drawdown of reserves to fund expenditure in year
Web-to-print solutions	(7)			Use of capital slippage reserve to fund revenue (licensing) costs associated with project
Elections	(6)			Drawdown of new burdens funding received in 2022/23 to fund additional expenditure on May 2023 elections
Homelessness	(3)			Higher than anticipated drawdown of previous years' homelessness grants to fund overspend in year
Total - Reserve variances relating to direct services	(475)	370	(105)	
Other reserve variances				
Business rates		163		Transfer of excess s31 grant income to fund deficit repayments in future years
Working balance		71		Below budgeted increase in working balance requirement due to variances elsewhere
Climate change	(36)			Use of climate change reserve to fund climate-related capital projects
Capital slippage		5		Lower than anticipated drawdown from capital slippage reserve due to further slippage
Total - Other reserve variances	(36)	239	203	
Forecast net use of reserves (before underspend)			(4,359)	

26. A full table showing all forecast General Fund reserve movements is included at Appendix C.

Virements

27. Cabinet approval is sought for a virement of £139,590 from the Committee Administration service centre to the Electoral Registration service centre. Historically, all staff costs relating to both services, along with some other administrative costs, have all been included within the Committee Administration budget, reflecting the fact that the services work very closely together. Following the reorganisation of Cabinet portfolios, a review has been undertaken to separate the costs so they are correctly accounted for within each service centre. This has been carried out with the agreement of both budget holders. There are no changes to the overall budget envelope, and no changes to the level or nature of service provided by either team. The teams will continue to work closely together where appropriate.

28. Note that the General Fund tables throughout this report and its appendices assume that the above virement is approved.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

29. The forecast outturn on the HRA is a net underspend of £652,000, as set out in the table below. A more detailed breakdown is provided at Appendix D.

Housing Revenue Account 2023/24 - Q1 Forecast	2022/23 Outturn £'000	2023/24 Original Budget £'000	2023/24 Current Budget £'000	2023/24 Forecast Outturn £'000	2023/24 Forecast Variance £'000
Service income	(16,457)	(18,233)	(18,233)	(18,152)	81
Service expenditure					
Finance and business management expenditure	130	114	114	210	96
Maintenance and repairs service expenditure	4,868	4,822	4,822	4,884	62
Management and homelessness expenditure	1,140	1,054	1,054	982	(72)
Additional one-off HRA revenue costs	-	-	1,000	793	(207)
Subtotal - Service expenditure	6,138	5,990	6,990	6,869	(121)
Other operating income and expenditure					
Bad debts	58	100	100	100	-
Depreciation	4,610	4,768	4,768	4,312	(456)
Borrowing costs	2,601	2,618	2,618	2,600	(18)
Treasury investment income	(105)	(95)	(95)	(140)	(45)
Uttlesford Norse Partnership profit share	(90)	-	-	(66)	(66)
Corporate pension costs (added years and deficit repair)	38	29	29	46	17
Share of corporate and democratic core costs	399	403	403	404	1
Other recharges from General Fund	1,471	1,564	1,564	1,570	6
Right to buy administration allowance	(16)	(10)	(10)	(10)	-
Subtotal - Other operating income and expenditure	8,966	9,377	9,377	8,816	(561)
Subtotal - Operating (surplus)/deficit	(1,353)	(2,866)	(1,866)	(2,467)	(601)
Capital financing	2,876	2,758	1,758	2,556	798
Transfers to/(from) earmarked reserves	(1,432)	108	108	(741)	(849)
Over/(under)spend	91	-	-	(652)	(652)

30. The operating surplus on the HRA is forecast to be £2.467 million, which is £601,000 higher than the budgeted figure of £1.866 million. The main variances from budget are as follows:-

- Depreciation charges are £456,000 lower than budgeted due to lower than anticipated property valuations as at 1 April 2023. Although this represents a revenue saving to the HRA, it means a corresponding reduction in the amount transferred to the Major Repairs Reserve in year to fund capital works on the Council's existing housing stock.
- In March 2023, Cabinet approved additional one-off revenue expenditure of £1 million to fund urgent issues arising in the HRA. This included the establishment of a contract management team to oversee the Council's main repairs and maintenance contract, and revenue resources required to deal with damp and mould issues throughout the housing stock. Per the latest forecast, only £793,000 of this amount is likely to be required, i.e. an underspend of £207,000.
- There is a forecast overspend of £105,000 in respect of council tax on void properties, as a result of a higher than expected level of voids throughout the year.

31. There is a net forecast overspend of £798,000 in respect of capital financing, which is primarily due to capital slippage from 2022/23. The most significant variances on individual projects are as follows:-

- An in-year overspend of £412,000 on the Walden Place redevelopment, to be funded from amounts set aside in the capital slippage reserve in 2022/23 for this purpose.
- An in-year overspend of £216,000 on new build housing at Woodlands, Great Dunmow, again to be funded from amounts set aside in the capital slippage reserve in 2022/23 for this purpose.

32. Transfers from earmarked reserves are forecast to be £849,000 higher than budgeted. This includes total transfers from the capital slippage reserve in respect of 2022/23 slippage of £856,000, which more than covers the net in-year overspend on capital financing as set out above.

HRA Revenue Reserves

33. The total balance on HRA revenue reserves (including earmarked reserves) at 1 April 2023 was £1.778 million. The forecast total balance at 31 March 2024 is now £1.689 million. This includes a prudent minimum 'working balance' of £586,000, and other earmarked reserves of £12,000, leaving usable revenue reserves of £1.091 million.

34. HRA revenue reserves are set out in full at Appendix E.

Major Repairs Reserve

35. The Major Repairs Reserve is used to fund capital works on the Council's existing housing stock. This is a significant programme of works, with a 2023/24 budget of £5.101 million.
36. Under statute, the Major Repairs Reserve is topped up each year by transferring from the HRA an amount equivalent to the depreciation charge on HRA assets. The reduced depreciation charge as set out in paragraph 30 above will therefore result in a lower than anticipated balance on the Major Repairs Reserve as at 31 March 2024, which is now forecast to stand at £394,000.
37. The latest Medium Term Financial Strategy, published in February 2023, forecast capital expenditure on existing stock of £5.152 million in 2024/25, against a forecast depreciation charge of £4.528 million, i.e. a shortfall of £624,000. This shortfall would usually be covered from the accumulated balance in the Major Repairs Reserve. Should this balance prove insufficient (as is currently forecast to be the case), any additional financing would need to be sourced from revenue reserves in the HRA.
38. The current forecast is therefore that a relatively small additional revenue contribution of £230,000 would be required in 2024/25. This will be kept under review and an updated position provided when the 2024/25 budget is set in February 2024.

Capital Programme

39. The current budget for the 2023/24 capital programme is £23.070 million. This comprises an original budget of £8.628 million and slippage from previous years of £14.442 million.
40. The forecast outturn spend is now £25.165 million, which is £2.095 million higher than the current budget. The most significant variances on individual capital projects are set out below, with a full breakdown provided at Appendix F:-

General Fund

- Capital expenditure of £2.091 million is being forecast in respect of works to the car park at Little Canfield which was not included in the original capital programme. A capital bid will be brought forward for this work in due course.
- Capital expenditure of £237,000 is anticipated in respect of air quality monitoring which was not included in the 2023/24 capital programme. This has arisen as a result of the Council being awarded £396,000 of grant income which is ringfenced for this purpose, to be spent over 2 years. Some match funding is required, which will be financed from the Council's Climate Change reserve (an estimated £36,000 in 2023/24). A capital budget bid will be brought forward in due course.

- An underspend of £229,000 on the waste vehicle replacement programme (VRP) based upon current commitments. It is anticipated that this amount will need to be transferred to the capital slippage reserve for use in future years. The VRP is currently under review, and any further proposed changes to the amount or phasing of spend will be brought forward as part of the 2024/25 budget setting process.
- An underspend of £100,000 against a budget of £600,000 for the superfast broadband project – it is anticipated that this amount will be transferred to the capital slippage reserve for use in future years, particularly in supporting initiatives to improve connectivity across the district.
- A net underspend on other General Fund capital projects of £194,000, of which £142,000 is forecast to be transferred to the capital slippage reserve for use in future years.

Housing Revenue Account

- An overspend of £214,000 on new build housing at Thaxted Road (compared to total project spend over a 5 year period of £3.765 million) – this overspend was anticipated towards the end of 2022/23 and an amount set aside in the capital slippage reserve to finance the 60% share which cannot be financed from right-to-buy receipts.

Capital Virements

41. Cabinet approval is sought for the following budget virements between General Fund capital projects:-

- A virement of £140,000, representing the anticipated underspend on the Swan Meadow Car Park resurfacing project, to fund an anticipated overspend on works at White Street Car Park.
- A virement of £24,000 from the museum buildings cyclical improvements budget to fund an anticipated overspend on the museum boiler replacement.

42. Note that the capital programme tables set out at Appendix F assume that the above virements are approved.

Treasury Management

43. Treasury management activities have been carried out throughout the period in accordance with the Treasury Management Strategy approved by Council in February 2023.

44. For the period from April to June 2023, the Council's weighted average cost of borrowing was 3.32%, whilst the weighted average return on treasury investments was 4.12%. The return on investments is higher than the cost of borrowing as investments tend to be placed for a shorter period (less than one

year and sometimes as short as overnight), whereas a significant proportion of the Council's borrowing has been fixed for the longer term. This means that recent increases in interest rates have been reflected relatively quickly within the investment portfolio, whereas the Council continues to benefit from lower interest rates on its borrowing where this was secured in earlier years. Nevertheless, the Council's borrowing far exceeds the balances invested, and the Council remains exposed to interest rate risk on refinancing. Further details are provided within the Q1 Treasury Management Outturn report presented to the same Cabinet meeting as this report.

45. The Council's borrowing over the period is summarised in the following table, whilst a detailed list of all borrowing and investments is included at Appendix G:

Borrowing	Opening Balance	Closing Balance	Weighted Average Interest Rate
	1 April 2023 £'000	30 June 2023 £'000	
Other local authorities	100,000	99,000	2.76%
UK building societies	5,000	-	3.80%
Phoenix	36,095	36,095	2.86%
Public Works Loan Board	158,315	158,315	3.76%
Total Borrowing	299,410	293,410	3.32%

46. During the period, the Bank of England base rate continued to rise from 4.25% at 1 April 2023 to 5.00% by 30 June 2023. Since then, there has been one further rise to 5.25% in August 2023, and the Council's treasury management advisers now feel that it is likely that the base rate has peaked. Nevertheless, as the Council's borrowing falls due, it is likely that refinancing rates will continue to be higher than those of the borrowing being replaced for the foreseeable future. As such, the Council's cost of borrowing is forecast to continue to rise, with the average cost of borrowing for the full year now forecast to be around 3.74%.

Prudential Indicators

47. From 1 April 2023, local authorities are required to monitor and report their prudential indicators on at least a quarterly basis.
48. The table below sets out the latest forecasts in respect of the Council's non-treasury management prudential indicators:

Prudential Indicators 2023/24	2023/24	2023/24	Variance
	Budget £m	Forecast £m	£m
Estimate of capital expenditure			
General Fund services	3	5	2
Commercial investments	1	10	9
Housing Revenue Account	9	10	1
Total - Estimate of capital expenditure	13	25	12
Estimate of capital financing requirement (CFR) at 31 March			
General Fund services	18	18	-
Commercial investments	245	246	1
Housing Revenue Account	81	81	-
Total - Estimate of capital financing requirement (CFR) at 31 March	344	345	1
Gross debt at 31 March*	310	314	4
Authorised limit			
Authorised limit for borrowing	415	415	-
Authorised limit for other long-term liabilities*	5	5	-
Total - Authorised limit for external debt	420	420	-
Operational boundary			
Operational boundary for borrowing	395	395	-
Operational boundary for other long-term liabilities*	5	5	-
Total - Operational boundary for external debt	400	400	-
Proportion of financing costs to net revenue stream	84%	83%	(1%)
Proportion of net income from commercial investments to net revenue stream	54%	79%	25%
* Includes Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and lease liabilities			

49. Key variances from budget in respect of the above indicators are as follows:-

- Increased capital expenditure of £12 million, due mainly to capital slippage from 2022/23 being £11 million higher than anticipated when the prudential indicators were set. This relates almost entirely to slippage on one of the Council's commercial investments, which has now completed during 2023/24. Other variances on the capital programme are set out at paragraphs 39 to 42 above.
- Increased forecast gross debt has been brought about by a decrease in the Council's working capital (i.e. the timing difference between receipt of income and payment of expenditure), which will slightly increase the amount which the Council will need to borrow externally.
- Proportion of net income from commercial investments to net revenue stream has increased from 54% to 79%. This indicator was initially set at by reference to 2021/22 outturn figures for investment income – however now that more commercial properties have been completed, investment income has increased which has resulted in the increase to this indicator.

This will be reviewed again as part of setting the 2024/25 Capital Strategy in the autumn.

50. Reporting against the prudential indicators relating to treasury management is undertaken separately within the Treasury Management Q1 Report 2023/24.

Risk Analysis

51.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Actual outturn will vary from forecast, requiring adjustments to budget and/or service delivery	3 – current forecasts have been prepared at an early point in the year, and are therefore subject to a high degree of inherent uncertainty	2 – budget will be closely monitored throughout the year and prompt action taken if necessary to control and report variances	Quarterly budgetary monitoring and regular analysis of the financial position

- 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.

General Fund Summary

General Fund 2023/24 - Q1 Forecast Summary	2022/23 Outturn £'000	2023/24 Original Budget £'000	2023/24 Current Budget £'000	2023/24 Forecast Outturn £'000	2023/24 Forecast Variance £'000
Service portfolios					
Communities and Local Partnerships	1,300	1,463	1,463	1,514	51
Environment and Climate Change	2,776	3,529	3,529	3,755	226
Finance and the Economy	1,353	1,614	1,614	1,751	137
Housing and Equalities	194	263	263	266	3
Planning	4,545	2,650	2,650	2,800	150
Strategy and Governance	3,075	4,240	4,240	3,424	(816)
Corporate Services	4,765	5,492	5,492	5,162	(330)
Subtotal - Service portfolios	18,008	19,251	19,251	18,672	(579)
Investment property					
Investment property income (net of management costs)	(11,462)	(11,974)	(11,974)	(12,022)	(48)
Borrowing costs	4,434	8,410	8,410	8,668	258
Minimum revenue provision (MRP)	2,211	2,804	2,804	2,516	(288)
Subtotal - Investment property	(4,817)	(760)	(760)	(838)	(78)
Corporate items					
Capital financing	1,711	2,441	2,441	2,555	114
Leisure PFI interest	348	334	334	334	-
Corporate pension costs (added years and deficit repair)	168	545	545	540	(5)
Treasury investment income	(375)	(337)	(337)	(502)	(165)
Net recharges to Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	(1,870)	(1,967)	(1,967)	(1,974)	(7)
Bad debt costs	(17)	-	-	-	-
Subtotal - Corporate items	(35)	1,016	1,016	953	(63)
External funding					
Retained business rates (including S31 grants)	(4,372)	(5,272)	(5,272)	(5,436)	(164)
Collection fund (surplus)/deficit	(560)	249	249	249	-
New Homes Bonus	(1,343)	(432)	(432)	(432)	-
Other government grants	(1,861)	(2,901)	(2,901)	(2,901)	-
Subtotal - External funding	(8,136)	(8,356)	(8,356)	(8,520)	(164)
Subtotal - Net operating expenditure	5,020	11,151	11,151	10,267	(884)
Transfers to/(from) earmarked reserves					
Ringfenced reserves	(130)	(1,232)	(1,232)	(945)	287
Core reserves	1,406	(1,867)	(1,867)	(1,766)	101
Member priority reserves	(483)	(1,137)	(1,137)	(1,497)	(360)
Grant reserves	249	(221)	(221)	(151)	70
Subtotal - Transfers to/(from) earmarked reserves	1,042	(4,457)	(4,457)	(4,359)	98
Total - Council tax requirement	6,062	6,694	6,694	5,908	(786)
Council tax	(6,404)	(6,694)	(6,694)	(6,694)	-
Over/(under)spend	(342)	-	-	(786)	(786)

General Fund Service Portfolios

Communities and Local Partnerships	2022/23	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24
	Outturn	Original Budget	Current Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Community Hubs	28	95	95	94	(1)
Emergency Planning	36	35	35	40	5
Grants & Contributions	391	368	368	589	221
Health Improvement	179	228	228	144	(84)
Saffron Walden Museum	268	266	266	291	25
Ward Member Grants	94	78	78	78	-
Community Safety	304	393	393	278	(115)
Total - Communities and Local Partnerships	1,300	1,463	1,463	1,514	51

Environment and Climate Change	2022/23	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24
	Outturn	Original Budget	Current Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Animal Welfare	4	4	4	-	(4)
Grounds Maintenance	386	445	445	417	(28)
Depots	51	(50)	(50)	(27)	23
Climate Change	114	450	450	378	(72)
Environmental Protection	335	526	526	512	(14)
Street Cleansing	433	466	466	492	26
Imported Food	(194)	(176)	(176)	(191)	(15)
Licensing	(95)	(49)	(49)	(136)	(87)
Vehicle Management	518	560	560	592	32
Environmental Health - Commercial	320	484	484	476	(8)
Waste Management	596	543	543	915	372
Street Services	308	326	326	327	1
Total - Environment and Climate Change	2,776	3,529	3,529	3,755	226

Finance and the Economy	2022/23	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24
	Outturn	Original Budget	Current Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Car Parks	(436)	(432)	(432)	(405)	27
Economic Development	290	478	478	476	(2)
Financial Services	1,296	1,116	1,116	1,135	19
Private Finance Initiative	203	452	452	545	93
Total - Finance and the Economy	1,353	1,614	1,614	1,751	137

Housing and Equalities	2022/23	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24
	Outturn	Original Budget	Current Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Homelessness	139	191	191	194	3
Housing Strategy	62	72	72	72	-
Housing Improvement Grants	(7)	-	-	-	-
Total - Housing and Equalities	194	263	263	266	3

Planning	2022/23	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24
	Outturn	Original Budget	Current Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Building Control	(68)	(97)	(97)	(209)	(112)
Development Management	2,798	194	194	296	102
Highways Infrastructure Planning	5	80	80	-	(80)
Planning Management	466	512	512	512	-
Planning Policy	1,160	1,696	1,696	1,896	200
Planning Specialists	184	265	265	305	40
Total - Planning	4,545	2,650	2,650	2,800	150

Strategy and Governance	2022/23	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24
	Outturn	Original Budget	Current Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Contract, Performance and Risk Management	29	181	181	162	(19)
Committee Administration	302	344	205	204	(1)
Corporate Management	1,535	2,418	2,418	1,611	(807)
Democratic Representation	329	355	355	354	(1)
Conducting Elections	38	100	100	106	6
Electoral Registration	36	34	173	178	5
Internal Audit	137	165	165	140	(25)
Local Amenities	(13)	(13)	(13)	(12)	1
Legal Services	475	393	393	450	57
Communications	207	263	263	231	(32)
Total - Strategy and Governance	3,075	4,240	4,240	3,424	(816)

Corporate Services	2022/23	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24
	Outturn	Original	Current	Forecast	Forecast
		Budget	Budget	Outturn	Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Asset Management	109	136	136	137	1
Benefits Administration	332	467	467	465	(2)
Customer Services Centre	552	603	603	543	(60)
Community Information Centres	23	23	23	23	-
Central Services	399	454	454	429	(25)
Housing Benefits	68	143	143	97	(46)
Human Resources	329	408	408	384	(24)
Information Technology	1,736	1,823	1,823	1,836	13
Land Charges	(37)	(53)	(53)	(39)	14
Council Tax Collection	(92)	(100)	(100)	(100)	-
Norse Partnership	398	437	437	437	-
Non Domestic Rates Collection	(147)	(146)	(146)	(150)	(4)
Offices	704	603	603	484	(119)
Revenues Administration	534	710	710	618	(92)
Council Tax Support	(143)	(16)	(16)	(2)	14
Total - Corporate Services	4,765	5,492	5,492	5,162	(330)

Overspends >£30,000

Service Portfolio	Forecast Commentary £'000
Waste Management	372 Includes overspend of £464,000 on waste disposal and processing costs which are volatile and determined by market forces. Partially offset by increased kitchen waste income of £105,000.
Grants & Contributions	221 Mainly relates to grants awarded from previous years' budgets but anticipated to be paid out this year, including £200,000 of Major Sports Facility grants where payment conditions have not yet been met. Funds have been set aside in earmarked reserves to cover these grants.
Planning Policy	200 Includes £135,000 of expenditure relating to additional specific grant income which was received in 2022/23 and is yet to be spent. Also includes £65,000 overspend on staff costs due to the use of agency staff to cover vacancies in hard-to-recruit posts.
Development Management	102 Includes an overspend of £174,000 on staff costs as a result of using agency staff to cover hard-to-recruit vacant posts. Offset slightly by increased planning application fees of £50,000, and a £40,000 saving on PPA consultancy costs as more work is conducted in-house.
Private Finance Initiative	93 Mainly due to higher than budgeted unitary payments to the PFI operator, following higher than anticipated contractual price increases, and as a result of a £19,000 underpayment in the previous year.
Legal Services	57 Includes an overspend of £30,000 on staff costs due to the use of agency staff to cover hard-to-recruit vacancies.
Planning Specialists	40 Includes overspend of £57,000 on external conservation consultancy.
Vehicle Management	32 Mainly relates to a forecast overspend on vehicle maintenance and material costs based upon year-to-date experience. Costs have risen and vehicles are aging - vehicle replacement programme is currently under review.

Underspends >£30,000

Service Portfolio	Forecast Commentary £'000
Corporate Management	(807) The budget included a central contingency amount of £516,000 in respect of excess agency staff costs for hard-to-recruit areas (Planning, Legal and Finance). Whilst the budget is held centrally, the associated costs are left in the relevant services so as to show the true overspend position on each service - this results in a corresponding underspend being shown here. In actuality, it is currently forecast that only £273,000 of this contingency will be required, leaving a genuine underspend of £243,000 (with the remainder showing as overspends elsewhere). In addition, there is a saving of £200,000 (of which £100,000 had been set aside in earmarked reserves) in respect of the Council's withdrawal from the Local Highways Panel. There is also an underspend of £95,000 on other staff costs primarily related to the vacancy in and subsequent deletion of the post of Assistant Director - Legal.
Offices	(119) Includes one-off additional income of £132,000 relating to rental income at Little Canfield. This is a technical accounting adjustment in respect of income which should have been recognised in 2022/23 but was omitted in error. Also includes underspend on staff costs of £53,000 due to vacancies in year. Slightly offset by £34,000 overspend on sewerage and wastewater treatment costs at Little Canfield, and £29,000 net overspend on utility costs across the office estate.
Community Safety	(115) Includes £167,000 of unanticipated grant income in relation to asylum seekers and domestic abuse, and £50,000 of related expenditure. The unspent amount will be transferred to an earmarked reserve for use in future years.
Building Control	(112) Relates mainly to new commercial income streams not included in original budget.
Revenues Administration	(92) Includes £58,000 unbudgeted new burdens funding and £19,000 underspend on staff costs due to staff leave.
Licensing	(87) Includes £74,000 underspend on staff costs due to vacant posts.
Health Improvement	(84) Includes £42,000 underspend on staff costs due to vacancies and staff leave. Also includes ringfenced grant income of £41,000 which relates to 2022/23 but was omitted in error from last year's accounts.
Highways Infrastructure Planning	(80) Saving due to closure of Highways Ranger service - this service was previously funded by Essex County Council until 2022/23, but funding was withdrawn this year.
Climate Change	(72) Broadly reflects underspends and slippage against the 3-year climate change programme. Some of this amount will be used to fund climate-related capital projects instead, with the remainder held in reserves for future years.
Customer Services Centre	(60) Underspend mainly due to vacant posts in year.
Housing Benefits	(46) Expenditure on housing benefits, and associated subsidy income, is largely outside of the control of the Council. Both depend upon the number of claimants and their circumstances. Mandatory housing benefit expenditure is currently forecast to be £197,000 higher than budget, with subsidy income forecast to be £243,000 higher than budget.
Communications	(32) Underspend due to a vacant post in year.

General Fund Reserves

Appendix C

General Fund Revenue Reserves - Q1 Forecast	Actual Balance 1 April 2023 £'000	Transfers from General Fund £'000	Transfers to General Fund £'000	Transfers Between Reserves £'000	Forecast Balance 31 March 2024 £'000
Ringfenced reserves					
Business rates	5,724	164	(220)	-	5,668
Capital slippage	921	-	(784)	-	137
Licensing	63	25	-	-	88
Leisure/Private Finance Initiative	1,102	-	(295)	-	807
Working balance	1,666	165	-	-	1,831
Total - Ringfenced reserves	9,476	354	(1,299)	-	8,531
Core reserves					
Commercial assets	4,000	1,000	-	-	5,000
Medium Term Financial Strategy	6,903	-	(1,981)	1	4,923
Total - Core reserves	10,903	1,000	(1,981)	1	9,923
Member priorities					
Economic development	670	-	(330)	-	340
Planning	733	-	(33)	-	700
Sustainable communities	1,464	-	(552)	-	912
Major sports facilities	255	-	(200)	-	55
Climate change	842	-	(345)	-	497
Voluntary sector	40	-	(5)	-	35
Coronation celebration grants	32	-	(32)	-	-
Total - Member priorities	4,036	-	(1,497)	-	2,539
Grants					
Homelessness	273	-	(102)	-	171
Health and wellbeing	205	-	(26)	-	179
Air quality	120	-	(94)	-	26
Public health	123	131	(31)	-	223
Shared Prosperity Fund	40	-	(39)	(1)	-
Other	31	37	(26)	-	42
Total - Grants	792	168	(318)	(1)	641
Total General Fund revenue reserves	25,207	1,522	(5,095)	-	21,634

Housing Revenue Account Forecast

Appendix D

Housing Revenue Account 2023/24 - Q1 Forecast	2022/23 Outturn	2023/24 Original Budget	2023/24 Current Budget	2023/24 Forecast Outturn	2023/24 Forecast Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Service income					
Dwelling rents	(15,215)	(16,506)	(16,506)	(16,511)	(5)
Garage rents	(222)	(245)	(245)	(238)	7
Other rents	(3)	(34)	(34)	(32)	2
Charges for services and facilities	(1,007)	(1,448)	(1,448)	(1,355)	93
Contributions towards expenditure	-	-	-	-	-
Reimbursement of costs	(10)	-	-	(16)	(16)
Subtotal - Service income	(16,457)	(18,233)	(18,233)	(18,152)	81
Finance and business management expenditure					
Rents, rates and other property charges	130	114	114	210	96
Subtotal - Finance and business management expenditure	130	114	114	210	96
Maintenance and repairs service expenditure					
Common service flats	526	574	574	593	19
Estate maintenance	4	2	2	5	3
Housing sewerage	18	20	20	20	-
Newport Depot	3	10	10	2	(8)
Property services	634	256	256	304	48
Housing repairs (Norse)	3,682	3,960	3,960	3,960	-
Housing repairs (other)	1	-	-	-	-
Subtotal - Maintenance and repairs service expenditure	4,868	4,822	4,822	4,884	62
Management and homelessness expenditure					
Housing services	692	572	572	577	5
Sheltered housing services	448	482	482	405	(77)
Subtotal - Management and homelessness expenditure	1,140	1,054	1,054	982	(72)
Additional one-off HRA revenue costs	-	-	1,000	793	(207)
Subtotal - Service expenditure	6,138	5,990	6,990	6,869	(121)
Other operating income and expenditure					
Bad debts	58	100	100	100	-
Depreciation	4,610	4,768	4,768	4,312	(456)
Borrowing costs	2,601	2,618	2,618	2,600	(18)
Treasury investment income	(105)	(95)	(95)	(140)	(45)
Uttlesford Norse Partnership profit share	(90)	-	-	(66)	(66)
Corporate pension costs (added years and deficit repair)	38	29	29	46	17
Share of corporate and democratic core costs	399	403	403	404	1
Other recharges from General Fund	1,471	1,564	1,564	1,570	6
Right to buy administration allowance	(16)	(10)	(10)	(10)	-
Subtotal - Other operating income and expenditure	8,966	9,377	9,377	8,816	(561)
Subtotal - Operating (surplus)/deficit	(1,353)	(2,866)	(1,866)	(2,467)	(601)
Capital financing					
Financing of capital expenditure in year	2,876	2,758	1,758	2,556	798
Subtotal - Capital financing	2,876	2,758	1,758	2,556	798
Transfers to/(from) earmarked reserves					
Working balance	78	30	30	37	7
Revenue reserves	-	78	78	78	-
Slippage reserve	-	-	-	(856)	(856)
Capital projects	(1,510)	-	-	-	-
Subtotal - Transfers to/(from) earmarked reserves	(1,432)	108	108	(741)	(849)
Over/(under)spend	91	-	-	(652)	(652)

Housing Revenue Account Reserves

Appendix E

HRA Revenue Reserves - Q1 Forecast	Actual Balance 1 April 2023 £'000	Transfers from General Fund £'000	Transfers to General Fund £'000	Transfers Between Reserves £'000	Forecast Balance 31 March 2024 £'000
Ringfenced reserves					
Working balance	549	37	-	-	586
Total - Ringfenced reserves	549	37	-	-	586
Usable reserves					
Revenue reserves	201	730	-	-	931
Revenue projects	160	-	-	-	160
Total - Usable reserves	361	730	-	-	1,091
Earmarked for capital purposes					
Potential projects reserve	10	-	-	-	10
HRA capital slippage reserve	858	-	(856)	-	2
Subtotal - Earmarked for capital purposes	868	-	(856)	-	12
Total - HRA revenue reserves	1,778	767	(856)	-	1,689

Capital Expenditure Summary

Capital Expenditure - Q1 Forecast	2023/24 Original Budget £'000	Slippage from 2022/23 £'000	2023/24 Adjustments £'000	2023/24 Current Budget £'000	2023/24 Forecast Outturn £'000	2023/24 Forecast Variance £'000	Forecast Slippage to 2024/25 £'000
General Fund							
Communities and Local Partnerships	215	47	-	262	258	(4)	-
Environment and Climate Change	290	469	-	759	773	14	229
Finance and the Economy	-	920	-	920	748	(172)	137
Housing and Equalities	240	-	-	240	245	5	-
Corporate Services	332	390	-	722	2,746	2,024	43
Investments	-	10,153	-	10,153	10,091	(62)	62
Subtotal - General Fund	1,077	11,979	-	13,056	14,861	1,805	471
Housing Revenue Account							
Existing stock maintenance	4,781	320	-	5,101	5,101	-	-
New builds	2,172	790	-	2,962	3,260	298	-
Sheltered accommodation redevelopment	526	1,353	-	1,879	1,901	22	-
Other	72	-	-	72	42	(30)	-
Subtotal - Housing Revenue Account	7,551	2,463	-	10,014	10,304	290	-
Total - Capital expenditure	8,628	14,442	-	23,070	25,165	2,095	471

Capital Financing Summary

Capital Financing - Q1 Forecast	2023/24 Original Budget £'000	Slippage from 2022/23 £'000	2023/24 Adjustments £'000	2023/24 Current Budget £'000	2023/24 Forecast Outturn £'000	2023/24 Forecast Variance £'000	Forecast Slippage to 2024/25 £'000
General Fund							
Grants and external contributions	200	-	-	200	406	206	-
Direct revenue contributions	515	-	-	515	690	175	-
Earmarked reserves	-	921	-	921	814	(107)	137
Capital receipts	-	197	-	197	162	(35)	-
Borrowing	362	10,861	-	11,223	12,789	1,566	334
Subtotal - General Fund	1,077	11,979	-	13,056	14,861	1,805	471
Housing Revenue Account							
Grants and external contributions	293	45	-	338	373	35	-
Direct revenue contributions	1,608	1,087	-	2,695	2,700	5	-
Earmarked reserves	-	725	-	725	856	131	-
Major Repairs Reserve	4,781	320	-	5,101	5,101	-	-
Capital receipts	869	286	-	1,155	1,274	119	-
Subtotal - Housing Revenue Account	7,551	2,463	-	10,014	10,304	290	-
Total - Capital financing	8,628	14,442	-	23,070	25,165	2,095	471

General Fund Capital Projects

Communities and Local Partnerships	2023/24	Slippage	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24	Forecast
	Original	from	Adjustments	Current	Forecast	Forecast	Slippage to
	Budget	2022/23		Budget	Outturn	Variance	2024/25
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Day centre cyclical improvements	25	-	-	25	25	-	-
Museum boiler	-	29	24	53	53	-	-
Guildhall exterior works	50	-	-	50	50	-	-
Museum buildings	30	-	(24)	6	6	-	-
Community project grants	110	18	-	128	124	(4)	-
Total - Communities and Local Partnerships	215	47	-	262	258	(4)	-

Environment and Climate Change	2023/24	Slippage	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24	Forecast
	Original	from	Adjustments	Current	Forecast	Forecast	Slippage to
	Budget	2022/23		Budget	Outturn	Variance	2024/25
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Household bins	70	-	-	70	71	1	-
Trade waste bins	10	-	-	10	13	3	-
Kitchen caddies	10	-	-	10	16	6	-
Garden waste bins	20	-	-	20	16	(4)	-
Electric car chargers	15	14	-	29	29	-	-
Vehicle replacement programme	165	455	-	620	391	(229)	229
Air quality monitoring	-	-	-	-	237	237	-
Total - Environment and Climate Change	290	469	-	759	773	14	229

Finance and the Economy	2023/24	Slippage	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24	Forecast
	Original	from	Adjustments	Current	Forecast	Forecast	Slippage to
	Budget	2022/23		Budget	Outturn	Variance	2024/25
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
White Street Car Park	-	15	140	155	120	(35)	-
Swan Meadow Car Park resurface	-	240	(140)	100	100	-	-
Car parking machine replacement	-	65	-	65	28	(37)	37
Superfast broadband	-	600	-	600	500	(100)	100
Total - Finance and the Economy	-	920	-	920	748	(172)	137

Housing and Equalities	2023/24	Slippage	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24	Forecast
	Original	from	Adjustments	Current	Forecast	Forecast	Slippage to
	Budget	2022/23		Budget	Outturn	Variance	2024/25
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Private sector renewal grants	35	-	-	35	35	-	-
Disabled Facilities Grants	200	-	-	200	200	-	-
Empty dwellings	5	-	-	5	5	-	-
Compulsory purchase order	-	-	-	-	5	5	-
Total - Housing and Equalities	240	-	-	240	245	5	-

Corporate Services	2023/24 Original Budget £'000	Slippage from 2022/23 £'000	2023/24 Adjustments £'000	2023/24 Current Budget £'000	2023/24 Forecast Outturn £'000	2023/24 Forecast Variance £'000	Forecast Slippage to 2024/25 £'000
Council offices improvements (general)	170	-	-	170	170	-	-
New depot site	-	-	-	-	2,091	2,091	-
London Road - fire alarm upgrade	-	50	-	50	50	-	-
Minor items IT	20	-	-	20	20	-	-
PCI compliance	20	-	-	20	20	-	-
Members' IT equipment	21	-	-	21	15	(6)	-
PSN CoCo	30	-	-	30	30	-	-
Asset management system	-	30	-	30	12	(18)	-
Cyber security	20	20	-	40	40	-	-
Grounds maintenance and vehicle systems	-	43	-	43	-	(43)	43
Licensing - Lalpac to Idox Uni	-	-	-	-	7	7	-
Scanner replacement and postal software	-	15	-	15	15	-	-
Sharepoint	-	18	-	18	18	-	-
WiFi	-	20	-	20	20	-	-
Telephony system (8x8)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ICT - new sites	-	187	-	187	187	-	-
Web-to-Print solutions	-	7	-	7	-	(7)	-
Move to servers Azure/AWS	50	-	-	50	50	-	-
E-form completion and e-signatures	1	-	-	1	1	-	-
Total - Corporate Services	332	390	-	722	2,746	2,024	43

Investments	2023/24 Original Budget £'000	Slippage from 2022/23 £'000	2023/24 Adjustments £'000	2023/24 Current Budget £'000	2023/24 Forecast Outturn £'000	2023/24 Forecast Variance £'000	Forecast Slippage to 2024/25 £'000
Investments	-	10,153	-	10,153	10,091	(62)	62
Total - Investments	-	10,153	-	10,153	10,091	(62)	62

Housing Revenue Account Capital Projects

Housing Revenue Account	2023/24 Original Budget £'000	Slippage from 2022/23 £'000	2023/24 Adjustments £'000	2023/24 Current Budget £'000	2023/24 Forecast Outturn £'000	2023/24 Forecast Variance £'000	Forecast Slippage to 2024/25 £'000
Existing stock maintenance	4,781	320	-	5,101	5,101	-	-
New builds							
The Moors	-	34	-	34	34	-	-
Thaxted Road	-	-	-	-	214	214	-
Great Chesterford	31	-	-	31	36	5	-
Takeley	-	42	-	42	42	-	-
Woodlands, Great Dunmow	1,652	640	-	2,292	2,312	20	-
Garden sites	489	74	-	563	622	59	-
Subtotal - New builds	2,172	790	-	2,962	3,260	298	-
Sheltered accommodation redevelopment							
Walden Place	526	1,331	-	1,857	1,879	22	-
Alexia House	-	22	-	22	22	-	-
Subtotal - Sheltered accommodation redevelopment	526	1,353	-	1,879	1,901	22	-
Other							
Cash incentive scheme grants	50	-	-	50	20	(30)	-
Asset management system	22	-	-	22	22	-	-
Subtotal - Other	72	-	-	72	42	(30)	-
Total - Housing Revenue Account	7,551	2,463	-	10,014	10,304	290	-

Section 106 Contribution Balances

S106 Contributions with Conditions (Receipts in Advance)	Opening Balance 1 April 2023 £'000	Income £'000	Drawn Down - Capital Financing £'000	Closing Balance 30 June 2023 £'000
Priors Green, Takeley	78	-	-	78
Land north of Ingrams, Felsted	10	-	-	10
Rochford Nurseries/Foresthall Park, Stansted	2	-	-	2
The Orchard, Elsenham	42	-	-	42
Wedow Road, Thaxted	53	-	-	53
Sector 4 Woodlands Park, Gt Dunmow	10	-	-	10
Keers Green Nurseries, Aythorpe Roding	120	-	-	120
Land adjacent to S/W Hospital	31	-	-	31
Land at Blossom Hill Farm, Henham	33	-	-	33
Land at Webb & Hallett Road, Flitch Green, Felsted	33	-	-	33
Land south side of Radwinter Road	322	-	-	322
Land North side of Stansted Road Elsenham	377	-	-	377
Land South of Stansted Road, Elsenham	330	-	-	330
Total - S106 contributions with conditions	1,441	-	-	1,441

S106 Contributions Held on Behalf of Other Bodies	Opening Balance 1 April 2023 £'000	Income £'000	Transferred to Other Bodies £'000	Closing Balance 30 June 2023 £'000
Sector 4 Woodlands Park (Helena Romanes School)	165	-	-	165
Brewers End, Takeley	31	-	-	31
Land adj Hailes Wood, Elsenham	10	-	-	10
Land at Flitch Green, Felsted	67	-	-	67
Land adjacent to S/W Hospital	1	-	-	1
Ashdon Road Commercial Centre	28	-	-	28
Land south of Stansted Road, Elsenham	53	-	-	53
Land south of Ongar Road, Dunmow	17	-	-	17
Land at 119 Radwinter Road, adj S/W Hospital	15	-	-	15
Land North of Ongar Road, Gt Dunmow	21	-	-	21
Land at Bury Water Lane, Newport	29	-	-	29
Land at Elsenham Nurseries	14	-	-	14
Bury Water Lane, Newport	26	-	-	26
Walpole Farm, Cambridge Road, Stansted	53	-	-	53
14 Stortford Road, Gt Dunmow	35	-	-	35
Land west of Woodside Way, Gt Dunmow	264	-	-	264
Land west of Parsonage Road, Takeley	62	-	-	62
77 High Street, Great Dunmow	-	9	-	9
Total - S106 contributions held on behalf of other bodies	891	9	-	900

S106 Contributions without Conditions (Capital Grants Unapplied)	Opening Balance 1 April 2023 £'000	Income £'000	Drawn Down - Capital Financing £'000	Closing Balance 30 June 2023 £'000
Affordable Housing	813	-	(220)	593
Dunmow Eastern Sector	18	-	-	18
Woodlands Park, Gt Dunmow	36	-	-	36
Bell College, Saffron Walden	15	-	-	15
Priors Green, Takeley	8	-	-	8
Foresthall Park, Stansted	33	-	-	33
Lt Walden Road/Ashdon Road, Saffron Walden	98	-	-	98
Oakwood Park, Takeley	5	-	-	5
Total - S106 contributions without conditions	1,026	-	(220)	806

Investments

Investment Date	Repayment Date	Counterparty	Amount £'000	Interest Rate %
15 Dec 2022	15 Jun 2023	London Borough of Newham	3,000	3.80%
20 Dec 2022	20 Jun 2023	Woking Borough Council	3,000	3.80%
29 Mar 2023	29 Oct 2023	Leeds City Council	2,000	4.45%
31 Mar 2023	03 Apr 2023	DMO	4,050	4.05%
03 Apr 2023	04 Apr 2023	DMO	6,120	4.05%
04 Apr 2023	05 Apr 2023	DMO	5,150	4.05%
05 Apr 2023	06 Apr 2023	DMO	5,400	4.05%
06 Apr 2023	11 Apr 2023	DMO	3,350	4.05%
11 Apr 2023	12 Apr 2023	DMO	4,600	4.05%
12 Apr 2023	13 Apr 2023	DMO	4,750	4.05%
13 Apr 2023	14 Apr 2023	DMO	3,500	4.05%
14 Apr 2023	17 Apr 2023	DMO	3,500	4.05%
17 Apr 2023	18 Apr 2023	DMO	6,750	4.05%
18 Apr 2023	19 Apr 2023	DMO	6,850	4.05%
19 Apr 2023	20 Apr 2023	DMO	6,750	4.08%
20 Apr 2023	21 Apr 2023	DMO	3,300	4.08%
21 Apr 2023	24 Apr 2023	DMO	2,700	4.08%
24 Apr 2023	25 Apr 2023	DMO	3,150	4.08%
25 Apr 2023	26 Apr 2023	DMO	3,480	4.08%
26 Apr 2023	27 Apr 2023	DMO	4,120	4.08%
27 Apr 2023	28 Apr 2023	DMO	3,750	4.08%
28 Apr 2023	02 May 2023	DMO	6,200	4.08%
02 May 2023	03 May 2023	DMO	4,770	4.10%
03 May 2023	04 May 2023	DMO	5,020	4.10%
04 May 2023	05 May 2023	DMO	4,440	4.10%
05 May 2023	09 May 2023	DMO	4,600	4.10%
09 May 2023	10 May 2023	DMO	5,300	4.10%
10 May 2023	11 May 2023	DMO	5,530	4.10%
11 May 2023	12 May 2023	DMO	4,500	4.35%
12 May 2023	15 May 2023	DMO	4,560	4.35%
15 May 2023	16 May 2023	DMO	7,050	4.38%
16 May 2023	17 May 2023	DMO	7,160	4.38%
17 May 2023	18 May 2023	DMO	7,300	4.38%
18 May 2023	19 May 2023	DMO	1,760	4.38%
19 May 2023	22 May 2023	DMO	1,900	4.38%
22 May 2023	23 May 2023	DMO	2,600	4.38%
23 May 2023	24 May 2023	DMO	2,460	4.38%
24 May 2023	25 May 2023	DMO	2,580	4.38%
25 May 2023	26 May 2023	DMO	2,250	4.38%
26 May 2023	30 May 2023	DMO	2,410	4.38%
30 May 2023	31 May 2023	DMO	2,780	4.38%
31 May 2023	01 Jun 2023	DMO	3,900	4.38%

contd...

Investment Date	Repayment Date	Counterparty	Amount £'000	Interest Rate %
01 Jun 2023	02 Jun 2023	DMO	3,000	4.38%
02 Jun 2023	05 Jun 2023	DMO	3,200	4.38%
05 Jun 2023	06 Jun 2023	DMO	2,900	4.38%
06 Jun 2023	07 Jun 2023	DMO	3,120	4.38%
07 Jun 2023	08 Jun 2023	DMO	2,000	4.38%
08 Jun 2023	09 Jun 2023	DMO	2,820	4.38%
09 Jun 2023	12 Jun 2023	DMO	2,930	4.38%
12 Jun 2023	13 Jun 2023	DMO	3,000	4.38%
13 Jun 2023	14 Jun 2023	DMO	3,120	4.38%
14 Jun 2023	15 Jun 2023	DMO	3,100	4.38%
15 Jun 2023	16 Jun 2023	DMO	2,530	4.38%
15 Jun 2023	29 Jun 2023	DMO	3,000	4.52%
16 Jun 2023	19 Jun 2023	DMO	2,740	4.38%
19 Jun 2023	20 Jun 2023	DMO	1,400	4.38%
20 Jun 2023	21 Jun 2023	DMO	1,870	4.38%
20 Jun 2023	27 Jun 2023	DMO	3,000	4.55%
21 Jun 2023	22 Jun 2023	DMO	1,900	4.38%
22 Jun 2023	23 Jun 2023	DMO	1,370	4.63%
22 Jun 2023	23 Jun 2023	DMO	1,000	4.63%
23 Jun 2023	26 Jun 2023	DMO	2,510	4.88%
26 Jun 2023	27 Jun 2023	DMO	3,000	4.88%
27 Jun 2023	28 Jun 2023	DMO	3,180	4.88%
27 Jun 2023	28 Jun 2023	DMO	3,000	4.88%
28 Jun 2023	29 Jun 2023	DMO	3,400	4.88%
28 Jun 2023	05 Jul 2023	DMO	3,000	4.88%
29 Jun 2023	30 Jun 2023	DMO	5,200	4.88%
30 Jun 2023	03 Jul 2023	DMO	2,780	4.88%
30 Jun 2023	28 Jun 2024	Harlow Council	3,000	5.78%
Weighted average interest rate for period				4.12%

Borrowing – Other Local Authorities

Borrowing Date	Repayment Date	Counterparty	Amount £'000	Interest Rate %
18 Jun 2020	19 Jun 2023	Oxfordshire County Council	5,000	1.20%
24 May 2022	23 May 2023	London Borough of Newham	8,000	1.20%
25 Jul 2022	07 Jun 2023	West Yorkshire Combined Authority	6,000	1.25%
30 Jun 2022	29 Jun 2023	Salford City Council	2,000	1.30%
30 Jun 2022	29 Jun 2023	Local Government Association	1,500	1.30%
30 Jun 2022	29 Jun 2023	Local Government Association	1,500	1.30%
08 Sep 2022	04 Aug 2023	Buckinghamshire Council	10,000	3.00%
08 Sep 2022	07 Sep 2023	Northern Ireland Housing Executive	10,000	3.00%
08 Sep 2022	07 Sep 2023	Blaenau Gwent Borough Council	5,000	3.00%
13 Sep 2022	07 Sep 2023	South Ribble Borough Council	3,000	3.00%
13 Sep 2022	12 Sep 2023	South Oxfordshire District Council	7,000	3.00%
13 Sep 2022	12 Sep 2023	East Sussex County Council	5,000	3.00%
13 Sep 2022	12 Sep 2023	South Lakeland District Council	3,000	3.00%
30 Nov 2022	29 Nov 2023	West Midlands Combined Authority	7,000	3.05%
06 Dec 2022	05 Dec 2023	West Midlands Combined Authority	11,500	1.80%
16 Feb 2023	03 Apr 2023	Middlesbrough Council	2,000	3.90%
20 Feb 2023	01 Jun 2023	South Gloucestershire Council	3,000	3.90%
16 Mar 2023	03 Apr 2023	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	2,000	4.35%
20 Mar 2023	01 Jun 2023	Bridgend County Borough Council	4,000	4.55%
23 Mar 2023	15 May 2023	Swansea City Council	1,500	4.40%
28 Mar 2023	04 Apr 2023	Scarborough Borough Council	2,000	4.30%
20 Apr 2023	03 Jul 2023	West Yorkshire Combined Authority	4,500	4.25%
18 May 2023	01 Jun 2023	Middlesbrough Council	1,000	4.40%
22 May 2023	01 Aug 2023	Rushcliffe Borough Council	5,000	4.45%
23 May 2023	21 May 2024	Bridgend County Borough Council	4,000	4.60%
23 May 2023	21 May 2024	South Oxfordshire District Council	3,000	4.60%
23 May 2023	21 May 2024	South Oxfordshire District Council	1,000	4.60%
07 Jun 2023	06 Jun 2024	Crawley Borough Council	5,000	2.25%
15 Jun 2023	08 Aug 2023	London Borough of Havering	2,500	4.65%
19 Jun 2023	19 Jul 2023	North Northamptonshire	8,000	4.75%
29 Jun 2023	03 Jul 2023	South Cambridgeshire District Council	1,000	5.00%
29 Jun 2023	03 Jul 2023	Coventry City Council	3,500	5.00%
Weighted average interest rate for period				2.76%

Borrowing – UK Building Societies

Borrowing Date	Repayment Date	Counterparty	Amount £'000	Interest Rate %
01 Feb 2023	02 May 2023	Furness Building Society	5,000	3.80%
Weighted average interest rate for period				3.80%

Borrowing – Phoenix

Borrowing Date	Loan Type	Initial Amount £'000	Loan Period	Opening Balance 1 April 2023 £'000	Closing Balance 30 June 2023 £'000	Final Repayment Date	Interest Rate %
05 Jul 2017	Annuity	10,000	40 years	9,755	9,755	05 Jul 2057	2.86%
06 Jul 2020	Annuity	12,000	37 years	11,707	11,707	05 Jul 2057	2.86%
05 Jul 2021	Annuity	15,000	36 years	14,633	14,633	05 Jul 2057	2.86%
Weighted average interest rate for period							2.86%

Borrowing – Public Works Loan Board (PWLB)

Borrowing Date	Loan Type	Initial Amount £'000	Loan Period	Opening Balance 1 April 2023 £'000	Closing Balance 30 June 2023 £'000	Final Repayment Date	Interest Rate %
28 Mar 2012	Maturity	3,000	12 years	3,000	3,000	28 Mar 2024	2.70%
28 Mar 2012	Maturity	3,000	13 years	3,000	3,000	28 Mar 2025	2.82%
28 Mar 2012	Maturity	3,000	14 years	3,000	3,000	28 Mar 2026	2.92%
28 Mar 2012	Maturity	3,000	15 years	3,000	3,000	28 Mar 2027	3.01%
28 Mar 2012	Maturity	3,000	16 years	3,000	3,000	28 Mar 2028	3.08%
28 Mar 2012	Maturity	3,000	17 years	3,000	3,000	28 Mar 2029	3.15%
28 Mar 2012	Maturity	4,000	18 years	4,000	4,000	28 Mar 2030	3.21%
28 Mar 2012	Maturity	4,000	19 years	4,000	4,000	28 Mar 2031	3.26%
28 Mar 2012	Maturity	4,000	20 years	4,000	4,000	28 Mar 2032	3.30%
28 Mar 2012	Maturity	4,000	21 years	4,000	4,000	28 Mar 2033	3.34%
28 Mar 2012	Maturity	4,000	22 years	4,000	4,000	28 Mar 2034	3.37%
28 Mar 2012	Maturity	4,000	23 years	4,000	4,000	28 Mar 2035	3.40%
28 Mar 2012	Maturity	4,000	24 years	4,000	4,000	28 Mar 2036	3.42%
28 Mar 2012	Maturity	5,000	25 years	5,000	5,000	28 Mar 2037	3.44%
28 Mar 2012	Maturity	5,000	26 years	5,000	5,000	28 Mar 2038	3.46%
28 Mar 2012	Maturity	5,000	27 years	5,000	5,000	28 Mar 2039	3.47%
28 Mar 2012	Maturity	5,000	28 years	5,000	5,000	28 Mar 2040	3.48%
28 Mar 2012	Maturity	5,000	29 years	5,000	5,000	28 Mar 2041	3.49%
28 Mar 2012	Maturity	5,407	30 years	5,407	5,407	28 Mar 2042	3.50%
22 Sep 2022	Annuity	30,000	49 years	29,908	29,908	22 Sep 2071	4.28%
29 Sep 2022	Maturity	50,000	8 years	50,000	50,000	27 Sep 2030	4.16%
09 Feb 2023	Maturity	2,000	2 years	2,000	2,000	27 Mar 2025	4.03%
Weighted average interest rate for period							3.76%

Agenda Item 14

Committee:	Cabinet	Date:	Thursday, 2 November 2023
Title:	Treasury Management Q1 Report - 2023/24		
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Neil Hargreaves, Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Economy		
Report Author:	Jody Etherington, Director of Finance, Revenues and Benefits JEtherington@uttlesford.gov.uk	Key decision:	No

Summary

1. The Council is required to follow the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's *Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2021 Edition* (the 'CIPFA Code') in all its treasury management activities.
2. The CIPFA Code requires each local authority to set a Treasury Management Strategy on an annual basis (which was approved by Full Council in February 2023), and to publish reports setting out performance against this strategy at least twice per year.
3. In addition, with effect from 1 April 2023, all local authorities are now required to publish and monitor their key prudential indicators on a quarterly basis. This report fulfils this requirement in respect of the Council's treasury management prudential indicators for Quarter 1. Other prudential indicators are reported in the Quarter 1 Financial Forecast presented to Cabinet alongside this report.
4. Treasury management activities are defined by CIPFA as:

"The management of the organisation's borrowing, investments and cash flows, including its banking, money market and capital market transactions, the effective control of the risks associated with those activities, and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks."
5. During the quarter, all treasury management activity has been undertaken in line with the approved Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24.
6. The detailed report at Appendix A, prepared with the assistance of the Council's treasury management advisers (Arlingclose), summarises the Council's treasury management activities for the period from 1 April to 30 June 2023.
7. Since this report covers the period up until 30 June 2023, it does not reflect key decisions taken by the Council since this date, including the Council's decision on 24 August 2023 to approve further funding of £21.1 million for Aspire (CRP) Ltd. This decision will result in an increase in the Council's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), and therefore the amount of external

debt required, and this will be fully reflected in the next quarterly Treasury Management Report covering Quarter 2.

Recommendations

8. The Cabinet is recommended to note this report, including the detailed Treasury Management Report Q1 2023/24 at Appendix A.

Financial Implications

9. As set out at Appendix A.

Background Papers

10. None.

Impact

- 11.

Communication/Consultation	Corporate Management Team (CMT) and Informal Cabinet Briefing (ICB)
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	N/A
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal Implications	N/A
Sustainability	N/A
Ward-specific impacts	N/A
Workforce/Workplace	N/A

Situation

12. The Council has borrowed and invested substantial sums of money and is therefore exposed to financial risks including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. The successful identification, monitoring and control of risks are therefore central to the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.

13. The main risks to the Council's treasury activities are:

- i. Liquidity risk (inadequate cash resources)
- ii. Market or interest rate risk (fluctuations in interest rates)

- iii. Inflation risk (exposure to change in prices)
- iv. Credit and counterparty risk (security of investments)
- v. Refinancing risks (impact of debt maturing in future years)
- vi. Legal and regulatory risk (i.e. non-compliance with requirements)

14. A detailed report is attached at Appendix A and this has been compiled with the support of the Council's external treasury management advisers, Arlingclose.

Risk Analysis

15.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Liquidity – lack of cash available to meet commitments as they fall due	2 – unlikely due to forward planning of receipts and expenditure	2 – would incur additional costs of short-term borrowing from external sources	Cash in and out flows are managed on a daily basis. All income and expenditure is planned and built in to cash flow statements. A minimum amount is maintained to cover any unexpected events.
Interest rate fluctuations – increased borrowing costs due to higher rates on refinancing of debt	3 – in the current environment of rising interest rates it is likely that much of the debt which falls due will need to be refinanced at higher rates	3 – significant increase in borrowing costs, although this is modelled within the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and closely monitored	Interest rate forecasts and projections are monitored regularly with regular updates from consultants (Arlingclose). In addition, action has been taken to reduce the Council's exposure by fixing a greater proportion of borrowing for the longer term.

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.

Appendix A

Treasury Management Report Q1 2023/24

Introduction

The Council has adopted the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's *Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice* (the CIPFA Code) which requires it to approve, as a minimum, treasury management semi-annual and annual outturn reports.

This quarterly report provides an additional update and incorporates the new requirement in the 2021 Code, mandatory from 1 April 2023, of quarterly reporting of the treasury management prudential indicators. The non-treasury management prudential indicators are incorporated in the Council's Quarter 1 Financial Forecast.

The Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/24 was approved at a meeting on 21 February 2023. The Council has borrowed and invested substantial sums of money and is therefore exposed to financial risks including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. The successful identification, monitoring and control of risk remains central to the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.

External Context

Economic background: From the start of the quarter until May it looked like peak global monetary policy rates were in sight as inflation continued to ease and central banks turned more dovish in tone. Only a few weeks later, stronger and more persistent inflation data, particularly in the UK, changed the picture.

The UK situation was not welcome news for the Bank of England. GDP growth was weak, confirmed at 0.1% in Q1, although more recent monthly GDP data has been somewhat better. The housing market has stalled, consumer demand is weak but seemingly recovering despite higher interest rates, and labour demand remained strong, with repercussions for wage growth which is accelerating.

April data showed the unemployment rate increased to 3.8% (3mth/year) while the employment rate rose to 76.0%. Pay growth was 6.5% for total pay (including bonuses) and 7.2% for regular pay, the largest growth rate of the latter outside of the Covid pandemic. Once adjusted for inflation, however, growth in total pay and regular pay remained negative.

Inflation fell from its peak of 11.1% reached in October 2022, but annual headline CPI in May 2023 was higher than the consensus forecast at 8.7% (8.4% expected), largely driven by services inflation, while the annual measure of underlying core inflation rose to 7.1% from 6.8%.

After a sharp rise in interest rate expectations, with clearly serious implications for mortgage markets due to higher inflation and wage data, the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee reaccelerated monetary policy tightening over the period with a 0.25% rise in Bank Rate in May and a 0.5% rise in June, taking Bank Rate to 5.0%. At both meetings the vote was 7-2 in favour of increasing rates, with the two dissenters preferring to keep rates on hold.

Interest rate expectations priced in further hikes in policy rates. Arlingclose, the Council's treasury adviser, revised its forecast to forecast a further 0.5% of monetary tightening to take Bank Rate to

5.5%. The risks, however, are that rates could be higher; financial markets are forecasting policy interest rates above 6%.

With many mortgages at low fixed rates now systematically being re-set over the next 12-24 months at higher rates at the end of their fixed rate period, there has been a lagged effect of the feed through of monetary policy on households' disposable income. The economic slowdown is expected to develop over time and therefore, despite the GfK measure of consumer confidence rising to -24 in June, it is likely confidence will be negatively affected at some point. The manufacturing sector contracted during the quarter according to survey data, which will eventually feed into services, whose expansion is slowing.

Despite the US Federal Reserve increasing its key interest rate to 5.00-5.25% over the period, activity in the region continued to defy monetary tightening, particularly in labour markets which have so far appeared robust, supporting the Fed's assertions of two more rate hikes after it paused in June. Annual US inflation continued to ease, falling from 4.9% in April to 4.0% in May, the lowest level since March 2021. US GDP growth at 2% annualised in the first calendar quarter of 2023 was also significantly stronger than expected against the initial estimate of 1.3%.

In the Euro zone, the picture was somewhat different. The European Central Bank maintained its hawkish tone and increased its key deposit, main refinancing, and marginal lending interest rates to 3.50%, 4.00% and 4.25% respectively. There were signs of weakening activity, particularly in Germany whose manufacturing sector has taken a hit from high energy prices and weaker global demand. However, inflation remained sticky, annual headline CPI fell to 5.5% in June while annual core inflation rose to 5.4% from 5.3%, which means the ECB is unlikely to stop monetary tightening.

Financial markets: Financial market sentiment and bond yields remained volatile, the latter continuing their general upward trend as uncertainty and concern over higher inflation and higher interest rates continued to dominate.

Gilt yields rose over the period. The 5-year UK benchmark gilt yield rose from 3.30% to 4.67%, the 10-year gilt yield from 3.43% to 4.39%, and the 20-year yield from 3.75% to 4.51%. The Sterling Overnight Rate (SONIA) averaged 4.37% over the quarter.

Credit review: Having completed a review of its credit advice on unsecured deposits at UK and non-UK banks following concerns of a wider financial crisis after the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank, purchase of Credit Suisse by UBS, as well as other well-publicised banking sector issues, in March Arlingclose reduced the advised maximum duration limit for all banks on its recommended counterparty list to 35 days.

Over the period S&P upgraded NatWest Group and related entities to A+ (except NatWest Markets which was upgraded to A), revised the UK sovereign outlook to stable from negative, and upgraded both Barclays Bank Plc and Barclays Bank UK Plc to A+.

Fitch put the US sovereign rating on Rating Watch Negative following increased political partisanship which at the time was hindering the latest resolution to raise the debt ceiling. It also upgraded the outlook on United Overseas Bank to stable, the outlook on Clydesdale to positive, and the outlook on Bank of Montreal to stable.

Moody's withdrew Guildford BC's rating (who chose not to continue being rated) and affirmed the Aaa rating of the European Investment Bank.

Arlingclose continued to monitor and assess credit default swap levels for signs of ongoing credit stress but made no changes to the counterparty list or recommended durations over the quarter.

Nevertheless, heightened market volatility is expected to remain a feature, at least in the near term and, as ever, the institutions and durations on the Council’s counterparty list recommended by Arlingclose remain under constant review.

Local Context

On 31 March 2023, the Council had net borrowing of £286.8 million arising from its revenue and capital income and expenditure. The underlying need to borrow for capital purposes is measured by the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), while balance sheet resources are the underlying resources available for investment. These factors are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Balance Sheet Summary

	31.3.23 Actual £m	31.3.24 Forecast £m
General Fund CFR	16.7	18.5
HRA CFR	80.9	80.9
Investments CFR	238.5	245.5
Total CFR	336.1	344.9
Less: Other debt liabilities *	(4.0)	(3.8)
Borrowing CFR	332.1	341.1
Less: Usable reserves	(34.0)	(29.5)
Less: Working capital	(11.3)	(11.3)
Net borrowing	286.8	300.3

* PFI liabilities that forms part of the Authority’s total debt

The treasury management position at 30 June 2023 and the change over the quarter is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Treasury Management Summary

	31.3.23 Balance £m	Net Movement £m	30.6.23 Balance £m	30.6.23 Weighted Average Rate %
Long-term borrowing	190.6	0.0	190.6	3.61
Short-term borrowing	108.8	(6.0)	102.8	3.36
Total borrowing	299.4	(6.0)	293.4	3.52
Short-term investments	12.1	(1.3)	10.8	5.05
Cash and cash equivalents	0.5	0.1	0.6	2.09
Total investments	12.6	(1.2)	11.4	4.89
Net borrowing	286.8	(4.8)	282.0	

Borrowing

CIPFA’s 2021 Prudential Code is clear that local authorities must not borrow to invest primarily for financial return and that it is not prudent for local authorities to make any investment or spending decision that will increase the capital financing requirement and so may lead to new borrowing, unless directly and primarily related to the functions of the Authority. PWLB loans are no longer

available to local authorities planning to buy investment assets primarily for yield unless these loans are for refinancing purposes.

However, where an authority already holds a commercial property portfolio, as in the case of this Council, the Prudential Code does permit further capital expenditure on the prudent active management and rebalancing of the portfolio and maximising the value of existing property assets.

Before undertaking further additional borrowing the Council will review the options for exiting these investments, in line with the requirements of the Prudential Code.

Borrowing strategy and activity

As outlined in the Treasury Management Strategy, the Council's chief objective when borrowing has been to strike an appropriately low risk balance between securing low interest costs and achieving cost certainty over the period for which funds are required, with flexibility to renegotiate loans should the Council's long-term plans change being a secondary objective. The Council's borrowing strategy continues to address the key issue of affordability without compromising the longer-term stability of the debt portfolio.

There has been a substantial rise in the cost of both short- and long-term borrowing over the last 18 months. In this quarter, Bank Rate rose from 4.25% at the beginning of April to 5.00% at the end of the quarter and was also significantly higher than its level of 1.25% at the end of June 2022.

Gilt yields faced upward pressure since early April following signs that UK growth has been more resilient and inflation stickier than expected. Consequently, PWLB borrowing rates continued to rise over the quarter. On 30 June 2023, the PWLB certainty rates for maturity loans were 5.25% for 10-year loans, 5.36% for 20-year loans and 4.95% for 50-year loans. Their equivalents on 31 March 2023 were 4.33%, 4.70% and 4.41% respectively.

A new PWLB HRA rate which is 0.4% below the certainty rate has been made available from 15 June 2023. Initially available for a period of one year, this discounted rate is to support local authorities borrowing for the Housing Revenue Account and for refinancing existing HRA loans, providing a window of opportunity for HRA-related borrowing and to replace the Council's £3m loans relating to the HRA maturing during this time frame.

At 30 June 2023 the Council held £293.4 million of loans, (a decrease of £6.0 million from 31 March 2023), as part of its strategy for funding previous and current years' capital programmes. Outstanding loans on 30 June 2023 are summarised in Table 3A below.

Table 3A: Borrowing Position

	31.3.23		30.6.23	30.6.23	30.6.23
	Balance	Net	Balance	Weighted	Weighted
	£m	Movement	£m	Average Rate	Average
		£m		%	Maturity
					Years
Public Works Loan Board	158.3	0.0	158.3	3.76	13.6
Phoenix Life Ltd	36.1	0.0	36.1	2.86	19.8
Government (incl. local authorities)	100.0	(1.0)	99.0	3.36	0.3
Building Societies	5.0	(5.0)	0.0	0.00	0.0
Total borrowing	299.4	(6.0)	293.4	3.52	9.9

The Council's short-term borrowing cost has continued to increase with the rise in Bank Rate and short-dated market rates. The average rate on the Council's short-term loans at 30 June 2023 on £293.4 million was 3.52%, this compares with 3.27% on £299.4 million loans 3 months ago.

Table 3B: Long-dated loans outstanding

	30.6.23 Balance £m	Rate %	Period Remaining (Years)
PWLB Maturity Loan	3.0	2.82%	1.7
PWLB Maturity Loan	2.0	4.03%	1.7
PWLB Maturity Loan	3.0	2.92%	2.7
PWLB Maturity Loan	3.0	3.01%	3.7
PWLB Maturity Loan	3.0	3.08%	4.7
PWLB Maturity Loan	3.0	3.15%	5.7
PWLB Maturity Loan	4.0	3.21%	6.7
PWLB Maturity Loan	50.0	4.16%	7.2
PWLB Maturity Loan	4.0	3.26%	7.7
PWLB Maturity Loan	4.0	3.30%	8.7
PWLB Maturity Loan	4.0	3.34%	9.7
PWLB Maturity Loan	4.0	3.37%	10.7
PWLB Maturity Loan	4.0	3.40%	11.7
PWLB Maturity Loan	4.0	3.42%	12.7
PWLB Maturity Loan	5.0	3.44%	13.7
PWLB Maturity Loan	5.0	3.46%	14.7
PWLB Maturity Loan	5.0	3.47%	15.7
PWLB Maturity Loan	5.0	3.48%	16.7
PWLB Maturity Loan	5.0	3.49%	17.7
PWLB Maturity Loan	5.4	3.50%	18.7
Phoenix Annuity Loan	14.6	2.86%	34.0
Phoenix Annuity Loan	11.7	2.86%	34.0
Phoenix Annuity Loan	9.8	2.86%	34.0
PWLB Annuity Loan	29.9	4.28%	48.2

The Council's borrowing decisions are not predicated on any one outcome for interest rates and a balanced portfolio of short- and long-term borrowing was maintained.

Treasury Investment Activity

The CIPFA Code defines treasury management investments as investments that arise from the organisation's cash flows or treasury risk management activity that ultimately represent balances that need to be invested until the cash is required for use in the course of business.

The Council holds significant invested funds, representing income received in advance of expenditure plus balances and reserves held. During the quarter, the Council's investment balances ranged between £9.4 and £15.3 million due to timing differences between income and expenditure. The investment position is shown in table 4 below.

Table 4: Treasury Investment Position

	31.3.23	Net Movement	30.6.23	30.6.23	30.6.23
	Balance		Balance	Weighted	Weighted
	£m	£m	£m	Average Rate	Average
				%	Maturity
					years
Government (incl. local authorities)	12.1	(1.3)	10.8	5.05	0.3
Banks (unsecured)	0.5	0.1	0.6	2.09	0.0
Total investments	12.6	(1.2)	11.4	4.89	0.3

Both the CIPFA Code and government guidance require the Council to invest its funds prudently, and to have regard to the security and liquidity of its treasury investments before seeking the optimum rate of return, or yield. The Council's objective when investing money is to strike an appropriate balance between risk and return, minimising the risk of incurring losses from defaults and the risk of receiving unsuitably low investment income.

As demonstrated by the liability benchmark in this report, the Council expects to be a long-term borrower and new treasury investments are therefore primarily made to manage day-to-day cash flows using short-term low risk instruments.

Bank Rate increased by 0.75%, from 4.25% at the beginning of April to 5.00% by the end of June, with the prospect of further increases to come. Short-dated cash rates rose commensurately, with 3-month rates rising to around 5.25% and 12-month rates to nearly 6.00%. The rates on DMADF deposits also rose, ranging between 4.80% and 5.40% by the end of June.

The progression of risk and return metrics are shown in the extracts from Arlingclose's quarterly investment benchmarking in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Investment Benchmarking - Treasury investments managed in-house

	Credit Score	Credit Rating	Bail-in exposure %	Weighted Average Maturity days	Rate of Return %
31.03.2023	4.65	A+	5	71	3.89
30.06.2023	4.25	AA-	6	119	4.89
Similar LA's	4.66	A+	65	45	4.26
All LA's	4.65	A+	63	11	4.32

Non-Treasury Investments

The definition of investments in the Treasury Management Code now covers all the financial assets of the Council as well as other non-financial assets which the Council holds primarily for financial return. Investments that do not meet the definition of treasury management investments (i.e. management of surplus cash) are categorised as either for service purposes (made explicitly to further service objectives) and or for commercial purposes (made primarily for financial return).

Investment Guidance issued by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) also includes within the definition of investments all such assets held partially or wholly for financial return.

The Council has invested the following total principal sums in directly owned property:

Table 6: Directly Owned Property

	31.03.23	30.06.23
	Actual	Actual
	£m	£m
Skyway House, Parsonage Road, Takeley - Offices	21.3	21.3
Deer Park Road, Livingston, Scotland - Vet Practice	5.2	5.2
Stane Retail Park, Colchester - Retail Park	27.2	27.2
Chorley - Regional Distribution Centre	58.3	58.3
Gloucester - Distribution Centre	43.3	43.3
Tewkesbury - Offices and Warehouse	29.1	29.4
TOTAL	184.4	184.7

These investments are forecast to generate £9.6 million of investment income for the Council in 2023/24 after taking account of direct costs.

In addition, as at 30 June 2023 the Council had invested principal amounts of £59.6 million in loans to its subsidiary, Aspire (CRP) Ltd, which holds a 50% share in investment property at Chesterford Research Park. These loans are forecast to generate investment income of £2.4 million during the year.

All non-treasury investments are acquired and managed in line with the Commercial Strategy approved each year by Full Council, and available on the Council's website. This sets out in more detail the risks to the Council of holding such investments, mitigating actions taken, and governance and oversight arrangements.

The principle risks of tenant defaults, void periods, and unexpected refurbishment costs are managed by setting aside sums in a commercial asset reserve. As at 31 March 2023 this reserve stood at £4 million, and there is provision in the Medium Term Financial Strategy to increase this amount by £1 million in each of the following 5 years.

The total contribution generated by commercial investments in 2023/24 (net of associated borrowing costs and repayment of principal) is forecast at £0.8 million, representing 4% of the Council's forecast net direct service expenditure. This contribution has decreased in recent years due to increased borrowing costs, but nevertheless is forecast to remain positive for the foreseeable future.

Compliance

All treasury management activities undertaken during the quarter complied fully with the principles in the Treasury Management Code and the Council's approved Treasury Management Strategy. Compliance with specific treasury management limits is demonstrated in the tables below.

Table 7: Investment Limits

	2023/24 Maximum £m	30.06.23 Actual £m	2023/24 Limit £m	Complied?
UK Central Government	7.3	5.8	Unlimited	✓
UK Local Authorities including Police and Fire per authority	3.0	3.0	5.0	✓
Secured Investments	0.0	0.0	5.0	✓
Banks (unsecured)	1.1	0.6	3.0	✓
UK Building Societies without credit ratings	0.0	0.0	3.0	✓
Registered Providers (unsecured)	0.0	0.0	3.0	✓
Money Market Funds per fund	0.0	0.0	5.0	✓
Strategic Pooled Funds	0.0	0.0	3.0	✓
Real Estate Investment Trusts	0.0	0.0	3.0	✓
Saffron Building Society	0.0	0.0	0.5	✓
Other Investments	0.0	0.0	3.0	✓

Compliance with the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary for external debt is demonstrated in table 8 below.

Table 8: Debt Limits

	2023/24 Maximum £m	30.06.23 Actual £m	2023/24 Operational Boundary £m	2023/24 Authorised Limit £m	Complied?
Borrowing	299.4	293.4	395.0	415.0	✓
PFI	4.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	✓
TOTAL	303.4	297.4	400.0	420.0	✓

Since the operational boundary is a management tool for in-year monitoring it is not significant if the operational boundary is breached on occasions due to variations in cash flow, and this is not counted as a compliance failure.

Treasury Management Prudential Indicators

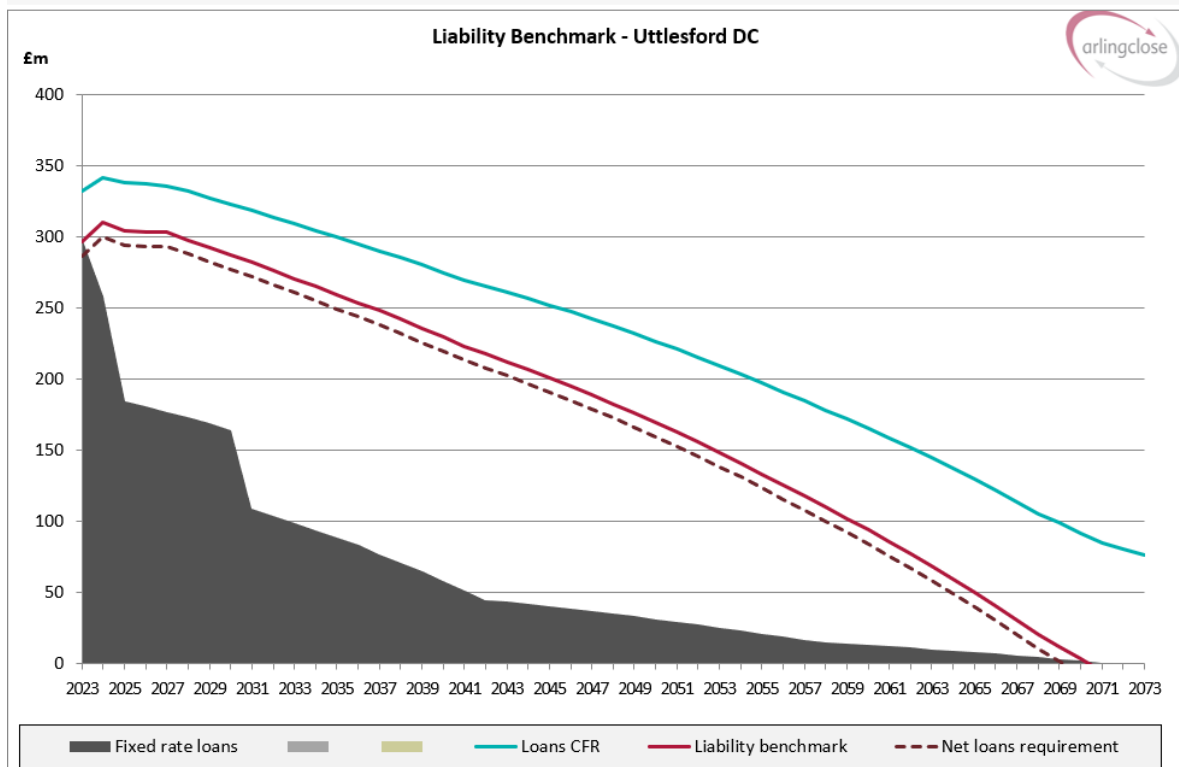
As required by the 2021 CIPFA Treasury Management Code, the Council monitors and measures the following treasury management prudential indicators.

1. Liability Benchmark

This new indicator compares the Council's actual existing borrowing against a liability benchmark that has been calculated to show the lowest risk level of borrowing. The liability benchmark is an important tool to help establish whether the Council is likely to be a long-term borrower or long-term investor in the future, and so shape its strategic focus and decision making. It represents an estimate of the cumulative amount of external borrowing the Council must hold to fund its current capital and revenue plans while keeping treasury investments at the minimum level of £10 million required to manage day-to-day cash flow.

	31.3.23 Actual £m	31.3.24 Forecast £m	31.3.25 Forecast £m	31.3.26 Forecast £m
Loans CFR	332.1	341.1	337.9	337.2
Less: Usable reserves	(34.0)	(29.5)	(32.7)	(32.5)
Less: Working capital	(11.3)	(11.3)	(11.3)	(11.3)
Add: Minimum investments	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0
Liability Benchmark	296.8	310.3	303.9	303.4

Following on from the medium-term forecast above, the long-term liability benchmark has been calculated assuming approved levels of capital expenditure funded by borrowing until 2027/28, minimum revenue provision on new capital expenditure based on the Council's approved MRP policy, and expenditure and reserves all increasing by inflation of 2% per annum after the end of the current 5-year MTFS period. This is shown in the chart below together with the maturity profile of the Council's existing borrowing.



Whilst borrowing may be above the liability benchmark, strategies involving borrowing which is significantly above the liability benchmark carry higher risk. The gap between the actual agreed fixed rate loans (in grey) and the liability benchmark (solid red line) provides an indication of the level of borrowing which the Council will need to refinance in future years (assuming no further capital expenditure beyond that already forecast).

2. Maturity Structure of Borrowing

This indicator is set to control the Council's exposure to refinancing risk. The upper and lower limits on the maturity structure of all borrowing were:

	30.6.23 Actual %	Upper Limit %	Complied?
Under 12 months	30.61	50	✓
12 months and within 24 months	6.42	50	✓
24 months and within 5 years	3.98	50	✓
5 years and within 10 years	25.25	80	✓
10 years and within 20 years	18.89	80	✓
20 years and above	14.84	100	✓

Time periods start on the first day of each financial year. The maturity date of borrowing is the earliest date on which the lender can demand repayment.

3. Long-term Treasury Management Investments

The purpose of this indicator is to control the Council's exposure to the risk of incurring losses by seeking early repayment of its investments. The prudential limits on the long-term treasury management investments are:

	30.06.23 Actual £m	2023/24 Limit £m	Complied?
Limit on principal invested beyond year end	3.0	10.0	✓

Long-term investments with no fixed maturity date include strategic pooled funds, real estate investment trusts and directly held equity but exclude money market funds and bank accounts with no fixed maturity date as these are considered short-term.

4. Security

The Council has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to credit risk by monitoring the value-weighted average credit rating of its investment portfolio. This is calculated by applying a score to each investment (AAA=1, AA+=2, etc.) and taking the arithmetic average, weighted by the size of each investment. Unrated investments are assigned a score based on their perceived risk.

	30.06.23 Actual	2023/24 Target	Complied?
Portfolio average credit rating	AA-	A	✓

5. Liquidity

The Council has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to liquidity risk by monitoring the amount of cash available to meet unexpected payments within a rolling three-month period, without additional borrowing.

	30.06.23 Actual £m	2023/24 Target £m	Complied?
Total cash available within 3 months	6.4	2.0	✓

6. Interest Rate Exposures

This indicator is set to control the Council's exposure to interest rate risk. It shows the annual revenue impact that a 1% rise or fall in interest rates would have in respect of borrowing and investments due to expire in the next 12 months. The impact of a change in interest rates is calculated on the assumption that maturing loans and investment will be replaced at new market rates.

	30.06.23 Actual £m	2023/24 Target £m	Complied?
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% rise in interest rates	0.7	1.5	✓
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% fall in interest rates	0.7	1.5	✓

Agenda Item 15

Committee: Cabinet

Date: Thursday, 2
November 2023

Title: Christmas Car Parking Incentives 2023

Portfolio Holder: Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economy
Cllr Neil Hargreaves

Report Author: Sarah Lewin, Acting Economic Development
Manager
slewin@uttlesford.gov.uk

Key decision:
No

Summary

1. The Council has operated a Christmas car parking promotion for a number of years in all Council managed pay and display car parks, except for Fairycroft Road car park in Saffron Walden (at the request of Waitrose who already fund a promotional incentive).
2. The purpose of the car park promotion is to:
 - a. Support the vitality and viability of the town and village centres.
 - b. Increase footfall into the town and village centres and promote local shopping and access to services.
3. It is proposed to implement a number of free car parking dates and times to incentivise shoppers into our three main towns, Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow and Stansted. The 2023 proposals reflect local feedback and provide an incentive to shop locally and support local businesses.

Recommendations

4. It is requested that the Cabinet approve
 - a. Free parking from midday in Saffron Walden (excluding Fairycroft Road car park) on 17th November 2023 to coincide with the lantern parade and Christmas light switch on event.
 - b. Free parking all day on Friday 24th November 2023 in Saffron Walden (excluding Fairycroft Road), Great Dunmow and Stansted Mountfitchet to encourage shoppers into the town centres on Black Friday.
 - c. Free parking all day on Saturday 23rd December 2023 in Saffron Walden (excluding Fairycroft Road), Great Dunmow and Stansted to encourage last minute local shopping.

Financial Implications

5. The total estimated loss of income if the proposals are approved is £6,416 for the three proposed dates.
6. Approved car parking incentives would be promoted through the use of stickers on ticket machines, local and social media advertising.

Impact

7.

Communication/Consultation	None
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	Car parks are located in Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow town centres, and Stansted Mountfitchet village centre
Workforce/Workplace	None

Risk Analysis

8.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Incentives do not bring in more shoppers	1 – it is likely that some additional shoppers will be attracted	1 – Little direct financial impact as income loss is minimal.	Ensure clear and widespread advertising of the individual incentives

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.

Agenda Item 16

Committee:	Cabinet	Date:	Thursday, 2 November 2023
Title:	Corporate Core Indicators (CCIs) 2023/24 Q1 Performance Update		
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Petrina Lees, Leader of the Council		
Report Author:	Angela Knight, Director of Business Performance and People aknight@uttlesford.gov.uk Paula Evans, Contract, Performance and Risk Manager pevans@uttlesford.gov.uk	Key decision:	No

Summary

1. This report presents the newly formed suite of Corporate Core Indicators (CCIs) which will provide members with quarterly performance data and where possible, benchmarking comparisons to other similar Local Authorities.
2. The CCIs were identified to enable the Corporate Management Team and Members to focus on key areas of performance across the council. Where possible, comparative data has been obtained from other local authorities so that further, indicator specific, analysis can also be completed.
3. Performance trends have been analysed to identify where improvement may be needed particularly when comparing against other 'statistical nearest neighbour' authorities.

Recommendations

4. None. The report is for information only.

Financial Implications

5. There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

Background Papers

6. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report:

None.

Impact

7.

Communication/Consultation	Reviewed by Corporate Management Team (CMT) and Informal Cabinet Board (ICB)
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	None

Corporate Core Indicators

8. A suite of Corporate Core Indicators (CCI's) has been developed and include a number of new indicators which have not been previously reported on. The indicators have been identified and developed to provide members with information on the performance of key activities within the council.
9. A total of 25 indicators have Q1 outturn data entered against them and where applicable this is compared to the previous year's internal data; this is set out in detail at Appendix A. A summary of the current indicators shows that:
 - 13 have achieved or exceeded their target
 - 6 are showing a decline in the performance levels since the previous comparable quarter
 - 10 are showing a decline in performance over the longer term (12 months)

Benchmarking

10. In addition to reporting against our internal targets and performance, an exercise to benchmark our performance externally has been carried out.
11. The benchmarking group used for the purposes of this report represents Uttlesford District Council's statistical near neighbours (SNN) as identified in the annual Financial Resilience Index produced by CIPFA (see table below).

Authority	Area km²	Population mid 2019
Uttlesford DC	641.18	91,284
Tewkesbury BC	414.4	95,019
South Cambridgeshire	901.63	159,086
Hart DC	215.3	97,073
Tonbridge and Malling BC	240.13	132,153
Horsham DC	530.26	143,791
Sevenoaks DC	370.34	120,750
Harborough DC	591.8	93,807
Test Valley BC	627.6	126,160
Winchester CC	660.97	124,859
Vale of White Horse DC	578.6	136,007
East Hampshire	514.4	122,308
West Oxfordshire	714.40	110,643
South Oxfordshire	678.54	142,057

12. The Nearest Neighbours Model is determined by 40 different metrics across a wide range of social-economic indicators and is designed to help interpret results and deep dive into how the statistical differences between other authorities arises.
13. As there were no other formal benchmarking groups identified at the time of formalising the CCI suite, these were thought to be a good starting point on which to build our benchmarking knowledge. Although it should be noted that this group of SNN is a very close match to the comparative data available on the LG Inform platform, Value for Money Profiles.
14. Work is currently being undertaken to ascertain which benchmarking information would be most appropriate to use through such sources as LG Inform+, CIPFA Insights, APSE. This work will include service specific benchmarking organisations, for example Housemark for the Housing Revenue Account. It is therefore anticipated the 2023/24 Q2 data will be reporting against a more formalised benchmarking group.
15. The benchmarking data contained in this report and the detailed information in Appendix A has been obtained directly from equivalent performance officers in the SNN authorities and/or published data on their authority websites.
16. Comparative data for 8 of the 25 indicators has been obtained and a minimum and maximum value has been identified for each indicator, but for benchmarking purposes the average of the group has been used to determine a comparable performance level for Uttlesford's Q1 outturns. A summary of the benchmarking data for the current group of local authorities selected is set out in the table below.

Benchmarking Comparison Summary				
No. of LA's	Indicator	Average performance level	UDC Outturn	Performance Comments
4	CCI 05: % Information Governance requests (FOIs & EIRs) dealt with in 20 working days	92%	83%	UDC's performance is the lowest of the benchmarking group, however, UDC's performance is improving, and new processes have been put in place to ensure this trend continues and the current target of 95% responded to within 20 days is achieved.
5	CCI 06: % of calls answered vs number of calls received across the council	89%	90%*	UDC's performance is above the group's average and the second highest out of 5.
8	CCI 09: % of Council Tax collected	30%	29.52%	UDC's performance is in line with the average for the group and on a par with all other council's bar one, which is an outlier with a very high performance.
8	CCI 10: % of Non-domestic Rates Collected	31%	30.20%	UDC's performance is in line with the average for the group and on a par with all other council's bar one, which is an outlier with a very high performance.
7	CCI 24: Processing of Planning Applications: Major Applications (within 13 - 16 weeks with EIA or including any Extension of Time)	83%	85.90%	UDC's performance exceeds the average for the group and is 4th highest out of 7.
7	CCI 25: Processing of Planning Applications: Non-major Applications (within 8 weeks or including any Extension of Time)	87%	84.62%	UDC's performance is 2% below the average for the group and 2nd lowest out of 7.
3	CCI 26: % of appeals upheld for Major Applications (min)	12%	10.81%	UDC's performance is better than the average for the group, however it should be noted the comparison group is small, and the spread is wide.
7	CCI 28: % Household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	48%	53.88%	UDC's performance is 6% above the average and 3rd highest out of 7.

**It should be noted that some LA's may offer a different range of services through their CSC function*

Risk Analysis

17.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
If performance indicators do not meet quarterly/annual targets then areas such as customer satisfaction and statutory adherence to government led requirements could be affected leading to a loss in reputation for the Council.	2 – The majority of performance measures perform on or above target. Where necessary, accompanying notes to individual performance indicators detail improvement plans.	3 – The majority of service areas in the Council are customer-facing so has the potential to impact reputationally, service delivery and financially.	Performance is monitored by CMT, and Cabinet on a quarterly basis. Short and long term analysis is carried out to identify performance trends, this supports the appropriate action/improvement plans to be put in place to address issues.

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.

Corporate Core Indicators (CCIs) - 2023/24 Q1 Outturn

PI No:	PI Title:	Uttlesford DC								Benchmarking Group				Benchmarking Notes	
		Q1 2022/23	Q4 2022/23	Q1 Target	Q1 Outturn	Status	STDOT*	LTDOT*	Performance Note:	Number	Minimum	Average	Maximum		
ORGANISATION/GOVERNANCE															
CCI 01	Average days lost per FTE through short-term sickness absence (min)	10.48 (short & long combined)	9.40 (short & long combined)	4.70	5.19	9.84 (short & long combined)				198 employees took a period of short term absence, of which a majority of these were due to minor conditions such as colds/ headaches and upset stomachs.					
CCI 02	Average days lost per FTE through long-term sickness absence (min)			4.40	4.65					There were 24 people who account for the long term absences, of which a third have left the organisation and only 4 are still on sick leave. 42% of the long term absences were due to stress/depression/anxiety, the majority of which were non-work related.					
CCI 03	Average days taken to complete candidate pre-employment checks (min)	n/a	n/a	15	12		N/A	N/A	Of the 11 new starters, only 2 were under target at 19 & 16 days and this was due to the delay of their previous employer supplying a reference.						
CCI 04	% of Leavers that leave within their first year of employment (min)	n/a	n/a	15%	21%		N/A	N/A	9 Leavers in 1st year (42 total). Breakdown: 4 - ES, 2 - Planning, 1 - Benefits, 1 - Performance, 1 - Audit. Reasons for leaving varied: enticed back to previous workplace, role wasn't what they expected, offered a promotion.						
CCI 05	% Information Governance requests (FOIs & EIRs) dealt with in 20 working days (max)	n/a	n/a	95%	83%		N/A	N/A	Numerator: 175 Denominator: 211. Although there was a significant increase in FOIs received in comparison to Q1 2022/23 there has also been a notable improvement in response times over the previous 12 months, although this has not been formally reported previously. Work will continue with all service areas to further improve monitoring processes which in turn will support an improvement in the indicator outturn.	4	83%	92%	97%	UDC's performance is the lowest of the benchmarking group, however, as already noted, UDC's performance is improving and on an upward trend.	
CCI 06	% of calls answered vs number of calls received across the council (max)	n/a	n/a	90%	90%		N/A	N/A	Numerator: 22,924 Denominator: 25,377 (abandoned: 2,453). Please note these figures relate only to calls into the council's Customer Service Centre. The target has been achieved this quarter despite a very high volume of calls. A high call volume inevitably can lead to longer wait times and increase the risk of call abandonment. Examples of high-volume calls include Council Tax payments at the start of the new financial year and garden waste renewal letters sent to over 11,000 customers requesting payment for the service. The District & Parish elections in May also generated many calls, with this year seeing the introduction of Voter Authority ID. Temporary issues in the waste and recycling service leading to missed bins, also contributed to a rise in calls and several bank holidays, Easter and The King's Coronation in May meant an increase in customer contact over a shorter opening period. Customer Services management continue to work with back offices to improve processes and provide support to individual advisors to manage call handling times as efficiently as possible.	5	87%	89%	91%	UDC's performance is above the group's average and the second highest out of 5.	
CCI 07	Contract Management			Indicator still to be determined following introduction of revised processes											
CCI 08	Resident Satisfaction			Indicator still to be determined further research and analysis to be completed											

PI No:	PI Title:	Uttlesford DC								Benchmarking Group				Benchmarking Notes
		Q1 2022/23	Q4 2022/23	Q1 Target	Q1 Outturn	Status	STDOT*	LTDOT*	Performance Note:	Number	Minimum	Average	Maximum	
COST OF LIVING CRISIS														
CCI 09	% of Council Tax collected (max) *	30%	99%	29.00%	29.52%	✔			Numerator: £23,707,078.20 Denominator: £80,319,996.06. Collection rate slightly ahead of target. This is a good result considering the economic climate and reflects the hard work of the revenues team in maintaining correct liable parties and promptly issuing revenue generating documents	8	20%	30%	38%	UDC's performance is in line with the average for the group and on a par with all other councils bar one, which is an outlier with a very high performance
CCI 10	% of Non-domestic Rates Collected (max) *	32.38%	98.06%	26.00%	30.20%	✔			Numerator: £15,493,902.30 Denominator: £51,296,234.70 Collection rate 0.51% below target which, given the economic climate, should be commended. This has been achieved through the prompt issue of reminders and summonses to ensure payments are received from businesses.	8	20%	31%	38%	UDC's performance is in line with the average for the group and on a par with all other councils bar one, which is an outlier with a very high performance
CCI 11	Council Housing: Rent collected as a percentage of rent owed (max) *	92.76%	97.10%	89.00%	92.15%	✔			Numerator: £4,552,551.36 Denominator: £4,940,135.21 This PI has exceeded the target due to focusing on rent collection. However the figure is down on the same quarter last year as the current cost of living rises are still impacting collection.					
CCI 12	% Households claiming LCTS against total CT base (min)	Indicator still to be determined to ensure appropriate monitoring of the impact of the cost of living crisis												
HEALTH & SAFETY														
CCI 13	Council Housing: % domestic dwellings on programme with valid LGSR gas safety certificate (max)	99%	99%	100%	99%	⚠			Numerator: 1,947 Denominator: 1,959 12 do not have in date certificates, tenants not allowing access with UDC for legal action					
CCI 14	Council Housing: % properties compliant with Carbon Monoxide and smoke detector regulations (max)	n/a	n/a	100%	99.40%	⚠	N/A	N/A	Numerator: 2,494 Denominator: 2,509 15 properties have not had an annual check as tenants are refusing access.					
CCI 15	Council Housing: Asbestos Management - % High Priority recommendations o/s from current and previous RA's (min)	n/a	n/a	0%	0%	✔	N/A	N/A	Numerator: 0 Denominator: 150 No actions outstanding					
CCI 16	Council Housing: Water Hygiene - % High Priority recommendations o/s from current and previous RA's (min)	0%	0%	0%	0%	✔			Numerator: 0 Denominator: 9 No actions outstanding					
CCI 17	Council Housing: Fire Safety - % High Priority recommendations o/s from current and previous RA's (min)	0%	0%	0%	0%	✔			Numerator: 0 Denominator: 1 1 action reported and has been completed					
CCI 18	Council Housing: Lift Safety - % lifts with an-in date safety inspection (LOLER) (max)	n/a	n/a	100%	98.11%	⚠	N/A	N/A	Numerator: 52 Denominator: 53 1 stairlift at Walden Place is shut down and beyond repair. Replacement order awaiting installation.					
CCI 19	Council Housing: Damp & Mould - % reported damp & mould cases responded to (within 14 days/ 7 days) (max)	n/a	n/a	100%	30%	⊘	N/A	N/A	Numerator: 7 Denominator: 23 30% of completed mould wash jobs have been completed in 14 days or less. The figures provided include all mould wash jobs raised and completed on Connect, we are unable to determine which of these were raised as a result of a damp and mould survey. The average turnaround time of all completed mould wash jobs during Q1 is 17 days.					
CCI 20	Average no. of days sickness lost due to staff incidents or accidents for the rolling year period as recorded on i-trent (min)	n/a	n/a	0.3	0.13	✔	N/A	N/A	Normally with in-house front line services such as Waste/Recycling/Grounds Maintenance/Housing there would be an expected higher number of sickness absences for accidents/incidences. This could indicate that risk are being mitigated with good H&S practices.	2	0.13	7.07	14	Data is currently only available for this indicator for one other Council in the group, so a comparison is not currently reliable.

PI No:	PI Title:	Uttlesford DC								Benchmarking Group				Benchmarking Notes			
		Q1 2022/23	Q4 2022/23	Q1 Target	Q1 Outturn	Status	STDOT*	LTDOT^	Performance Note:	Number	Minimum	Average	Maximum				
FINANCE & INCOME																	
CCI 21	% of commercial property net income against budget (max)	n/a	n/a	95.0%	100.40%	✔	N/A	N/A	Numerator: £12,022,000 (forecast) Denominator: £11,974,000 (budget) Slight increase due to delay in completion of MOOG resulting in additional interest.								
CCI 22	% of invoices paid within 30 days (max)	97.30%	98.09%	98.00%	97.11%	⚠			Numerator: 1,782 Denominator: 1,835 We found 53 invoices that needed more intervention after they were entered onto the system. This ranged from supplier forms that needed to be filled in by the suppliers to departments with sick leave or annual leave that had little or no cover in place.	2	97%	98%	99%	Data is currently only available for this indicator for one other Council in the group, so a comparison is not currently reliable.			
CCI 23	Council Housing: Average re-let time in days (all re-lets including time spent in works) (min)	56	67	35	87	❌			Numerator: 3,768 (void days) Denominator: 43 (lets) On average, 77 days were attributed to the works process and difficulty in finding suitable contractors and 10 days were due to the lettings process. Several properties had to be re-offered or re-advertised this quarter, we will look at this in more granular detail. To improve the time in works we are re-engineering the key to key process with UNSL and will be able to report an improvement once this important piece of work has taken place. Void management is a key focus for the coming quarter.								
ENVIRONMENT/COMMUNITIES & DEVELOPMENT																	
CCI 24	Processing of Planning Applications: Major Applications (within 13 - 16 weeks with EIA or including any Extension of Time) (max)	83.33%	85.94%	98.00%	85.90%	✔			To note that this period covers speed of major decisions from 01/10/2021 to 30/09/2023 - 85.90%. The measure to be used is the percentage of decisions on applications made: (a) within the statutory determination period; or (b) within such extended period as has been agreed in writing between the applicant and the local planning authority, as recorded for major development in Live Tables P151a and 151b, and for non-major development in Live Table 153 from the data collected by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities. The assessment period for this measure is the two years up to and including the most recent quarter for which data on planning application decisions are available at the time of designation.	7	63%	83%	100%	UDC's performance is above the average for the group and 4th highest out of 7.			
CCI 25	Processing of Planning Applications: Non-major Applications (within 8 weeks or including any Extension of Time) (max)	85.49%	84.72%	80.00%	84.62%	✔			To note that this period covers speed of major decisions from 01/10/2021 to 30/09/2023 - 84.62%. The measures used are as per CCI 24 above.	7	73%	87%	96%	UDC's performance is 2% below the average for the group and 2nd lowest out of 7.			
CCI 26	% of Appeals upheld for Major Applications (min)	8.82%	6.85%	9.00%	10.81%	❌			To note - the current figure for the period of decisions issued between 01/04/2021 to 31/03/2023 with appeal decisions to 31/12/2023 is 10.81% with some appeal decisions outstanding. Figure being queried with DLUHC. Now very close to national target of below 10%. The measure to be used is the percentage of the total number of decisions made by the authority on applications that are then subsequently overturned at appeal, once nine months have elapsed following the end of the assessment period, as recorded in Live Table P152a and P152b for major development and in Live Table 154 for non-major development from the data collected by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities and the Planning Inspectorate. The 9 months specified in the measure enables appeals to pass through the system and be decided for the majority of decisions on planning applications made during the assessment period. The assessment period for this measure is the two years up to and including the most recent quarter for which data on planning application decisions are available at the time of designation, once the nine months to be allowed for beyond the end of the assessment period is taken into account.	3	2%	12%	25%	UDC's performance is better than the average for the group, however the comparison group is small and the spread is wide.			

PI No:	PI Title:	Uttlesford DC								Benchmarking Group				Benchmarking Notes
		Q1 2022/23	Q4 2022/23	Q1 Target	Q1 Outturn	Status	STDOT*	LTDOT^	Performance Note:	Number	Minimum	Average	Maximum	
CCI 27	% 'red' status tasks from Local Plan project plan (min)	n/a	n/a	0%	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	This indicator is currently under review and will reflect a revised and more defined method of monitoring for the Local Plan. It is anticipated outturn will be reported from Q2 onwards.					
CCI 28	% Household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting (max)	52.48%	43.06%	50.00%	53.88%				Numerator: 4,479.90 (recycling and composted) Denominator: 8,314.88 (total domestic waste arising)	7	35%	48%	55%	UDC's performance is 6% above the average and 3rd highest out of 7
CCI 29	% High Priority actions completed from the Climate Change plan	Indicator still to be determined to ensure the most appropriate monitoring of Climate Change Initiatives is adopted												
CCI 30	% staff completed safeguarding training (max)	n/a	n/a	100%	44%		N/A	N/A	Numerator: 138 Denominator: 313 As at end June 2023, 67% of all staff had completed safeguarding training. Further work has been completed to improve the number of attendances by end Q2 such as toolbox-type sessions for depot staff with the content of the course being specifically tailored to the audience. Other initiatives being progressed include the introduction of a safeguarding bulletin and inclusion of safeguarding training within the U-Learn series of on-line courses.					