JULY 2021

Uttlesford Employment Needs & Employment Land Assessment

Initial Analysis – Overview Paper

July 2021

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INITIAL ANALYSIS – OVERVIEW PAPER

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Uttlesford District Council has just started to develop a new Local Plan. The new Local Plan will be a comprehensive Development Plan Document (DPD), containing both strategic and non-strategic policies for development over at least the next 15 years. To inform the development of the Plan, Iceni and SQW were commissioned to undertake an employment needs and economic growth assessment.

1.2 This Overview Report reflects on early evidence gathering (noting that it will need to be developed as the study progresses). It is underpinned by four Working Papers:

- Working Paper 1 provides a review of key literature, structured by the main themes identified in our brief from Uttlesford District Council
- Working Paper 2 presents a socio-economic baseline, drawing on a range of socio-economic datasets from ONS
- Working Paper 3 summarises a set of employment projections prepared for this study by Cambridge Econometrics.
- Working Paper 4 presents Iceni's analysis of commercial property market dynamics, addressing the office and industrial markets.

1.3 It is important to note that most of the evidence and data reported in the first two working papers predates the pandemic. The projections considered in Working Paper 3 are based on Cambridge Econometrics' forecasts from March 2021 and they do therefore take account of the pandemic and of the UK's departure from the EU.

1.4 This Overview Report seeks to bring together the initial analysis in the four working papers and set out initial key findings arising from it. It has been prepared to inform the preparation of the Local Plan Issues and Options consultation document.

1.5 The Overview Report has been drafted by Iceni and SQW.

2. OVERVIEW OF UTTLESFORD

2.1 Uttlesford is a district in north-west Essex. In 2019, it had a total population of 91,000 people[1]. According to ONS sources, the total number of jobs in the district was 56,000 in 2019[2] and the total number of enterprises was 5,475[3].

2.2 Within Uttlesford, the largest settlements are Saffron Walden (population approximately 15,500), Great Dunmow (8,800), and Stansted Mountfitchet (6,400)[4]. Collectively these settlements accommodate 30,700 – around a third of the District's population – with two-thirds living in rural areas.

2.3 South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge lie to the north of Uttlesford, whilst the Essex Districts (and towns) of Braintree and Chelmsford lie to the east and south east, and the East Hertfordshire town of Bishop's Stortford lies to the west (Figure 2.1).

2.4 The district is home to London Stansted Airport – the UK's fourth busiest airport by total passenger traffic in 2019[5] - and aided by its location between London and Cambridge is well served by major road and rail links. The M11 motorway runs north-south through the district with junctions at Stansted Airport (junction 8) and Stump Cross near Saffron Walden (junction 9), whilst the A120 runs east-west between Bishop's Stortford and Braintree via Great Dunmow. This connects Uttlesford to Colchester, Harwich and Hertford. These major transport corridors influence the geography of demand for employment space.

2.5 The West Anglia Main Line also runs north-south through the district with stations at six locations (Stansted Mountfitchet, Stansted Airport, Elsenham, Newport, Audley End and Greater Chesterford). From all stations there are frequent services to Cambridge operated by Greater Anglia. Greater Anglia also runs services from Stansted Airport (and on occasion Stansted Mountfitchet) to London Liverpool Street, under the branding of the Stansted Express. These services run every half hour with a journey time of approximately 50 minutes.

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[1] ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates, 2019

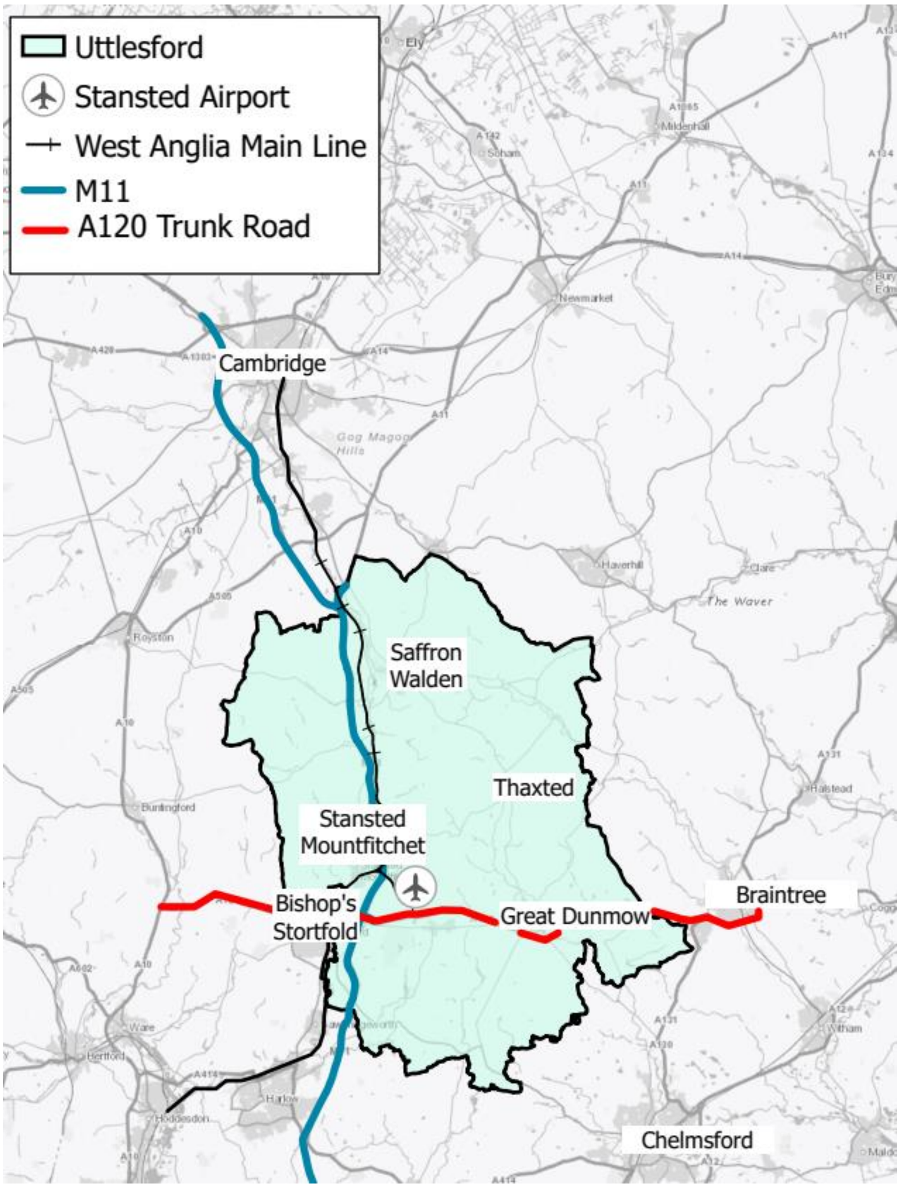
[2] ONS Jobs Density, 2019

[3] UK Business Counts, 2020

[4] Essex Highways (2018) *Uttlesford District Cycling Action Plan*

[5] UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Airport Data 2019 - https://www.caa.co.uk/Data-and-analysis/UK-aviation-market/Airports/Datasets/UK-Airport-data/Airport-data-2019/

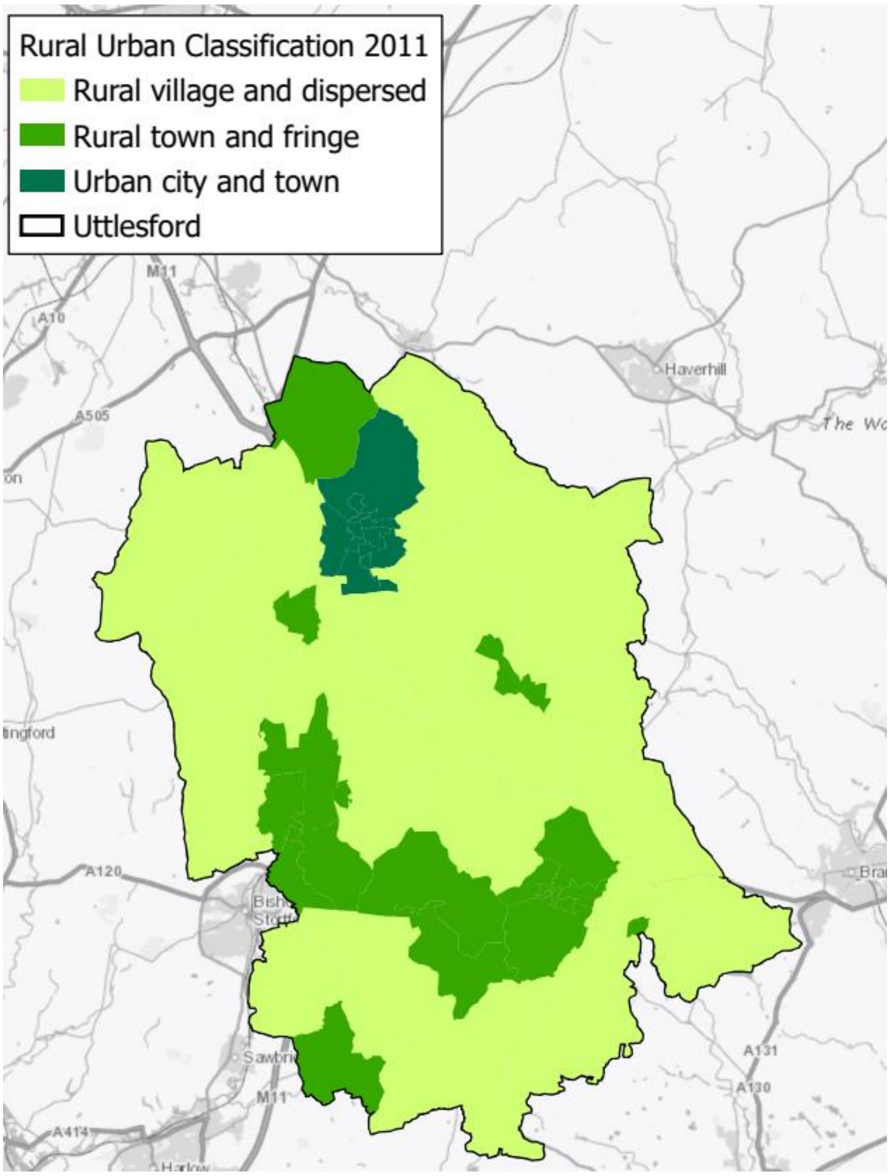
Figure 2.1: Map of the Major Settlements and Transport Links in and around Uttlesford



Source: Produced by SQW 2021. Licence 100030994

2.6 As shown in Figure, Uttlesford is predominantly rural; most of its territory is defined as either '*Rural village and dispersed'* or *'Rural town and fringe'* under the 2011 Rural / Urban Classifications. The only Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) classified as *'Urban city and town'* are situated in the north of the district clustered around Saffron Walden. As set out above, two-thirds of the District's population lives in the rural areas/settlements.

Figure 2.2: Rural Urban Classification 2011 – Uttlesford



Source: 2011 Rural / Urban Classification, ONS. Produced by SQW 2021. Licence 100030994

3. KEY FINDINGS FROM INITIAL RESEARCH

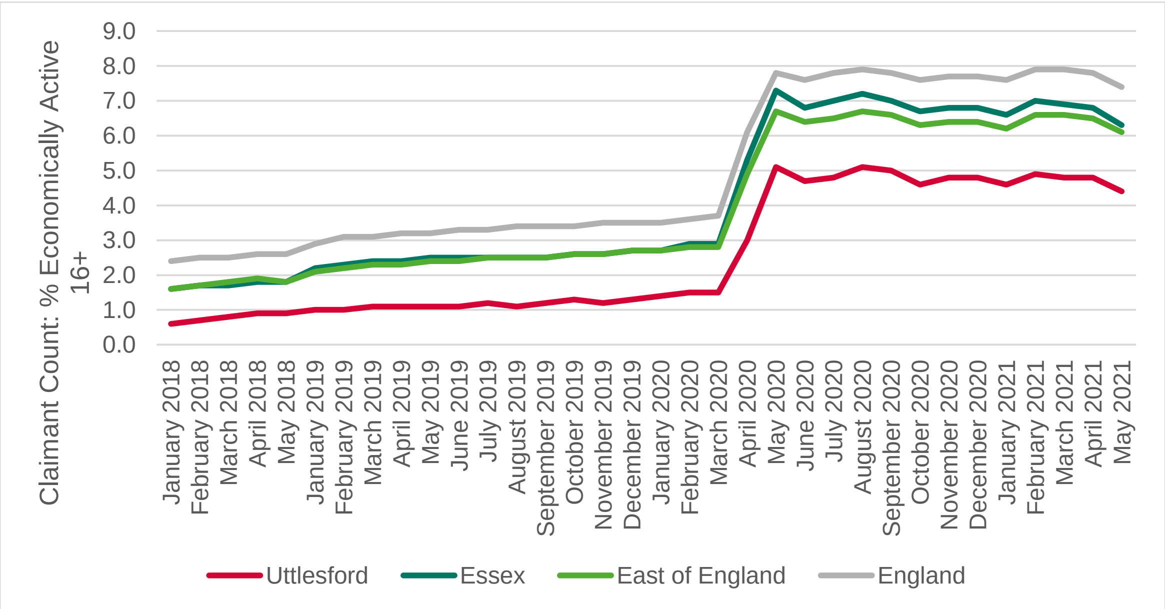
Overall Employment Growth

3.1 The evidence reviewed through the working papers suggests that **Uttlesford has seen relatively rapid employment growth in recent years.** It has outperformed surrounding areas in comparative terms.

3.2 2019 is the last year for which historic data are available. ONS' Jobs Density dataset suggests that there were 56,000 jobs in Uttlesford. CE's estimate for 2019 is slightly lower – at 53,800. There is no single data source for employment, with Cambridge Econometrics modelling 53,800 jobs in 2019. The difference between the data sources, noting the former is modelled to the nearest 1,000 is modest. For consistency with other elements of the assessment, the core figure used should be 54,000 jobs.

3.3 Clearly the Covid-19 pandemic has affected the local economy. Unemployment rose sharply in Spring 2020, but the claimant count in Uttlesford – which stood at 4.4% in May 2021 – remains below regional and national averages.

Figure 3.1: Trend in Unemployment Claimants, 2018-21

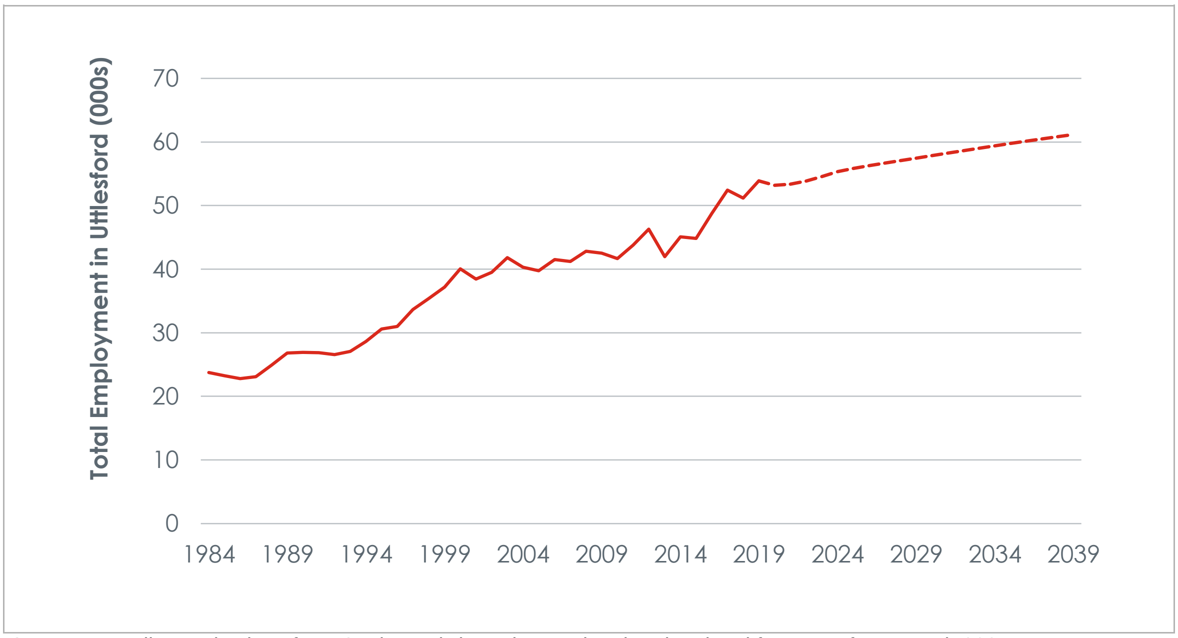


Source: NOMIS

3.4 HMRC provisional data indicates that as at 31st May 2021, there were 3,900 employments furloughed in Uttlesford representing a rate of 10% of roles. This is slightly above the Essex, regional and national averages of 8%, but not as high as might be expected given that aviation is one of the sectors which has been relatively strongly affected by Covid-19. In addition to the employments furloughed, there will be self-employed persons who have sought support through the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme. The profile of the roles furloughed, shows that the highest absolute numbers are in transport and storage (760), wholesale/retail (520) and accommodation and food (470) highlighting that aviation and leisure are key areas affected.

3.5 Looking ahead, growth is projected to continue, although generally at a slower rate than over the last decade. According to Cambridge Econometrics baseline projections, total employment in Uttlesford is projected to increase from 53,800 jobs in 2019 to 57,500 jobs in 2029 and just over 61,000 ten years later in 2039. In 2009, the number of jobs in the district was 42,500. Hence from 2009-2019, the increment was 11,300 jobs whereas the expected change from 2019-2029 is a more modest 3,700. These projections take account of the structure of the local economy, how different sectors are expected to perform in the future (at a national and regional level) and the relative historical performance of these sectors in Uttlesford.

Figure 3.2: Absolute Level of Employment in Uttlesford, Historic and Projected, 1984-2039



Source: Baseline projections from CE (LEFM), based on regional and national forecasts from March 2021

3.6 As the project progresses, we will consider and progress alternative growth scenarios informed by our analysis and stakeholder discussions.

Sectoral Dimensions

3.7 Within this overall picture, the existing evidence points to a range of key sectors in Uttlesford. From the *Uttlesford Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan 2018-21* (prepared by Uttlesford District Council in 2018), these are identified as including:

- the visitor economy

- the rural economy
- life sciences, research and innovation.

3.8 In addition, **activities linked directly or indirectly to Stansted Airport are effectively a fourth key 'sector'**; this embraces aviation, some advanced manufacturing and logistics/warehousing activities, as well as retail, hotel and other ancillary functions linked to a major airport.

3.9 From the available data, it is difficult to shed much light on the prospects for these sectors: none of them map precisely onto the SIC codes which structure the projections and in most cases, short to medium term prospects have been significantly influenced by the pandemic. This is especially true of the visitor economy and aviation-related activities (although in both cases, medium term growth is projected in allied sectors). The rural economy is likely to have proved more resilience while the life sciences cluster – focused on Chesterford Research Park and assuming it mirrors the prospects of life sciences nationally – ought to have seen sustained growth[6].

3.10 From CE's analysis, other sectors which ought to be recognised as important across Uttlesford, and apparently with growth potential, include **construction** (which is projected to grow especially quickly) and **IT services** (which is growing, albeit from a relatively low base).

Spatial Dimensions

3.11 Iceni has next sought to drill into spatial dynamics within the District. Using BRES data on employment, we have split the district into four geographical building blocks. These are as follows:

- Stansted Airport and environs[7]
- Saffron Walden[8]
- Great Dunmow[9]
- Other Rural Areas.[10]

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[6] From CE's analysis, both pharmaceuticals and health appear to be on a growth trajectory in Uttlesford, although the pharmaceuticals sector is identified as being very small in absolute terms

[7] LSOAs E01022086 and 090

[8] LOSAs E01022074, 075, 076, 077, 978, 079, 080, 081 and 082

[9] LSOAs E01022067, 068, and 69 plus E01033054, 55, and 56

[10] Remaining LSOAs in the District

3.12 Our analysis is based on the best fit to lower level super output areas (LSOAs). The data will not fully count self-employment (which we would expect to be greater in the rural areas), but provides some indication of the relative composition of employment in different areas.

3.13 Stansted Airport and environs has the greatest concentration of jobs at 14,900 accounting for around a third of the District total. Employment in this area is strongly focused in transport and storage (7,700) – essentially activities associated with the airport operation – together with accommodation and food (2,000), which will include employment in restaurants and hotels. These two sectors account for around three quarters of jobs in this area. The next largest sector is accommodation and support.

3.14 The Saffron Walden area accounts for 7,000 jobs, around 16% of the BRES District total. The largest employment sector in this area is wholesale/retail (1,400 jobs, LQ 1.3). There is an above average representation of employment in public administration (350 jobs, LQ 1.6) influences by the Council's presence here; but also above average jobs in higher value sectors such as professional, scientific and technical activities (800 jobs, LQ 1.2) and finance and insurance (250 jobs, LQ 1.3) albeit that employment numbers in these sectors are modest.

3.15 The Great Dunmow area accommodates around 4,100 jobs. It appears to have a relatively broad employment base with slightly higher levels of employment relative to the region in real estate, construction, wholesale/retail and other services; albeit that the absolute numbers of jobs are modest. Wholesale and retail is the largest employment sector (900 jobs) followed by admin and support services (almost 500).

3.16 The remaining rural areas of the District accommodate over 18,000 jobs, around 40% of the District total. The largest employment sectors in this area are again wholesale and food, construction and education – as is the case in many areas. Sectors which are more strongly represented in this area are Professional, scientific and technical activities (3,400 jobs, LQ 2.0), construction (1800 jobs, LQ 1.6). Health and accommodation and food also account for over 1500 jobs, with the latter having an LQ of 1.3.

3.17 An analysis of the business base shows that 92% of businesses in rural areas have less than 2 employees, compared to 90% across the East of England. This drives the stronger focus on micro-businesses across the District relative to the regional average. There are few large businesses in the District overall, with 99% of businesses in the District being SMEs.

Table 3.1 Business Base, 2020

2020	Total Enterprises	Micro (0 to 9)	Small (10 to 49)	Medium-sized (50 to 249)	Large (250+)
Saffron Walden	640	565	60	15	0
		88%	9%	2%	0%
Stansted Airport	760	665	75	20	0
		88%	10%	3%	0%
Great Dunmow	500	455	40	5	0
		91%	8%	1%	0%
Other Rural Areas	3,575	3,300	230	25	5
		92%	6%	1%	0%
Uttlesford Total	5,475	4,985	410	65	10
		91%	7%	1%	0%
East of England	271,395	244,305	22,095	4,000	995
		90%	8%	1%	0%

Source: IDBR/NOMIS

3.18 An analysis of the business base by sector shows a large number of enterprises in the District in Professional, scientific and technical activities (over 1000) of which more than two thirds are in the rural areas. Construction and wholesale/retail and the next largest. However relative to the regional profile, there is a stronger concentration of agricultural enterprises in Uttlesford (which number 375 in 2020, LQ 2.0). These are very much focused in the rural areas. Other sectors with larger numbers of enterprises in the rural areas include construction and wholesale/retail.

Table 3.2 Enterprises by Sub-Area, 2020

	Saffron Walden	Stansted Airport	Great Dunmow	Other Rural Areas	Uttlesford	East of England
A : Agriculture, forestry and fishing	5	40	15	315	375	11,935
B : Mining and quarrying	0	0	0	0	0	100
C : Manufacturing	30	35	45	190	300	14,345
D : Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	5	0	0	0	15	285
E : Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	0	5	0	5	15	935
F : Construction	85	125	70	595	875	43,505
G : Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	100	90	80	375	645	37,250
H : Transportation and storage	15	45	15	100	175	13,945
I : Accommodation and food service activities	30	30	25	110	195	13,270
J : Information and communication	55	65	35	255	410	22,185
K : Financial and insurance activities	20	15	10	85	125	5,235
L : Real estate activities	20	30	20	110	180	9,510
M : Professional, scientific and technical activities	120	125	80	710	1,040	44,580
N : Administrative and support service activities	65	90	45	330	530	22,840
O : Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	5	0	5	40	45	1,350
P : Education	5	15	5	70	95	4,755
Q : Human health and social work activities	30	15	10	100	155	9,395
R : Arts, entertainment and recreation	15	10	5	85	125	6,065
S : Other service activities	35	15	30	95	175	9,905
Total	640	760	500	3,575	5,475	271,395

Source: IDBR/NOMIS

3.19 Saffron Walden has a slightly higher proportion of private sector enterprises engaged in sectors typically associated with office space (Sections J-N).

Stansted Airport

3.20 Stansted Airport is clearly a major economic driver for the District's economy; but one which has been hit hard (as with other airports) by the Covid-19 pandemic. It is currently unclear how long it will take for passenger numbers and freight volumes to return to pre-pandemic levels and then to resume a growth trajectory. This will have implications for the wider footprint of Stansted as an employment hub.

3.21 Pre-pandemic, there had been ambitious plans for Stansted. In 2018, Manchester Airport Group outlined plans for £500 million investment over five years[11]. The plans included: construction of a new Arrivals terminal; reconfiguration of an existing terminal to become a departures terminal; and development of a new technical and professional skills college on site (which subsequently opened and is operated in conjunction with Harlow College).

3.22 In May 2021 the Airport was granted planning consent for expansion of the airport to enable combined airport operations of 274,000 aircraft movements (in line with the current cap), but with an increased proportion of passenger flights and an increased throughput of 43 million terminal passengers per annum. To facilitate this, the planning consent (UTT/18/0460/FUL) includes provision for two new taxiway links to the runway and nine additional aircraft stands, together with highways improvements including at M11 Junction 8.

3.23 The Appeal decision notes that the planning consent provides airlines and other prospective investors, with greater certainty regarding the ability of Stansted to grow, secure long-term growth deals and expand their network – potentially including long-haul routes. It notes that since the acquisition of the Airport by Manchester Airports Group (in 2013) and the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic there had been significant growth in passengers – with passenger numbers increasing by over 10mppa, from 17.8m in 2013 to 28mppa with associated growth in routes, airlines and employment (from 10,200 to 13,000).

3.24 The Inquiry evidence estimated that it would take 3-4 years for passenger traffic to recover to levels seen before the pandemic. It notes that the airport is less exposed to the long-haul and business markets which are likely to see more prolonged recovery curves and (in the case of the business sector) structural change to working practices.

3.25 The Inquiry Panel found that the conclusions of the ES and ESA regarding forecast passenger growth numbers were reasonable and sensible, and sufficiently robust (ID Para 27). The ES Addendum updated the demand forecasting to take account of Covid. This shows 35mppa being achieved in 2027 the cap of 43 mppa being reached in 2032-34. The Panel found that if it takes the airport longer than expected to reach the anticipated levels of growth, the environmental effects would take longer to realise; we note that a worst-case scenario assessed (reaching the cap in 2034) in the ES/ ESA.

3.26 The Inquiry evidence on forecasts expected cargo volumes growing from 234k tonnes in 2019 to 375k tonnes in 2032 – a 60% growth in cargo tonnage, but just 2% of the overall total cargo handled

[11] Uttlesford District Council (2018) *Uttlesford Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan 2018-21. 'Supporting Sustainable Business Growth'*

at London Airports. The assumed split of flights in 2032 is 92% passenger (252,000), 5% cargo (15,000) and 7% other (e.g. private aviation).

3.27 The economic impact analysis undertaken for MAG by Optimal Economics. This expected Stansted-related employment across a wide study area to grow from 24,100 in 2019 (of which 13,000 is direct on-airport employment) to 30,300 – with the proposed development supporting 5,600 additional jobs and £380m GVA. Of the additional employment, 3,000 is additional direct on-airport jobs.

3.28 In terms of the wider economic benefits, the evidence indicated that the proposed development will enable 1.2 million business passengers to travel through Stansted in 2032, which is estimated to create an additional £1 billion of GVA for the East of England and London economies. The spending of the 2.2 million inbound leisure passengers will support 13,900 jobs and £336 million of GVA in the tourism industry. Both these effects will support the growth of the East of England and London economies.[12] These WEBs arise through a range of factors:

- Attractiveness to FDI and enabling local firms to exploit investment opportunities overseas;
- Facilitating trade – through both the shipment of goods and enabling people to visit customers;
- Labour market effects – in particular associated with the attraction of highly skilled individuals to work in the UK;
- Agglomeration effects – both through the role of the flight network and in influencing FDI decisions resulting in clustering of firms in locations around airports;
- Tourism – supporting growth in tourism through inbound visitor travel/ expenditure.

3.29 Many of these wider benefits are at a regional level rather than specific to Uttlesford, which is likely to benefit more specifically from direct airport jobs and some potential for growth in businesses locally which provide products or services to the Airport. We will look further at these issues as the project progresses.

3.30 The evidence then identifies particular air intensive or air sensitive economic sectors, but picks out in particular the globally important tech, pharmaceuticals and life science sector around Cambridge and in the LSC Corridor.

[12] Proof of Evidence of Edith McDowall, Optimal Economics

Commercial Market Dynamics

3.31 Uttlesford has a relatively modest stock of office space (94,000 sq.m) but the level of office space has remained relatively stable over the period since 2010 (in contrast to surrounding areas where stock levels have fallen). The focus of the market is on SME businesses which are looking for local affordable space, as opposed to larger HQ requirements which are rare. Larger deals have been focused at Chesterford Research Park, which is focused on R&D and the bioscience sector, and reflects proximity to Cambridge; as well as at Parsonage Road in Takeley close to the A120.

3.32 Vacancy levels has risen over the last 18 months, likely influenced by companies not renewing leases, to around 8.0% but from a low base. The vacancy level is therefore necessary to support turnover in a functioning market. However there is essentially no Grade A office space available. New development will however primarily occur when a occupier is in place, and prepared to pay a premium; with the rental tone of around £19 psf for Grade A space insufficient to support speculative development. For these reasons together with the potential shift towards more flexible/ virtual ways of working, the level of new development of office space is likely to be fairly modest.

3.33 The District has a much greater volume of industrial space (459,000 sq.m), which includes industrial and warehousing premises; and the total volume of such space has grown by 6% between 2010-20. Leasing activity has been focused towards SME businesses with almost all deals for units of < 50,000 sq.ft, however this appears (at least in part) a reflection of a lack of availability of larger units or sites that could accommodate them.

3.34 Positive net absorption over the last 6 years has reduced the vacancy level to a very low 1.8% with both the data and stakeholder engagement pointing to a constrained supply and urgent need to bring forward additional land at commercially attractive locations. The market remains vibrant, with demand for properties of a range of sizes; and with the greatest demand focused at locations close to/ accessible from M11 Junction 8.

4. OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS LOOKING FORWARDS

4.1 The effects of the pandemic – and the consequences of the UK's departure from the EU – are very important contextual factors in informing an understanding of future prospects for Uttlesford's economy; both are reflected in the projections developed by CE.

4.2 Beyond this, we would note the following points. **All of these need further investigation and research**, but we think **all will be important in shaping the next iteration of the Uttlesford Local Plan**:

- In relation to its employment implications, **aviation is a potentially important growth driver but there are some uncertainties about the pace of its recovery.** It is currently unclear how long it will take for passenger numbers and freight volumes to return to pre-pandemic levels and then to resume a growth trajectory. This will have implications for the wider footprint of Stansted as an employment hub. Pre-pandemic, there had been ambitious plans for Stansted. In 2018, Manchester Airport Group outlined plans for £500 million investment over five years[13]. The plans included: construction of a new Arrivals terminal; reconfiguration of an existing terminal to become a departures terminal; and development of a new technical and professional skills college on site (which subsequently opened and is operated in conjunction with Harlow College).

  In May 2021 the Airport was granted planning consent for expansion of the airport with the core assumption being of 35mppa being achieved in 2027 the cap of 43 mppa being reached in 2032-34. The Panel found that if it takes the airport longer than expected to reach the anticipated levels of growth, the environmental effects would take longer to realise; we note that a worst-case scenario assessed (reaching the cap in 2034) in the ES/ ESA. This can be expected to support the District's economy.

- The M11 motorway transects Uttlesford and the associated 'innovation corridor' in principle presents opportunities, particularly in respect of life sciences given the significance of Chesterford Research Park on the edge of the Cambridge sub-region. However **with regard to the research and innovation agenda there are both opportunities and threats looking forward**. On the positive side, the quest for vaccines and therapeutics during the pandemic has been a spur for additional investment and growth. In addition, the relocation of Public Health England to Harlow (to the south of Uttlesford) and the establishment in Braintree (to the east) of the Cell and Gene Therapy Manufacturing Catapult's Manufacturing Innovation Centre both

[13] Uttlesford District Council (2018) *Uttlesford Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan 2018-21. 'Supporting Sustainable Business Growth'*

potentially present opportunities. But set against this – and insofar as research investment is funded by the public sector – there may well be increasing pressure to direct available resources out of the Golden Triangle in response to wider 'levelling up' imperatives. Whilst the Oxford-Cambridge Arc continues to be a national priority, the implications for resourcing seem increasingly uncertain. However, on balance, for Uttlesford – and given the momentum that undoubtedly exists – **prospects in relation to life sciences should continue to be strong**.

- Uttlesford is within the '**digital innovation zone'**. This has been established by local authorities across Essex and Hertfordshire with the aim of delivering the following vision: "*To be the best connected place of its type in the UK. A place of innovation and inclusion. A place where the benefits of digital investment are harnessed, maximised and shared across residents, commuters, businesses and borders*"[14]. Digital connectivity will certainly be important going ahead – particularly in relation to Uttlesford's rural economy and its Garden Communities (see below). In addition, the links to the digital sector could be important. **CE's analysis suggests that the IT sector is underrepresented in Uttlesford currently**, but that reasonable growth is projected and the links to the DIZ could be important. Strong broadband connectivity will be important in supporting growth in business and professional services as the relationship with London evolves.

- **Uttlesford's population is set to grow quickly**. Between 2019 and 2039, the population is expected to increase by just over 16,000 people. This translates into a growth rate of 0.8% per annum across the 20 year period – double the rate for the East of England and England, and faster than the rate observed in neighbouring areas. Within this, the fastest rate of growth is in the older age groups (as is the case nationally); this arguably presents both opportunities and threats in relation to the district's economic prospects, but ***issues around a growing, ageing population ought to be considered carefully.*** How this growth is distributed within the District and phased over time will have economic implications.

- From CE's analysis, **the construction sector is set to see rapid future growth**. This relates in part to projected population growth within Uttlesford, but also more broadly across Essex, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire. *The future of the sector is an issue that needs to be considered in the context of the Local Plan review*. The importance of construction is referenced in most of SELEP's principal strategic statements – including through the delivery of major projects – although its needs as a sector perhaps need further consideration.

- Already, Uttlesford's **resident working age population** is reasonably (although not outstandingly) well qualified overall and within it, there is a high incidence of residents working in higher order occupations. London commuting is a feature and the sectoral mix suggests that

[14] See Our Vision – DIZ

post-pandemic, that there will be more residents working for home for more of the time. It seems likely therefore that Uttlesford will be home to many individuals who could, at some stage, consider self-employment and/or the formation of new businesses. Already, Uttlesford has a very high incidence of micro enterprises within its business stock. However new firm formation rates are modest and survival rates are somewhat lower than comparator areas. *This may suggest that more could be done to support micro-business in Uttlesford, particularly if broader shifts precipitate a growing interest in enterprise (which is probable):*

  - **a strategy for enterprise – including appropriate incubator/innovation centre provision –** ought therefore to be considered in relation to the new Local Plan

  - in addition, **consideration ought to be given to appropriate grow-on space** which appears to be a particular issue (and the absence of it may be one reason why micro businesses appear to be growing slowly).

- Another sector which is projected to grow is **logistics**. With the M11 motorway and the A120 – and with a major international airport – Uttlesford is well connected and the scale of demand for logistics-related activities is likely to be high. The Council will need to take a view on appropriate provision, recognising the double-edged nature of the sector's growth.

- There are three main towns in Uttlesford: **Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow and Thaxted**. The evidence suggests that the most vibrant is Saffron Walden – in part because of its train connections to London Liverpool Street (via Audley End) and in part because of its proximity to the Cambridge sub-region. Existing studies have suggested a need for more retail provision – although with the shift to on-line retail, it is unclear whether this continues to be the case. Great Dunmow and Thaxted are smaller and less well connected. *The economic role of all three towns will need consideration going forward.*

- The evidence we have been able to review says very little about the **rural parts of Uttlesford**. Simply in terms of their economic footprint, these are dominated by micro enterprises, and they are generally home to people who work elsewhere (whether within the district or further afield). There is concern that redundant farm buildings are being converted to residential uses. Looking ahead, small scale employment provision is likely to be important – but so too is high quality broadband.

4.3 Stakeholder consultation and the business survey will provide further insight into a number of these issues as the project progresses.