

# Baseline Assessment of Culture, Creativity and the Arts for Uttlesford District Council

Draft 13<sup>th</sup> February 2022



Pictures from top left clockwise – Fairycroft House (Saffron Walden), Thaxted Guildhall, Saffron Hall, House on the Hill Toy Museum (Stansted), Newport Parish Council, The Arts Centre Dunmow, Manuden Village Community Centre,

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Appendix 1: Spatial Distribution of Cultural, Arts and Heritage Assets across largest Parishes

# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. Uttlesford District Council (UDC) commissioned the Cultural Engine CIC to undertake a 'Baseline Assessment of Culture, Creativity and the Arts' as part of a wider evidence base to inform the Local Plan. The work took place between September 2021 and January 2022.
- 1.2 The Baseline Assessment includes a number of key elements of research that combine to build up, for the first time across the District, a comprehensive picture of the cultural, creative, arts and heritage sectors; including venues, spaces, practitioners, organisations and resources. Most of the venues and organisations covered were not-for-profit, community and voluntary sectors where organisations, groups and individuals are engaging communities and visitors in cultural activities, events, and programmes. A database of almost 400 organisations and practitioners has been created that provides the basis for ongoing monitoring of the creative and heritage sectors.
- 1.3 The Baseline Assessment covered several research methods:
  - Audience insight and data (working with the Audience Agency)
  - Virtual online Surveys with stakeholders (Sector organisations and Parish/Town Councils) with some face-to-face interviews
  - Stakeholder interviews and strategic conversations with some of the key providers and organisations located across the District
  - Research through online, telephone and word of mouth to build as comprehensive a database as possible and which will act as a benchmark opportunity for long-term updating and refreshing)
  - On the ground research within parish and settlements
  - Engagement with Arts Council England, Essex County Council, English Heritage

## Context Setting

- 1.4 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's Planning Policies for England with guidance for Local Authorities on how these are to be applied (including the production of Local Plans). To achieve 'sustainable development' the NPPF states that the 'planning system has 3 overarching objectives' (para 8) which are framed as 'economic', 'social' and 'environmental'. It is under the 'social' objective that culture sits.
- 1.5. By making a clear provision in Local Plans for preserving, enhancing, and building spaces and sites that can be used by communities for cultural activities and pursuits, a clear contribution can be made to 'sustainable development'.
- 1.6. Between 2019 and 2039 the population of the District will increase by over 16,000 (double the growth rate projected for the East of England and England<sup>1</sup>). This is a significant number of new people who are likely to live in new developments connected to existing settlements, or in new settlements or a garden community. Cultural infrastructure must be considered as part of holistic place making as there is a strong body of evidence to support the key role of culture and cultural infrastructure in placemaking and local economies.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: The Local Economy of Uttlesford. Developing an evidence base to inform the new Local Plan. Section B: Socio-economic Baseline (July 2021). SQW. 2.11 (page 7)

- 1.7. Uttlesford is one of the most affluent Districts in England with no areas of significant deprivation, (not a single Lower Super Output Area is in the 40% most deprived). There is an older population than the Essex and national average, and a significant 0 – 15 age group, so isolation in what is a predominantly rural District is a challenge particularly for older people as recognised in the Uttlesford Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2022.
- 1.8. All strategic partners in Uttlesford will need to collaborate to make a strong case for investment in cultural infrastructure over the coming years, developing new narratives and evidence and targeting investment where it may be most needed (including linking to new development sites) These narratives should be based on the concept of building on assets and opportunity, with investment unlocking wider social, health and economic/tourism benefits. There is an excellent cultural and heritage asset base to build on and significant experience locally to support this process. Furthermore, a strong cultural base is essential to creating new communities which may emerge as priorities within the new Local Plan.

### **Relevant Policy and Strategic Issues**

- 1.9 The Arts Council England ‘Let’s Create’ strategy for 2020-2030 and the related Delivery Plan focuses significantly on broadening participation in cultural experience for everyone. The strategy recognises the wider benefits of culture and arts on outcomes including social, health and economic. ‘Let’s Create’ sets the national strategic context for the cultural sectors, but has no guidance relating to the planning system or development gain.
- 1.10 Uttlesford District has traditionally received low levels of investment from the Arts Council and other sources including the National Lottery Heritage Fund, when compared to other Districts in Essex for example. There needs to be a strategy to address this.
- 1.11. Uttlesford District is 177<sup>th</sup> out of 316 on the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) Heritage Index, a detailed analysis of a range of indicators on heritage and cultural participation within local authority areas and the asset base in terms of buildings, spaces, and environments for example. This is quite low considering the heritage offer of the District. The District is particularly low scoring on ‘Museums, Archives and Artefacts’ – both assets and activities. These findings suggest that although there is a wealth of heritage across the District, more could be done to engage communities, interpret and explore.
- 1.12. There is ever more interest in the value of arts, culture and heritage to place making agendas, and particularly the current challenges for town centres across the UK. The important role that is played by the arts/cultural and heritage offer in relation to town centres needs to be considered. This includes core established destinations including galleries and museums, as well as events and festivals. There is an increasing focus on the importance of experiences.
- 1.13. Although Uttlesford is not a ‘Levelling-Up’ priority area, the core narrative of Levelling-Up is pervading all national and regional strategic and funding priorities (including Arts Council, Essex County Council and South East Local Enterprise Partnership), so it is important to recognise this when developing strategy and targeting funding. Cultural and heritage investment is recognised as a priority for the Levelling-Up agenda nationally.

## Neighbouring Authorities and Cultural Strategies

- 1.14. Research for the Baseline Assessment included analysis of neighbouring local authority cultural strategies. This was to inform partners in Uttlesford on how neighbouring Authorities are undertaking strategy development in relation to culture and arts as this may be relevant to how UDC takes forward a cultural strategy beyond the Baseline stage. It was also an opportunity to start new conversations which could lead to joint working and promotions. Meetings were held with four neighbouring authorities.
- 1.15. The Neighbouring Authorities were East Hertfordshire District Council, Cambridge City Council, Chelmsford City Council and Stevenage Borough Council.
- 1.16. All approaches by the Local Authorities differed and none had linked their cultural strategy work formally to the Planning and the provision of social and community infrastructure or the Local Plan.
- 1.17. All of the Neighbouring Authorities have established a cultural network (or networks in Cambridge), and in the case of Stevenage and Chelmsford they also have separate Trusts to support cultural development. Only East Herts had compiled a database of existing cultural organisations (around 200). The networks in place had supported the process of developing cultural strategies and priorities and can support funding applications. Cambridge and East Herts, as have other local authorities, have developed platforms (web based) to publicise and promote local groups, activities and venues; are supporting culture through grants; and have adopted strong enabling role. Networks in all of the Neighbouring Authorities appear to be working well and offer opportunities for collaboration, strategy development and identification of priorities
- 1.18. In the case of Stevenage, the cultural strategy (which includes significant references to heritage) is very much embedded within the local regeneration and development context, and recognises cycling and cycle ways as an important part of local cultural infrastructure. Chelmsford is also very much positioning culture as core to wider place-making and economic development opportunities in the city.

## Adopted Local Plans from Other Local Authorities – References to culture, creativity and the Arts

- 1.19. Research was undertaken as part of the Baseline into a number of Adopted Local Plans from Local Authorities across England, with a particular interest in their references and policies relating to culture, creativity and the arts. The fact of being ‘adopted’ demonstrates that these Local Plans have been found to be sound and legally compliant, so they provide a good insight that may be of relevance to UDC.
- 1.20. Of the Local Plans reviewed, Chelmsford City Council’s Local Plan has the most references to the importance of culture, including a number of policies to back this up relating to ‘protecting and enhancing’ cultural assets, and ensuring new infrastructure developments include cultural facilities. There is also a specific reference to the Chelmsford Cultural Development Trust – *‘Through close engagement with the public, the mutual objective is to inspire participation in the arts and culture, to build awareness of the City’s historic heritage and to ignite interest in developing creative and cultural legacies for the future.’*
- 1.21. Harlow, also a neighbouring authority, has specific reference to the ‘Sculpture Town’ brand as an important cultural asset that should be enhanced through the planning process.

- 1.22. Many other references to culture and heritage in the Local Plans relate to town and urban centres, and tourism/visitor economy (including evening economy). There are also references to the benefits to health and wellbeing through culture. References to heritage and historic environments tends to be more prominent than references to culture and arts.
- 1.23. None of the Local Plans has a specific technical evidence base to support cultural related narrative and policies.
- 1.24.

## **Audiences and Engagement with Culture in Uttlesford**

An assessment of the Audience Agency's Audience Spectrum data shows that the most prominent of the 10 Audience Spectrum segments in Uttlesford District are 'Commuterland Culturebuffs', 'Dormitory Dependables' and 'Trips & Treats'. 80% of the Uttlesford population belong to one of these three segments, compared with 59% and 57% of the population in Hertfordshire & Cambridgeshire, and Essex respectively.

## **Cultural Venues and Organisations in Uttlesford – The Database**

- 1.24. Our research has highlighted 392 venues artists and cultural activities of which 168 are physical places ranging from heritage sites, private studios, music venues to multifunctional facilities of which there are 79. The latter are predominantly village halls either run by the Parish Council or the community. They offer venues for all kinds of cultural activities provided by itinerant professionals and local informal groups and appear to fulfil a large proportion of local cultural need.
- 1.25. Saffron Walden is the main cultural centre within Uttlesford with most of the larger museums, galleries, markets, events, and other cultural opportunities located in the town along with strong amateur and community groups and participation. Together with neighbouring towns and cities (outside of the District) including Cambridge, Bishops Stortford, Harlow, Braintree and Chelmsford there is an extended cultural offer for those wishing to travel.
- 1.26. Broadly in terms of the share of physical cultural, arts and heritage assets, 29% of these are located in Saffron Walden, 10% in Great Dunmow, 6% in Thaxted (a total of 45% for the main three locations in the District). 30% of the assets on the list are activities and/or projects that are not fixed or located in any one place (although many will run sessions and events in the main towns at locations such as Fairycroft House).
- 1.27. Key cultural/heritage destinations include Saffron Hall, Fry Art Gallery, Fairycroft House, Audley End, Saffron Walden Museum and Stansted Mountfitchet Castle. There are very few public cultural/heritage attractions that are not in (or close to) urban centres. The main destinations will be the main drivers of visits by audiences from within as well as from outside of the District.

## **Survey of Cultural Sector Organisations**

- 1.28. A bespoke survey achieved 79 responses from cultural, creative and arts organisations.

- 1.29. Respondents were from a wide range of cultural and heritage 'sub sectors' including music/music venues (most popular), arts/creative education, artists, multi-use spaces, theatre/performing arts, craft/heritage craft practitioners, cinemas, museums, archives and heritage buildings.
- 1.30. Many organisations are entirely voluntary led with very little funding, and many use a range of different spaces for activities (as they don't have a core property/space)
- 1.31. Respondents were split on whether their organisations/operations had the funding they needed, and on whether they had access to the advice and support they needed.
- 1.32. Most of the audiences and participants are from the parish or the local area, although there are good numbers of visitors/audiences from other areas as well (particularly for larger organisations). The majority of respondents stated that they did engage their local communities in activities/participation.
- 1.33. There was a broadly positive response from respondents to the potential opportunity to join a District-wide cultural network, but many caveats and comments relating to the purpose, scope and focus.

### **Themes Emerging from Strategic Conversations and Insight**

- 1.34. Meetings and discussions were held with 29 cultural, heritage and community organisations (the majority based in Uttlesford) to understand the local context, challenges and opportunities for culture, arts and heritage in the District. A number of key themes emerged and some of the key issues are summarised under these themes.
- 1.35. Audiences and Participation for Culture, Creativity and the Arts (and Heritage). Only Saffron Walden Museum has an effective local public remit with funding through UDC. Many other creative spaces and organisations are limited in capacity and in their scope is regional and not necessarily local (although all are keen to engage more locally where possible). Fairycroft House is the main multi-purpose cultural space in the District with a very local focus (but is limited by space and funding). Much activity takes place in Church and Village Halls. Audiences and participants are generally made up of older people, particularly for larger organisations including the Museum, Fry Art Gallery, Thaxted Festival and Saffron Hall.
- 1.36. Community Engagement. Many organisations engage their local communities in activities. Higher profile examples include Saffron Hall through programmes focused on arts and wellbeing outcomes and Saffron Walden Museum are collaborating with Essex Cultural Diversity Project (an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation that supports diverse community engagement in arts and heritage projects) on community outreach relating to the natural history collection.
- 1.37. General Accessibility and Affordability of Space for Cultural Participation. Much of the formal arts/cultural and heritage space is in Saffron Walden, but the most accessible space is Fairycroft House (although this space is heavily oversubscribed and cannot meet all the demand). There are not many formal arts and cultural space options in Saffron Walden
- 1.39. Funding for Culture, Creativity and the Arts. Uttlesford has low levels of investment in arts, culture and heritage from core funders including the Arts Council. Funding for Saffron Walden Museum through UDC is the only major public subsidy. Private sponsorship and membership is important to many cultural organisations. Consideration should be given to the potential role of non-arts funding (i.e. funding that is not targeted at arts provision), particularly health and wellbeing budgets recognising the benefits of arts and cultural activities to health and social outcomes.

- 1.40. Potential for Cultural Networks. There is no cultural network currently in the District; although there are some good examples of local collaboration including Saffron Walden Heritage Development Group. There is also evidence of some mutual support between organisations including Saffron Hall providing assistance to Fairycroft House and Thaxted Festival during the Covid lockdown in 2020. Collaborative consideration needs to be given to the future role, scope and geographic coverage of a cultural network(s).
- 1.41. Governance and Volunteering. Uttlesford appears strong on volunteering through arts, culture and heritage organisations, with experienced volunteers taking on some key roles in established organisations including Fry Art Gallery, Thaxted Festival and Great Dunmow Museum (as well as Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd). Most village halls and local community spaces are volunteer run which supports opportunities for community and cultural activities. Volunteers tend to be older people, so attention should be given to succession planning in the short and longer-term.
- 1.42. Space for emerging Creative Practitioners and Organisations. The space available for emerging artists, crafters and creative practitioners appears limited. The majority of practitioners seem to operate in private spaces (homes for example). This may be a limiting factor on those wanting to access affordable and flexible space who do not have their own space at home. There may be scope for developing new spaces to be leased on affordable and flexible basis taking inspiration from other examples including Gatehouse Arts and Parndon Mill (Harlow) and Cuckoo Farm (Colchester).
- 1.43. Economic Development and Tourism. The cultural offer of a place makes a significant contribution to the local economy by encouraging visitors, supporting the hospitality sectors, retail and evening economy, as well as through direct employment. This was recognised in many of the discussions with key stakeholders. Some cultural/heritage organisations are a big draw for visits to the District including the Museum, Audley End, Saffron Hall and Thaxted Festival. The Tourist Information Centre in Saffron Walden has 118,000 visitors each year and supports the promotion the cultural/heritage offer. There are no other TICs elsewhere in the District currently. More could be done to promote cultural venues and activities throughout Uttlesford and to link key cultural locations Saffron Hall and Audley End to the economy of Saffron Walden in particular.

## **Cultural and Creative Skills and Education**

- 1.44. The state funded secondary schools in the District seem to offer a good cultural curriculum and extra curricula activities. There is no evidence however of significant Arts Award activity in schools or other organisations.
- 1.45. Access to Youth Services across the District is relatively poor and Covid has made the situation harder. UDC's Youth Initiatives Fund is a the main investment in youth provision, but there appears to be little use of the fund to lever in additional investment and match funding in cultural activities for example. There are a number of Essex County Council owned Youth Centres that are utilised on a very part time basis, and many villages have no formal provision of any kind. Other youth activities appear limited and utilise community spaces. Thaxted has an independent Youth Centre but very limited activity and funding at present.
- 1.46. The Essex County Council managed ACL (Adult Education) College no longer runs courses at the Essex CC-owned building at Fairycroft. ACL have not provided any clear rationale for this. There is limited community provision of arts, cultural and craft courses within the District (and limited in neighbouring areas as well).



- 1.47. Uttlesford has a Youth Council that has been disrupted by Covid although there are plans to develop this further and engage more young people across the District. This could be a good forum for informing cultural provision from young people's perspective. Initiating a Local Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP) could also be investigated (generally led by the Local Authority). An LCEP would bring artists and creative organisations together with school providers to improve cultural provision locally and could secure additional funding from the Arts Council.
- 1.48. Rom Theatre Arts (at Dunmow Arts Centre) are developing a 3-Year Diploma Course in 'Musical Theatre' that will be accredited by Chichester University. The course will be based entirely at the Arts Centre and will be open to students from across the world putting Dunmow on the map for Higher Education.

## Parish and Town Councils and the Rural Context

- 1.49. Uttlesford is predominantly a rural District covering around 250 square miles with a patchwork of Parishes all with their own sense of identity and community. It is therefore important to consider the role of Parish Councils and other local groups in relation to the provision of spaces and activities for cultural activities.
- 1.50. There are 51 Parish Councils of varying sizes and capacity, 2 larger Town Councils in Great Dunmow and Saffron Walden, and 4 parishes that have no formal Council structure (but do have local meetings). Together with a wealth of local communities and charities running village halls and other community spaces, this represents an excellent community-centred network covering the whole District with knowledge and insight into the local needs to their communities. They are therefore important partners for maintaining and increasing cultural, arts and heritage provision over the next few years.
- 1.51. A key challenge, which is particularly important in the context of Covid-19, is addressing isolation of communities across the District, particularly younger and older populations in rural areas. Parish Councils and community groups/charities in particular are important in tackling this, primarily through use of their Village Halls for cultural and community activity.
- 1.52. The Baseline (database) identifies that there are at least 79 Village Halls or similarly accessible community spaces, which is a significant number of spaces that are accessible for a range of activities. Not all of the spaces are managed by Parish or Town Councils however. 14 are managed directly by Parish or Town Councils, 44 are run by independent charities for example.
- 1.53. A survey of Parish and Town Councils was undertaken as part of the Baseline work (13 responses). This indicated that a range of cultural activities take place across many parishes including music, arts/crafts, history and performing arts. Most of the activities are taken up by older people and families. There is little experience across Parish Councils of applying for external funding (for cultural or community projects for example).
- 1.54. A review of Neighbourhood Plans within the Uttlesford District was undertaken to inform the Baseline. Four are completed (or 'made'), with a further four at different stages of development. Other than Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan (not yet 'made'), **the majority make few if any references to cultural space or provision.** There are many more references to the importance of historic environments and heritage.
- 1.55. Public transport is very limited between rural locations across the District. Reliance upon cars is high in the District (car ownership in Uttlesford is one of the highest rates in England).

1.56. The Recorders of Uttlesford History (RUH) is an important network of experienced individuals with significant resources relating to local history. They are all volunteers and tend to be older people and the resources for shared projects and outreach is limited. However, they could play a key role in sharing local heritage and history with existing and new communities across the District (with additional support/funding as necessary).

## **Key Opportunities, Challenges and Recommendations**

1.57. Through the Planning system it will be important to unlock sources of funding for accessible cultural (and community) facilities, and where possible consider future costs.

1.58. Leverage opportunities for funding and investment, recognising that Uttlesford gets very low levels of public investment. Coordinate existing funding to maximise impact and use it to lever in additional external funding where possible.

1.59. Recognise some existing opportunities that can make a difference to cultural provision, including at Faircroft House (and adjacent Essex CC space).

1.60. Consider forming an Uttlesford-wide cultural network to represent the broader creative/cultural sectors (and heritage) and support networking. The network could also engage with local tourism initiatives.

1.61. Village Halls and community spaces are important for providing space for cultural and community activities in rural areas. Some local committees may need access to support and funding. Encouraging collaboration between local committees may be beneficial.

1.62. Cultural events are important for promoting Uttlesford's cultural and heritage sectors. Initiatives including an open studio programme that includes areas South and East of the District and working with the National Trust to develop a replacement for Wood Festival could be considered.

1.63. There are a number of opportunities to support young people to engage in cultural activities. Initiatives could include developing a Local Cultural Education Partnership, and utilising the Youth Investment Fund to leverage additional funding.

1.64. Recognise the importance of culture/arts to the future of town centres and aim to get those visiting key destinations including Audley End and Saffron Hall to also visit Saffron Walden town centre where possible.

1.65. There is a lack of accessible and affordable studio spaces across the District for artists, creative practitioners and crafters. This is an issue that could be addressed to enable emerging creatives to get established and stay in the District.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. This report summarises the work undertaken to date (January 2022) on a Baseline Assessment of Culture, Creativity and the Arts for the Uttlesford District. The work was commissioned by Uttlesford District Council (UDC) to support the ongoing work of the Local Plan, and ultimately form part of the evidence base for the Local Plan. The Brief for the Baseline Assessment focused on the following outcomes. **This report relates to Stage 1 only.**

### Stage 1: **Baseline Assessment**

- a. Identifying existing venues, spaces, practitioners, organisations and resources
- b. Understand the benefits and value of what already exists for different sectors of the community
- c. Understand challenges and opportunities including engagement with stakeholders
- d. Identify gaps in provision in relation to other comparable places and the District's geographical location and rural accessibility issues

Stage 2: **Strategy Development** – Development of a Culture, Creativity & Arts Strategy and implementation, Funding and Action Plan

- 2.2. It is rare for Local Authorities to seek to compile a comprehensive analysis of organisations, practitioners and groups in the creative, cultural and arts sectors in their areas; and rarer still for this to be linked to Planning.
- 2.3. There is not standard system for incorporating cultural asset planning into the Local Plan process, so the approach taken is multi-faceted and is inevitably informed not just by the numbers (i.e. how many spaces and where), but also by insight, ideas and concepts formed through engagement with a wide range of stakeholders. The Baseline Assessment is not a full Cultural Strategy; this will follow in due course based to a large extent on some of the issues, challenges and opportunities captured in this Baseline.
- 2.4. Throughout the analysis of the current situation across the District regarding culture, creativity and the arts (and we have always included heritage due to its close interrelationship with cultural provision), there have been many different takes on why culture is important and what role it plays. We can summarise the three main ways that stakeholders across Uttlesford understand 'culture' and its importance and how they potentially relate to the Local Plan process:
- The importance of **mapping** spaces that can be used for arts/culture and heritage activities, and that in recognising this mapping (and resulting database), ensure that these assets and spaces survive into the future (and secure investment where required). Being clear on what the asset base is provides a strategic basis for Uttlesford District Council (UDC) and other partners as appropriate to identify actions and interventions to improve or maintain provision of spaces
  - The importance of increasing **overall participation** rates in arts/culture and heritage activities. There are many reasons for increasing overall participation including social and health outcomes that stakeholders recognise from their own experience and available research
  - Recognise the role of Arts, Culture, Creativity and Heritage in terms of **placemaking** and supporting local tourism/economic development. The creative sectors are part of an area's 'soft power' when it comes to promoting inward investment, business growth, tourism opportunities and improved infrastructure. This is equally relevant for existing towns, villages and places as well as new proposed settlements (of all sizes) including Garden communities

- 2.5. UDC does not have an Art, Culture or Heritage strategy of any kind. Often creative/arts sectors are referenced and incorporated into wider strategic and documents. However, this does not appear to be the case for UDC with very few references to arts, culture or heritage in wider economic or health and wellbeing strategies for example. Therefore the inclusion of arts, culture and creativity in relation to the Local Plan provides an obvious opportunity to promote their wider strategic importance (and potentially secure investment where it might be needed).
- 2.6. The Baseline Assessment is an attempt not only to map the current provision of spaces, activities, organisations and practitioners, but also to understand the broader cultural context and ecosystem at play across the District. Given the size and rural nature of the District, perceptions and insights vary depending upon the location. The District is dominated by small rural settlements and farmland with a two towns acting to an extent as focal points for retail, hospitality, culture/leisure. The towns are smaller than the main towns in other Essex Districts, limiting their role as destinations for all across the District.
- 2.7. Given the relatively dispersed nature of the main towns and the close proximity of towns in neighbouring Districts, other towns outside of Uttlesford may well play a more important role including Cambridge, Bishops Stortford, Harlow, Chelmsford and Braintree.
- 2.8. Given the challenge of presenting a picture that captures the entire District as a coherent whole (as the wider Local Plan process essentially demands), we have pursued a number of different strategies to build up an initial picture – some data-driven and some more strategic and narrative driven.
  - Audience insight and data (working with the Audience Agency)
  - Surveys with stakeholders (Sector organisations and Parish/Town Councils)
  - Stakeholder interviews and strategic conversations with some of the key providers and organisations in the District
  - Research through online, telephone and word of mouth to build as comprehensive a database as possible (having it will provide the opportunity for long-term updating and refreshing)
  - On the ground research within each parish and settlement, seeing how connected or otherwise places are for example and where some of the key facilities are situated

## What do we mean by Culture, Creativity and the Arts?

- 2.9 This has been left open for the Baseline Assessment including different elements of the wider creative and cultural sectors, and importantly including heritage. The refining of the interpretation can be undertaken in due course through the development of a Cultural Strategy. To an extent responders to the survey essentially self-selected, and the interpretation of culture, creativity and the arts was left deliberately open to encourage responses.
- 2.10 The search for organisations, spaces and creative practitioners for inclusion on the Database was **primarily focused on public participation and creative and crafting skills**. Public participation would include any organisation, group, space or individual that is involved in encouraging, supporting or facilitating the public to take part in creative activities. This would be very much in line with the Arts Council's current focus on culture and arts – all about participation and access for all.
- 2.11 Ultimately the Baseline Assessment and resulting Cultural Strategy (which will both inform the Local Plan process longer-term) **will most likely be relevant to what could be described as public good**

**interventions – spaces that can be described as ‘infrastructure’ that can support a range of activities and events**, and the activities that take place in relation to this. Obvious examples of public good spaces and activities include art galleries, theatres, and cultural hubs.

- 2.12 Ensuring good provision in terms of facilities and access is crucial and will then provide much of the necessary infrastructure for the wider creative sectors to thrive. Specific interventions that may be relevant could include new community halls, local museum/galleries and artist studios. Public art could also be included although there has been very little focus from any stakeholders or responders to the survey on this issue.
- 2.13 In terms of ‘heritage’, although this was deliberately not included within the title of the study and the surveys in particular, heritage-focused activities were very much a key issue for many stakeholders and respondents to the surveys. Not all heritage activities are necessarily ‘creative’, but there is significant scope for this and there is also a great importance in terms of placemaking, community participation, and volunteering through heritage activities. **The heritage offer of the whole of the Uttlesford District is strong in terms of the buildings but also cultural heritage and narratives, and it is a big driver of community participation and volunteering.** Creative activities can be key drivers for community participation in heritage, and some cultural organisations certainly straddle both the arts and heritage (Fry Art Gallery for example).
- 2.14 This report is split into two main sections. The first sets the CONTEXT for the report, covering a range of relevant strategic issues that are important considerations for developing policies for culture, creativity and arts in Uttlesford. The second covers the main research and findings – ASSESSMENT OF CULTURE, CREATIVITY & ARTS IN UTTLESFORD

# **SECTION ONE**

## **CONTEXT**

### 3. CONTEXT SETTING

- 3.1 In this section we consider some of the important context for the Baseline Assessment – essentially the wider strategic issues that are important considerations for undertaking the Baseline and resulting research, but also thinking beyond this stage relating to planning, economic development, placemaking, tourism, health & wellbeing.

#### Uttlesford Local Plan

- 3.2 The cultural and creative sectors are part of the wider context for future infrastructure investment as part of the Local Plan process. Development of an evidence base provides an opportunity for the Local Authority to consider at an early stage what investment might be needed in relation to potential development over the Plan period. For Uttlesford there is likely to be significant new development in a number of locations, in the form of new Garden Communities and/or linked to existing settlements including Saffron Walden and Great Chesterford.
- 3.3 Working with existing communities to understand their needs and concerns, as well as aiming to understand future communities is important, and this Baseline sits within this context. **Culture was identified as important from the Community Stakeholder Engagement process undertaken at the earliest stages of the Local Plan process**, so this Baseline seeks to deepen a shared understanding of culture, creativity and the arts (and heritage) so that future decisions and assumptions are not made without considering the current situation.

#### The National Planning Policy Framework and Culture

- 3.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's Planning Policies for England with guidance for Local Authorities on how these are to be applied (including the production of Local Plans). The NPPF was initially published in March 2012 with a number of updates up to July 2021. As the guidance sets out, 'the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development' (paragraph 7). To achieve 'sustainable development' the NPPF states that the 'planning system has 3 overarching objectives' (para 8) which are framed as 'economic', 'social' and 'environmental'. **It is under the 'social' objective that culture fits in:**

*'A Social Objective - to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being'<sup>2</sup>*

- 3.5 The reference to 'cultural well-being' provides the opportunity for Local Authorities to identify in their Plans the cultural infrastructure that is required to support the 'social objective'.
- 3.6 Further to this the guidance states that to ensure a 'Sustainable Rural Economy' (which is of great relevance to Uttlesford), 'planning policies and decisions should enable...the retention and development of accessible **local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting**

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<sup>2</sup> See National Planning Policy Framework

**places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses** and places of worship.’ (Para 84d).

- 3.7 The NPPF also states that ‘Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which....promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other – for example through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres, street layouts that allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods, and active street frontages..’(para 92a) **Clearly culture, creativity and the arts has much to offer in creating safe and inclusive spaces that support social interaction.**
- 3.8 There is also a need to ‘To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs’ (para 93). This includes planning ‘positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, **cultural buildings**, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;
- 3.9 Ultimately the NPPF recognises that by making a clear provision in Local Plans for preserving, enhancing and building spaces and sites that can be used by communities for cultural activities and pursuits, a clear contribution can be made to ‘sustainable development’.

## **The Local Economy and Population**

- 3.10 The arts, creative and cultural industries and heritage sectors are part of a wider economic and social ecosystem and are interrelated to wider place making and planning considerations. The value of the wider creative and heritage sectors are not only important in terms of direct employment and higher value and skilled workforce required, but also support other sectors including hospitality, retail and wider tourism/visitor economy. This is recognised by the Arts Council for example:

*‘It’s clear that **people want to experience the best of arts and culture when they visit places**, and that the arts and culture offer is something that attracts people to a destination in the first place. At a time when staycations are becoming the new summer holiday for some people, this couldn’t feel more timely as the UK tourism industry experiences a resurgence – **it’s clear that arts and culture have a key role to play in helping places succeed in putting themselves on the map.**’<sup>3</sup>*

- 3.11 Partnerships between cultural and heritage sectors and tourism sectors (including Local Authorities who often take a lead on tourism strategies and promotions) is important in terms of **presenting a coherent visitor and tourism offer**. Local communities are visitors too, so it is not all about incoming visitors.
- 3.12 Recent research by SQW showed that ‘Arts, Entertainment and Recreation’, a fairly broad cross-section of different sub-sectors, has a 2.3% share in the sectoral distribution across the Uttlesford District. This may not sound particularly high, but it is broadly in line with the East of England (2.2%) and only slightly lower than the national average (2.5%).<sup>4</sup> It is an important sector therefore and ensuring that

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<sup>3</sup> Arts Council England: How Culture can play its part in developing local tourism (June 2021) - [How culture can play its part in developing local tourism | Arts Council England](#)

<sup>4</sup> SQW: The Local Economy of Uttlesford, Developing and Evidence Base to Support the New Local Plan, Section B Socio-Economic Baseline July 2021



there is a thriving arts, cultural and heritage ecosystem is part of a holistic approach with many different stakeholders and partners playing a key role.

- 3.13 The way that the District is perceived based on an understanding of the local economy and related factors by strategic organisations (including Government and regional authorities) and funders is an important issue to understand for partners across Uttlesford. **Collaborative narratives have to emerge that address the importance of investing and developing the arts, culture and heritage sectors over the coming years as part of wider sustainable place-making strategies.** These narratives should be based on the concept of building on assets and opportunity, with investment unlocking wider social and economic benefits. Below we consider some of the economic issues of relevance:
- 3.14 Between 2019 and 2030 the population of the District will increase by over 16,000 (double the growth rate than for East of England/England). This is a significant number of new people who are likely to live in new Garden Communities, or on developments connected to existing settlements (like Saffron Walden and Great Chesterford for example). **Cultural infrastructure must be considered as part of holistic place making.**
- 3.15 There is a higher age profile than the region and neighbouring areas, meaning that there is a need to support older people to engage in activities that increase social interactions (reducing isolation which is a challenge in the District), improve health and wellbeing and tackle increasing challenges including dementia. **The projected population growth in Uttlesford is expected to be driven primarily by growth in the 65+ age group,**<sup>5</sup> meaning that there is likely to be a high number of retirees with experience and interest in volunteering and taking part in a range of activities (including cultural and heritage).
- 3.16 **There is also a high 0 – 15 age range** who, in a rural District, can also suffer from social and cultural isolation (exacerbated by Covid-19), requiring investment in youth spaces and activities to enable meaningful cultural provision. There are a range of quality spaces across the District (in towns but also in rural areas) where youth activities can take place.
- 3.17 Uttlesford has **a higher skilled workforce than regional/national average, and a high number of businesses are classed as ‘micro’ (91%),** which is higher than neighbouring areas. Clearly there is an enterprising and locally-focused employment context and investment in arts and cultural activity can contribute to this (particularly around tourism, evening economy and wider town/rural placemaking agendas).
- 3.18 Generally Uttlesford is one of the most affluent Districts in England. There is not a single Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) in the most deprived 40% in England (quite unusual particularly in the context of Essex). Social grades A/B/C1 are 65% within the District, significantly higher than the rest of Essex (56%). However, this does not negate the need to invest in quality arts, cultural and heritage provision as part of achieving sustainable and healthy communities now and into the future.

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<sup>5</sup> SQW The Local Economy of Uttlesford, Developing and Evidence Base to Support the New Local Plan, Section B Socio-Economic Baseline July 2021

## Health and Wellbeing in Uttlesford

- 3.19 The **Uttlesford Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2022** sets out the priorities that a wide range of partners have for the District, based on a shared understanding of strategic health priorities and issues. It was produced by the Uttlesford Health & Wellbeing Board which includes UDC, voluntary sector organisations, NHS, Active Essex, Essex Fire & Rescue and Essex County Council.
- 3.20 Clearly, as with many Health & Wellbeing Strategies, the document was produced and the priorities identified before Covid-19. However, there is no suggestion that the priorities will change fundamentally over the coming years.
- 3.21 The overall Vision is:  
*'All children, young people and adults in Uttlesford are able to live healthy, fulfilling and long lives'.*
- 3.22 The priorities set out are:
- Combat Loneliness and Social Isolation
  - Plan for Healthy Communities
  - Alleviate Winter Pressures and Fuel Poverty
  - Enable people to eat well and be active
  - Support people to age well in Uttlesford
- 3.23 The document recognises that 'social networks' can have an important impact on health outcomes, and there is clear recognition of the future growth of the District and the need to plan for 'shaping healthy communities'. There is also a reference to the District having 'elevated of rural and social isolation'.
- 3.24 The strategy notes the equal importance of 'mental health' across the population to physical health and the need to broaden the focus to tackle this:  
  
*'Improving child and adult mental health and ensuring that it is considered to be of equal importance to physical health is fundamental to unlocking the power and potential of our communities. It is therefore important to facilitate holistic approaches that benefit health and wellbeing in its widest sense.'*
- 3.25 Rural isolation is clearly a bigger challenge in Uttlesford than many other parts of Essex, and therefore it is a key focus and priority that the Health & Wellbeing Board aim to better understand (in terms of the causes as well as the health outcomes).  
  
*'Uttlesford is a large, yet sparsely populated district. Its rural nature is an additional factor which can determine that **people live in pockets rather than whole communities**. This can contribute to loneliness and/or social isolation, especially for younger or older people with limited access to transport.'*
- 3.26 The **'loss of hobbies' in older people in particular is identified as one key factor in causes social isolation**, and this is linked to wider health challenges as people get older in rural and isolated areas. There is a role for public, charitable and third sector organisations across the District to tackle this 'even if this is not their primary aim'. The response needs to include supporting and encouraging

‘groups, including establishing new organisations that **promote greater community involvement in every community in the district.**’

3.27 Other challenges from **an increasingly older population include dementia**, a condition that people can live with for a number of years and needs to be better recognised and understood so that organisations can provide more effective support.

3.28 In terms of ‘Planning for Healthy Communities’, the ‘balance of local services and the general feel of an area can all reinforce positive behaviours and a sense of wellbeing.’ This is relevant to the Local Plan process with large areas of new development and some potential for Garden Communities in the District.

*‘A person’s sense of community can also influence wellbeing. This is not something that should be overlooked particularly when planning larger developments. Not only is it vital to factor in the matters that might affect new communities but it is equally important to consider the surrounding and existing communities.’*

3.29 More recently Essex County Council have compiled statistics comprising the different Districts across the West Essex area from a health perspective. West Essex is Harlow, Epping Forest and Uttlesford. Overall it shows Uttlesford compares well with other Districts and the National Picture in terms of general health of the population and deprivation/economic outcomes (which are of course interrelated). Some examples of this include:

- The life expectancy at birth for Uttlesford (males) is 82.6 which compares to 78.6 in Harlow and 79.4 nationally. For females it is 85.4 in Uttlesford compared to 82.5 for Harlow and 83.8 nationally.
- There are no communities living within the most deprived quintiles and rates of obesity at all ages is lower in Uttlesford compared to West Essex and Nationally.
- The % of adults with no qualifications is lower in Uttlesford compared to West Essex and Nationally
- The number of fast-food outlets per 100,000 population is also significantly lower for Uttlesford compared to West Essex and Nationally

3.30 All of this builds up a picture of **relative affluence and good health compared with other areas in Essex and Nationally**. However, the role of arts and cultural engagement as part of a broader healthy and sustainable community agenda is important in maintaining this, as well as supporting some of the key issues around social isolation and mental health. This is something that can be addressed in partnership between arts/cultural organisations and health providers and commissioners.

3.31 It is worth noting that research commissioned by the Arts Council through Wavehill, ‘Arts and Place Shaping: Evidence Review: May 2020’ found evidence of health benefits from participation in arts and culture.

*‘.....cultural organisations able to demonstrate the positive impact they are having across the whole health spectrum, from prevention, to supporting people recovering from ill health, to helping people living with long term conditions.’*

*'The evidence base demonstrates the valuable contribution of arts and culture to supporting public health objectives including positive health promotion to prevent periods of ill-health and creating healthy communities through a place-based approach.'*<sup>6</sup>

- 3.32 Related to this evidence there is a broader interest in linking health and wellbeing outcomes to participation in arts and cultural activities, including the Arts Council's collaboration with the National Academy for Social Prescribing on the Thriving Communities Fund which supported voluntary, community, faith and social enterprises to form partnerships with arts/cultural organisations to run a series of projects focused on local **social prescribing collaborations**.<sup>7</sup>
- 3.33 **Saffron Hall are already leading the way locally in developing an arts and wellbeing approach through their community-focused projects Together in Sound and Come Together.** Together in Sound in particular is a partnership with Anglia Ruskin University's Cambridge Institute for Music Therapy Research and will result in new evidence of the impact of music therapy on people living with dementia. This kind of project that brings arts and health practice together should be a focus for future investment to support health and wellbeing outcomes across the District.

## Uttlesford Tourism

- 3.34 Tourism and the visitor economy is interlinked with the cultural and heritage sectors, with institutions including Saffron Walden Museum, Fry Art Gallery, Audley End and Saffron Hall important drivers of visitors to the Uttlesford District. Promotion and coordination of cultural and heritage assets is a key part of any economic development programme. There is **no dedicated Visit Uttlesford online presence currently**, although this is planned and is to be commissioned by UDC in 2022. **Uttlesford destinations are not well covered by the Explore Essex site** (managed by Essex County Council)<sup>8</sup>, primarily because Essex CC does not have cultural, heritage or natural space assets in the Uttlesford District. Explore Essex would be a key source of information on cultural (and wider open space and sports) provision for prospective visitors to all Districts/Boroughs in Essex including Uttlesford.
- 3.35 Covid-19 has hit the visitor economy in Uttlesford as it has elsewhere in the UK with cultural and heritage destinations forced to close. In the Uttlesford Economic Recovery Plan document produced by UDC in December 2020 there is reference to UDC **working with Saffron Walden Tourist Information Centre 'on joint projects - development of day / weekend itineraries for visitors.'** The TIC is an important organisation, managed and funded by Saffron Walden Town Council, for encouraging visits to cultural and heritage organisations and spaces across Saffron Walden (although not necessarily the rest of the District). Other than UDC itself, **there is no dedicated body or organisation taking responsibility for overall tourism promotion for the District**, so Saffron Walden will naturally have higher profile than other locations.
- 3.36 There was a part-time **TIC operating within Great Dunmow Library** but this is no longer functioning and would require collaboration of local partners to get this going again (the Essex Library Service is happy to consider fresh proposals).

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<sup>6</sup> 'Arts and Placeshaping Evidence Review' May 2020 – Wavehill Social and Economic Research

<sup>7</sup> See National Academy for Social Prescribing – [socialprescribingacademy.org.uk](https://socialprescribingacademy.org.uk)

<sup>8</sup> See [www.explore-essex.com](https://www.explore-essex.com)

3.37 Investing in cultural and heritage assets will be important in ensuring that these sectors can contribute to the tourism offer. The Uttlesford District contributes significantly to the culture and heritage offer of Essex and the wider Southeast region, and this is core to tourism. **Investment in Uttlesford's wider tourism offer will also contribute to and strengthens the Essex and wider regional economy.** This means that, despite the relative affluence of the District economically, making a strong case for regional and government investment should still be a priority.

## 4. RELEVANT POLICY AND STRATEGIC ISSUES

- 4.1. In this section we consider some national and regional policy that is relevant to any study on culture, creativity and the arts. This will become more relevant as progression is made towards a full Cultural Strategy for the District. It is important for Uttlesford District Council and other partners that there is a good understanding of wider strategy and policy in relation to the arts, cultural and heritage sectors. This way support can be given to the sectors to access the funding and support they need, strengthening the cultural ecosystem of the District so it can fully contribute to achieving a vision for sustainable communities set out through the Local Plan.

### Arts Council England - Strategy 2020-2030 and Delivery Plan 2021-2024 and Broader Context

- 4.2. Arts Council England is the national creative agency for arts and culture in England, distributing funding drawn mainly from Government (DCMS) and the National Lottery. It is the **largest single funder of arts and cultural projects through open grant programmes** (including National Lottery Project Grants) as well as through its National Portfolio Programme (through which larger organisations have an agreed funding settlement for up to four years). Funding is available for individual artists and creative practitioners, as well as groups and organisations. As well as funding it also provides advocacy for the creative sectors and produces guidance and research on a range of relevant issues and sector insight.
- 4.3. Let's Create 2020-2030 and Delivery Plan 2021-24 In 2020 the Arts Council published a new 10-Year Strategy entitled 'Let's Create' which set out a vision that will focus ever more on supporting organisations and individual practitioners to engage ever more people in cultural experiences, across the whole of England. There was a definite shift away from language that had pervaded for many years including 'arts' and 'excellence', and towards broader principles of participation and the wider benefits of arts and culture (social and economic for example).

*'By 2030, we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each is valued and given the chance to flourish, and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high quality cultural experiences.'*

*'We believe in the inherent value of creativity and culture: in their power to delight and move us, and in their capacity to help us make sense of the world. But we also know that **investment in creativity and culture can deliver broad social benefits**, through the skills they offer to young people and workers, the economic growth they generate, and the part they play in building healthy, closeknit communities. Over the next 10 years, we will work to improve the way we make the case for the social and economic value of investing public money in culture.'*<sup>9</sup>

- 4.4. From an Uttlesford perspective, this emphasis on the wider benefits of **arts and culture fits well with an approach that seeks to integrate these sectors with the wider Planning system within the District**. The Arts Council, as the national agency for creativity, essentially provides greater depth to complement the references to culture in the National Planning Policy Framework.

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<sup>9</sup> 'Let's Create Strategy 2020 – 2030' – Arts Council England

- 4.5. Arts Council England Funding Statistics from Arts Council England show a **very low rate of investment in Uttlesford over the last few years**, with only a small number of projects receiving any funding at all. There are no **core funded National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) in Uttlesford**, and no apparent plans for any organisations to make applications to become NPOs for 2023-24 onwards. Part of the reason for this appears to be a certain lack of experience and knowhow regarding the process of making applications to the Arts Council (it can be a challenging process with significant information required), a certain lack of awareness, and a clear sense of 'self reliance' that many cultural organisations demonstrate. The relative affluence of the Uttlesford District means that other Districts in Essex and the East of England may be higher priorities for funding (Basildon and Tendring Districts are both identified as Priority Places for investment for example).
- 4.6. It would appear from the Arts Council's own data on Project Grants made within the Uttlesford District that there was only one project grant award April 2019 to March 2020, and two between April 2020 and February 2021 (both under £15,000). This is low and UDC and other partners would be justified in seeking to encourage a greater number of applications, and in considering ways of supporting organisations and individuals to do this.
- 4.7. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a planning charge, introduced by the Planning Act 2008, as a tool for local authorities in England and Wales to help deliver infrastructure to support the development of their area. It came into force on 6 April 2010 through the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010. Larger developments may be liable for CIL depending upon the policies of the local planning authority in the area. CIL can provide much needed funding for important infrastructure in areas where there is development taking place (and increasing the demand for infrastructure of all kinds).
- 4.8. Despite publishing a new Strategy for 2020-2030 'Let's Create', the Arts Council England does not have any recent guidance that creates a link between CIL and cultural/arts/heritage infrastructure (or indeed any other potential development gain including s106). **Other than what is in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), there is no clear guidance from Government (or Department for Culture, Media and Sport in particular).** Cultural Engine are following this up with the Arts Council England and this may lead to Uttlesford District being seen as something of a pioneer in terms of linking cultural/arts to the formal Planning system (ongoing as of February 2022).
- 4.9. In 2012 the Arts Council published some very brief guidance on '**Community Infrastructure Levy: Advice note for culture, arts and planning professionals**' (April 2012). This was produced by Martin J. Elson (Emeritus Professor in Planning, Oxford Brookes University). This guidance no longer appears to be official in terms of current Arts Council policy, and much has changed since the guidance was published in 2012 including tightening of local authority budgets for arts/culture, new Arts Council strategies and policies, Covid-19. However, it does provide some insight and Cultural Engine are currently following up with Arts Council England on updated advice and/or guidance in relation to Planning and Community Infrastructure Levy.
- 4.10. In keeping with what is likely to be needed in Uttlesford over the coming years, and very much in keeping with current uses of Village Halls and Fairycroft House in Saffron Walden, as well as Saffron Hall and Saffron Screen, the guidance states:

*'There is a growing trend **towards shared or multi-use facilities**. These include **flexible multi-use arts venues** and arts space within educational establishments, wider **civic complexes or local community facilities**.'*

- 4.11. In relation to what the guidance refers to as 'Arts Space', these include galleries, multi-use venues and theatres, and production, rehearsal and education space for arts.

*'As the population grows, the provision of high quality modern arts facilities may involve:*

- New buildings, extensions and reconfigurations of site layouts to improve and maximise publicly useable space*
- The reorganisation of internal space within an existing building to allow for improved public accessibility, better space for educational purposes, and more convenient back office space*
- Space for production, education and rehearsal uses, in addition to that for public performances*

- 4.12. Essentially, where there is scope for new arts/cultural buildings these are obviously welcome, but there is also generally scope for improving existing assets for to support ongoing running of space and public access. This is certainly the case in Uttlesford where there are some key opportunities in existing spaces (in public ownership).

- 4.13. Museums are also included as a specific reference in relation to CIL:

*'Museums **capture local experience and history and foster shared community**, identity and understanding. They also have a **role in economic development**, providing important visitor attractions and helping to generate income. Entirely new museums are rare. More visits and greater access and use will normally be fostered by constructing extensions, re-organising internal spaces and by access improvements. As the **population grows there will be a need for increased space for collections**, more storage space and increased education and learning spaces for local schools and communities generally. Where new provision is involved it may take the form of a **co-located facility**.'*

- 4.14. Essentially, Museums are important spaces for community cohesion, education, place making and economic development/tourism. As places grow in population, in theory there will be more demand on the important services and functions that museums can provide. If this demand can be met then there will be benefits from a social perspective (shared community, identity and understanding) as well as economic.

## **National Lottery Heritage Fund**

- 4.15. The National Lottery Heritage Fund (previously the Heritage Lottery Fund) is the largest single funder of heritage projects and activities in England, and runs an ongoing grants programme that is primarily aimed at not-for-profit organisations. Funding can be for capital and revenue and projects from under £10,000 to up to £5m for larger nationally significant initiatives. For capital investment (buildings, landscapes) projects it is expected that there will be significant investment in activities that engage communities.
- 4.16. Although there are some smaller revenue projects that have been funded through the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) (including the ongoing 'Saffron Story' project), **there has been very little investment in Uttlesford over the last decade and more (revenue and capital)**. This may change in



the next few years as Saffron Walden Museum have made some initial progress with a potential bid for major work at the Museum (building, site and wider outreach with a total budget around £4m).

- 4.17. Heritage Funding is managed differently from Arts Council funding as there is obviously a greater emphasis on engaging with heritage of all kinds, but there is significant scope for creative output as many projects have shown, particularly when engaging with communities. This can include performance, theatre, dance and music, so there is much to be gained for the local creative scene from NLHF projects. NLHF does not have an ongoing 'portfolio' or funded organisations as the Arts Council does, so all funding is project focused.
- 4.18. The outcomes that have to be considered by projects are set out below. The higher the level of funding requested, the more outcomes projects are expected to meet:
- A wider range of people will be involved in heritage (mandatory outcome)
  - The funded organisation will be more resilient
  - People will have greater wellbeing
  - People will have developed skills
  - The local area will be a better place to live, work or visit
  - The local economy will be boosted
  - Heritage will be in a better condition
  - Heritage will be identified and better explained
  - People will have learnt about heritage, leading to change in ideas and actions
- 4.19. The **Heritage Fund is an important part of the funding ecology for heritage assets and activities, funding both revenue and capital for smaller and larger projects.** For projects of a larger scale there is a need to undertake research and development (feasibility) prior to making any applications, and this can be prohibitive without access to funding/resources that are outside of everyday running costs. However, where this work can be undertaken it will generally consider engagement of future audiences, contributions to the local area (economy and social outcomes), capital investment needs and the interpretation of heritage. This then increases the chances of projects or programmes securing investment from a range of sources, increasing awareness of the opportunity.

## RSA Heritage Index

- 4.20. The Heritage Index is a programme developed in partnership between the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) and the National Lottery Heritage Fund in England. It compiled utilising data from over 100 different sources on heritage assets and activities that take place at local authority level in England. The Heritage Index is a unique tool for understanding both the absolute and relative activities and assets across local areas, with data sources ranging from listed buildings, to funding streams, to participation in heritage for example.
- 4.21. All Local Authority areas are ranked from 1 (highest score) to 316 (Lowest Score). The last iteration of the Heritage Index is from 2020. The Uttlesford District is ranked 177 out of 316, which given the wealth of heritage across the District is not particularly high. However, it is higher than Braintree (287), Harlow (222), and Chelmsford (211). East Hertfordshire is higher however at 147 and Cambridge City is ranked 9 (very high).
- 4.22. The overall ranking is based on a Local Authority area's ranking on a range of indicators. For Historic Built Environment Uttlesford is ranked 68, which is not surprising given the wealth of historic listed

buildings in the District. However, it is the indicators that focus on other elements of heritage and participation of the community in activities relating to it which score less high for Uttlesford. Museums, Archives and Artefacts has a low ranking of 195 overall, with the activities relating to these ranking even lower at 238. What this indicates is a lack of evidence of community engagement with this heritage including funded projects, volunteering, visiting heritage locations and other types of engagement.

## Arts, Culture, High Streets and Town Centres

- 4.23. There is ever more interest in the value of arts, culture and heritage to place making agendas, and particular the current challenges for town centres across the UK. Uttlesford's key town centres of Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow (as well as smaller centres of Thaxted and Stansted Mountfitchet) appear to be resilient in terms of their retail and hospitality offer (certainly in comparison to some other town centres across Essex), and they still have a good mix of independent businesses for example. The fact that there are fewer larger towns in Uttlesford than all other Districts in Essex (and other neighbouring areas), only makes their relevance greater as centres for retail, employment, leisure and tourism. They are also likely to grow in size over the Local Plan period, so **planning ahead for future sustainability and economic vibrancy is important. Culture plays a key part in this.**
- 4.24. Businesses in town centre locations have been **hit by Covid as well as the ongoing challenges from online retail and changing leisure patterns**, so certainly nothing can be taken for granted in terms of the long-term success of local town centre economies. The important role that is played by the arts/cultural and heritage offer in relation to town centres needs to be considered strategically (as it is being through the Local Plan). This includes core established destinations including galleries and museums, as well as events and festivals, **ensuring that they are sustainable and able to play a key role** as part of an interesting town centre offer for visitors and local communities.
- 4.25. There is an increasing focus on **the importance of experiences which is challenging the traditional role of town centres as centres for retail and other core services**, and it is clear that a strong arts and cultural offer can support this.
- 4.26. There is significant literature and research in this area, and it is growing all of the time as new ideas and insights emerge to tackle the challenges of ensuring town centre sustainability.

*'.....72 per cent of millennials (aged 24 to 38) would **rather spend their money on an experience or an event than buying things**, and this is reflected in the shift towards leisure, arts, culture and dining on high streets. Social media is a key driver. Posting pictures on Instagram of new experiences is de rigour.'*<sup>10</sup>

*'High streets that are exclusively places to spend money are at risk of decline and failing to build this civic pride. **Culture makes high streets more than places to spend money and – especially when deployed in effective partnership with other amenities – can retain local vibrancy, footfall, and pride.***<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Grimsey Review 'Build Back Better: Covid-19 Supplement for Town Centres' June 2020

<sup>11</sup> 'A High Street Renaissance – How arts and culture bring people and pride back to our High Streets' BOP Consulting commissioned by Arts Council England August 2021

- 4.27. The Arts Council and South East Local Enterprise Partnership commissioned in 2021 a Creative High Streets report that was undertaken by We Made That. The report was launched in February 2022 with the findings and case studies furthering the case for culture's role in revitalising high streets across the South East. There is no focus on Uttlesford, but there are case studies covering a number of towns in the region.
- 4.28. *'The way we engage with our high streets has changed, and high streets must adapt to the diverse new trends for shopping, which are increasingly driven by customer experience and perception. Culture is a vital way in which town centres can develop their 'brand' and become unique and attractive places.'*<sup>12</sup>

## Essex County Council

- 4.29. Essex County Council are the upper-tier authority for Uttlesford and therefore have a significant stake in issues relating to transport, infrastructure, education, youth provision, health and wellbeing as well as arts, culture and heritage (including the Essex Record Office). In terms of arts, culture and heritage, Essex CC for a number of years provided direct investment through a grants programme for organisations and projects across the county, but very little of this has reached Uttlesford. Essex CC do not have any cultural, heritage or country park assets in Uttlesford so they are unlikely to invest directly through their own capital programme as they might in other areas (for example Jaywick Martello Tower in Tendring, Hadleigh Country Park in Castle Point or Cressing Temple in Braintree).
- 4.30. Although the grants programme for culture and arts was withdrawn around 2019-20 and for 2020-21 (it was incorporated into the broader focused community funds), from January 2022 a new Arts & Cultural Fund is being launched by Essex CC which is linked to the new 'Everyone's Essex: The Plan for Essex 2021-2025'
- 4.31. The introduction to the new funding sets out the importance of arts and culture to the future of Essex, and in particular the role that arts and culture can play in delivering wider outcomes:
- 'Essex's cultural organisations and practitioners makes it a great place to live, work and visit. ECC recognises that we need to think imaginatively about how to achieve our outcomes, that is why we are placing a heavier emphasis on the arts, not only because we believe that a thriving cultural sector is part of a strong economy, but also because we believe the arts can help us achieve outcomes in many areas, from employment to social care.'***
- 4.32. Applications for the Arts & Cultural Fund opened on the 4<sup>th</sup> January 2022 with projects to be delivered in 2022-23 (with an emphasis on activities and participation in the summer 2022). There will be a total of 5 years, with the total pot of funding for the 5 years being £1m.
- 4.33. The Cultural Engine in putting together this Baseline has engaged directly with Essex CC to help them understand the key opportunities in Uttlesford, share insight into the work on creating an evidence base for the Local Plan, and in making contacts to key partners in the District.

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<sup>12</sup> 'Creative High Streets', Arts Council England and South East Local Enterprise Partnership, January 2022  
<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/news/creative-future-high-streets>

## Levelling-Up

- 4.34. Although Uttlesford is unlikely to be a priority area for Government or Regional investment directly through Levelling-Up Funds, there is some relevance to an emerging Cultural Strategy in the national Levelling-Up narrative. Levelling-Up frames much of the current Government's approach to investment, so recognising the core themes and concepts can be important for stakeholders in the District. Levelling-Up is also being referenced through Arts Council strategies and priorities, and by Essex County Council as well, so it is **pervading many areas of national and regional policy**.
- 4.35. For Local Authorities and their partners it is obviously important to reflect current national policy priorities, and Levelling-Up (even though not currently well defined as a concept) is a policy/theory thread that runs through much of current Government policy and funding. As can be seen from the Essex County Council example above, the new Cultural and Arts Funding coming through is being seen as a key example of their 'Levelling-Up' agenda as well as their post-Covid revival of places across the country.
- 4.36. Although our key focus has been on 'culture, creativity and arts', what we have seen across the District in compiling the Baseline is a significant amount of activity and community engagement in heritage (which form a key part of every area's cultural activity and offer). Heritage is seen in the March 2021 'Levelling-Up Prospectus' in the context of the current Government's stated ambitions for 'levelling-up' as important local infrastructure. This is a clear recognition of the **importance of heritage from a regeneration perspective, and that it relates to 'everyday life'**.

*'Upgrades in local heritage sites strengthen the local economy and build civic identity. These are things that people rely on every day in communities up and down the country – the infrastructure of everyday life.'*

*'Cultural investment maintaining, regenerating, or creatively repurposing museums, galleries, visitor attractions (and associated green spaces) and heritage assets as well as creating new community-owned spaces to support the arts and serve as cultural spaces.'*

*'In short, culture and heritage are things that people up and down the country bring people together and strengthen communities.'* In keeping with our core theme of heritage and its importance to place and communities, the Levelling-Up Fund Prospective recognises that heritage can be instrumental in this respect.

*'Many towns already have a **strong heritage and sense of place, and benefit from their cultural and civic assets both directly, from tourism and visitor revenue**, and indirectly, by inspiring a sense of local pride and community cohesion, making places more attractive to live and work in.'*

- 4.37. This **perception of the importance of heritage** to local regeneration is backed-up through Government initiatives including the 'Towns Fund'. The prospectus for the Towns Fund states:  
**'Perception of place is an important 'pull' factor in business location decisions and can affect a place's capacity to attract and retain workers. Many towns already have a strong heritage and sense of place, and benefit from their cultural and civic assets which may make places more attractive to live, work, visit and invest in**

## 5. NEIGHBOURING AUTHORITIES - APPROACH TO CULTURE & CULTURAL STRATEGIES

- 5.1. As part of the research for the Baseline Assessment the Cultural Engine and UDC Planning staff reviewed a number of neighbouring Local Authority strategies for arts and culture. Partly this was driven by an interest in how neighbouring Authorities are undertaking strategy development in relation to culture and arts as this may be relevant to how UDC takes forward a cultural strategy beyond the Baseline stage, and partly it was an opportunity to start new conversations which could lead to joint working, sharing of information and collaborative tourism promotion (for example).
- 5.2. Meetings were held with a number of neighbouring Local Authority representatives, and the Cultural Engine also attended the East Herts Your Lives Your Culture Conversation in at Southern Maltings in Ware on the 21<sup>st</sup> October 2021.

### East Hertfordshire District Council

- 5.3. As part of the work on the Baseline the Cultural Engine and UDC staff engaged directly with staff at East Hertfordshire responsible for leading on the ongoing development of the East Herts Cultural Strategy
- 5.4. Based on public consultation in November 2020 and ongoing liaison with cultural sector stakeholders, including an event in October with over 60 cultural and public sector stakeholders – ‘Your Lives Your Culture Conversation’ at Southern Maltings in Ware. East Herts Council have compiled a list of around 200 organisations that are engaged in arts and culture, and there is a Cultural Delivery Group managed by the Council that involves around 40 representatives. This group is tasked with developing an implementation plan for the key priorities set out in the East Herts Cultural Strategy 2021-25). The key elements of the strategy, for which actions are being developed by the Cultural Delivery Group, are set out below:
  - a. East Herts’ population is changing and new neighbourhoods and garden villages are bringing new opportunities
  - b. Relative deprivation can hamper access to arts and culture
  - c. Arts and culture can alleviate loneliness and so have a positive impact on health and wellbeing
  - d. Arts and culture can promote community safety and civic pride
  - e. Young people thrive when they are involved in arts and culture
  - f. Just getting to an arts venue can be a challenge
  - g. COVID19 has made a big impact
  - h. Cultural activities are not immune to the challenges of climate change
  - i. This strategy will be judged by the impact it has
- 5.5. The East Herts Cultural Strategy is not strategically linked to planning or the Local Plan in the District (in that it is not part of the evidence base), although there are clear references to growth and the Local Plan period up to 2033. **One opportunity is to consider future developments as a way of securing new investment in facilities**, although there are no clear targets or additional context regarding this.

*'In a context of finite funding for public and community-based arts, new development offers the opportunity to create cultural facilities that can fund themselves in the long term and to establish stewardship structures to oversee the management of these facilities.'*

*'Embed arts and culture within new neighbourhoods and garden towns in the district, creating cultural opportunities residents.'*

- 5.6. Similarly to Uttlesford the East Herts Cultural Strategy considers the relative rural context of the East Herts District and the challenges this poses to access for all communities. There is reference to ensuring provision is accessible across the District, and making use of existing community assets.

*'Support all partners to develop cultural opportunities in all corners of our district, allowing our residents to participate in a rich cultural life in their own communities, whether in the rural villages or the bustling town centres'*

*'Identify how the potential of the district's assets, such as village and community halls, can be maximised to achieve its cultural vision, bringing in the relevant partners to identify projects and deliver initiatives that benefit residents in East Herts.'*

- 5.7. There are no references to Uttlesford or towns in Uttlesford District or references to collaboration on promotion for example. However, Council officers and local Members expressed a keen interest to continue sharing information and considering future opportunities to collaborate.

## Cambridge City Council

- 5.8. A meeting was held between Cultural Engine, UDC and Cambridge City Council staff on the 19<sup>th</sup> October 2021 where the City Council's strategic approach to supporting arts and culture was discussed. As with East Hertfordshire the **City Council does play a key role recognising the importance of culture to the Cambridge place brand** (which drives significant tourism into the City each year). The City Council does not deliver many direct services or events, but **plays a facilitation role recognising that it can be challenging for organisations to put on events or run projects without support on a range of issues (legal, funding etc.)**.

- 5.9. There are a number of groups and initiatives that the City Council are involved with:

### The Cambridge Core Stakeholders Partnership:

- 5.10. This is a forum for key organisations with responsibilities for planning and funding culture/arts in Cambridge City. The City Council sit alongside the University, Cambridgeshire County Council and the Arts Council. This is an important group given the number of core funded arts/cultural organisations that the City has (National Portfolio Organisations for example)

### The Cambridge Arts Network:

- 5.11. This is a city-based network that is supported and administered by the City Council, and has around 1100 members. It is the key sharing and information network for the City. There is a website and members can post information and updates on [Cambridge Arts Network](#)

#### Festivals and Events Liaison Group:

- 5.12. This is an important forum convened by the City Council to support a balanced and diverse range of quality cultural, social and community festivals and events each year. Information is shared, partnerships are formed and challenges can be flagged up and resolved.

#### Culture Task Group:

- 5.13. This is a Cambridgeshire-wide group that includes all of the local authorities, arts/culture and sport organisations, English Heritage, Arts Council England, Sport England and other key bodies relevant to culture and sport in the county. This group is led by Cambridge County Council.
- 5.14. In relation to development in the City, the City Council is encouraging developers of all sites **to include a cultural element in their plans**, and they have undertaken a high-level audit of community spaces and other spaces available for cultural activity and how they are used (this is ongoing).

#### **Chelmsford City Council**

- 5.15. A meeting was held with Chelmsford City Council staff, Cultural Engine and UDC on the 25<sup>th</sup> October 2021, to discuss Chelmsford City Council's progress with a **City-wide Cultural Strategy and other related initiatives**. The Council have led on engaging with a wide range of stakeholders since 2018 and produced a 'Chelmsford Towards 2040' which was a shared-cultural vision and outline strategy forming the basis of further work to establish clear priorities and actions. A cultural partnership, **Ignite Chelmsford**, is the key engagement and consultation mechanism. Ignite is also a
- 5.16. The Priorities set out in the 2040 Vision were:
- A growing Creative Economy for everyone - Advocate for a creative workforce across all sectors. Map and connect to better support the Creative & Cultural Industries.
  - Increased opportunities for young people - Broaden Horizons to reach our creative potential and help prevent a rise in youth related crime
  - Build better connected communities - Use Arts & Culture to ensure those often marginalised from society feel welcome and at home.
  - Strengthen a sense of identity and belonging - Tell Chelmsford's full story, building on our strength in science and innovation and Increasing participation of minority and hard-to-reach groups.
  - Improved Health & Wellbeing - Prioritise issues identified in the joint Health and Wellbeing plan for Essex, including Mental Health, Obesity and Inactivity
  - Embrace our green spaces and waterways - Celebrating nature as part of the culture of Chelmsford. Finding ways to improve access and encouraging thinking about ecosystems and sustainability. Use rivers/nature to connect across the district and celebrate our rural/agricultural connections.
- 5.17. In July 2021 a 'Summit' was held with a wide range of stakeholders to consider further the key themes from the 2040 Vision and to identify any issues or actions that needed to be considered and

developed further (the Summit was facilitated by the Cultural Engine). This then formed the basis for 4 'Labs' based on 4 top issues (or 'provocations') with invited participants who will identify key actions and initiatives that can be funded and taken forward. The first of the Labs focused on the City Centre and High Street and the role that arts and culture can play in ensuring a vibrant future. [From the Summit to Ignite Chelmsford Labs - Ignite Chelmsford](#)

- 5.18. The team leading the Cultural Strategy has **positioned the arts, cultural and creativity as critical to achieving broader Council priorities and outcomes relating to the economy, health and wellbeing and a reduction in social isolation**, increasing opportunities for younger people and the City place brand or narrative. As Chelmsford was awarded official 'City Status' in 2012, the latter point is particularly relevant as many local partners still consider that Chelmsford needs to develop and refine a **key Vision or Narrative**.
- 5.19. Chelmsford City also has the Chelmsford Cultural Development Trust which is independent of the Council and works to secure funding and takes on other strategic issues. In 2022 the Trust will consider whether the City should bid for official UK City of Culture Status for 2029, and what investment, planning and partnership work will be required along with the wider economic and social benefits of bidding. The Trust is also supporting work to establish Local Cultural Education Partnership and other local initiatives that require funding and local partnership support. Work is also taking place to identify an opportunity space in the City Centre for a community-run/owned cultural hub space (for working, events etc.).
- 5.20. Although the Chelmsford Cultural Development Trust and other cultural priorities are identified in the adopted Local Plan, there is no clear link currently between the planning system locally and the cultural strategy development. This could change as the strategy and key initiatives are identified. The intention is that the final cultural strategy will be informed by all of the partnership working and particularly the 'Labs' and be key to the wider growth and regeneration agenda across the City (and wider district).

## Stevenage Borough Council

- 5.21 A meeting was held with Stevenage Borough staff as part of the work on the Baseline, as with other meetings with neighbouring (or at least geographically close) authorities, the purpose was to share information and to consider future collaboration as relevant. The meeting was held on the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021 and included both Cultural Engine and UDC.
- 5.22 Stevenage Borough Council published a Cultural Strategy in 2018 to cover the period up to 2022. As a 'New Town' with limited rural context, it is quite a different place ~~to~~ from Uttlesford (similar to Harlow in many ways).
- 5.23 The Vision set out in 'Stevenage Re-Imagined: A ten-year arts and heritage (cultural) strategy for Stevenage' states:
- 'As the first New Town Re-Imagined, Stevenage aims to offer:*
- *Flagship performing arts, museum and heritage facilities*
  - *An iconic public realm arts programme*



- *Extensive creative industries spaces and hubs, including digital, to attract and develop talent and to support skills development and economic growth'*

5.24 There is clear reference throughout to the **cultural offer complementing 'town centre regeneration' and improving local health outcomes, supporting the economy and engaging children and young people**. There is also reference to attracting 'visitors from the County, London and beyond to a thriving, busy and accessible creative environment.' Interestingly there is also a **significant emphasis on the Borough's cycling infrastructure as being key to the area's culture and vibrancy. This demonstrates Stevenage's holistic understanding of culture and wider placemaking**. The Council is engaged in a £1bn regeneration programme and the cultural strategy is clearly linked to this. The Cultural Strategy was supported with £10,000 from the Arts Council and had support from the Assistant Director for Communities and Neighbourhoods (who had experience from a culture-led regeneration programme in Great Yarmouth).

*'There is an important opportunity to redress the underuse of the cycle network, encouraging a new approach to public art and stimulating substantial new engagement with walkways and cycle paths, enhancing cultural contribution to health and well-being.'*

- 5.25 As with Chelmsford and the establishment of the Chelmsford Cultural Development Trust, Stevenage Borough Council supported the **establishment of an independent community interest company called Junction 7 Creative CIC**. This new organisation would have independent lobbying and advocacy abilities that are not necessarily available to the Council. Junction 7 Creative also take a lead on utilising empty shop units for example, making use of Council Estates assets where possible. Junction 7 Creative started as a 'core partners' group and continue to provide a useful conduit to local groups and communities for the Council.
- 5.26 Stevenage Museum is directly managed and funded by Stevenage Borough Council and features in the cultural strategy. **There is an ambition to relocate the Museum to a town-centre location and develop the country's first 'New Town Museum'**. Other key local cultural assets including the Theatre are outsourced currently (although these arrangements are under review). The Stevenage Cultural Strategy appears to be a good example of Local Authority working with its partners and recognising an opportunity that is locally specific and could support a wider place making and tourism agenda.

## **Considerations for Uttlesford District Council from the Cultural Strategy Review**

- 5.27 As set out above, there is no one format or system for undertaking a Cultural Strategy and related action plan. The opportunities and way forward are very much related to the local situation, how the Local Authorities sees the role of culture (and heritage) strategically, and the local arts and cultural scene.
- 5.28 **Having a cultural strategy (or in the process of co-producing one) is a good way of pulling different partners together** to gain consensus on key issues, challenges and opportunities. This is not something that is happening naturally across the Uttlesford District currently (although there are good examples of collaboration locally like the Saffron Walden Heritage Development Group). Organisations that have an interest will feel that they can influence the agenda and take part if there is a cultural strategy and action plan that may identify and support specific initiatives, funding opportunities and strategic interventions.

- 5.29 None of the cultural strategy approaches undertaken by neighbouring authorities see culture, arts and heritage as separate from wider issues relating to economic development, place-making, regeneration and social/wellbeing outcomes. **Having a cultural strategy therefore enables culture/art and heritage to be seen in a broader context and are therefore more likely to have their importance recognised strategically** (and therefore secure funding for example).
- 5.30 There is a case to be made based on the neighbouring authority approaches for some kind of **independent partnership and/or organisation that can be proactive and lead on taking action to support the development of the creative ecology**. In Chelmsford and Stevenage there are specific external organisations tasked with taking forward key issues (funding, engaging communities, developing projects).
- 5.31 Chelmsford and Stevenage are also working on **new ‘narratives’ that will frame how culture/arts plays a key role in placemaking, regeneration and place brand**. This can be important for making a clear case for investment and identifying how cultural investment can contribute to successful outcomes – economic and social in particular. In particular, Chelmsford and Stevenage (as well as East Herts) clearly frame culture/arts as key to town and city centre vibrancy (and renewal). Cambridge City Council has a very clear understanding of the importance of arts/culture to the city and the networks that are established to support the cultural/arts sectors demonstrate this. The fact that they have regular liaison with the Arts Council and other bodies puts them in a different position to smaller areas and able to influence the local agenda (Cambridge also has many National Portfolio Organisations making it a good strategic location for Arts Council direct engagement).
- 5.32 **None of the other areas have attempted a comprehensive ‘baseline assessment’ as Uttlesford has**, and none of the other cultural strategy processes are clearly related to the planning system (or clearly informing the local plan process). It would appear that Uttlesford District is something of a pioneer and outlier in this respect, and this can only then strengthen the evidence base to support future decision making through the Local Plan and other strategic issues including economic development (towns and rural), tourism, public health and transport.
- 5.33 **Recognition has to be given to those involved in the Uttlesford Community Stakeholder Forum during 2020 and 2021 (chaired by Angela Dixon) which provided the momentum for this and raised the importance of culture and heritage to the wider placemaking and planning agenda.**

## 6. ADOPTED LOCAL PLANS FROM OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES – REFERENCES TO CULTURE, CREATIVITY AND THE ARTS

- 6.1. In this section we consider how other Local Authorities have included references to culture, creativity and the arts in their adopted Local Plans. Some of these are relatively close to Essex and others are in other areas of England and there are various geographic contexts (some rural and others more urban in nature). There are relatively few references to arts or culture in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and this means that interpretations of the guidance by Local Authorities will vary (as will the significance of arts and culture in the Local Plan documents).
- 6.2. The fact of being ‘adopted’ demonstrates that these Local Plans have been found to be sound and legally compliant, so they provide good insight that may be of relevance to UDC, potentially influencing what can be achieved in relation to supporting culture, creativity and the arts through the Planning system. It should be noted however that we found **no real evidence of other Local Authorities undertaking a Baseline Review or similar process for their cultural or arts sectors (as part of the evidence base). Evidence, where it does exist, tends to be in the form of a broader Tourism or Leisure strategy, and often these are over 5 years old meaning the situation may well have changed** (through Covid or significant cuts to Local Authority budgets for example).

### Chelmsford City Council Local Plan

- 6.3. The Chelmsford City District neighbours Uttlesford to the South. Chelmsford City Local Plan is for the period 2013 – 2036. The District is approximately half the size of the Uttlesford District but with almost double the population (172,000). 112,000 people live within the City of Chelmsford (the historic ‘County Town’ of Essex). Chelmsford was awarded ‘City Status’ in 2012 and there are significant growth plans set out in the Local Plan.
- 6.4. There are a number of clear policies that set a strong context for investing in culture over the Plan period.
- 6.5. Strategic Priority 9 – Reinforcing Chelmsford’s regional role as ‘Capital of Essex’. The ‘capital’ role is central to this vision. *‘The Council is keen to ensure that all parts of the **City are vibrant and successful with continued new facilities and by encouraging investment in Chelmsford's arts and culture.**’*
- 6.6. Also under Strategic Priority 9 - *‘**A Cultural Development Trust has also been established to work in partnership with the Council to strengthen Chelmsford’s cultural identity.** Through close engagement with the public, the mutual objective is to inspire participation in the arts and culture, to build awareness of the City’s historic heritage and to ignite interest in developing creative and cultural legacies for the future. The Trust will contribute to the ideas for a shared Cultural Vision “Towards 2040” and participate in encouraging investment in the City’s museums and theatres.’*
- 6.7. The above reference to the new ‘Trust’ demonstrates the Council’s commitment to **finding mechanisms to put culture/arts and heritage at the centre of the place-making and growth agenda**, and indeed the Trust is now playing a more active role in taking forward projects, strategy and funding applications (although not integrated with the Planning system).

- 6.8. Strategic Policy S5 recognises arts and cultural facilities as a key part of the ‘community facilities’ that are *‘an integral part of any proposals for new residential and employment development’*. *‘New facilities will be accessible to the community, and will be secured by a range of funding measures including planning obligations, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), and/or its successor, and other relevant funding streams.’* This policy clearly links investment in a wide range of community infrastructure (including cultural/arts) through CIL and other development-related funding. **Investment through CIL has been secured for the Museum for example in previous years.**
- 6.9. Strategic Policy S12 recognises the primary importance of **Chelmsford City Centre for ‘arts, culture and leisure’** and focuses on strengthening the role of the City Centre and other small neighbourhood centres across the District.
- 6.10. There is a special focus on Sandford Mill through Policy SPA5 which recognises its cultural role in the District. *‘Development will be permitted for proposals for a mix of uses to support Sandford Mill’s cultural, leisure and recreational focus.’* Sandford Mill is in a rural area to the east of Chelmsford City and is home to a large store and museum of industrial and waterways heritage.
- 6.11. The Chelmsford Local Plan has no specific evidence base to support the above policies promoting arts and cultural investment. There is a Sport & Arts Strategy 2012 – 2016 listed in the evidence base. This strategy makes reference to a number of mainly sporting related priorities, also referencing the importance of theatres and festivals for example.

## **Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Local Plan**

- 6.12. The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan is for the period 2014 – 2033 (adopted in 2020). There are similarities with Uttlesford with **Leek being the largest town with a population of 21,000** (not dissimilar to Saffron Walden), a population of 98,000 slightly larger than Uttlesford and an area that is largely rural but slightly smaller in size.
- 6.13. Unlike Chelmsford there are far fewer direct references to arts and culture in the Local Plan. Rather there is more focus on the importance of tourism. **Culture is linked to tourism in the main relevant policy E4 – Tourism and Cultural Development**, and there is concern that new tourism or cultural facilities should be accessible. There should be *‘good connectivity with other **tourist destinations and amenities, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling**’, or ‘in locations in or close to settlements where local services, facilities and public transport are available’, or in specific areas identified for tourism development including the Churnet Valley (an area of importance for nature and cultural heritage popular with visitors).*
- 6.14. One of the Plan’s Spatial Objectives is SO7 which to *‘protect, provide and enhance the tourism, cultural, sport and recreation and leisure opportunities for the District’s **residents and visitors**’*.
- 6.15. The main reference point in the Evidence Base is a Staffordshire Moorlands Visitor Strategy which has a number of references to the importance of culture as part of the tourism offer of the area.

*‘Tourists are looking for immersion in a culture, unique experiences, authenticity, exploration, adventure and personal fulfilment from their holiday experience. **The ‘what’ is more important than***

*the 'where'*.<sup>13</sup> Essentially it is not just about where tourists might go, but more about the unique experience they might have when they get there, perhaps with a sense of 'authenticity' that is linked to place.

## Harlow Council Local Plan

6.16. Harlow is another District close to Uttlesford although much smaller in size but with a population not significantly smaller than Uttlesford (85,000). The Local Plan period is 2011 – 2033 (adopted Dec 2020).

6.17. There are a number of direct references to the importance of culture/arts in the Harlow Plan. However, 'culture and recreational facilities' are listed as potential 'needs for provision' in relation to new development alongside 'public art'. **Public art is of significant interest in Harlow given the 'Sculpture Town' brand that the town has cultivated over the years**, with the Harlow Art Trust taking on responsibility for many of the towns' impressive collection. The Trust does not have access to significant funding or capacity for this role however.

*'Since the designation of Harlow New Town in 1947, the district has been collecting and creating works of art for the enjoyment of the residents and visitors to the district in order to enhance the public realm. Most of the pieces are sculpture based, hence the branding of Harlow as a Sculpture Town'*

6.18. Policy L3 relates entirely to public art provision in Harlow – *'Provision of Public Art in Major Developments In major developments, public art should be provided and maintained. The form of public art in each case should be discussed with the Council at the earliest opportunity.'* There is recognition that public art 'improves the environmental and cultural quality of the district.'

6.19. The Strategic Objective concerned with Lifestyles focuses on sustainable provision of leisure, recreational and cultural requirements, with a key aim to *'Provide and enhance sporting, leisure, recreational facilities and cultural opportunities in the district'*.

6.20. It is clear that the cultural priority in Harlow Local Plan is to invest in the Sculpture Town through new development, and that this is linked to the original development of the New Town which had public art at its core through the vision of architect Frederick Gibberd. **This focus on public art is unusual for a Local Plan and Harlow Council are clearly focusing their cultural provision through the Planning System on this.**

## East Hertfordshire District Local Plan

6.21. East Herts borders Uttlesford to the west and Bishops Stortford in particular will be the main town centre for many of the Uttlesford population living in the south and west of the District. The Local Plan for East Herts is for 2011 – 2033 (adopted October 2018). The District is slightly smaller in size than Uttlesford with a population of 148,000 (higher than Uttlesford). There is a similar rural context. The main town of Bishops Stortford has a population of over 41,000 and is therefore twice the size of Saffron Walden. Hertford and Ware are of a similar size to Saffron Walden.

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<sup>13</sup> Staffordshire Moorlands Tourism Study (Team Consultants, May 2011)

- 6.22. Cultural facilities are mentioned in relation to Community Facilities. *‘Community facilities provide for the health and wellbeing, social, educational, recreational, leisure and cultural needs of the community.’* Included in the description of ‘community facilities’ are art galleries, cinemas, museums and libraries, music and concert halls, and public houses. Under the Policy CFLR7 the *‘provision of adequate and appropriately located community facilities will be sought in conjunction with new development.’*
- 6.23. Policy CFLR7 is clear that provision **of facilities should be ‘on site’ as a priority, or a ‘financial contribution towards either off-site provision, or the enhancement of existing off-site facilities.’** Interestingly there is also a **demand for applicants to detail how these facilities ‘will be maintained in the long term.’**
- 6.24. This last point is an important consideration for ensuring that **new facilities have a sustainable future** (identifying where ongoing funding and revenue generation may be generated for example). Capital development of a new community asset (cultural or otherwise) is not the only important factor.

### Summary of Issues from Adopted Local Plans

- 6.25. Adopted Local Plans from across England vary in how they prioritise culture and arts provision, with some focusing on town and city centres as key locations for cultural provision, while others focus on specific locations or issues (like the Sculpture Town in Harlow). The National Planning Policy Framework does make specific references to cultural provision (as set out above), but the guidance is limited and open to local interpretation.
- 6.26. None of the Local Plans reviewed for this report has a dedicated arts and cultural evidence base to support the Local Plans, and where documentation does exist it is not always recent (often over 5 years old) and does not have a technical assessment of need.
- 6.27. In terms of references to arts and culture in adopted Local Plans, the key issue appears to be the wider strategic view that the Local Authority (and its partners) has of its importance as a key element of placemaking or place brand. For example, Harlow has a clear commitment to continuing the ‘Sculpture Town’ concept that has become a core part of the town’s cultural and architectural make up. There is no compelling technical evidence base that demonstrates how important sculpture is to the town, but public art in the form of sculpture is very much linked to its original New Town vision (led by Frederick Gibberd). The importance of the Sculpture Collection is promoted by Harlow Art Trust in particular (the Art Trust have also previously managed the Gibberd Gallery).
- 6.28. For Staffordshire Moorland, the main issue relating to culture is tourism. Accessible cultural facilities are part of a strong tourism and visitor offer. A different concept of the importance of culture/arts from Harlow (although the sculpture collection in Harlow does for a trail for residents and visitors alike), but tourism is clearly the main strategic priority for Staffordshire Moorland District Council and its partners so cultural will be set in this context.

**SECTION TWO**  
**ASSESSMENT OF CULTURE,  
CREATIVITY & ARTS IN  
UTTLESFORD**

## 7. AUDIENCES AND ENGAGEMENT WITH CULTURE IN UTTLESFORD

### Cultural Trends and Behaviours – Uttlesford Wide

- 7.1. Cultural Engine collaborated with the Audience Agency to analyse available data on a range of cultural trends and 'behaviours' associated with communities living in Uttlesford, and comparing these to other local areas (Essex and Hertfordshire/Cambridgeshire). The information is gathered by the Audience Agency from a number of different sources including surveys/data from arts/cultural organisations and surveys of individuals. A key information source is the Audience Spectrum which has been created by the Audience Agency to support cultural organisations to understand the existing audience profiles and support investment decisions across England.
- 7.2. Audience Spectrum segments the English population by their attitudes towards a broad interpretation of culture, and by what they like to see and do. There are 10 different Audience Spectrum profiles that can be used to understand who lives in particular locations in terms of their likely cultural preferences. It is informed by many different data sources and trends including from arts organisations and non-personalised information on spend for example. Audience Spectrum is the most accurate tool the sector has ever had to help target audiences, and include a wider public.
- 7.3. An assessment of the Audience spectrum data shows that the most prominent of the 10 Audience Spectrum segments in Uttlesford district are Commuterland Culturebuffs, Dormitory Dependables and Trips & Treats. 80% of the Uttlesford population belong to one of these three segments, compared with 59% and 57% of the population in Hertfordshire & Cambridgeshire, and Essex respectively. These segments show the following traits:

#### Commuterland Culturebuffs:

- 7.4. This segment has higher engagement in cultural activities and tend to be affluent suburban and greenbelt consumers of culture as part of their social lives. They tend to be **keen consumers of culture**, with broad tastes but a leaning towards heritage and more classical or traditional offerings. They are often mature families or retirees, living largely in leafy provincial suburban or greenbelt comfort.  
Uttlesford 34%, Essex 17%, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire 22%

#### Dormitory Dependables:

- 7.5. This segment tends to have medium engagement in cultural activities. Whilst regular they are not frequent cultural attenders. **A significant proportion of arts audiences are made up of this dependably regular if not frequently engaging group.** Most live in suburban or small towns and show a preference for heritage activities alongside popular and more traditional mainstream arts. Many are thriving, well off mature couples or busy older families. Life stage coupled with more limited access to an extensive cultural offer means that culture is more an occasional treat or family or social outing than an integral part of their lifestyle  
Uttlesford 32%, Essex 25%, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire 23%



### Trips & Treats:

- 7.6. This segment also tends to have medium engagement in cultural activities. While this group may not view arts and culture as a passion, **they are reasonably culturally active**, despite being particularly busy with a wide range of leisure interests. They tend to be comfortably off with children ranging in ages and include young people still living at home. With a strong preference for mainstream arts and popular culture like musicals and familiar drama, mixed in with days out to museums and heritage sites, this group are led by their children's interests and strongly influenced by friends and family. Uttlesford 14%, Essex 15%, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire 14%
- 7.7. The above data highlights that **overall engagement levels in arts/culture is likely to be significantly higher in Uttlesford than it is for the rest of Essex and or Hertfordshire/Cambridgeshire** as a whole. There certainly appears to be higher levels of affluence resulting (potentially) in high engagement, as well as more medium engagers in arts/cultural activity. However, this does not necessarily guarantee engagement with arts/culture activities, rather a propensity to engage. The propensity may well be affected by location, opportunity and the nature of the cultural offer locally.
- 7.8. Data is also available from the Audience Agency on cultural attendance for a range of popular cultural activities in the District and surrounding areas. As with the Audience Segmentation, this is informed by a range of data sources including Mosaic (reflecting actual spend by consumers), and wider surveys (Arts Council for example). It differs from Audience Segmentation as it aims to show 'actual' participation based on data rather than a populations' 'propensity' to engage or attend. We will refer to this as 'Actual Engagement Data' below.
- 7.9. **Uttlesford appears to have higher levels of cultural engagement than Essex**, but slightly lower levels of cultural engagement than the population of Hertfordshire & Cambridgeshire.
- 7.10. In the table below we have presented the cultural activities that have the highest level of engagement in Uttlesford (comparing them to Essex and Herts/Cambs). **This data is for 2019 so is pre-Covid** (long-term impacts of Covid on audience engagement in a range of cultural activities is not yet available obviously). Pre-Covid data is therefore the best indication we can get of what 'normal' engagement is likely to be.

Attended	Uttlesford	Essex	Hertfordshire & Cambridgeshire
	%	%	%
Art galleries	29%	27%	29%
Ballet	13%	12%	14%
Classical concerts	17%	15%	17%
Comedy shows	23%	21%	23%
Contemporary dance	10%	10%	12%
Jazz concerts	10%	10%	12%
Opera	10%	9%	11%
Plays	37%	33%	37%

Popular/rock concert	40%	38%	40%
Theatre	50%	47%	50%
Museums	26%	25%	28%
Archaeological sites	6%	5%	6%
Stately homes/castles	22%	19%	21%
Go to the Cinema every two or three months	16%	16%	17%
Adults 15+ estimate 2019 (Pre Covid)			

- 7.11. As can be seen from the above, the percentage of attendance varies slightly between the areas, there is no major difference between attendance in any one of the activities between Uttlesford, Essex and Hertfordshire & Cambridgeshire. It can be seen however that Uttlesford tends to have slightly higher attendance percentages than the rest of Essex in particular. The consistency of this last point **would suggest that cultural engagement is generally slightly higher in Uttlesford than other areas of Essex.**
- 7.12. Bearing in mind the Uttlesford population's apparent higher propensity to engage in cultural activities (based on Audience Spectrum insight), one reason for the limited differences between Uttlesford and the other areas could be a lack of available local activities or facilities, particularly as Uttlesford is dispersed over a large rural area. Our research has highlighted that (perhaps unsurprisingly) most of the cultural opportunities/facilities are in or around Saffron Walden closely followed by Thaxted, Great Dunmow, Stansted Mountfitchet and Wimbish (Wimbish although small has an interesting cluster of artists). However, the good general spread of community and village hall spaces should ensure that space is available across the whole District for broader community activity (including culture).
- 7.13. **There is no particular trend or correlation between facilities and participation, possibly due to the District's general affluence and ability that people have to travel by car** (there are very high car ownership rates in Uttlesford compared to England average). There is however, **slightly higher participation in the west of the District** which could be linked to its proximity and relatively easy access to Cambridge, Bishops Stortford and Harlow (and M11 links to London potentially as well). The one trainline that runs through the District does so through the west as well (connections to London and Cambridge).

## 8. CULTURAL VENUES AND ORGANISATIONS IN UTTLESFORD – THE DATABASE

- 8.1. The key task for the Baseline Assessment of Culture, Creativity and the Arts was to compile a comprehensive list on all of the activity, spaces, organisations, individuals and practitioners taking place or working within the District. This was a major undertaking given the geographic scale of the District and the vast number of small settlements and parishes. The Cultural Engine approached the compiling of the List (or database) through:
- Gathering information through discussions and meetings with key strategic organisations
  - Internet searches (and following up with phone calls for example)
  - Visiting towns and villages to identify any spaces, organisations or groups that may exist
  - Undertaking the Baseline Survey (as covered above) and incorporating key information from the responses into the Database
- 8.2. **The database is a separate document (based on Excel) and covers about physical spaces as it which is important considering the need to plan ahead for such spaces through the Planning process.** However the database also covers a significant number of arts activities and organisations/groups that do not operate out of one core building (or do not own/rent spaces). All such activities and groups are on the database with some basic information about the nature of their operation and activities as possible.
- 8.3. As the Local Plan emerges it will become easier to consider where there may be gaps in provision in terms of spaces for cultural activities, particularly when potential sites come forward for development (for example in a large new settlement or Garden Community). However, a database is a good place to start in terms of being able to understand what the culture/arts and heritage sectors look like in the District (a snapshot for January 2022 as the scene is dynamic and constantly shifting and changing). In terms of developing and ultimately delivering a District-wide Cultural Strategy, the Baseline List provides a good source of information including locations, facilities, contact information, company type (charity etc.).
- 8.4. Together with an analysis of audiences and cultural trends across the District, the database provides part of a picture for future planning.

### Cultural venues and organisations in Uttlesford – The Database

- 8.5. Our research has highlighted 392 venues artists and cultural activities of which 168 are physical places ranging from heritage sites, private studios, music venues to multifunctional facilities of which there are 79. The latter are predominantly village halls either run by the Parish Council or the community. They offer venues for all kinds of cultural activities provided by itinerant professionals and local informal groups and appear to fulfil a large proportion of local cultural need (or the opportunity if they are underutilised).
- 8.6. Saffron Walden is the main cultural centre within Uttlesford with most of the larger museums, galleries, markets, events and other cultural opportunities located in the town. Together with neighbouring towns and cities (outside of the District) including Cambridge, Bishops Stortford, Harlow, Braintree and Chelmsford there is an extended cultural offer for those wishing to travel.

- 8.7. Broadly in terms of the **share of physical cultural, arts and heritage assets we found that around 29% of these are located in Saffron Walden, 10% in Great Dunmow, 6% in Thaxted (a total of 45% for the main three locations in the District)**. 30% of the assets on the databased are activities and/or projects that are not fixed or located in any one place (although many will run sessions and events in the main towns at locations such as Fairycroft House).
- 8.8. Key cultural/heritage destinations include Saffron Hall, Fry Art Gallery, Fairycroft House, Audley End, Saffron Walden Museum, Stansted Mountfitchet Castle. **There are very few public cultural/heritage attractions that are not in (or close to) urban centres**. These will be the main drivers of visits by audiences from within as well as from outside of the District.
- 8.9. There is **very little accessible/affordable artist studio space within the District**, potentially limiting artists/creative practitioner start-ups and people with fewer resources accessing suitable space. There are also several very popular activities that perhaps reflect the core interest of key demographic groups in the District. For example, Theatre and Dance are very strong in the District with over 40 groups, and many different music-focused groups and organisations. Unsurprisingly arts, crafts and individual artists is a strength, and there are 7 art galleries. There are many historical societies (and the Recorders of Uttlesford History are represented in the majority of parishes). There are at least 21 historic attractions and museums.
- 8.10. The majority of the cultural and heritage attractions are relatively small in scale and will relate to local populations (although contributing to the overall tourism context). **Saffron Hall is notable as one world class facility in the District with critically acclaimed acoustic and state-of-the-art facilities**. Audley End is one of the most important heritage attractions in the East of England (one of English Heritage's most popular).

## Area Profiles Analysis – Baseline Data and Audiences

- 8.11. In this section we draw upon the Audience profile data by local area (broken down into Post Code areas), as well as drawing upon the Database and to a lesser extent the Sector Survey (see Section 8 for more on the Survey). We therefore bring the various sources of information and data we have together. The total population in Uttlesford is approximately 90,000 and through analysis of 14 areas (based on post codes), we provide some high-level analysis of trends.
- 8.12. There is information on the population of each area, the multi-functional spaces the areas have available within them, and other reflections in relevant issues to likely participation in arts/cultural activities. There is also some reflection on social grade information, particularly the social grades that will tend to engage the least.
- 8.13. Saffron Walden is the largest settlement in the District. In the Area Profiles the population of Saffron Walden has been split to reflect the four postcode areas covering the town, meaning parts of the town are included with surrounding areas. At the end of the analysis of the 13 areas below, **we also include a separate analysis of Saffron Walden and the immediate surrounding areas as a whole**.

#### Takeley, Elsenham, Henham

- 8.14. The Takeley, Elsenham & Henham area is a cluster of villages based just east of Stansted Airport with an area population of just over 7000 between them (3367, 2466, 1233, respectively). They are approximately 5 miles from Bishops Stortford (15 minutes by car) and are heavily influenced by this main town just outside of the Uttlesford District. The area has 9 multifunctional venues (6 run by the community) which provide a host of cultural activities ranging from dance, drama and local history to flower arranging. They are within easy reach of Hatfield Forest and many cultural activities in Bishops Stortford.
- 8.15. The population's propensity to engage in cultural activity is 9% higher than the rest of Uttlesford and around 30% higher than Essex and Cambridge & Hertfordshire. Its high engagement Audience Segments are in line with the rest of Uttlesford, but its medium engagement groups are much higher. Typically, this group is represented by thriving, well off mature couples or busy older families whose life stage coupled with more limited access to an extensive cultural offer means that culture is more an occasional treat or family or social outing than an integral part of their lifestyle. This is reflected in the actual engagement data which is less than the rest of Uttlesford and Cambridge & Hertfordshire but is still higher than Essex which has the lowest propensity to engage and is less culturally active.
- 8.16. Comparing this area with Uttlesford as a whole, the density of population per cultural establishment is within the middle of the range signifying other areas would benefit more from cultural investment.

#### Stansted (Incl Burton End) & London Stansted Airport

- 8.17. The Stansted (inc. Burton End) & London Stansted Airport area includes the airport and land to the northwest of the airport. This rural area includes Stansted Mountfitchet which is a large well served village and Burton End which is very small. The combined population is just under 8500. They are approximately 4 miles from Bishops Stortford (15 minutes by car) and are heavily influenced by this main town just outside of Uttlesford.
- 8.18. The main cultural/heritage attractors are Stanstead Mountfitchet Castle, Toy Museum (which is in the grounds of the Castle site) and Historic Windmill. Stanstead Mountfitchet has a library and 2 multifunctional halls (both run by the community) providing a mixture of cultural workshops, classes, and activities. Bishops Stortford likely caters for much of the population's additional need.
- 8.19. The population's propensity to engage in cultural activity is about the same as the rest of Uttlesford as a whole and around 20% higher than Essex and Cambridge & Hertfordshire. This is based on very high levels of medium engagement segments. Typically, the area is represented by thriving, well off mature couples or busy older families whose life stage coupled with more limited access to an extensive cultural offer means that culture is more an occasional treat or family or social outing than an integral part of their lifestyle. Unlike other areas in Uttlesford with predominantly medium propensity to engage in culture, the actual engagement data shows a higher participation rate than the rest of Uttlesford, Essex and Cambridge & Hertfordshire
- 8.20. Comparing this area with Uttlesford as a whole, the density of population per cultural establishment is within the middle to top of the range. Excluding attractions like Mountfitchet Castle and the Toy Museum the results would be much lower. As such it could benefit from further cultural investment.

#### Saffron Walden (Inc: Wimbish, Ashdon, Radwinter)

- 8.21. Saffron Walden (Inc: Wimbish, Ashdon, Radwinter) is the eastern area of Uttlesford's major town of Saffron Walden and the villages to its east. With a population of approximately 10,000 about half residing close to Saffron Walden itself, with villages like Wimbish, Ashdon and Radwinter having populations of 1629, 893 and 612 respectively. Saffron Walden offers a wealth of cultural activities and is essentially the cultural hub of Uttlesford (based on the cultural offer), whilst the villages to its east are rural and small in population.
- 8.22. The cultural offer within the villages is primarily through 7 multifunctional village halls (5 run by the community) offering an array of activities, workshops, and informal group meetings. Many host local artists who are involved in Saffron Walden's cultural provision. Saffron Walden itself hosts galleries, Uttlesford's main museum, fetes, music events, craft workshops, society, music venues and is the district's main retail hub (with many independent shops).
- 8.23. The population's propensity to engage also reflects Uttlesford as a whole but tends to have more medium cultural engagement rather than higher cultural engagement. Typically, this is represented by thriving, well off mature couples or busy older families and younger families who are led by their children's interests. The actual engagement data shows lower levels of engagement than Uttlesford and Cambridge & Hertfordshire but higher than Essex.
- 8.24. Comparing this area with Uttlesford as a whole, the density of population per cultural establishment is within the middle of the range signifying other areas would benefit more from cultural investment.

#### Saffron Walden (Inc: Great Chesterford)

- 8.25. Saffron Walden (Inc: Great Chesterford) includes the north of Uttlesford's major town of Saffron Walden and the villages directly to the north. With a population of approximately 5200 over 70% of these reside within Saffron Walden itself, with the village of Great Chesterford having a population of 1494. Saffron Walden is urban and offers a wealth of cultural activities and is essentially the cultural hub of the Uttlesford District. Great Chesterford, to the north of Saffron Walden, is only 16 miles from the heart of Cambridge so communities there are likely to relate to Cambridge as much as any location in Uttlesford.
- 8.26. The cultural offer within the villages is primarily through 4 multifunctional village halls (3 run by the community) offering an array of activities, workshops, and informal group meetings. Many host local artists who are involved in Saffron Walden's cultural provision. Saffron Walden itself hosts galleries, Uttlesford's museum, fetes, music events, craft workshops, society, music venues and the District's main retail centre. Cambridge is close by car and provides a wealth of cultural activities.
- 8.27. The propensity to engage in culture in this area is less than Uttlesford as a whole and 10% higher than Essex and Cambridge & Hertfordshire. However, the actual participation data shows higher participation than Uttlesford, Essex and Cambridge & Hertfordshire.
- 8.28. Comparing this area with Uttlesford as a whole, the density of population per cultural establishment is within the middle to top of the range signifying other areas would benefit more from cultural investment.

#### Saffron Walden (Inc: Clavering)

- 8.29. Saffron Walden (Inc: Clavering) includes the west of Uttlesford's major town of Saffron Walden and the villages directly to the west. With a population of approximately 9200, 25% of these reside within the boundary of Saffron Walden itself, with the village of Clavering having a population of 1494 and the remaining in several smaller villages. The Clavering district of this area is within 8 miles of Saffron Walden, 7 miles (15 minutes' drive) and the whole area is only 20 Miles (40 minutes' drive) from Cambridge.
- 8.30. The cultural offer within the villages is primarily through 10 multifunctional village halls (7 run by the community) offering an array of activities, workshops, and informal group meetings. Many host local artists who are involved in Saffron Walden's or Cambridgeshire's cultural provision. Residents can access the cultural offer in Saffron Walden, Cambridge, and Bishops Stortford
- 8.31. The area's propensity to engage in culture is greater than Uttlesford as a whole, 29% higher than Essex and 27% higher than Cambridge & Hertfordshire. The actual participation data shows greater participation than Uttlesford and Essex but less than Cambridge & Hertfordshire.
- 8.32. Comparing this area with Uttlesford as a whole, the density of population per cultural establishment is at the top of the range signifying other areas would benefit more from cultural investment.

#### Saffron Walden (Inc: Newport)

- 8.33. The Saffron Walden (Inc: Newport) area includes the town of Saffron Walden and the villages to the south including Newport (which is one of the larger villages in the District). With a population of approximately 10300, 25% reside within Saffron Walden itself, with the village of Newport having a population of 2353 and the rest in several smaller villages. The centre point of the area is within 4 miles (10 minutes' drive) of Saffron Walden, 9 miles (20 minutes' drive) from Bishops Stortford and 21 Miles (40 minutes' drive) from Cambridge.
- 8.34. The cultural offer within the villages is primarily through 5 multifunctional village halls (3 run by the community) offering an array of activities, workshops, and informal group meetings. Many host local artists who are involved in Saffron Walden's or Cambridges cultural provision. Residents can access cultural opportunities in Saffron Walden, Bishops Stortford, as well as Cambridgeshire.
- 8.35. The population's propensity to engage in culture is 5% less than Uttlesford as a whole, 18% higher than Essex and 16% higher than Cambridge & Hertfordshire. The actual participation data shows a higher participation than Uttlesford, Essex and Cambridge & Hertfordshire.
- 8.36. Comparing this area with Uttlesford as a whole, the density of population per cultural establishment is within the lower of the range. As such it would benefit from further cultural investment.

#### Manuden, Berden, Farnham

- 8.37. Manuden, Berden & Farnham are rural villages based in the west of Uttlesford north of Bishops Stortford. With a population of just over 1800 between them, the centre of the area is approximately 10 miles (23 minutes by car) from Saffron Walden but only 5 miles (10 minutes by car) from Bishops Stortford.

- 8.38. The villages have 3 multifunctional venues (2 run by the community) which provide a host of cultural activities ranging from dance, drama and local history to flower arranging. They are within easy reach of Bishops Stortford and its many cultural activities and not far from Stansted Mountfitchet.
- 8.39. The population's propensity to engage in cultural activity is the same as Uttlesford as a whole, 27% higher than Essex and 21% higher than Cambridge & Hertfordshire. Its high engagement sector is greater than most other areas within Uttlesford and represents affluent groups with mature families or retirees. The actual participation data shows higher participation than Uttlesford, Essex and Cambridge & Hertfordshire.
- 8.40. Comparing this area with Uttlesford as a whole, the density of population per cultural establishment is at the top of the range signifying other areas would benefit more from cultural investment.

#### Little Canfield

- 8.41. Little Canfield is a rural village based to the southeast of Stansted Airport. It has a population of 500 and is 3.5 miles from Great Dunmow. The village has a sole village hall (operated by the community) and access to other halls in the adjacent villages.
- 8.42. The population's propensity to engage in cultural activity is 13% higher than Uttlesford as a whole, 36% higher than Essex, and 34% higher than Cambridge & Hertfordshire. It has no high engagement sectors but exceeds the level of medium engagement sectors compared to Uttlesford as a whole, Essex and Cambridge & Hertfordshire. The actual participation data shows higher participation than Uttlesford and Essex but less than Cambridge & Hertfordshire.
- 8.43. Comparing this area with Uttlesford as a whole, the density of population per cultural establishment is at the bottom of the range signifying other it would benefit more from cultural investment.

#### High Easter

- 8.44. The High Easter area is mainly rural based in the southern part of Uttlesford and to the northwest of Chelmsford. The centre of the area is over 20 miles from Saffron Walden and as such their cultural hub is more likely to be Chelmsford (10 miles away) or Great Dunmow which is 8 miles away. The population here is 1500. The village has a sole village hall (operated by the community).
- 8.45. The population's propensity to engage in cultural activity is 16% lower than the rest of Uttlesford and around 6% higher than Essex and Cambridge & Hertfordshire. The area's cultural audience is made up of both high and medium engagers. This lower propensity to engage is demonstrated in the actual participation data on which is lower than the rest of Uttlesford and Cambridge & Hertfordshire but higher than Essex.
- 8.46. Comparing this area with Uttlesford as a whole, the density of population per cultural establishment is at the bottom of the range signifying it would benefit more from cultural investment.



### Hatfield Heath

- 8.47. The Hatfield Heath area is mainly rural villages based in the southwestern part of Uttlesford, to the south of Stanstead Airport and northwest of Chelmsford which is 15 miles away (25 minutes by car). Both Bishops Stortford and Harlow are 6 miles away (12 minutes by car). The population is 6800, 1930 in Hatfield Heath and the remaining in smaller villages.
- 8.48. The area has 4 multifunctional spaces (all run by the community) which offer a range of cultural activities including dance, drama and local history. Bishops Stortford and Harlow are accessible and also offer a variety of cultural attractions.
- 8.49. The population's propensity to engage in cultural activity is equal to Uttlesford as a whole and 24% higher than Essex, 22% higher than Cambridge & Hertfordshire. Its cultural audience has a large amount of high cultural engagers predominantly affluent groups with mature families or retirees. This is reflected in the data on actual participation, which is higher than the rest of Uttlesford, Cambridge & Hertfordshire and Essex.
- 8.50. Comparing this area with Uttlesford as a whole, the density of population per cultural establishment is at the bottom of the range signifying it would benefit more from cultural investment.

### Thaxted & Broxton

- 8.51. The Thaxted & Broxton area is in central Uttlesford to the northeast of Stanstead Airport and southeast of Saffron Walden which is 8 miles away (10 minutes by car). The area's population is around 6700 with Thaxted & Broxton being 2845 and 512 respectively.
- 8.52. The area has 11 multifunctional venues (10 run by the community) which provide a host of cultural activities ranging from dance, drama and local history to arts and crafts. Thaxted has a reasonable cultural offer of its own with historic buildings, gardens, festivals, and resident artists. The area is also within relatively easy reach of Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow.
- 8.53. The population's propensity to engage in cultural activity is 3% lower than Uttlesford as a whole and 20% higher than Essex, 18% higher than Cambridge & Hertfordshire. This is reflected in the data on actual participation, which is lower than the rest of Uttlesford, Cambridge & Hertfordshire but higher than Essex.
- 8.54. Comparing this area with Uttlesford as a whole, the density of population per cultural establishment is at the top of the range signifying other areas would benefit more from cultural investment.

### Great Dunmow (Inc: Barnston, Leaden Roding)

- 8.55. The Great Dunmow (Inc: Barnston, Leaden Roding) area is to the South of Uttlesford and directly east of Stanstead Airport. It is directly central between Chelmsford and Saffron Walden which are about 12 Miles away (25 minutes by car). The population of the area is 13600 with the population of Great Dunmow being 8830 the majority of the remainder living in villages including Barnston & Leaden Roding.

- 8.56. Great Dunmow is famous for its Flitch Festival and is the largest settlement (town) in the South of the District with a good cultural and heritage offer. It has 5 multifunctional halls with a further 6 in the surrounding villages (9 run by the community) all offering an array of cultural and other community activities. There are historic buildings, museums, markets and fetes within the area and a particularly strong dance & drama contingent.
- 8.57. The populations propensity to engage in cultural activity is 6% lower than Uttlesford but 17% higher than Essex and 15% higher than Cambridge & Hertfordshire. This is reflected in the data on actual participation which is lower than the rest of Uttlesford and Cambridge & Hertfordshire but higher than Essex.
- 8.58. Comparing this area with Uttlesford as a whole, the density of population per cultural establishment is in the middle of the range signifying other areas would benefit more from cultural investment.

#### Felsted, Stebbing, Little Dunmow

- 8.59. The Felsted, Stebbing, and Little Dunmow area is east of Great Dunmow and extends to the eastern border of the Uttlesford District. The area is quite large and rural with a population of 9200 spread between a number of small villages with Felsted, Stebbing and Little Dunmow having populations of 3051, 1300, 284 respectively. Stebbing in the centre of the area is 15 miles from both Saffron Walden and Chelmsford
- 8.60. The area is well served with 7 multifunctional venues (4 run by the community) which provide a host of cultural activities ranging from dance, drama to local history.
- 8.61. The populations propensity to engage in cultural activity is 6% higher than Uttlesford as a whole and 29% higher than Essex, 27% higher than Cambridge & Hertfordshire. This is not reflected in the data on actual participation showing lower participation rates than the rest of Uttlesford and Cambridge & Hertfordshire but higher than Essex.
- 8.62. Comparing this area with Uttlesford as a whole, the density of population per cultural establishment is in the middle of the range signifying other areas would benefit more from cultural investment.

#### Summary of Data for all areas

- 8.63. The analysis into the relationship between the populations propensity to engage and the facilities available fails to show any coherent trend or link between the two in the majority of the areas.
- 8.64. Analysis of the population against the number of multifunctional facilities produces some interesting insights however. A 'multi-functional space' is one that is available to use for a range of uses including cultural. It could be a village hall or other community/parish run space. Over the whole District, according to the information on facilities developed through the Baseline, the average population per multi-functional space is 1,188.
- 8.65. Below is a summary table of 13 areas of different sizes, organised into postcode areas. The different sizes of the populations and the relative isolation of some locations compared to others makes direct comparisons challenging. Despite this we have ordered the population against the number of multi-functional spaces that are available for use/hire in each location.

Uttlesford art Comparison of venues per head of population	Population	No Of Population Per Multifunctional Space	Ranking
Uttlesford as a whole	93,859	1,188	
Manuden, Berden, Farnham	1,819	606	1
Thaxted, Broxton	6,708	610	2
Saffron Walden (Incl Clavering)	9,149	915	3
Takeley, Elsenham, Henham	9,228	1025	4
Dunmow (Incl Barnston, Leaden Roding)	13,676	1243	5
Saffron Walden (Incl Great Chesterford)	5,191	1298	6
Felsted, Stebbing, Little Dunmow	9,118	1303	7
Saffron Walden (Incl Wimbish, Ashdon, Radwinter)	10,155	1451	8
High Easter	1,500	1500	9
Hatfield Heath	6,800	1700	10
Little Canfield	1,819	1819	11
Saffron Walden (Incl Newport)	10,284	2057	12
Stansted (Incl Burton End & Stansted Airport)	8,412	4206	13

8.66. The **above table clearly demonstrates that the areas that have fewer multifunctional spaces/facilities per head of population and therefore could benefit with cultural investment (in the form of multi-functional spaces) are Stansted (Incl Burton End & Stansted Airport), Newport, Little Canfield, Hatfield Heath.** However this would require further consultation with local parish representatives and further analysis of use trends as local populations may travel to neighbouring areas for activities and to use local village halls for example. For example, the new facilities at Manuden do attract users from across a wider area given the quality of the space.

8.67. This figure reflects existing population profiles and will not take into account new growth areas across the District. Where the new growth areas are (including any new Garden Communities) will affect the population in relation to multi-use cultural provision.

#### Additional Analysis of Saffron Walden and Surrounding Area

8.68. Saffron Walden is one of the finest examples of a medieval market town in the East of England, with a wealth of listed buildings in the town centre and Conservation Areas. The area's propensity to engage in cultural activity is 2% higher than the rest of Uttlesford and around 24% higher than Essex and Cambridge & Hertfordshire. However, Saffron Walden is at the heart of the Uttlesford cultural and tourism scene accommodating the area's major museum, central library, galleries, music venues, as well as its many historic attractions, markets, and annual festivals.

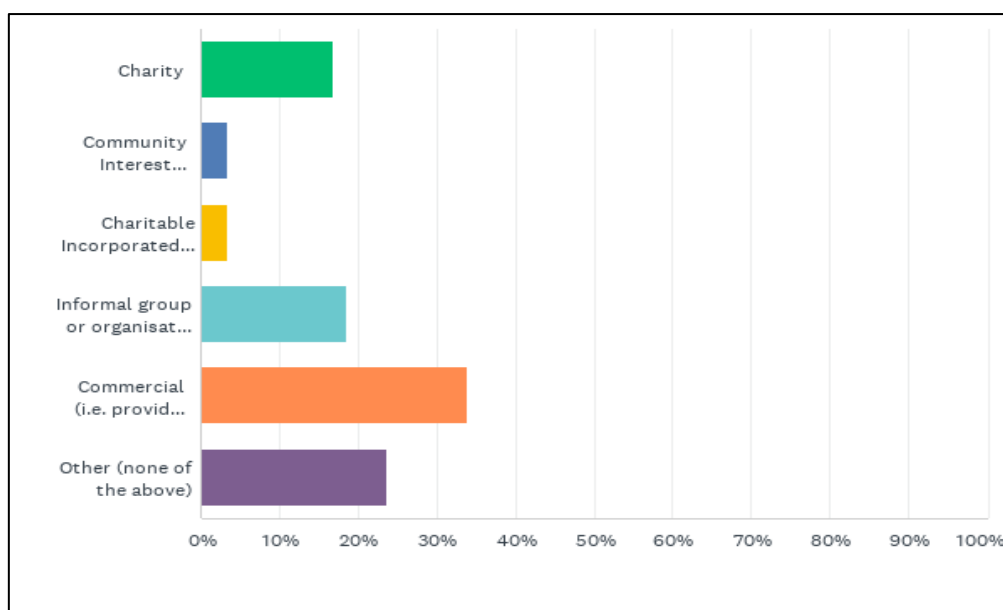
- 8.69. Saffron Walden is positioned 12 miles from Bishop's Stortford, and just 15 miles from Cambridge. Cambridge in particular provides competition for the town's cultural attractions and attract visitors from Saffron Walden and across Uttlesford. Saffron Walden and surrounding area has 5 multifunctional venues. There are 60 cultural and heritage venues and spaces, and the town is home to 186 of the District's itinerant creative practitioners (those who operate across and beyond the District).
- 8.70. Appendix 1 is a table that shows the distribution of cultural, arts and heritage assets (spaces, activities and practitioners) in some of the most populated parishes in the District. The information confirms that Saffron Walden has the majority of cultural (including galleries and artists) and heritage spaces. Great Dunmow is well provided for in terms of multi-use spaces and arts groups. There is also an interest cluster of artists/crafters located at Wimbish.

## 9. SURVEY OF CULTURAL SECTOR ORGANISATIONS

- 9.1. A bespoke survey was developed by Cultural Engine utilising SurveyMonkey to support the gathering of information for the Baseline Assessment, as well as to provide some insight and information from practitioners and organisations working across the cultural/creative sectors in Uttlesford. The survey was published on the Local Plan page of the UDC website, and UDC encouraged Parish Councils to put up posters on their notice boards. A short article also appeared in Saffron Walden Reporter in September 2021.
- 9.2. There were 79 responses in total which is a good number when considering we have identified just under 400 organisations, individuals and groups which would be a target audience for such a survey (a success rate of approximately 20%). There was some interesting feedback from across different sub-sectors including commercial and charitable. It was decided not to push the survey too hard at this Baseline stage given the potential for 'consultation fatigue' locally (other surveys from UDC had been issued in late Summer/Autumn 2021 including business, and Council spending plans). Given the need to develop a Cultural Strategy utilising the information collected during this Baseline stage, there is likely to be a need to engage further with cultural sectors during 2022.
- 9.3. There was no clear incentive to organisations, groups or individuals to sharing their thoughts and insights, although many indicated that they would like to stay in touch with the process and potentially be part of a future cultural network (more on this below). We did follow up with a number of respondents to clarify issues or to seek a 'strategic conversation' (see Section 9), so there is clear potential for UDC to engage further and offer information and support in the future (on funding opportunities for example). Collecting information for the Baseline was not reliant upon the Survey, but did help to augment the information being gathered by the Cultural Engine.
- 9.4. Below we provide some high-level insight into the responses to the Survey. The analysis is essentially looking for general trends and insights Uttlesford-wide so is intentionally fairly high-level.

### Who has responded to the Survey?

- 9.5. Around half (39) of the respondents were 'on behalf of an organisation/group'. 22 respondents were 'an individual practitioner/artist', 8 were 'amateur/personal interest' and 5 were a 'commercial company or practice'. The remainder (5) were 'other', but these are basically on behalf of an organisation.
- 9.6. Although only 39 indicated they were answering on behalf of an organisation, 59 respondents answered the question about how the organisation is constituted.



- 9.7. The most popular response (20) was 'commercial' with all other responses (including Charity) making up the remainder (all of the other responses will be non-commercial and working in the public interest in some way)
- 9.8. The Survey provided a wide range of options for respondents to choose from that best describes the particular sub-sector of the creative/cultural/arts sector. It is worth noting that respondents could provide multiple responses (the total number of responses was 167 from the 79 that completed the survey). The range of activities are listed below and give some insight into the relative strengths of sub-sectors within the District.
- 21 'Music Venue/Music Studio or Music organisation/musician
  - 20 'Arts/Creative education (i.e. skills training, courses or workshops – Using arts/culture to support learning outcomes)
  - 17 'Artist (including visual art, sound, performance art and installation)
  - 13 'Multi-Use Space (i.e. used for arts/cultural uses and other uses)
  - 11 'Community/Voluntary sector arts group or organisation'
  - 11 Theatre or Performing arts space (including dance) or theatre/dance practitioners
  - 9 'Cinema'
  - 8 'Craft, heritage craft, artisan practitioner or craft workshop space'
  - 5 'Museum'
  - 6 'Creative/arts professional development support (support for arts/creative sector i.e. funding or project development)
  - 6 'Temporary spaces for culture/arts (including outdoor spaces)
  - 5 'Retail (selling arts/cultural products)
  - 5 'Art Gallery or public art location'
  - 4 'Local History Group'
  - 3 'Archive'
  - 3 'Heritage Building'
  - 2 'Art Trail, fair, festival or open studio event'
  - 2 'Art studio space (providing studio spaces for artists)

*'It would be great to have a teaching/learning space for all ages to get involved with arts & crafts. ECC once held good adult day & evening classes in Saffron Walden but don't any more. A decline since 1980's & 90's. PITY'* (Craft Practitioner)

*'I am a potter. I used to teach workshops from my studio but since the pandemic I have decided to just work on my own work which I sell predominantly online.'*

- 9.9. It is clear from the above that Music is well represented in the District, as well as Arts and Cultural Education. Theatre and Artists of various specialisms are also well represented which is to be expected in a District where participation rates seem high in amateur creative pursuits.

Q7 Please provide any more information about your organisation or practice here. For example, describe how you run activities or who you work with on a regular basis

Saffron Hall music school classes regular work talks events put artists  
open schools times run Society art weekly group  
Saffron Walden local performing music ages workshops organise year  
studio CONCERTS experienced community

#### Social Media Presence?

- 9.10. Given the informal nature of the groups that some of the respondents are answering for, it is perhaps not particularly surprising that 16 (21%) stated that they did not have a website or social media presence of any kind. That includes not only a website but also Facebook, Instagram and Twitter (for example). In our research for the Baseline database we did find it challenging to get any kind of information online regarding a number of groups or practitioners.

- 9.11. Still, **the majority of responses show a social media presence** (59 or 79%).

#### Do organisations or practitioners use a regular space or spaces?

- 9.12. The majority of respondents stated that they did have access to and used regular spaces within the District. There was a wide range of comments regarding the space uses of different organisations and individuals with many using spaces across the District and beyond on an ad-hoc basis. There are references to church buildings, using home spaces, renting, and farm buildings.

*'We use space as and when we need it. Sometimes locally and sometimes in situ to show. And sometimes London. **Fyi it is more expensive to use locally than London.** Fyi also, I made a lot of enquires as to using empty buildings as we work on an ad hoc basis, have our own insurance and could use them instead of them going stagnant.'* (Theatre Company)

*'I host an annual poetry weekend at my home. But it's only for 6 people, by invitation only.'*

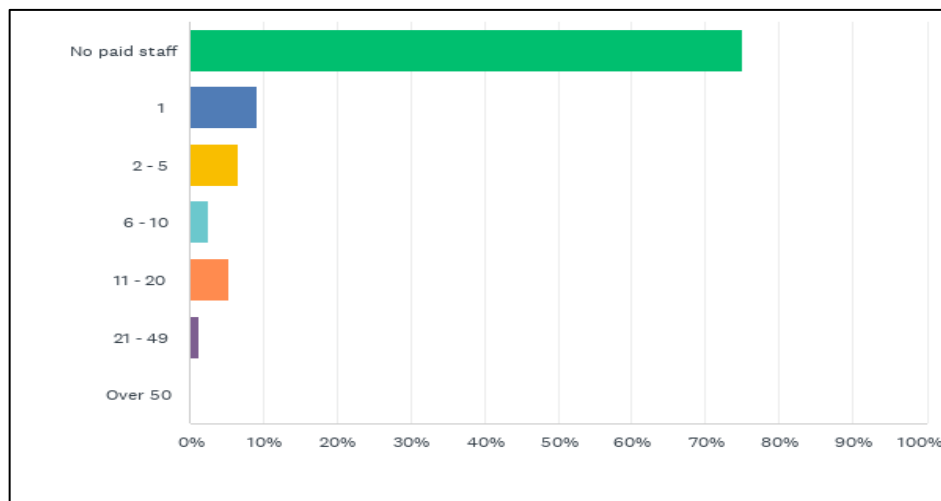
*'We hire junior school halls and church halls.'*

### Q9 Do you use a regular space or spaces?

Saffron buildings Village Hall room Rehearsals performances Saffron Walden  
centres Hall public use Parish home community Church school  
space meetings office sometimes rent St Mary hire studio

### Do Organisations or Groups have Paid Staff?

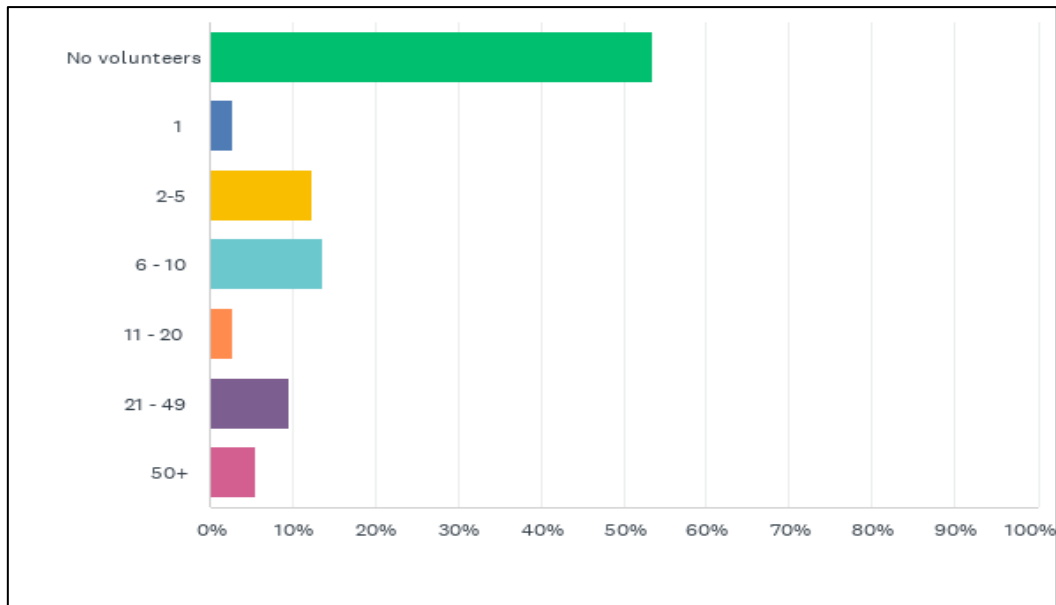
9.13. On the whole the organisations/individuals who responded did not tend to have any paid staff. This reflects the **keen amateur and participatory nature of much of the arts and cultural scene across the District**, with a relatively small number of larger organisations who do have staff.



### Do the organisations/groups have volunteers?

9.14. The majority of respondents (39) stated that they had no volunteers. However, given the voluntary nature of many of the respondent's groups, this is likely to be a little misleading. Many of the respondents will themselves be volunteers, so they may mean that they have no other volunteers. However, the responses clearly show that the **nature of the cultural scene is very reliant upon a core and unpaid group of individuals** (and this is indeed backed up by discussions with local groups).



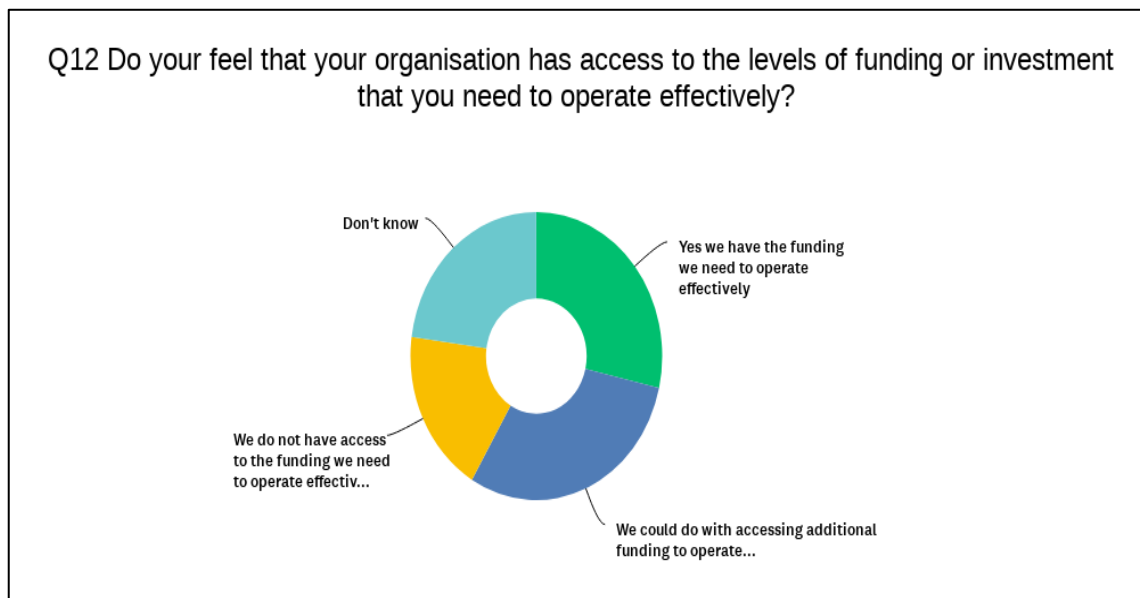


*'As a society we are a not for profit organisation. No one is paid. Many give their time freely to aid and support events and the running of the society.'* (Local Art Society).

*'We have a pool of around 90 volunteers but there is a smaller hard core.'*

#### Do You Have Access to the Funding You Need?

9.15. The responses to this question were mixed which is probably broadly encouraging from a financial sustainability point of view.



9.16. 20 responses stated that they do have the funding they need. 21 stated they could do with 'additional funding'. 12 stated that they 'do not have access to the funding they need'. A further 16 stated that they 'don't know'.

- 9.17. This range of responses is no doubt a **reflection of the informal and volunteer-led nature of the organisations** responding to the survey. From wider research it is clear that there is not a significant amount of arts, cultural or indeed heritage related funding going into organisations and communities across Uttlesford, so there **does not seem to be a culture of regular applications from local organisations or practitioners** (as might exist in other Districts). Supporting organisations/groups to access external funding does seem to be an area of opportunity. Commercial organisations however will not necessarily be interested or eligible.

*'We have received charitable support from various local charities through which we have improved our equipment, facilities, and accessibility. Members' fees cover our every day running costs.'*

*'Our ability to carry out outreach and engagement activities has been severely curtailed in recent years due to increasing challenging budget positions within local government.'*

*'There is a **need for affordable exhibition space for artists to display and sell their work.**'*

*'As we entirely voluntary based, it is difficult to find time and people to apply for grants.'*

*'We **generate our own funds** and recently raised over £600,000 for a building extension. Income is generally from visitors and other arts organisations.'*

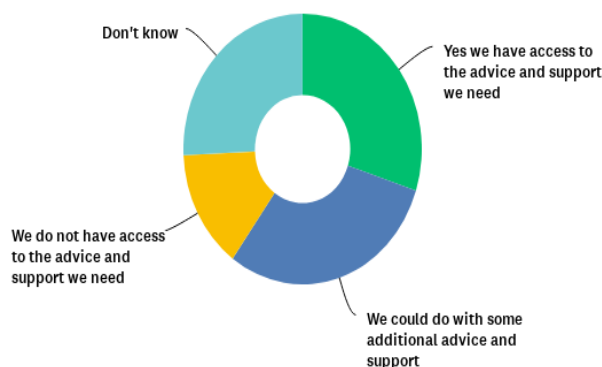
*'We are a small company and **accessing funding is so time consuming that it takes more finance than we have in order to pay a fair wage for the hours it would take to fill out all the forms.** Often local funding is in such small amounts that hours to access negates any benefit.'*

- 9.18. It is worth noting that, despite the significant pressure faced nationally by the creative and arts sectors during the Covid-19 pandemic and resultant lockdowns, **there were not many references to financial or funding disruption caused by Covid-19 in the responses to this survey.** From broader research we know that for some of the larger organisation's membership remained strong which provided some financial stability through the pandemic, and less formal groups will have limited their activities thereby reducing demand for income (from not hiring spaces for example).

#### Do You Have Access to Advice and Support?

- 9.19. As with the funding response above, this is a varied response with no overall consensus. This of course not unexpected given the range of organisations responding and in some ways is reassuring that there is not necessarily a significant demand for more support. Reflecting on wider research, many organisations and individuals are aware that UDC in particular has not been in a position to offer an Arts/Cultural support role since 2008, and therefore the expectations of securing advice and support from UDC in particular are low. Equally, unlike some other Districts/Boroughs in Essex where there are active strategic cultural organisations (including those that are part of the Arts Council's National Portfolio) which offer support programmes and advocacy, Uttlesford has very little of this (although it does have organisations that would be capable of providing some support to others).
- 9.20. The responses were equally split (21 each) between 'We have access to advice and support we need' and 'We could do with some additional advice and support.' There were fewer responses (9) for 'We do not have access to the advice and support we need'. A further 18 responded that they 'Don't Know'.

Q13 Do you feel that you have the access to the support and advice you need? For example funding, business planning, interpretation, forming partnerships etc.



*'We are always open to business support and advice. Being a creative isn't always the best starting point to successfully run a business. Its only through Covid that we have become aware of some of the funding available to small businesses. gaining knowledge of what's out there is always really useful.'*

*'I have always self taught and seeked out help myself. I feel that business advisors and practitioners that are outside the commercial space are perhaps a bit behind to offer support I need.'*

*'We tried to find out more from the council & while they were very helpful, we came away none the wiser on which funds we would be eligible for. We are planning to become a CIO at some point to widen our funding potential.'*

#### Where are Audiences and Participants From?

9.21. Arts, cultural and heritage organisations can operate at different levels in terms of outreach, ambition and capacity. Given the high number of smaller informal and voluntary groups that exist across Uttlesford it is perhaps not surprising that a high number of respondents said that their audiences and participants are essentially local.

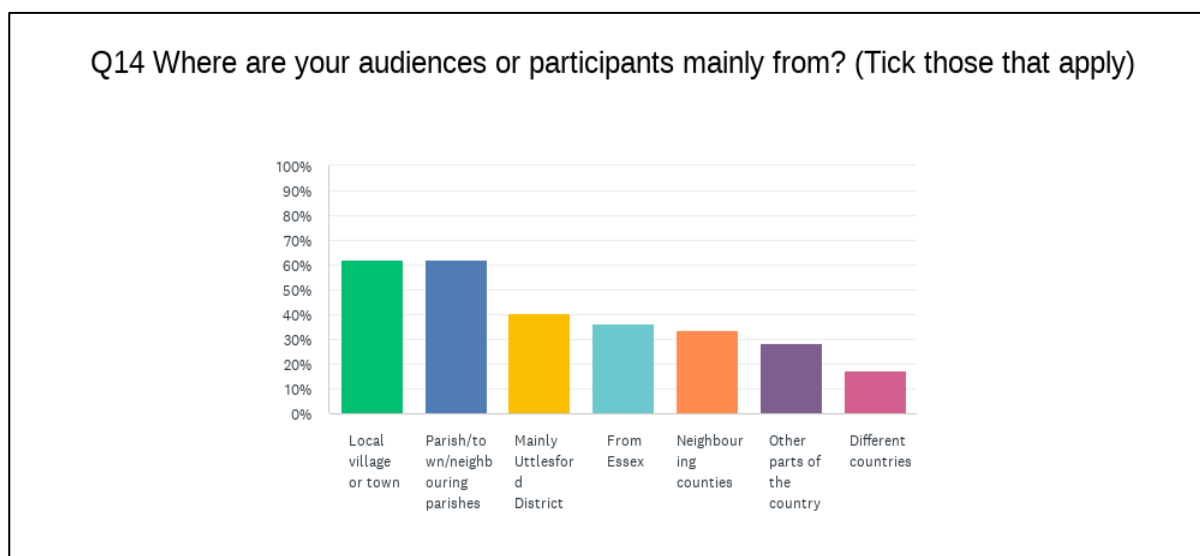
9.22. Respondents could choose more than one option as we are aware that audiences and participants for culture can be from different areas (local and from outside of Essex for example). 45 (62% of the respondents – not 62% of all of the responses to the question) stated that their audiences/participants were mainly 'Local, from the town/village'. 46 (63%) stated that their audiences/participants were from the 'Parish/Town and Neighbouring parishes'. 29 (49%) stated they were 'Mainly from Uttlesford District'. Out of the 206 responses (including multiple choices from respondents), this means that 120 (58%) stated a mostly local audience. 'From Essex (outside of Uttlesford)' 27 (37%), 'From Neighbouring Counties' 25 (34%), 'From Other Parts of the Country' 21 (29%) and 'From Different Countries' 13 (17%).

9.23. This shows that although the majority have audiences and participants from the local area, there is a good reach out into neighbouring areas and even internationally. Some of the international references are from commercial organisations reflecting the make up of their customer base.

*'Many of our staff are very local, however, our customer base is global with the majority of our audience from the USA.'*

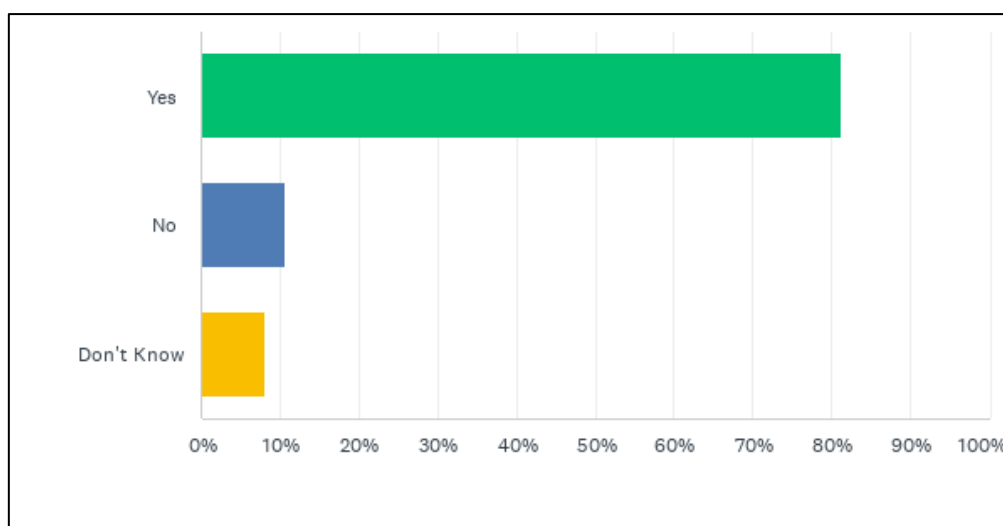
*'As Stansted is a 'border' town, we derive a proportion of our audience from the Bishop's Stortford area.'*

*'I get more visitors from CAMBRIDGE than I do from Saffron Walden. The general public are not interested in any art projects. They are in fact uneducated in such activities.'*



#### Do Organisations/Practitioners Engage Their Local Communities?

9.24. There was an overwhelmingly positive response to this question with **61 (81%) of respondents stating that they do engage locally**. Of course this will mean different things in different settings and contexts, but it does demonstrate a **good local connectivity between organisations operating and their communities**. The fact that many are run by local volunteers will increase the bonds between smaller groups/organisations and the local community.



*'Extensive work on, for example, Dementia. Also a wonderful venue for local amateur arts organisations.'*

*'We are able to perform at events that take place locally as well as school fetes etc. We hold two of our own concerts every year, the profits from which we donate to local charities.'*

*'When starting new projects we always engage with the village residents via our Google Group and Facebook pages. We do the same when putting on activities.'*

*'We have always had strong recruitment from within the village or local communities. We enjoy people joining us locally as it aids the work-life balance we try to help our staff achieve.'*

*'We try to engage with the local community, but as we don't have enough resources financially this proves very difficult. We do promote via social media and where there are local events we are there promoting the centre.'*

Would You be Interested in Joining an Uttlesford-focused arts/creative network in the future (if one was established)?

9.25. There is no current District-wide network for arts/cultural organisations, and as far as can be ascertained from discussions with sector representatives there has never been one. Not all Local Authorities have such networks, and where they do exist they vary depending upon the stated purpose, management and oversight, terms of references and whether they are related to a clear action plan or strategy. **Uttlesford is a large rural district and the different towns or locations do not necessarily make for a coherent geographic context for such a network.**

9.26. The responses to this question are interesting as there is clearly some good interest in joining a group, but there are caveats to this in many responses. 30 (39%) said they would 'definitely' be interested. 34 (44%) said they 'might be interested'. Only 3 said they were 'not interested' and 11 said they 'didn't know'. This would suggest that efforts could be made (through the development of a 'Cultural Strategy' perhaps) to **form a group or groupings/networks that can represent the interests of the arts/creative sectors effectively** (particularly if linked to development and the Local Plan process), support networking and promotion.

- 9.27. Some of the responses demonstrated a potential interest in joining a group, but recognised some of the potential challenges, for example **different interests from across the sub-sectors or art forms making it difficult to achieve consensus**. There are many different reasons that individuals or organisations might have for wanting to network.

*'From my experience such forums struggle to meet the needs when there is diversity between group members.'*

*'We have very few opportunities for networking locally and would be very interested in this....More opportunities for engagement with other creatives locally would be wonderful.'*

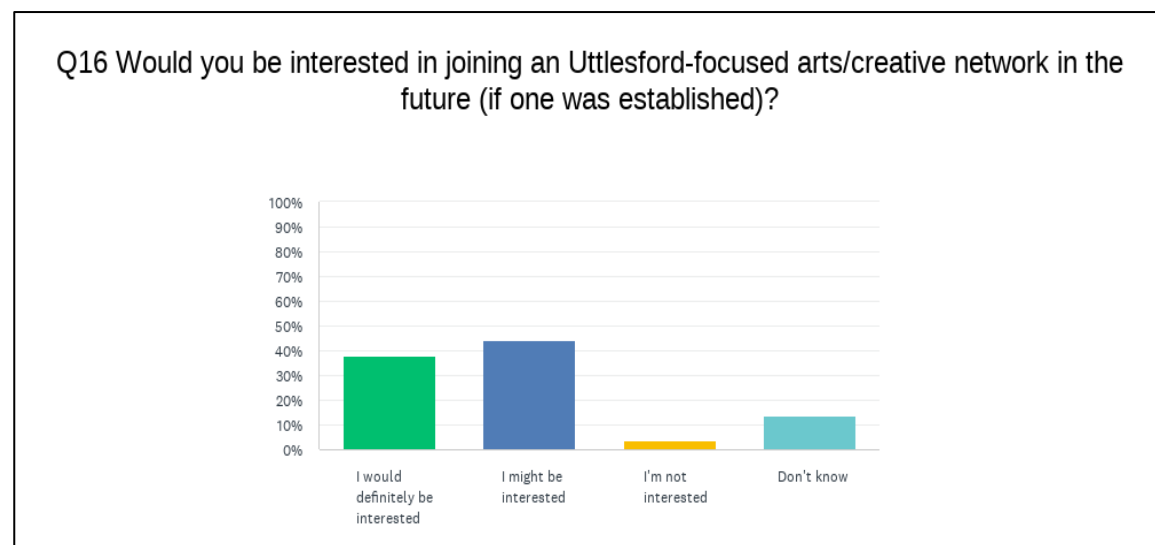
*'It depends on how it would work for our business. The arts is a hugely broad term used for many industries; if it was set up to help young, talented individuals go into a business and start a career in a creative industry they love, through training schemes and work experience, we would be interested.'*

*'This rather depends on what it is set up to do. If there is synergy in the form of exchanges of ideas for funding that would be of considerable interest.'*

*'Having been involved very briefly in discussions about the putative Uttlesford Arts Festival a couple of years ago, I would need to be persuaded that a clear and reasonably detailed proposal was in place to identify the mechanisms and benefits of any scheme.'*

*'I would hope that the network would be more than a talking shop. It would be good if it could lead to some good partnership work and increased paid opportunities for skilled professional artists and creatives.'*

*'I really think this is needed. I communicate regularly with other performing arts leaders but we all feel that there is a huge lack of performance space, workshop venues etc and no real motivation to change this.'*



## 10. THEMES EMERGING FROM STRATEGIC CONVERSATIONS AND INSIGHT

- 10.1. To support the information gathering for the Baseline Assessment, the Cultural Engine organised and held a number of meetings with key strategic organisations across the District who are responsible for arts, cultural and heritage provision. This included a workshop and presentation with a number of representatives at Saffron Walden Museum on the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021.
- 10.2. With the exception of Saffron Walden Museum, the running of which is funded directly by UDC (although UDC does not own the building or collection), **none of the organisations or groups provide their services supported by ongoing public funding or subsidy.** This is actually quite unusual compared to other areas of Essex. For the majority of cultural/arts/heritage institutions therefore their responsibility is to their audiences (not all local), their members and their sponsors; and this does not necessarily overlap neatly with the Uttlesford District boundary (i.e. they see their responsibilities and role as going beyond the District). However, all are keen advocates of the cultural and heritage scene in Uttlesford and are certainly not against extending their engagement locally where possible, but this is not always a key driver.
- 10.3. Understanding the strategic context for culture, creativity and the arts in Uttlesford is an important part of building an evidence base to support future decisions around policy, investment and networking/promotions for example. The organisations that are based across the District and who work to develop, promote and support culture, arts and heritage are likely to be well placed to identify issues, challenges and opportunities. This insight is likely to be as meaningful as what emerges from mapping and statistics. The organisations have daily experiences of operating within the District, often in very different contexts and situations. **The current culture/heritage scene is fundamentally the base upon which future growth in the creative/heritage sectors can be established. There is so much experience, knowledge and expertise within the local scene.** New investment, where it may be needed, should be initially focused on supporting existing organisations and groups as many have the potential to expand their services, grow their operations and provide more of a mutual support network.
- 10.4. Between September and December 2021 Cultural Engine met with (often on more than one occasion) with 30 organisations/individuals, all having an interest in the cultural, arts and heritage sectors. This included some of the major players including Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden Museum, Fairycroft House, Fry Art Gallery and Thaxted Festival, as well representatives of a number of small organisations.
- 10.5. This provides a good basis from which to understand the cultural sector opportunities and challenges across the Uttlesford District. It should be said that the majority of the those consulted, although not necessarily publicly funded, are very much in the 'third sector' category (charities, not for profits, locally funded). Many of them interact on a regular basis with a wide range of audiences, participants and volunteers, providing a good understanding of local grass roots needs and issues.
- 10.6. Clearly a significant number of the organisations engaged are located in and around Saffron Walden. This is not surprising given the high number of organisations based in what is the largest town in the District. It does reflect our findings from the Baseline work that **Saffron Walden and the west of the District is where the majority of the cultural offer and activities are based.**

- 10.7. In the sections below we consider some of the key issues of relevance to the Baseline work and a future Uttlesford Cultural Strategy and Local Plan. These are brief summaries covering some of the main points and more analysis and detailed assessment will be needed to support a full Uttlesford Cultural Strategy in due course. All of the notes relate specifically to issues raised or discussed through meetings and discussions with the organisations/individuals listed above. This covers a lot of important and relevant ground, but will not cover all potentially relevant issues.
- 10.8. The approach to the 'strategic conversations' was to engage directly the larger arts, cultural and heritage organisations operating in the District, as well as other smaller groups and individuals that could give an insight into the issues, opportunities and challenges as they see it. This was an interesting time to be undertaking such discussions with Covid-19 having been a major factor for over 12-months but at the time of the discussions much had returned to as normal as was possible. So there is reflection on broader trends over a longer period (before and after Covid), although Covid has obviously had an impact on some.

### **Audiences and Participants for Culture, Creativity, Arts and Heritage**

- 10.9. Culture, arts and heritage play a key role in engaging audiences and visitors from across a wider area, and this can contribute to local economic development (tourism, hospitality, evening economy etc.) as well as health and wellbeing.
- 10.10. Given the wide range of organisations consulted there are obviously differences in terms of the types of audiences that engage and participate depending upon a range of factors. Some **larger cultural and heritage institutions are securing audiences from a wider area than Uttlesford** (and in some cases national or international). **Other smaller groups or organisations engage primarily with a very local audience.** This is backed up by our findings from the Sector Survey which showed community-based organisations tend to engage with audiences and participants from their town, village, Parish or neighbouring parishes. Larger organisations including Saffron Hall, Fry Art Gallery, Saffron Walden Museum, Audley End and Thaxted Festival (based primarily at Thaxted Parish Church) **attract visitors/audiences from the wider region** and beyond.
- 10.11. From a mapping point of view, having cultural organisations of a larger scale within the District will give a strong impression that there is a good local offer for communities within the District (and this would indeed be on the whole correct). However, **out of the larger organisations it is really only Saffron Walden Museum that has a clear local remit** given its funding support through UDC, and even then there is a perception from elsewhere in the District that the Museum is really focused on Saffron Walden as a town (which is not in fact the case).
- 10.12. Larger and well-established organisations including **Saffron Hall, Audley End and the Fry Art Gallery are regionally and nationally significant in terms of their high-quality cultural offer** and they are not reliant upon local audiences. Scope for local engagement by the larger organisations is limited due to a number of factors including
- Inaccessibility/limited space - Saffron Hall for example is based on a school site which limits community engagement activity on site throughout the week. Thaxted Festival has no permanent venue and has very limited capacity. Fry Art Gallery is improving its space through an ongoing capital programme but **space will still be limited**, and Saffron Walden Museum



likewise has limited internal space for larger events/workshops (although does use what space it has to good effect)

- Limited funding – **None of the larger organisations have any significant revenue funding for outreach programmes in the community** to engage/increase local audiences/participants (Saffron Hall have developed some more recently explored below)
- Capacity – There is a large **reliance upon volunteers** even within the larger organisations which limits outreach and staffing capacity is tight. Even where there is an appetite to outreach to local communities or run/develop specific programmes, the capacity limitations are generally prohibitive.
- Not a strategic priority – Audley End's events programme for example is tailored around **securing visitors from a wide area** (to support revenue generation) and the concepts/development are driven largely by the national English Heritage team (not locally). Engaging local audiences and providing space for participation/local events is not a priority therefore.

10.13. **This then leaves Fairycroft House as essentially the default (and affordable) multi-purpose arts and culture centre in the District** with activities covering everything from arts/craft, U3A workshops and youth activities, live music and rehearsal/recording space, health and wellbeing, and dance/performance (where space allows). This is an excellent achievement by Fairycroft House CIC and its partners, but the nature of the building does restrict usage (space, configuration of rooms/spaces, conflicting uses, significant staff/volunteer capacity demands to provide support for events/workshops). Fairycroft House CIC is run as not-for-profit with significant volunteer time (and highly experienced volunteers) dedicated to its effective running and operation. **Securing funding to enable improvements to the Fairycroft House building does appear to be a priority** for improving the overall cultural offer (and therefore directly supporting the cultural/arts scene in the District). Almost as importantly however, is the apparent opportunity for the **expansion of the Fairycroft House operation (in partnership with Saffron Walden Town Council) into the Essex County Council owned space** adjacent on Fairycroft Road (used infrequently for Youth Services but otherwise totally under-utilised throughout the week).

10.14. As well as Fairycroft House, **Dunmow Arts Centre similarly is run on a not-for-profit basis with affordable space for a range of activities** in Great Dunmow (fully accessible from the town centre). The Arts Centre includes space for community radio and houses dance and theatre workshops throughout the week (including through the Rom Theatre Arts – effectively the in-house Performing Arts Company). It would appear that Dunmow Arts Centre is **relatively isolated from the local cultural scene** with few local organisations aware of its offer despite the availability of affordable space for a range of activities. Foakes Hall, managed by Great Dunmow Town Council, is regularly booked out for a range of activities by local communities and is therefore a crucial space for supporting participation in a range of activities (as well as culture through performances/comedy etc.)

10.15. Audiences and participants are not only taking part at formal arts/cultural or heritage settings, whether local or otherwise. A **network of spaces across the District provide accessible space for a range of activities including Village and Church Halls**. Local theatre/dance groups in Saffron Walden regularly use the Baptist Church in Saffron Walden for example (including Theatre Unboxed), but there is **apparent demand for a dedicated arts/cultural space that is accessible and provides facilities that are required** for such activities (this demand could partly be met through the Essex CC owned space proposal from Fairycroft House).

- 10.16. Utilising outdoor spaces including for events and festivals (and markets) is an opportunity for local organisations and creative practitioners to get involved in supporting engagement and raising their own profile. Major **events including those organised through the Saffron Walden Initiative have participation (in dance for example) at the core**, and there are many events being planned for 2022 including those linked to the 'Saffron Story' programme (partnership of a number of local organisations). Saffron Walden Town Council is engaged in consultation in an effort to ensure the Town Square is available more often throughout the week for outdoor events, markets etc. **Parish and Town Councils clearly play in important role in rural areas supporting local festivals and events** (although Covid has been disruptive over the last couple of years).
- 10.17. Relevant to the utilisation of outdoor space, the National Trust at Hatfield Forest **are no longer planning to run the popular Wood Festival** due to the short and longer-term impacts of Covid-19. The space remains available and the Trust would consider a third party taking on responsibility for a new festival (although it would not have the same name and branding). Wood Festival provided opportunities for local audiences (as well as visitors from across the wider region) to have a quality cultural experience in a unique setting.
- 10.18. There is not a strong culture of organisations/groups going for public/charitable funding to engage new audiences and participants. This includes **Arts Council England funding which is negligible in Uttlesford** compared to many other Districts in Essex and Hertfordshire for example. Although this speaks to the relative strength and independence of the creative/arts and heritage sectors in the District, **external funding for specific programmes can provide impetus for engaging participants and securing new audiences for creative output** and programming which can then increase confidence within organisations/staff/volunteers and have lasting positive impacts. High Stile projects, based in Great Dunmow, are a good example of a local arts organisation that does secure regular funding for community-engaged arts projects from the Arts Council and is able to employ artists on specific projects.
- 10.19. The proposed major capital and revenue application by Saffron Walden Museum to the National Lottery Heritage Fund will (potentially) provide an opportunity for significantly more engagement of audiences and participants in activities and learning. There is a comprehensive Audience Development Plan that sets out the main opportunities during proposed capital works and longer-term. This includes off-site work and engagement during proposed future capital works.
- 10.20. **Audiences are also often made up of older people**, particularly for some of the key cultural attractions and events including the Fry Art Gallery (mainly over 60s), Thaxted Festival (49% of 2019 audiences over 70), Saffron Hall (high booking rate from 'Commuterland Culturebuffs' who tend to be older than the general population). Audley End also has an older audience profile (although also strong for families). Voluntary participatory groups including the Recorders of Uttlesford Heritage (RUH) also tend to be much older people, as do volunteers for the Great Dunmow Museum for example and participants in the Dunmow Arts Group. This is not necessarily unusual, but it does point to the need to support accessible engagement opportunities across the district for younger people and families. As audiences age (and have more time) they will tend to get interested in the kinds of cultural offering that Uttlesford is strong in, although this can never be guaranteed over the next decade and beyond.

## Community Engagement

- 10.21. This overlaps to an extent with Audiences and Participation set out above. By ‘community engagement’ we mean specific and focused programmes of activity and outreach by organisations with the specific aim of engaging local communities/community groups in a range of activities. This is not only good for outcomes for communities (health, wellbeing) but also good for growing new audiences for arts/culture and heritage.
- 10.22. Saffron Hall provides some excellent **local engagement opportunities for participants on programmes including Together in Sound and Come Together**. Together in Sound is a partnership between Saffron Hall Trust and Anglia Ruskin University (ARU), offering music therapy groups for people living with dementia and their carers/companions. As well as offering excellent music making and collaborative singing for local people, it is also a research project with ARU participating through their ‘Cambridge Institute for Museum Therapy Research’. Saffron Hall intend to complete an evaluation of ‘Together in Sound’ and roll out the programme into other areas (where funding allows). For early 2022 this will be in Braintree in partnership with Braintree Museum and other local organisations. The ‘Come Together’ project is a multi-arts programme for local people, facilitated by a team of professional writers, visual artists, theatre-makers and musicians (open for people living in Uttlesford age 14+). This has been taking place Friends Meeting House in Saffron Walden.
- 10.23. Saffron Walden Museum run regular programmes aimed at engaging communities. For example the ongoing Lost Language of Nature project that aims to conserve a large number of specimens from the Museum’s natural history collections, whilst working with the public to discover new narratives through storytelling and language. There is a planned collaboration with Essex Cultural Diversity Project (ECDP) to increase diverse community engagement with this project and the Museum more generally. [www.essexcdp.com](http://www.essexcdp.com)
- 10.24. Fairycroft House, although often used by many organisations through the hire of the space, directly runs music events including regular Thursday evening All Star Jam Night where a full backline is provided for bands or performers to turn up and play at least 2 songs to a live audience. **This kind of initiative gives people in the community the chance to participate on a level not usually possible without access to significant kit and space** and is a strong contribution to the local popular music scene.
- 10.25. Thaxted Festival run a school programme every year as part of the Thaxted Festival, with opportunities for local school children to engage with world-class musicians. For example the Pasadena Roof Orchestra will work with a local primary school in 2022. This is relatively small scale and limited to Thaxted. **2024 is a major anniversary opportunity for Thaxted Festival (150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Gustav Holst)** with plans to significantly increase engagement and participation locally for which additional funding will be required.
- 10.26. The majority of community engagement with arts and culture will be informal through local groups, organisations and sessions taking place in non-formal arts settings, as well as through voluntary-run spaces including Dunmow Museum (and other local museums). There does appear to be significant scope to increase levels of formal engagement with arts and culture and heritage in Uttlesford. One way of securing this would be to recognise more formally in health, wellbeing and social strategies

(at District and County level) the importance of **culture/arts as a way of achieving long-term health outcomes across the community** (as demonstrated by the Saffron Hall examples above).

## **General Accessibility and Affordability of Space for Cultural Participation**

- 10.27. **Formal arts, cultural and heritage space is at a premium in Uttlesford** (and Saffron Walden in particular). The spaces that are dedicated to this include Saffron Hall, Audley End, Fairycroft House, Saffron Walden Museum, Dunmow Arts Centre and Fry Art Gallery, and they vary in their ability to house community activities and availability for hire by cultural groups/organisations. Notwithstanding the fact that the majority of these are in Saffron Walden, **only Fairycroft House is regularly used for a range of arts, cultural and craft events and workshops**. Saffron Hall is limited by its location at Saffron Walden Community High School (which is also the home of Saffron Screen), Saffron Walden Museum has limited available space (although plans to address this), Audley End is not generally accessible by local groups to host their events, and Fry Art Gallery also has limited space and volunteer capacity to support this.
- 10.28. Smaller arts/cultural groups including performing arts often use non-arts spaces including church halls and other community spaces. As discussed elsewhere in this document the **network of village halls is a strong point and they are used for a variety of sessions** throughout the week. Newport Village Hall being a good example, along with Foakes Hall (Dunmow) and Manuden (the first £1m Village Hall). Pubs are also used regularly for music and some community participation (for example the Railway Arms in Saffron Walden is community owned and has plans to develop some of the outbuildings for greater community use). Greater use could be made of Dunmow Arts Centre throughout the week as there are generally affordable spaces available (awareness appears low in Dunmow of the Arts Centre facility generally).
- 10.29. Therefore, **despite the apparent strength of the creative/arts/heritage sectors in terms of well-established organisations with dedicated buildings and spaces, the actual accessible and affordable space is limited. This only goes to demonstrate the need (and certainly the apparent demand) for more dedicated spaces for arts and culture in particular** (of all forms) in Saffron Walden and possibly elsewhere (although a business plan and suitable space may be more of a challenge outside of the main town). How this space might be developed and managed would have to be considered longer-term, but an immediate opportunity appears to be the Essex CC space adjacent to Fairycroft House (an outline business plan has been submitted to Essex CC by Saffron Walden Town Council and Fairycroft House CIC). This needs to be considered as a matter of priority to establish whether there is any real chance of Essex CC entertaining current outline proposals (Cultural Engine did engage directly with Essex CC on this issue but clarity in terms of their intentions was difficult to establish).
- 10.30. The improvements to the spaces inside and outside of Saffron Walden Museum clearly also represent an opportunity to increase community activity and participation, and **the Museum wants to move closer to being the 'heritage hub' for North West Essex** (serving the whole of Uttlesford more effectively, including being an access point for Essex Record Office, as well as into Braintree and Harlow areas). The plans for a major National Lottery Heritage Fund bid (in the region of £3.5m with match funding taking it over £4m) are ambitious and there is some way to go before any actual capital work can go ahead (at least 3 years). Should this option not be feasible, then it might not be

unreasonable **to link the development of the Museum to potential sources of infrastructure funding** through the Local Plan period.

- 10.31. Audley End (English Heritage) is clearly an important cultural and heritage location and destination for audiences from the local area and beyond to have quality experiences either through the core offer (House and Gardens) or through specific events including the summer Proms programme and winter events such as the Enchanted Audley End (through December 2021). Audley End has over 170,000 visitors each year, mostly from outside of Uttlesford. **English Heritage are currently scoping an outline Masterplan for the Audley End site which could see significant investment to improve facilities, access, and unlock more spaces** for interpretation and smaller events. This could unlock additional space on the site for community-use, although this is yet to be established.

### **Funding for Culture, Creativity and the Arts**

- 10.32. From the analysis of funding through the major funders for arts, culture and heritage (Arts Council England and National Lottery Heritage Fund) over the last few years, **it is clear that Uttlesford District has significantly lower levels than some other Districts/Boroughs in Essex**. There are no National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) of the Arts Council in Uttlesford and no apparent appetite for any organisations to make an application for the new round in early 2022 (for 2023-24 onwards). Through the Cultural Recovery Fund administered by the Arts Council Saffron Hall were able to secure some important investment to replace lost revenue through Covid-19, although this fund is likely to be a one-off and doesn't necessarily relate to core Arts Council funding trends.
- 10.33. External funding from these sources, and other charitable trusts and foundations, for revenue activity can provide the investment and impetus needed for organisations to engage more broadly and reach out to local communities.
- 10.34. Other than the commitment to Saffron Walden Museum (which is a big commitment to a non-statutory service), UDC does not directly fund a lot of arts and cultural activity across the District. In terms of local funding there is some important albeit small scale support for local organisations including Great Dunmow Museum who get around £7,000 each year split between UDC and the Town Council. Saffron Walden Town Council support for the Tourist Information Centre (which is important for wayfinding and promotion of cultural/heritage opportunities with around 118,000 visits each year) is an important contribution, and they also support other events throughout the year. Essex County Council launched a 5-year £1m fund for culture in January 2022 (for 2022-23 onwards), so Uttlesford-based cultural organisations should certainly consider this for specific projects (Uttlesford has seen low funding through Essex CC cultural and community grants programmes in the past – compared with some other Districts/Boroughs).
- 10.35. A key challenge is likely to be **the time and effort it takes for organisations and individuals to make applications to core funders including the Arts Council**. Given the largely volunteer nature of local capacity, dedicating significant time to application writing, forming new partnerships and associated research is likely to be beyond what many organisations and individuals can achieve. There is also the issue of general awareness of what funding opportunities are out there. **Providing coordinated support (potentially through the District Council) is one solution that could be considered**, or enabling more established institutions to provide support for others could be another.

- 10.36. Funding is not only relevant to project and programme delivery (activities, outreach etc.) and capital (building improvements), **it is also a very important consideration for scoping and planning for capital works**. Saffron Walden Museum was able to commission a fairly comprehensive Audience Development plan to support an initial application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) due to a £51,200 grant from the NLHF (Resilient Heritage Programme). Without this external funding it would have been difficult for the Museum to make the initial case for funding of this scale, and this may be a limiting factor for other cultural, arts and heritage organisations and groups across the District (and would also be relevant to Village Hall and other rural community spaces for example).
- 10.37. There are some very good examples of organisations and events securing private sponsorship (including from local businesses), **and membership schemes is also an important generator of revenue** – Thaxted Festival, Saffron Hall, Fry Art Gallery for example all have members that pay an annual (or lifetime) fee. Members are not always local. The Fry Art Gallery for example has around 1300 members who come from all over the UK and internationally in some cases. The Fry Art Gallery also secured around £600,000 of capital funding for a major overhaul of the gallery space, and this was achieved without recourse to the Arts Council or Heritage Fund for example.
- 10.38. Funding for arts, culture and heritage does not only have to come through sector specific routes. For example, funding through health and wellbeing related sources can be important. **The work of Saffron Hall on the ‘Come Together’ and ‘Together in Song’ programmes demonstrates the effectiveness of an arts-based approach to health and social outcomes**. Earlier in 2021 the Arts Council collaborated with the National Academy for Social Prescribing on a fund to support more arts/cultural organisations engage with local social prescribing networks. This only goes to demonstrate the importance of arts/cultural organisations looking at different sources of funding and a strategic recognition of the importance of the cultural/arts sectors in delivery health and wellbeing outcomes (from Essex CC and UDC for example).

## Potential for Cultural Networks

- 10.39. There is **not a District-wide network for arts/culture organisations or practitioners in Uttlesford** (as there is for some other Districts/Boroughs in Essex). Although establishing such a network does not seem to be a major priority for many, it is nonetheless something that interests people across the sector (and through the survey undertaken to support the Baseline). There is evidence of organisations collaborating and providing support for others, with good examples being Saffron Walden Museum and Saffron Hall. Saffron Hall have provided support, particularly during Covid, for Faircroft House (including technical advice on sound equipment and access to space for rehearsals and events), and Thaxted Festival.
- 10.40. Saffron Walden Heritage Development Group is a good example of a local network that includes Saffron Walden Museum, Saffron Walden Town Council/Tourist Information Centre, enabling some collaboration that has resulted in a National Lottery Heritage Funded project ‘Saffron Story’ which will support activities and events in 2022 around the origins of ‘Saffron’ and its historic relevance to the town. **The Town Team in Great Dunmow with the support of the Town Council and other partners are key players in organising events and initiatives** (not a network as such but demonstrates partnership potential in Dunmow).

- 10.41. The Curator at Saffron Walden Museum also provides support as a Museum Mentor for Fry Art Gallery and Great Dunmow Museum, as well as supporting other local Museums, and Museum staff support other events including at Hadstock, Thaxted and the Gardens of Easton Lodge. Staff at the Museum also engage with other organisations/groups including Essex Wildlife Trust and Essex Field Club.
- 10.42. There is no collaborative network of Village Halls across the District. Whilst this might not seem a major priority, and members of Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) do have recourse to support, **recognising the challenges that these spaces and the volunteers that run them face is part of thinking a strategically about local cultural/heritage provision.** Village Hall Committees and volunteers face financial pressures, health & safety and accessibility challenges, and have limited scope for promotion. Supporting Village Halls and other community spaces across rural areas of the District share information, expertise and insight might be beneficial.
- 10.43. There is no overall consensus on whether a wider cultural/arts network is needed for Uttlesford, although there is recognition that there could be greater levels of collaboration within the District. A key concern is representation for the arts/cultural (and heritage) sectors which does not seem to have been a major consideration to date within UDC corporate strategies (for example), although this may change through a new Cultural Strategy. The fact that the Community Stakeholder Forum (that informed the early stages of the Local Plan) was chaired by Angela Dixon from Saffron Hall was an interesting and important development in this respect.
- 10.44. The geographic coverage of any future network is not necessarily a straightforward issue. **There is no consensus on whether a network should be across the whole District, whether localised (for example around Dunmow, Saffron Walden), or thematic.** This is also something that has emerged through the sector survey. The lack of collaboration across the District could be the result of limited formal (or informal) networking, or could be because it is unrealistic to expect this to happen across different geographic locations and contexts. This needs to be considered further through a Cultural Strategy (and perhaps in preparation for further engagement and consultation on its development). **An initial 'stakeholder forum' or some kind of initial and informal network might be a good place to start in terms of securing some consensus on this issue,** and this group could be formed in preparation for development of a cultural strategy (and in this way would have a clear remit and reason to meet).

## Governance and Volunteering

- 10.45. Volunteering is important to arts, cultural and heritage organisations and activities across the UK and Uttlesford appears to be very strong in this respect, at least in relation to the organisations and groups engaged with through the Baseline work. The lack of any significant core funding for many organisations/groups means that there is a real **demand for skilled, experienced committed volunteers to take on key roles.** Important cultural institutions that have very little paid staff capacity (if any) yet deliver an important cultural offer include Fry Art Gallery (only have a part-time freelance 'Keeper'), and Thaxted Festival (only recently secured 1 Day a Week Administrator). Faircroft House has very little core staff capacity and the leadership is essentially voluntary (although highly experienced).

- 10.46. Great Dunmow Museum is run entirely by volunteers and the Saffron Walden Museum Society (which owns the collection and the Museum building) is also an entirely voluntary charitable trust (the Museum staff and ongoing revenue is funded separately by UDC). The Recorders of Uttlesford History (RUH) are all volunteers and funding is limited to support this important network (although they have managed an impressive output including publications in different subjects over the last decade). With other local museums and groups also being voluntary, this highlights how the heritage sector in Uttlesford across the board is more or less entirely volunteer focused, and older age groups are (unsurprisingly) most prominent. In the case of the RUH there is no clear succession planning for active individuals or for artefacts/legacies that are stored often within domestic settings.
- 10.47. With the exception of Saffron Walden Town Council and Great Dunmow Town Council run community spaces/halls, **the majority of accessible space for community/arts/culture in Uttlesford is managed by voluntary committees who also tend to be older people**. This does not necessarily pose any obvious problems as there is a perception that roles will be filled in the future by new retirees for example. However, ensuring a good network of accessible village spaces should be a priority to support cultural/heritage participation, and so the reliance upon older volunteers is a potential risk for the future.
- 10.48. Considering the broad issue of Governance across the District for arts/cultural and heritage organisations, it appears that this is very strong with **a good number of very experienced individuals acting as Trustees**. There was one interesting reference to the strength of this voluntary system across the District – ‘Good Governance is important and it is the invisible backbone of much of what is important to communities in Uttlesford’. This certainly appears to be the case, but it cannot be taken for granted into the future, and providing networked and collaborative support (from a cultural/heritage perspective) could be an important issue to consider through a Cultural Strategy.

## Space for Emerging Creative Practitioners and Organisations

- 10.49. The focus of engagement through the Baseline was primarily on publicly and charitable-funded or voluntary organisations operating in the Uttlesford District. There are **however many professional artists, crafters and practitioners contributing to the wealth of creative activity across the District**. There are regular craft fairs throughout the year held at Village Halls and spaces including Fairycroft House, and practitioners run workshops for others to learn new skills. In consulting with many different organisations, one issue that did emerge a number of times is the apparent lack of space available for emerging artists and creative practitioners. The majority of existing creative practitioners appear to be working out of their own homes, outhouses and barns (for example).
- 10.50. There is a thriving arts and craft scene in the District, and there are local spaces for artists to sell work, for example the Church Street Gallery in Saffron Walden (there is a quality threshold that has to be met). The Smithy in Saffron Walden (located in the Cockpit off the Market Square), is a good example of a small craft/art business (jewellery) that is both a workshop and a retail space. However the Smithy is too small a space to run workshops and hiring space in Saffron Walden tends to be expensive, so they will run workshops in Cambridgeshire (which they say is more affordable for them and accessible to their audiences/participants).
- 10.51. Overall it appears that smaller and affordable spaces on flexible terms, often seen in the form of **‘artist studios’ are in very short supply across the District meaning that much of the arts/crafts**



**sectors is dominated by those that have greater resources.** One idea coming from the Fry Art Gallery was that their current temporary space at 'Fry Art Gallery Too' on Museum Street could be **converted to artist studios** (given the building is effectively in public ownership and had been endowed with an artistic use over the last year).

- 10.52. Spaces for studios do not have to be permanent and can use the 'pop up' or 'meanwhile' principles particularly in town centre locations (consider Gatehouse Arts in Harlow). Other **examples that were noted during discussions included Parndon Mill (Harlow) and Cuckoo Farm Studios (Colchester)**. There are many farm buildings across the District that might be suitable for conversion as well as spaces in the town centres.
- 10.53. **In terms of planning ahead for creative/cultural infrastructure, ensuring provision of flexible creative spaces may be something to consider.** This issue is of relevance to younger people who may be looking to start a creative practice or small business in the arts/cultural sectors and who may not be able to find space in Uttlesford (due to price or lack of space – or both). This was an issue raised by a number of stakeholders.

## **Economic Development and Tourism**

- 10.54. The creative and cultural sectors are important to all towns across the UK, and it is no different for towns and villages in Uttlesford. The cultural (and heritage) offer of a place makes a big difference to the economy by encouraging visitors, supporting the hospitality sectors, retail and evening economy, as well as through direct employment. This was recognised in many of the discussions with key stakeholders and indeed the Fry Art Gallery had a calculation that, through their activities and presence in Saffron Walden, **they contribute around £380,000 per annum to the local economy** (according the Economic Impact Calculator from the Association of Independent Museums). The Museum, Fairycroft House, Saffron Hall, Audley End could also make similar claims for Saffron Walden, as could Thaxted Festival, Dunmow Arts Centre and Great Dunmow Museum for Dunmow.
- 10.55. Visitor numbers vary depending upon the organisation/location, with the Museum seeing around 11,000 visitors each year (pre-Covid), almost 6,500 to Saffron Hall between August 2020 and August 2021 (a very strong performance given the challenges of Covid with 35% new attendees). Thaxted Festival can get around 500 for some of the most popular performances during its Festival programme, and although there are no official figures from Fairycroft House there are around 300 people accessing and using the space for a range of activities each week.
- 10.56. Promotion of the cultural and heritage offer is important and this role is played well for Saffron Walden by the Tourist Information Centre (funded and managed directly by Saffron Walden Town Council since 2008). The **TIC in Saffron Walden has around 118,000 visitors each year** who are then provided with information about the local offer and supported with wayfinding. UDC used to fund the TIC in Saffron Walden and other locations until 2008, but due to financial constraints this ended along with funding for an Arts Development Officer. There has been a local initiative in Great Dunmow to have a part-time TIC (or equivalent) located at Great Dunmow Library, but this is not currently operational and the space it occupied is empty (the Essex CC Library team would be happy to consider this again if support were available).

- 10.57. It appears there are plans for a new Visit Uttlesford site, separate from any Essex County Council initiative, that will be commissioned and funded by UDC in 2022. This is a **clear opportunity to effectively promote the wider culture and heritage offer across the District and to engage with any future cultural/heritage network that may become established through a future Cultural Strategy**. Currently the main online resource for visitor information/tourism is linked to Saffron Walden TIC ([visitsaffronwalden.gov.uk](https://visitsaffronwalden.gov.uk)), meaning **only Saffron Walden is promoted effectively**.
- 10.58. A clear economic challenge, as well as an opportunity, is to aim to secure more visitors to Saffron Walden (and other locations where possible) when they are visiting Saffron Hall, Saffron Screen and Audley End. Audley End is seen very much by English Heritage as a regional asset and there is not a clear strategy (or indeed an apparent revenue need) to appeal to local visitors (currently over 170,000 visitors each year). This therefore limits Audley End's connectivity to Saffron Walden and Uttlesford with visitors apparently unlikely to make a visit to other locations/destinations when visiting Audley End. This is recognised by some stakeholders and indeed the Saffron Walden BID did run a carriage and horses connection for visitors for a short period in summer 2017 (not continued and not on the radar currently of the BID), with over 1000 people taking the trip. The work led by the BID to promote the Saffron Hall pantomime (Wizard of Oz) during November and December 2021 with window displays in local shops is another effort to connect Saffron Hall to the town centre, as visitors will generally (although not exclusively) travel directly to the Saffron Hall site (on the edge of town at Saffron Walden County High School) and not visit the town centre.
- 10.59. The apparent underperformance of Saffron Walden's evening economy (hospitality) was referenced by a number of stakeholders. There was a view that more **coordinated cultural events and promotions after 5pm (particularly in the summer months) could support the evening economy in the town**. Saffron Walden Town Council were keen to see this happen and would be supportive (in terms of potential liaison between stakeholders and businesses or through promotion for example).

## 11. CULTURAL AND CREATIVE SKILLS AND EDUCATION

- 11.1. In this section we briefly examine the current offer for creative skills in Uttlesford. Engaging younger people as well as adults in creative learning and skills development opportunities is all part of ensuring there a vibrant creative ecosystem at all levels (professional and voluntary). The challenge is to ensure there is funding and capacity to deliver activities and learning opportunities, and that spaces are utilised effectively.

### Schools and Colleges

- 11.2. Below we provide a brief overview of the cultural/arts offer within the local secondary schools. There is nothing particularly remarkable about the offer for pupils, but still a good set of creative options at Key Stage 4 (GCSE). We also reflect on the situation regarding Adult Education.

#### Helena Romanes School Great Dunmow

- 11.3. Art, Dance and Drama are all offered at KS4. The extra-curricular clubs and activities include Art & Design, Drama, Media, Dance and Music.

#### Saffron Walden County High School

- 11.4. Saffron Walden Community High School houses both Saffron Hall and Saffron Screen so has a good association with the creative arts. The benefactor responsible for funding Saffron Hall intended there to be educational benefits to the school from the building of the world-class facility.
- 11.5. The County High School offers Art & Design, Drama and Music for KS4 (GCSE). There is also a 'Music Academy' run in partnership with Saffron Hall.

#### Joyce Frankland Academy Newport

- 11.6. The curriculum offer for Key Stage 4 includes Art, Music, and Drama. Music clubs also run throughout the week.

#### Forest Hall School Stansted Mountfitchet

- 11.7. The curriculum includes Art at Key Stage 3 and 4 and for GCSE there are the choices of Art, Dance, Music and Photography. There are also after school 'enrichment' activities including drama and dance.

#### Arts Award

- 11.8. Arts Award is a national programme to engage more young people in creative activities and pursuits, supported by the Arts Council and Trinity College London. Arts Award is led by trained practitioners linked to cultural and community organisations and schools. The aims are:
- to offer learning and qualifications which support individual creative development in any setting
  - to place young people at the heart of the Arts Award process

- to increase young people's experience and understanding of arts practitioners and cultural organisations
- to embrace new art forms and technologies
- to reach the widest possible range of young people

11.9. There is no great evidence of engagement with Arts Award through local schools or other cultural or heritage organisations in the District. Arts Award is something that could be considered to increase cultural participation and learning opportunities for young people.

#### Adult Education

11.10. ACL is an Essex County Council associated adult-education provider that runs courses at key locations and online across Essex. ACL have sites in many Districts including in Harlow, Rayleigh, Maldon, Brentwood and Basildon. ACL Essex used to run courses out of the Essex CC-owned facility adjacent to Fairycroft House (on Fairycroft Road) in Saffron Walden. In engagement with Essex CC on this issue no reason could be identified as to why there was **no longer any activity in this building through ACL other than possible lack of take up before the Covid-19 pandemic** (and clearly during the pandemic). Indeed a scan of the current offer through ACL for creative courses across Essex demonstrates that they may well be in decline (perhaps a casualty of Covid-19). ACL have no plans to restart courses at the Fairycroft site.

11.11. There is no other major Adult Education space in the District and cultural/craft skills provision tends to be informal in nature, with courses running in locations including Fairycroft House (run by Fairycroft House CIC). Creative courses for culture/craft at other locations including Braintree (part of Colchester Institute) appear to be very limited, and a similar situation at Harlow College. Access to Adult Education for culture/craft within and beyond into some neighbouring areas does seem to be very limited.

11.12. It should be noted that significant **learning opportunities for courses of all kinds have shifted online** due to Covid. However, for arts/craft and technical courses this format is not always likely to be suitable (and in any case there are few creative courses offered through online provision in colleges close to the Uttlesford District).

#### Saffron Centre for Young Musicians

11.13. Although not linked to Saffron Walden County High, the Saffron Centre for Young Musicians is based at Saffron Hall and operates throughout term-times on Saturdays. The Centre attracts young musicians from beyond Uttlesford (as well as locally) and is an important and highly respected cultural initiative running in the District.

11.14. The Centre provides emerging musicians aged 5-18 across the East of England with an opportunity to play in an ensemble, participate in workshops and have individual tuition for instruments including woodwind, brass, strings, piano, guitars as well as singing. In addition to these practical lessons, students can opt for more academic subjects; composition, musical history, theory and aural perception. The Centre operates every Saturday in term-time from 9.30 am to 12.30 for 30 Saturdays over the academic year, and is suitable for any young musician who is already able to sing or play an instrument. Places are offered on the basis of potential, taking into account the candidate's age,

musical education and experiences to date. Those with sufficient potential can be accepted at any stage of their musical development, and there is no minimum standard.

- 11.15. The Centre has been a division of the Guildhall School of Music & Drama since 2009, and plays a part in the Guildhall Young Artists progression routes, from primary education through to graduate and post-graduate studies in music.

#### The Arts Centre - Great Dunmow

- 11.16. As well as offering a range of clubs and activities delivered through Rom Theatre Arts and other partners, there is an interesting formal education development. Rom Theatre Arts are now developing a 3-Year Diploma Course in 'Musical Theatre' that will be accredited by Chichester University. The course will be based entirely at the Arts Centre and will be open to students from across the world. Rom Theatre Arts are currently touring other colleges and locations to recruit students. Investment from students (around £9000 per year each) will provide a significant boost to both Rom Theatre Arts and the Arts Centre, enabling investment in infrastructure/building work and facilities (they have recently taken on new space attached to the current site). This would also be a major boost for **Great Dunmow with a University Degree Course in the town putting it on the map for Musical Theatre** and becoming a student destination.

#### **Youth Services and Formal Activities/Clubs**

- 11.17. Dedicated spaces are limited and underfunded it would appear at present and have been heavily disrupted by Covid-19. Although not all Youth Services are necessarily 'cultural' in nature there are various activities that run on a regular basis, some of which are funded through UDC (Youth Initiative Fund) and Town Council support. There are some dedicated Youth Centres in the District, but not all are well used currently. They are all however potential spaces for cultural and arts engagement and activity. Below we summarise the kinds of activities that take place in a number of key locations across Uttlesford. The Youth Centres in Saffron Walden, Stansted Mountfitchet and Great Dunmow are all owned by Essex County Council.

#### Saffron Walden

- 11.18. Youth Centre Fairycroft - The main Youth Centre space is at the Essex CC-owned facility adjacent to Fairycroft House. The Youth Outreach Project is supported by funding from UDC Youth Initiatives Fund and Saffron Walden Town Council and delivered by the Saffron Walden Youth Outreach project (independent charity). Year 9 upwards and on Friday evenings (once a week). The budget available for activities is around £20,000, but this budget is not entirely dedicated to supporting the Youth Outreach Project as other groups and organisations can bid into this.
- Scouts – Located on the High Street/Castle Street  
Guides – Baptist Church / St. Mary's Church  
Boys Brigade - Baptist Church

#### Great Dunmow

- 11.19. Youth Centre Great Dunmow – Located by Doctors Pond in the town centre. This is a two-nights per week Youth Outreach Project supported by UDC Youth Initiatives Fund and Great Dunmow Town

Council. Run by Old Skool (£10,000 in total. £5,000 from Town Council and £5,000 from UDC Youth Initiatives Fund)

Scouts and Guides – Mill Lane (Scout Hut)

Air Cadets Hall – High Street

#### Stansted Mountfitchet

- 11.20. Youth Centre – Located on Lower Street, run by Gemini Youth Services with funding from the Youth Initiative Fund and Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council. One night per week currently. Scouts and Guides also operate in Stansted Mountfitchet

#### Thaxted

- 11.21. Youth Centre – There is a dedicated Youth Centre on Park Street. There are limited youth services operating on a totally voluntary run basis. There is no funding currently from the Youth Initiative Fund. Currently only operating on Friday evenings, but opportunities to expand provision. The Thaxted Youth Club is owned by the Youth Club and money is raised through services and local donations to supports its operation (very limited currently).  
Scouts and Guides - Bardfield Road

#### Newport

- 11.22. Dedicated Youth Centre owned by the Youth Club. Limited services currently. No funding from Youth Initiatives Fund. Located at the Recreation Ground Frambury Lane (next to the Sports Pavilion).

#### Great Chesterford

- 11.23. Youth Club - At the Community Centre Fridays (term time). On the recreation ground, Chesterfords Community Centre. Voluntary run club not currently active.  
Scouts and Guides – Take place in the local school Hall

#### Great Sampford

- 11.24. Youth Centre in the School Hall – infrequent activities currently and no core funding. Longstanding voluntary group has run activities (no paid staff).

#### Langley

- 11.25. There is some limited youth activity in the Community Centre supported by volunteers. Voluntary groups have run activities and were supported to get established by UDC.

### **Uttlesford Youth Council**

- 11.26. The Youth Council was an initiative to directly engage young people in Uttlesford in the democratic process, enabling them to be part of Full Council Meetings for example (although not with voting rights). Two young people have been formally invited to be part of the Climate Change Working

Group at UDC (Council committee) for example. Since Covid the Youth Council has been hit quite hard as older young people have left and it has not been possible to recruit replacements. The Youth Council can attract around 6 – 10 young people to meetings. However, given transport connectivity challenges, it is often necessary to pay for taxis for around 6 young people from across the District. From a consultation and engagement perspective, having an operational and effective Youth Council would be a good forum to discuss local cultural and heritage provision for young people (and inform future services and projects). Meetings can be held digitally when necessary.

## **Local Cultural Education Partnership**

- 11.27. Local Cultural Education Partnerships (LCEPs) are an Arts Council-led initiative focused on Districts/Boroughs that aim to bring cultural providers together with local education/school systems. In Essex and the wider sub-region they have been supported to date through the Royal Opera House Bridge organisation (funded by the Arts Council as a 'bridge' between education and creative sectors). There is an LCEP in Braintree for example as well as in Southend and Colchester. There is no LCEP in Uttlesford and no apparent moves to establish one. Given the likely changes to the strategic support offered to LCEPs from 2023 onwards as all existing National Portfolio Organisations currently funded by the Arts Council will have to reapply for 2023-24 funding onwards, it may be difficult to get a LCEP formally established in Uttlesford, but inspiration could be taken from other areas and support requested from Royal Opera House Bridge while they maintain their current role.
- 11.28. An LCEP would provide an opportunity for partners to identify clear opportunities for supporting young people to engage in cultural and creative activities on a regular basis. In Southend for example the LCEP secured funding (£25,000 from the Bridge and £25,000 from Southend Borough Council) to establish the 99 by 19 programme that encourages young people to try different cultural experiences in their local area (which not only encourages exploration but also necessitates a clearer strategic understanding of the local cultural offer from a young person's perspective).

## 12. PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS AND THE RURAL CONTEXT

- 12.1. In this section we explore the importance of Town and Parish Councils, as well as local community groups and organisations, to the cultural scene across the Uttlesford District. Uttlesford is predominantly rural District covering around 250 square miles with a wealth of Parishes with their own identities, sense of place, heritage and community. There are 51 Parish Councils of varying sizes and capacity and 2 larger Town Councils in Great Dunmow and Saffron Walden. 4 parishes no formal Council structure (but do have local meetings).
- 12.2. The main towns of Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow, Stansted Mountfitchet and Thaxted account for less than a third of the population of the District (estimated to be around 91,000), **meaning that the majority of the population live in one of the many rural parishes.** The majority of the villages appear to be in good economic health with a wealth of well-maintained built heritage (majority in private ownership), local amenities (including pubs and shops) and community assets (including Village Halls). Connectivity between locations within the District is obviously a challenge with limited bus services and a heavily reliance upon car ownership (one of the highest rates of car ownership in England and Wales). **Cycling infrastructure is generally poor between locations and walking is not a viable option for most journeys between villages and towns.**
- 12.3. Across the parishes there are 3,700 Listed Buildings and 36 Conservation Areas, 73 Scheduled Monuments and over 4,000 records of archaeological sites and finds. **This is a wealth of cultural heritage and an asset base that provides an excellent basis for interpretation, community participation and engagement, a sense of place and for supporting local/rural tourism and the local economy.** The historic rural character of the many parishes across Uttlesford is rightly valued by local communities and Town/Parish Councils and they want to see it protected for the future. To this end a number of Town and Parish Councils have developed Neighbourhood Plans (explored in more detail below), and there is a clear sense from current engagement and consultation taking place for the Local Plan that planning policies should place heritage, character and landscape protection as key factors in decision making.
- 12.4. In terms of culture and the arts across a rural District the size of Uttlesford, it is clearly not possible to provide the same level of access for communities or facilities for practitioners in each location. **Cultural groups, activities, organisations and activities are dynamic in the sense that they can emerge, change and end.** Some of this relates to access to appropriate spaces where groups can gather for cultural activities, lessons, workshops and events. **Issues including access to funding and support/advice is also important as is digital connectivity.** When Arts Council England states that it wants to 'shape stronger cultural provision in villages, towns and cities', (ACE – Let's Create) it is recognising the need to engage and support local communities and organisations to achieve this. The Arts Council cannot achieve this across all rural areas and Districts, so Local Authorities and many other organisations and support organisations have a role to play here.

### The Importance of Town and Parish Councils – Culture and Heritage

- 12.5. The number of Parish and Town Councils across the District poses **a major opportunity for supporting cultural engagement and participation. Each of the Parish/Town Councils has a clear understanding of their local area, community, issues and infrastructure needs, the local heritage and context.** In theory this is an excellent network with which to plan for improved cultural



infrastructure where it is needed, support projects to secure funding and get communities actively involved in shaping the local cultural offer and scene, recognising the wider social and economic benefits that stem from this. Providing support and advice to Parish Councils in developing (or updating) Neighbourhood or Village Plans is likely to be a good strategy in developing the local evidence base of need (as it can be for demonstrating a need for more affordable housing for example). Their role in supporting the development of the arts and culture (and heritage) across the District should not be underestimated.

- 12.6. The large number of Parish/Town Councils is also a challenge however as across Uttlesford they do not appear to operate as an effective network, and the relationship with UDC can often be strained (or at least remote). UDC do organise and facilitate the Local Council's Liaison Forum with Parish/Town Councils to discuss relevant issues and strategy, but attendance is often fairly poor.
- 12.7. The varying size, resources and capacity of Parish and Town Councils means that they cannot all take part in meetings, networks, initiatives or project development. External advice and support is available through Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) although not all Parishes or community groups who run facilities (including Village Halls) are members. Notwithstanding these challenges, it should be recognised that **Parish/Town Councils are important components in terms of local infrastructure provision, key stakeholders for the development of cultural initiatives and activities, and are immersed in the local context and community.** Finding ways of empowering them will be key in the longer-term strategy of maintaining existing assets that can be utilised for culture/arts activities, and where necessary to improve the infrastructure to ensure the offer is District-wide (as far as is possible) and not concentrated in Saffron Walden.
- 12.8. A key challenge, which is particularly important in the context of Covid-19, is **addressing isolation of communities across the District, particularly younger and older populations in the rural areas.** The is something recognised as an issue in the Uttlesford Health & Wellbeing Strategy. Parish Councils and local organisations are likely to be important to tackling this, including through use of their Village Halls for cultural and community activity.
- 12.9. Relating to the key role of Parish Councils in England, a recent report from the Thinktank Onwards is an interesting intervention in the whole issue of localism and local representation. It argues that in the national debate on devolution there has been too much focus on regions and local enterprise partnerships as well as city deals (for example), and not enough on the **hyper-local and therefore 'one of the oldest and most effective structures of local governance – the town and parish council...'**

*'The vision we set out is not revolutionary but it is vital: for every neighbourhood, no matter where it is located, to be able to establish its own local democratic governance, and, if a sufficient share of residents wills it, to take greater control of local functions.'*<sup>14</sup>

- 12.10. As the Government develops its broader 'Levelling-Up' agenda with indications that there may be reorganisation of local government focused on larger unitaries (potentially covering existing county areas like Essex), there is a potential risk of local representation suffering (particularly in rural areas and smaller towns which tend to be represented by parish and town councils). The Localism Act 2011 made it easier for communities to establish a new Parish or Town Council and brought in specific

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<sup>14</sup> 'Double Devo: The Case for Empowering Neighbourhoods as well as Regions' Onwards Thinktank 2021

powers around Neighbourhood Planning (explored more later in this Section). The Onwards report suggests that Government should increase the powers of Town and Parish Councils still further:

*'The Government should radically increase the powers available to town and parish councils, by extending the General Power of Competence on the same terms as the rest of local government and by creating new powers for town and parish councils to "pull down" responsibility for neighbourhood functions if they believe they could do a better job than the district or unitary council. These functions should include: maintenance of green space; management of civic assets, such as libraries, community hubs and sports facilities; and street cleaning and sweeping. It could even extend to licensing of markets and street trading and power should be clarified to give town and parish the ability to invest in church buildings too'*<sup>15</sup>

- 12.11. There is no guarantee that these new powers will be forthcoming, and the Onwards intervention in the policy debate is notable due to the relative rarity of strategic focuses on the role and importance of parish and town councils in England. The **immediate issue of relevance to arts, cultural and heritage provision in Uttlesford District is ensuring a good relationship between the District Council and parish/town councils, and supporting local efforts to improve facilities or community programmes recognising the unique role that this hyper-local tier of local government has.**

## Village Halls and Community Spaces

- 12.12. Village Halls and other community spaces are likely to be one of the most important facilities in rural Parishes/Villages across Uttlesford. They can be used for a wide range of activities throughout the week for a reasonable cost and they are of varying ages, sizes and facilities. Not all Village Halls and Community Spaces are managed by Parish or Town Councils in Uttlesford (or elsewhere in England), as **local community groups often take responsibility.**
- 12.13. Parish and Town Councils can potentially play an important role in the development of Village Hall and Community Spaces. One mechanism is preferential borrowing through the Government-backed Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), something which is not available to local community groups or charities. The borrowing through the Parish or Town Council does not need to be related to a property that it owns; it can borrow to support investment in their local area including community spaces. Borrowing by the Parish or Town Council can be repaid through recourse to their proportion of the Council Tax precept (which would need to be raised to account for the borrowing). A Parish/Town Council is rated as a first-class borrower based on the security of future Council Tax revenues, and the PWLB understand the statutory nature of Local Authorities at all levels.
- 12.14. Through the Parish and Town Council-focused survey for the Baseline we found that various activities take place regularly in Village Halls. Previous cultural programmes have been run in Village Halls across Essex including 'Essex on Tour' which was a match-funded programme through Essex County Council (2006-2010), supporting Village Hall committees to stage cultural events through access to hands-on practical and commissioning advice. This kind of programme could be revived in Uttlesford and would certainly be in line with current Arts Council priorities. Cultural Engine consulted with Essex Music Development Agency (Tony Morrison runs EMDA and was the lead for

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<sup>15</sup> Double Devo: The Case for Empowering Neighbourhoods as well as Regions' Onwards Thinktank 2021

Essex on Tour). Learning from the previous Essex on Tour programme and securing funding through local and national sources could see a similar programme emerge (not necessarily led by EMDA).

- 12.15. We found from the Baseline Assessment that there were 79 Village Halls or similarly accessible community spaces, which is a significant number of spaces that are accessible for a range of activities. Not all of the spaces are managed by Parish or Town Councils however. **14 are managed directly by Parish or Town Councils, 44 are run by independent charities, 2 Community Interest Companies, 2 are commercial, 1 community trust, 2 on school sites (run by the school).**
- 12.16. **Newport Village Hall is a good example of a space that is well used by the local community for regular community and cultural events.** For example, the Newport Amateur Dramatics Society (NATS) uses the space for production and rehearsals, as do the well-established Saffron Walden Symphony Orchestra. There are a wide range of other uses throughout the week and the space is well publicised with good modern facilities and parking. The Hall is also very close to Newport Train Station.
- 12.17. Another consideration is that of Churches that are often located at the very centre of villages and in some very remote areas. Some church spaces will be included in the Baseline Assessment as they are known to be utilised for cultural/arts and other community activities. Across the country there is some concern about the future of many parish churches with congregations becoming smaller and funding tight for upkeep and repairs of what are very often Listed Buildings<sup>16</sup>. Even if local parish churches are not currently used for cultural or community activities on a regular basis, it may be possible for them to become so and this may provide an opportunity for securing some investment in building maintenance and running costs. This issue would need further investigation and consultation with relevant stakeholders (including Parochial Church Councils).

## **Parish Councils and Assets of Community Value**

- 12.18. The Localism Act 2011 introduces 'Assets of Community Value' (also known as the Community Right to Bid). The legislation allows local groups, including parish councils, to nominate assets (buildings and land) for inclusion on a register or list of Assets of Community Value. If a property is included on the ACV List, then the owner of the asset must inform the Local Authority of their intention to sell. If a local group want to buy the asset to ensure it remains a local asset of community value, this can trigger a six-month moratorium on the sale, giving the group an opportunity raise the money to meet the asking price.
- 12.19. ACV processes are managed by the relevant Local Authority (in this case Uttlesford District Council) who must keep an up-to-date list of ACVs in their area, publicise notices of disposal of assets on the list, act as an intermediary between owners and community bidders (those who applied for the ACV – or other local groups if interested). Local Authorities cannot add properties or land to the list on their own initiative; rather they must receive a nomination from a Parish Council, Neighbourhood Forum or another unincorporated local group (of at least 21 local people who appear on the electoral roll with the local authority or a neighbouring local authority).

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<sup>16</sup> 'House of Good' National Churches Trust (October 2020)

- 12.20. Once a property or space has been listed as an ACV and the owner wishes to sell, then an initial moratorium period of 6 weeks is initiated during which the owner cannot sell and the local group or Parish Council can express an interest in purchasing. If this proceeds then a full moratorium period of six months is initiated during which time owner may not enter into a sale of the asset, unless such a sale falls within one of the exemptions or is to a local community interest group. Essentially the **ACV process provides an opportunity for Parish Councils and other local groups to bring buildings and spaces they consider have real value to the local community into public/community ownership.**
- 12.21. Assets of Community Value do not have to be cultural assets, and so the use of this particular system for recognising the value of assets is not in itself essential for preserving and enhancing local cultural and heritage infrastructure. However, many of the spaces and places recognised are playing a key role at the heart of the community (whether they are in community ownership or not), and many could be utilised for cultural and heritage activities if they remained accessible by the community.
- 12.22. On the current register **of ACV held by UDC there appears to be 79 including a number of pubs, playing fields, allotments, community spaces** (including the Rowena Davey Day Centre in Great Dunmow), golf courses and even schools. This is one of the largest ACV lists of Essex Local Authorities, **although a critical reflection on whether all merit inclusion as ACVs is probably required by UDC and local stakeholders.** Examples of ACVs that were registered and then brought into community ownership and use are the Railway Arms (Station Road in Saffron Walden) which now operates as a community-owned pub and music/events venue, and Fairycroft House which is now a thriving arts/cultural venue. It is worth noting also that the Essex County Council owned 'ACL' (college) building adjacent to Fairycroft House has been registered as an ACV. This is one building that has been clearly identified by Saffron Walden Town Council and Fairycroft House CIC as having potential for arts, cultural and community use. **The ACV system therefore has demonstrated tangible results in Uttlesford over the last few years.**

## Town and Parish Council Survey

- 12.23. To support the Baseline Study and in recognition of the importance of Town and Parish Councils to cultural and community infrastructure across the District, Cultural Engine and UDC created a bespoke digital survey to gain some information and insight from Town and Parish Councils. This was introduced at a Local Council Liaison Forum on the 14<sup>th</sup> September 2021 and circulated through UDC contacts with a direct link to the survey. There were 13 responses from Birchanger, Broxted, Elsenham, Farnham, Great Canfield, Henham, Quendon & Rickling, Stebbing, Thaxted, Widdington. Newport Parish Council responded to the sector survey, so their responses are a different format so are only referenced in the summary below where relevant. This provides a good range of information at a very local level representing around 25% of the total that could have responded. As well as providing a summary below, the responses have informed the gathering of information on each Parish for the Baseline Assessment.

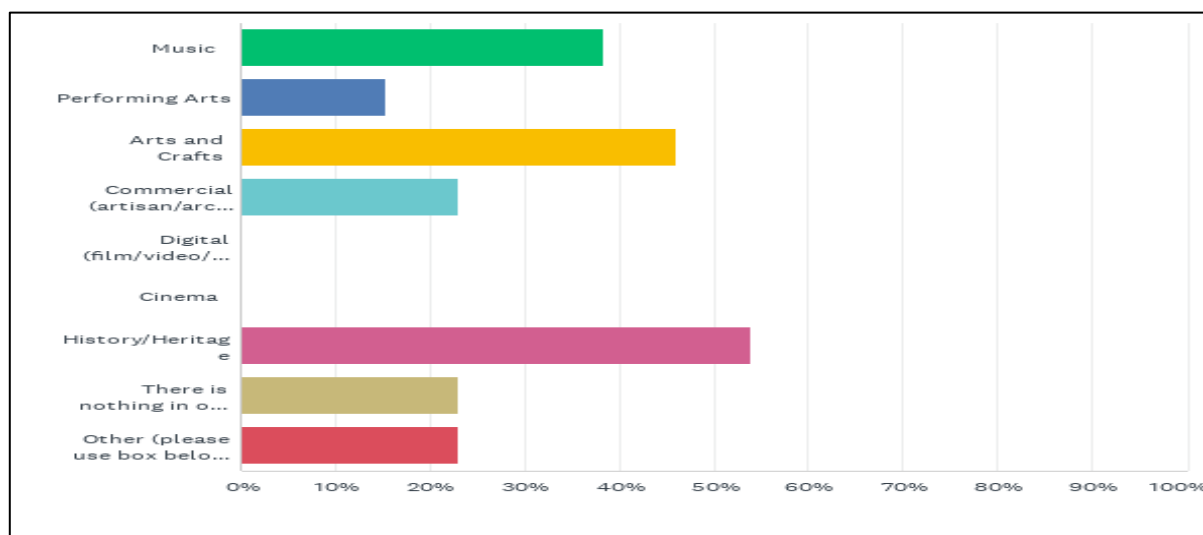
### What Takes Place in the Parish?

- 12.24. When it comes to the range of activities that the Parish Councils say take place in their areas, there is a fair range with History/Heritage, Arts/Crafts and Music being the most popular.

12.25. One response summed up the challenge in terms of rural connectivity and local capacity:

*'a small rural community with limited facilities and no public transport. Whilst none of the above [cultural activities] take part on a regular basis, some village groups will cover elements.'*

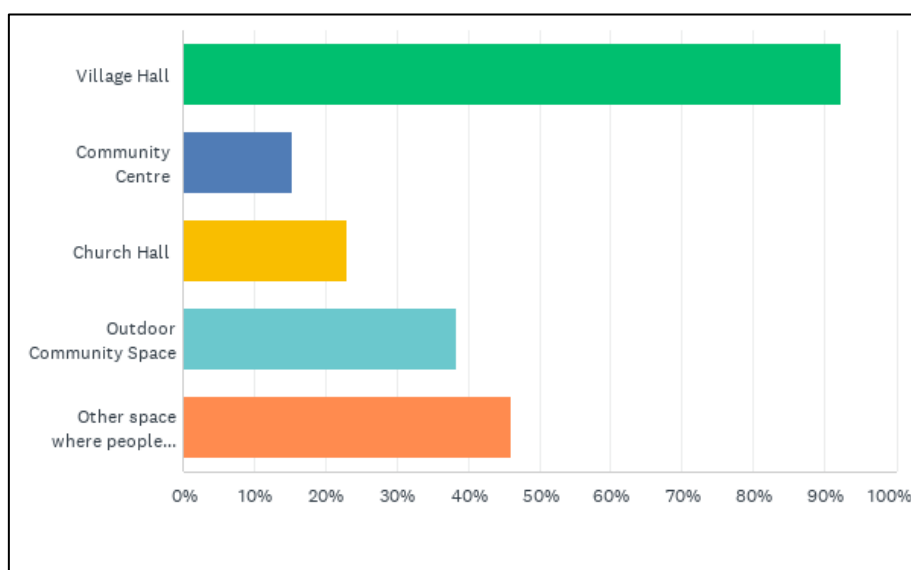
*'Our activities are run by volunteers and advertised through our website and local magazine. But we do not have one person responsible for all activities in this sector.'*



12.26. It is worth noting that all the Parish Council respondents stated that the Parish Council **does not directly organise any of the arts/cultural events**. There were two references to the Parish Council making grants for local activities.

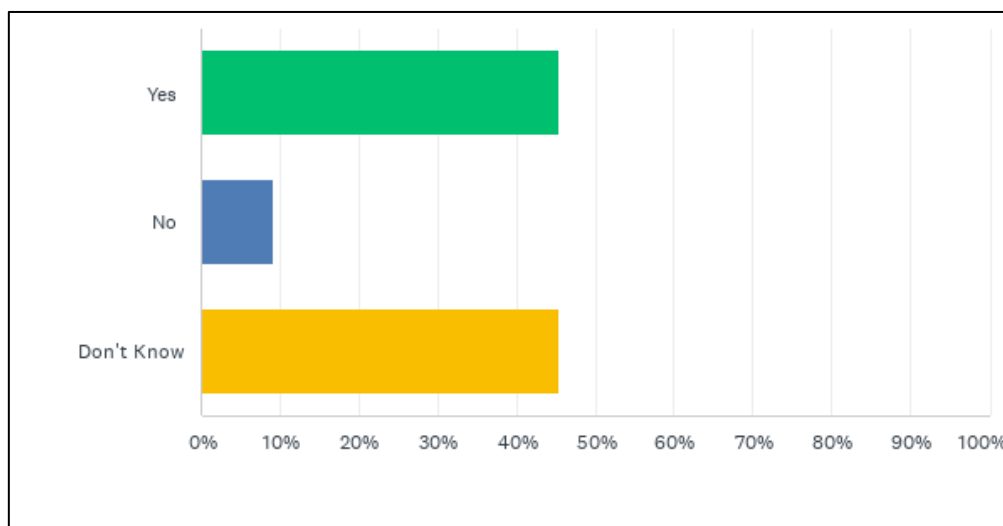
*'The Parish Council makes grants available to any group who provides resources to benefit the community.'*

Is there a Village Hall, Community Centre or Other Community Space in the Parish?



12.27. All of the Parishes, perhaps unsurprisingly, had spaces for community gatherings and often more than one space. Not all of the spaces have cultural activities taking place in them. Some of the spaces are managed and owned by the Parish Council and others are independent (i.e. managed by a separate charity/committee).

Are there any gaps in provision Locally?



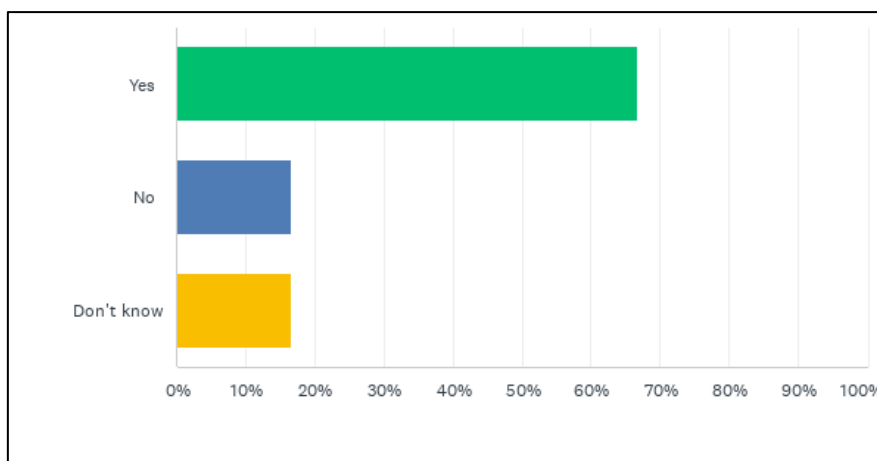
12.28. There were a range of views expressed in relation to gaps in provision as might be expected given the likely subjective nature of responses. 5 answered 'Don't Know' and 5 answered 'Yes'.

*'No theatre no cinema. Lots of interest however hard to get people committed.'* (Widdington)

*'It would be useful to offer more in the Village Hall eg Stagecoach. The Village School is expanding and more cultural and creative opportunities will be needed. Currently the Village Hall is lacking amenities eg WiFi which would make it more useable.'* (Quendon & Rickling)

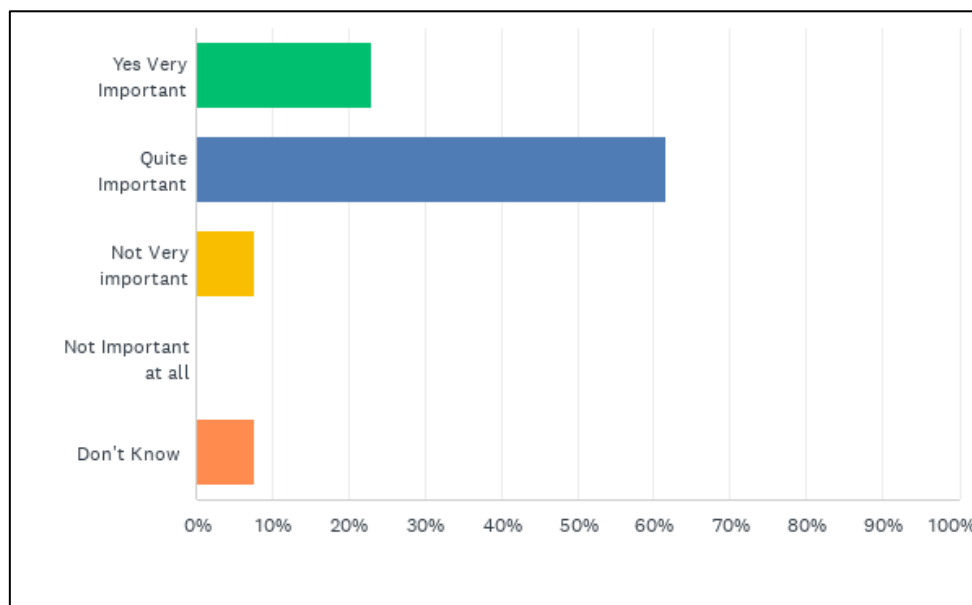
*'**Lack of provision for young people**, access and availability visual arts, outdoor sculpture, indoor exhibition space. Theatrical and cinematic provision. Contemporary music provision.'*

Are there some spaces that need investment?



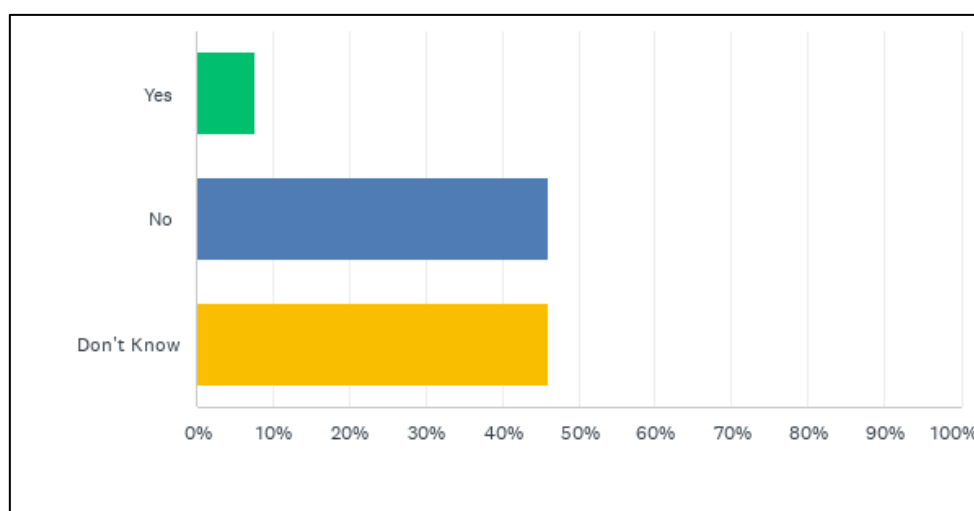
12.29. 8 respondents stated that there were spaces that needed investment. The spaces referenced varied and included local pubs, meeting spaces and village halls. Improvements needed include basic redecoration through to a need for wifi and improved disability access.

Is cultural, creative and arts activity important to the local identity of the Parish?



12.30. A broadly positive response to a question that could be interpreted (quite deliberately) in different ways. On the whole the response is positive. The response to this question would very much depend upon the attitude of the person responding and potentially their level of engagement (or non-engagement) in the creative sectors.

Does Culture, Creativity and the Arts Support Tourism and the Visitor Economy?

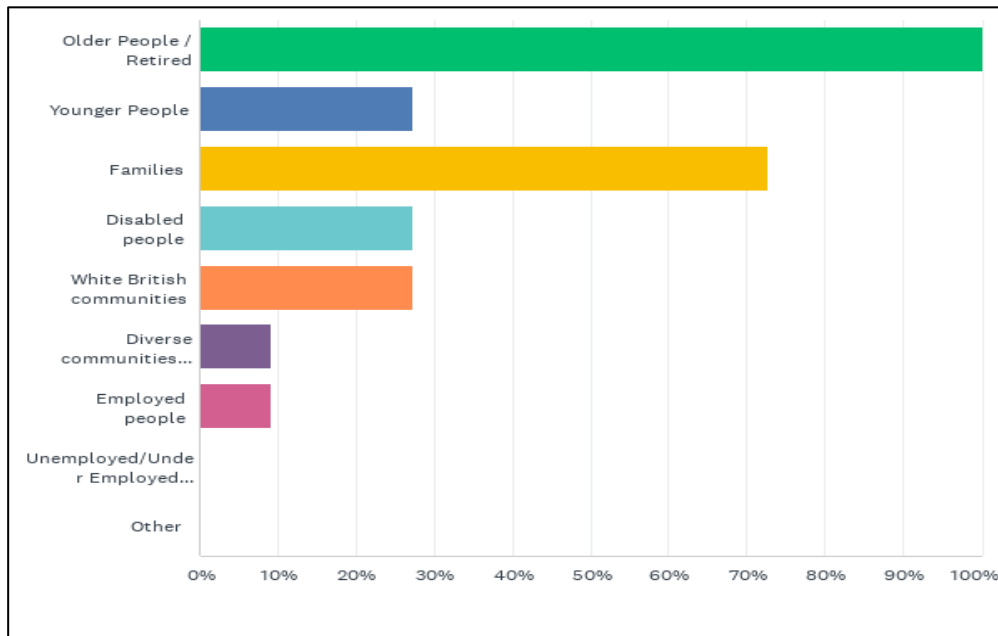


12.31. Negative and 'Don't Know' responses were equal, and there was only one positive response. Again the question is open to be interpreted in different ways, but there is clearly a **distinction being drawn here between cultural activities which are essentially for the local community, and built heritage for example which would appeal to a wider audience/visitor profile**. The one positive

comment reflects the importance of events that attract people from across a wider area and are part of the town's cultural heritage and traditions.

*'Thaxted Festival and Morris Weekend support large numbers of visitors'.*

#### Which Groups are Mainly Being Served by Cultural Activities in the Parish?



- 12.32. It is **older people/retired people** that appear to be the main focus, mostly because they tend to be **the ones who get involved in organising village/parish events and activities**. It is encouraging to see that 'families' are also referenced. However, '**younger people**' are less of a focus.

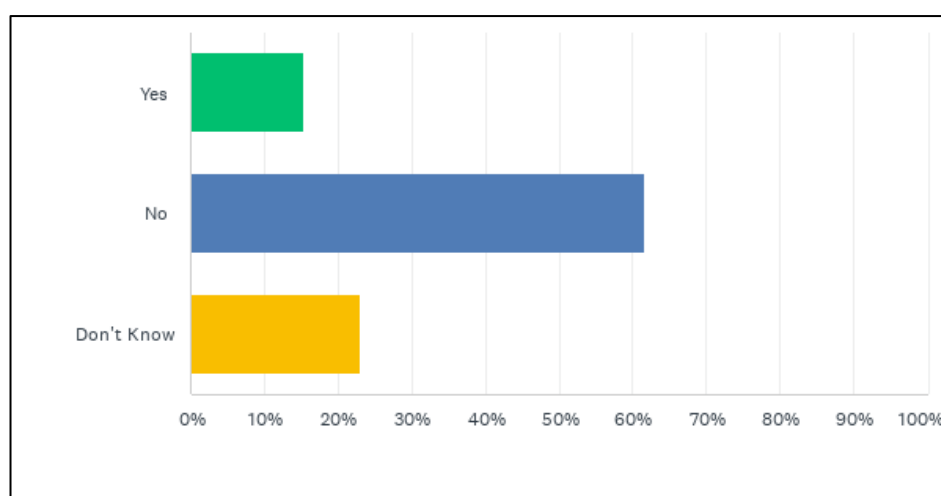
*'Given the current mood of the country anything that can help people feel better about themselves and their community is of real benefit.'*

*'Helps to create a sense of community and prevent social isolation.'*

*'Developing people's creativity and enhancing their critical facilities, enabling a broader perspective on modern life and culture our changing region.'*



### Do Parish Councils have experience of applying for funding?



- 12.33. The majority of respondents indicated that they **did not have experience of applying for external funding** to Trusts and Foundations as well as the Arts Council or National Lottery Heritage Fund. One positive response was in relation to raising funding for a local playground. Although this is only a snapshot from a limited number of Parish Councils, it does suggest that support for local fund raising (at least from grant makers) could be valuable for cultural infrastructure (as well as for other local priorities). The Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) does provide some support for making a case for social housing and improvements to Village Hall for their members. However for **arts, culture and heritage there is not really a resource or any capacity to provide support** where it might be wanted or needed.

### **Current Neighbourhood Planning Context in Uttlesford – Arts and Culture**

- 12.34. As part of the Baseline work the Cultural Engine undertook a review of all published Neighbourhood Plans for Parishes/Towns in Uttlesford, as well as any other less formal 'Plans' (like a Village Plan for example). As noted above, a Neighbourhood Plan is potentially a good strategic initiative undertaken at a local level that could be utilised to identify gaps in provision for community space and infrastructure. Access to local, accessible and affordable space is important for community activities of all kinds, including arts, culture and craft. Nationally there is **provision through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for Parish Councils to receive a proportion of the funds secured related to developments in their areas, and funding can be allocated for priorities identified in Neighbourhood Plans**. There is greater certainty over the allocation of funding to Parish Councils if there is a Neighbourhood Plan in place ([Community Infrastructure Levy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/community-infrastructure-levy)). **This makes Neighbourhood Plans important for areas that are likely to see significant development and growth over the coming decades**. Uttlesford District Council currently does not have a Community Infrastructure Levy strategy at present.
- 12.35. Many of the parishes in Uttlesford are very small in terms of population (if not geography) and therefore undertaking a full Neighbourhood Plan is probably not realistic. However, some Parishes have produced some detailed plans including Stebbing which has a population of around 1300.
- 12.36. There are a number of Neighbourhood Plans at varying stages of completeness. Where a Neighbourhood Plan has been through all of the regulatory stages and is found to be sound, it is

deemed to be 'Made' and is therefore complete. There are a number of stages before a Neighbourhood Plan can reach this stage, including Regulation 17 (Independent Evaluation) and Regulation 18 (Referendum of all in the defined area to vote for or against).

- Stebbing (Regulation 17 Stage)
- Saffron Walden (Regulation 17 Stage).
- Great Dunmow (Completed – A Made Neighbourhood Plan)
- Ashdon (Regulation 14 – Public consultation, so pre-submission)
- Felstead (Completed - Made Neighbourhood Plan)
- Great and Little Chesterford (Early-stage development pre-submission)
- Newport Quendon & Rickling (Completed – Made Neighbourhood Plan)
- Thaxted (Completed – Made Neighbourhood Plan)

12.37. Other Parish Councils are planning to develop plans including Radwinter, Little Easton and Little Dunmow. Some Parish Councils have other documents including a Design Statement (Little Bardfield).

12.38. There are **few direct references to culture and the arts across the Neighbourhood Plans that have been completed**. Below we provide a brief analysis of three neighbourhood Plan in the context of culture, arts and heritage.

#### Stebbing Neighbourhood Plan

12.39. The Stebbing Neighbourhood Plan is not yet 'Made' and was updated in July 2021 so is the most recent of all plans, and there has clearly been concern across the parish over the potential development of the West of Braintree Garden Community (WoBGC) which was included in the previous (now withdrawn) draft of the Uttlesford Local Plan (and indeed in Braintree District Council's Local Plan). The emphasis therefore throughout the plan is on the preservation of the historic character of the Parish and village, and the identification of a number of small scale potential housing development areas. There is a significant focus on 'Heritage and Conservation' throughout.

12.40. A key objective of the Plan is *'to balance meeting both the present needs of the Parish with the needs of the future in order to support a vibrant rural community by contributing towards promoting and achieving sustainable development.'* This includes ensuring that there is a mix of housing available including 'starter homes'.

12.41. Through the consultation process for the Local Plan 81% of respondents identified that there 'was not enough for teenagers to do in the Parish' (532 responses to the survey were received so this is a significant number). This is not surprising given the rural location, but there is no clear strategy for resolving this through the Plan, albeit an ambition to attract some funding.

*'...the Parish Council will consider seeking funding from various sources, eg. sports funding bodies and community fund-raising activities, to provide a Youth Shelter and/or other facilities at an appropriate location within the village.'*

12.42. There is however reference to the range of clubs and activities that take place in Stebbing, in particular in the Church and the Village Hall. Clubs and Societies are referenced as being important for *'maintaining the social cohesion and providing the mutual support which exists within the Parish and is appreciated as part of our rural village life.'*

- 12.43. There is a clear reference to cultural activities in relation to the Church (St. Mary's The Virgin) which appears to be an important and accessible space for use by the community:

*'The availability of community buildings for a diverse range of activities is particularly important in rural communities. In particular community buildings in the Parish are available to all including the target groups; of particular importance is the Church which will be important for religious groups while a variety of cultural activities take place in other community buildings and on other sites.'*

- 12.44. There are no specific initiatives identified in the Neighbourhood Plan that relate directly to culture/arts or new facilities. This is not unreasonable given the relatively small scale of development that the Plan itself proposes on 6 separate sites across the Parish. This may need to be reviewed in the future as the Uttlesford Local Plan progresses.

- 12.45. In relation to small business space which could be utilised for creative and craft practitioners, there is a specific policy reference to supporting new small or homeworking spaces. This is Policy STEB15 and includes potential support for conversion of existing buildings, new small scale Class E buildings (subject to parking, access), home working in new housing, and 'proposals for larger scale employment space will be considered on their individual merits and in accordance with other relevant policies.'

- 12.46. The Plan recognises that tourism is also important to the area with many walkers for example visiting throughout the year, making use of the good path networks. The Plan has a specific policy to support Tourism through STEB 18:

*'Proposals that contribute to the tourism appeal of the immediate area and create and/or enhance visitor attractions will be supported, together with the provision of new facilities that can benefit local residents, and where they are consistent and do not conflict with the overall policies in this Neighbourhood Plan.'*

#### Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan

- 12.47. The Plan is for the period 2021-2026 so is up to date (although not a 'made' plan). It has the clearest focus on culture of all the Neighbourhood Plans given Saffron Walden is the largest settlement and is a destination for visitors/tourism on a regular basis throughout the year. The (very long) Vision for the future of Saffron Walden clearly recognises the importance of arts and culture, although strongly from a tourism perspective.

*'....The traditional long-established links with the artistic community will be maintained and its proximity to Cambridge will enable it to become a popular tourist destination.'*

- 12.48. The public consultation that was undertaken to develop the Plan clearly identified the importance of the arts to Saffron Walden – 'Saffron Walden has a strong offer of art-related activities which support health and a community spirit.' There is also recognition that the strong local 'performance art community which could be built upon as a revenue source', suggesting that this could support tourism. There is recognition that the evening economy in Saffron Walden 'could be more vibrant and there is support for a more café-style culture', which can be interrelated with a wider cultural and arts offer.

- 12.49. There are three key points from the consultation that relate to the cultural offer and facilities in the town:
- *'Saffron Walden does not have an arts performance space that is large enough, or that can be booked for long enough, for full staged productions to be viable*
  - *Saffron Walden does not have a space to host large arts exhibitions.*
  - *Cost of hire of rooms and availability of storage space is an issue for arts groups.'*
- 12.50. Two of the main cultural assets in town are referenced:
- *Signage to Saffron Hall and Saffron Screen is not clear enough for out of town visitors.*
  - *Saffron Screen and Saffron Hall are out of the centre and therefore events held there do not generate a positive knock-on impact on the evening economic activity of the town centre'*
- 12.51. Saffron Hall and Saffron Screen are both important cultural assets and destinations for the local area. However, as the Neighbourhood Plan recognises, their wider economic impact is limited due to their location outside of Saffron Walden town centre and their audiences not visiting the town centre in any great number.
- 12.52. Although not directly related to arts, culture and the creative industries, there is a reference under 'Commercial Objectives' to *'encourage development of facilities for new start-up businesses'* and to *'support proposals that enhance the attractiveness and competitiveness of commercial units, both in use and vacant, for existing and new businesses.'* The relevance here is to the **creative industries which often need access to affordable and flexible business space which is definitely in short supply in Saffron Walden** (and across the wider Uttlesford District). Further to this the Plan supports proposals *'that provide a means for temporary office working spaces, light industrial units and pop-up shops to open to test new business concepts.'*
- 12.53. In a clear reference to one of the most important cultural and heritage assets in Uttlesford and its apparent lack of contribution to the wider Saffron Walden economy, the Plan states that ***'Measures to encourage visitors to Audley End House to visit Saffron Walden town centre will be supported. This could include initiatives such as free shuttle bus services'***. There is also a clear reference to support the increased use of the **Market Square as a 'social gathering space'**.
- 12.54. The Plan has a dedicated section under 'Infrastructure' on 'Arts and Cultural Facilities' – ***'The strong arts and culture community in Saffron Walden is an asset to the town and continuing support for it meets the objectives of the SWNP.'***
- 12.55. *'On an economic note, public art and cultural events can and do boost and build upon the town's aesthetic appeal, increasing local and visitor footfall and providing commercial opportunities for local businesses'*
- 12.56. In terms of identifying specific initiatives, the Plan identifies a number which would further contribute to the cultural offer of the town – *'The arts and culture groups have identified gaps in infrastructure which, if filled, would enable them to further broaden their offer. These gaps include more space for studio bookings, art and cultural exhibitions, stage shows and concerts, and more capacity for film screenings.'* The identified projects include:

- Developing and Improving the Saffron Walden Museum
- A new town centre site for Saffron Screen where it can have 160, 120 and 60 seater cinema spaces along with a café/bar offer
- Fairycroft House 'arts and media centre' expansion given that the existing space is limited and very well utilised throughout the week, led by the Fairycroft House CIC
- A possibility of expanding the Tourist Information Centre offer (currently located in the Town Hall)

12.57. The main statement from the Plan however sets out a vision for a new town centre space.

*'As a way of filling the gaps in the cultural infrastructure as identified by the arts groups, and to meet with current planning policy thought, the SWNP would welcome the construction of **additional multi-purpose arts centre space in Saffron Walden. A town centre location for this would be essential to encourage cross-usage with other arts venues and local businesses and to ensure that the town centre as a whole can gain a maximum benefit from the project.** Applications for change of use from A or B class uses to a publicly accessible arts centre (D1/D2) will be supported in the Town Centre.'*

12.58. The above statement is key as it commits to a town centre location, recognising that the current cultural offer does not necessarily contribute significantly to the town centre economy (including the evening economy), and there is a reference to utilising existing spaces (retail or office) through change of use.

12.59. As an effective summary of key priorities the Plan contains the following policies:

1. *'Proposals for new public art will generally be supported, subject to any site-specific considerations.*
2. *A community cinema and/or an arts centre would be supported, subject to it being in a town centre location or at or next to the Fairycroft site*
3. ***Contributions from development will be sought towards arts and arts facilities.'***

#### Great Dunmow Neighbourhood Plan

12.60. The Great Dunmow Local Plan (2015 - 2032) provides a comprehensive analysis of many of the key issues of relevance to ensuring the continued vibrancy and sustainability of Dunmow, including the town centre and high street. There is a focus on ensuring the historic character and rural setting and context of the town is maintained over the coming decades as development takes place. There is very little focus on

12.61. According to a survey undertaken of visitors to the town centre, **'independent shops and craft fayres are important pull factors for Dunmow'**. There are regular craft events and activities in Dunmow, often located in Foakes Hall (managed by the Town Council).

12.62. The key cultural issue that is clearly referenced a number of times in the Neighbourhood Plan relates to the historic Flitch Trials that take place every four years in the town (records of which can be traced back to the Middle Ages and referenced in Chaucer). The Flitch Trials are a key local cultural and community event, and are also important for cultural tourism.

*'The Town Council commits to continue to support the Flitch Trials which are held in the town, and to seek support and funding from other sources, wherever necessary and appropriate. The Town Council will seek to **build a brand identity based on the Flitch Trials for the benefit of the town's tourist industry.**'*

## Public Transport

- 12.63. Public transport within the District is not necessarily directly related to cultural provision. However, given the very rural nature of the District and the relative isolation of many of the 57 parishes and villages/hamlets, it is worth a brief reflection on the general picture for bus and train travel within the District.
- 12.64. Saffron Walden is the main location for arts and cultural provision and to a lesser extent Great Dunmow and Stanstead Mountfitchet as well as Thaxted. There are limited bus services that run from a number of the villages to Saffron Walden in particular and through to other larger destinations including Bishops Stortford. There are **currently 18 Essex CC contracted bus services that operate in Uttlesford.**
- 12.65. The Essex County Council Bus Service Improvement Plan 2021-26 does not focus in any significant way on Uttlesford which is perhaps not surprising given the District has the lowest population density of all Essex Districts and Boroughs. (1 person per square hectare compared to 25 in Harlow and 5 in Chelmsford). However, some investment is referenced
- Bus Stop Improvements at Priors Green (Takeley)
  - Investment of £746,500 for a digital demand response service supported by electric minibuses
- 12.66. The Digital Demand Response Service (D-DRT) is something that Essex CC intends to invest in over the next few years (especially across rural areas of the County). The strategy reflects on the relatively poor uptake of the existing Demand Response Transport Services (DART) in Uttlesford and Braintree Districts which undermines a public subsidy model.<sup>17</sup>
- 12.67. The Great Anglia train service within and through the District does not connect to the main urban settlements effectively, and only runs through the west of the District through Great Chesterford, Audley End, Newport, Elsenham and Stansted Airport as well as Stansted Mountfitchet.
- 12.68. The train station at Audley End is on the edge of the village of Wendens Ambo which is a fairly long (and not particularly pleasant) walk to Saffron Walden Town Centre. Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow, and Thaxted therefore do not have train services. The train service in Uttlesford cannot therefore be used by residents or visitors for travelling between local places. Improved connectivity from stations to urban areas is a challenge, but there are examples. For example **Saffron Hall engage Uttlesford Community Transport to provide a dedicated shuttle bus service for visitors to performances, picking them up at Audley End Station and taking them to Saffron Hall (and back).** The Saffron Walden BID also organised coach and horse trips between Audley End and Saffron Walden town centre as a trial to encourage more people to visit the town centre (in 2017).

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<sup>17</sup> The Essex County Council Bus Service Improvement Plan 2021 – 2026 - [ecc bsip 2021 to 2026.pdf \(essexhighways.org\)](#)

- 12.69. Given the challenges of using public transport, it is perhaps not surprising that **Uttlesford has one of the highest rates of car ownership of any Local Authority** area in England and Wales (according to the RAC in 2012).<sup>18</sup>
- 12.70. There is no evidence of significant travelling on public transport between different areas of the District by communities for Culture/Arts participation. There is some evidence from Saffron Hall statistics that some of their audiences travel from areas of the Borough that are fairly close to Saffron Walden (Debden, Newport, Chesterfords, Ashdon as well as within Saffron Walden). People living in communities in Great Dunmow for example are probably more likely to look south towards Chelmsford or west towards Bishops Stortford for a cultural experience than towards Saffron Walden. Those living in Stansted and Takeley areas are far more likely to look to Bishops Stortford given the geographic and relatively easy road connectivity. Cambridge and the wider Cambridgeshire area has a significant cultural, heritage and wider tourism offer that will attract audiences from the west of the District.
- 12.71. Cycling infrastructure is relatively poor across Uttlesford, particularly in terms of connectivity between key areas/locations. The nature of the rural roads would mean that unless there were significant safety measures put in place, or dedicated cycle highways; cycling between destinations across the District would not be particularly safe. Routes that are promoted tend to be more recreational and through natural spaces (including part of the Flitch Way).
- 12.72. The Essex Highways Uttlesford District Cycling Action Plan references some ambitions for investment in new schemes, principally measures to link Audley End Station more effectively to and through Saffron Walden Town Centre. There are other potential improvements around Stansted, Dunmow and Great Chesterford (but these appear to be a lower priority).<sup>19</sup> Cycling is not only a means of transport, but can also encourage sustainable tourism and exploration of the District's cultural, heritage and hospitality offer.

### **The Role of Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE)**

- 12.73. The Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) is an independent charity that is part of the wider RCC network in England through their membership of ACRE (Action for Communities in Rural England). Their role is to provide support for rural communities across Essex, representing their interest and needs to Government and Local Authorities for example.
- 12.74. RCCE play a key role in providing support for Parish Councils, local charities and groups in improving, securing investment in and re-developing their village halls and community spaces. This is generally done through a membership scheme (cost is £60 per annum). They have specialist Community Building and Village Hall advisors who can provide hands-on support for the development of visions, design briefs, specifications, engaging architects, securing funding, local consultation and legal issues relating to charity law and legislation (of particular interest to Trustees of charities for village halls who may have personal liabilities related to a new development).

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<sup>18</sup> RAC Foundation Car Ownership Rates per Local Authority Dec 2012 - [car ownership rates by local authority - deceember 2012.pdf \(racfoundation.org\)](https://www.racfoundation.org/deceember2012.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Essex Highways Uttlesford District Cycling Action Plan, March 2018

- 12.75. RCCE also runs the Hallmark Scheme, a nationally recognised quality standards scheme for Village Halls and Community Buildings.
- 12.76. RCCE has 42 member organisations across Uttlesford and therefore already plays a significant role in supporting local charities, parishes and churches (through Parochial Church Councils), and this should not be underestimated when considering the importance of local spaces for arts, cultural and heritage experiences of all kinds that require good quality and accessible spaces.

## The Recorders of Uttlesford History

- 12.77. The Recorders of Uttlesford History (RUH) is a grass roots network of local history societies operating across the District's 57 Parishes. They take a lead on recording the local history of each parish and collecting and looking after local archives of artefacts and documents. Saffron Walden Museum or the Essex Record Office cannot take all of the information, artefacts and documents that might be relevant to each parish, so the RUH ensure that they are made accessible to local history researchers. Storage is a concern for many of the RUH and poses an immediate and longer-term challenge. Some of the Recorders work in small groups, or as part of a larger local history society in a parish, while others operate largely on their own. Local History Society membership in parishes varies from between 30 and 100 people.
- 12.78. The RUH are separate from Saffron Walden Museum but they are open to a closer association given they have the same geographic coverage. The Museum Curator does provide support and advice to the RUH.
- 12.79. The RUH have a website<sup>20</sup> with pages of information and picture/photographs, all of which is freely available to anyone. There are also a number of published books that cover different aspects of the District's history and heritage. RUH do not organise many events, although there has been one History Fair organised in 2009 in Saffron Walden Town Hall which attracted hundreds of visitors.
- 12.80. The **RUH are important in the cultural life of the parishes through sharing history resources, recording past events and information as well as recording current events and helping to organise community events**. Because of its extensive nature and geographic coverage and the strong commitment to the network by the RUH, the RUH and their work has been the subject of a Masters thesis (Aberystwyth University) which is currently nearing completion.
- 12.81. The RUH do not meet on a regular basis, but do hold meetings and sessions on different subjects. They would be keen to hold more regular network meetings via Zoom in the future as travelling fairly long distances across the District is prohibitive. They would also consider taking part in a wider cultural network for the District online.
- 12.82. There is the ongoing challenge that many of the RUH are older people and there is a **general shortage of volunteers to take on roles and help to organise events**, meetings etc. Many of the RUH and the Local History Societies are finding that communities are not as engaged with each other within parishes as they used to be, with fewer people willing to volunteer or take an interest. The RUH would therefore be open to being supported more formally by an established institution or

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.recordinguttlesfordhistory.org.uk/>



organisation in the District such as the Museum in Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow Museum, Gibson Library or Thaxted Society.

- 12.83. The RUH play an interesting and important role in relation to the District's wealth of heritage, providing support for researchers (locally, nationally and internationally), collaborating with the Museum Service and Essex Record Office, providing local communities with an opportunity to learn about and engage with their local history. RUH also record each year's events across the Parish which they then share with the Essex Record Office for future reference and research.
- 12.84. Their main challenge is a shortage of volunteers to run these things – **many RUH find that community life is not as active or thriving as it has been in previous times**. Therefore, such a network might best be organised centrally by Saffron Walden Museum or some other established institution and could involve the Gibson Library, Dunmow Museum, Thaxted etc. There is limited succession planning to replace RUH across the District, and there is the ongoing challenge of legacy succession as many artefacts and documents are held at RUH own homes rather than at the Essex Record Office or Museum.

## 13. KEY OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 13.1. Drawing on the research for the Baseline including surveys, strategic conversations and compiling the database, in this section we summarise the key headline issues and specific opportunities and challenges that relate to them. Where there are possible actions and recommendations that could be taken, these are also set out and could be taken further through a Cultural Strategy where appropriate.
- 13.2. Seven key themes identified are which are discussed in the sections below:
- Planning: identifying cultural (and community) infrastructure need
  - Leverage Opportunities for funding and investment
  - Focus on maintaining existing cultural infrastructure
  - Young People – supporting their cultural and social wellbeing through culture
  - Extending spatial access to culture and heritage assets
  - Utilising cultural and heritage assets to support a vibrant economy
  - Meeting Future Provision

### Planning: identifying cultural (and community) infrastructure need

- 13.3. Planning Policy through Local Plans is often a reflection of wider strategic priorities of the Local Authority and strategic organisations in the area. As seen from a review of a number of Adopted Local Plans, the references and policies relating to culture reflect local priorities, for example public sculpture in Harlow or tourism in Staffordshire Moorlands. Local Plans set the context for future placemaking and a local response to 'sustainable communities', and culture, arts and heritage are important to this (as recognised in the National Planning Policy Framework).
- 13.4. The Baseline mapping undertaken that complements this report has identified that there is generally fairly good provision across the District in terms of accessible community space (mainly in the form of village hall and community spaces). This is important for a rural District, and there are good local structures set up to run them (some part of a Parish Council and others independent). From a Planning perspective, it will be important to ensure that new development and growth can:
- Unlock new sources of funding for accessible community facilities where necessary, and that there is a clear sense of how sustainable a new space might be (how can revenue be generated, low running costs etc.). It appears that, although most villages have access to some kind of accessible space, that to the west of the District there is likely to be greater need if new developments and/or garden communities emerged.
  - Unlock resources to invest in improving existing village halls and community spaces to ensure they can provide well for existing and new communities. These multi-use spaces are important to village and rural life for many different groups and provide the essential infrastructure for existing and future cultural engagement and activity. Ongoing funding can be a challenge, so this should also be considered.
- 13.5. **Regarding the provision of existing cultural and arts infrastructure (including heritage spaces), there is a definite need and opportunity to invest in existing spaces** including Faircroft House (existing and adjacent space), as well as Saffron Walden Museum. This will become ever more important as new development takes place and the population grows. Cultural and heritage

organisations should be encouraged, perhaps through a new cultural network and the development of a Cultural Strategy, to contribute directly to policies and priorities for development gain funding, including Community Infrastructure Levy.

## Leverage Opportunities for Funding and Investment

### Funding

- 13.6. Funding for arts, cultural and heritage organisations is clearly very important and can come from various sources including public sector, charitable, commercial, sponsorship and membership. There is a relatively low reliance in Uttlesford upon public sector funding (which would include core funding from the Arts Council for example) compared to some other areas across Essex. **This does represent relative core strength and resilience of many organisations, but it can also limit ambition in terms of both capital (buildings and spaces) and engagement (of audiences, participants).** This can then limit the impact that arts, cultural and heritage organisations can have locally. Many organisations that are reliant upon volunteers (some entirely) will not necessarily require significant funding to support their operations, but similarly they will be limited in terms of their ability to develop new programmes and initiatives, as well as engage new audiences or those less likely to engage in arts/culture.
- 13.7. Uttlesford District has received **very low levels of public subsidy in arts, culture and heritage over a sustained period** – primarily based on an understanding of investment from the Arts Council and National Lottery Heritage Fund. Essex County Council funding for culture or wider infrastructure has also been low (confirmed by Essex CC in relation to grants to Uttlesford-based cultural/heritage organisations).
- 13.8. Organisations working in culture and heritage sectors should be supported and encouraged to bid for funding where possible. Focused funded projects can build confidence and a skill set in the local cultural ecosystem that is self-sustaining, potentially creating new opportunities.
- 13.9. There is also a need to consider the importance of other sources of funding that are not arts/culture/heritage related. Saffron Hall are leading the way on this to an extent, **running projects that utilise arts engagement and practice to address social isolation, improve mental health and tackle dementia.** Engaging with agendas including ‘social prescribing’ for example across the District could secure new investment into the cultural/heritage sectors while also achieving significant social and health gains.
- 13.10. Linking investment in culture/heritage to wider economic benefits including tourism and the future viability of town centres and public spaces will be an important issue relating to planning and development.
- 13.11. Investing in quality spaces that are accessible to all across the District will be important in the future to ensure everyone has access to cultural, heritage and community experiences without having to travel by car (some travel by car will always be required of course). This includes village halls that are run by communities and Parish Councils. There is **not a strong culture of collaboration between UDC and Parishes Councils in particular at present which may limit collaboration around identifying funding and building an evidence base to support funding applications.**
- 13.12. Encouraging all organisations to **keep records of engagement, audience data and event information will help with building an evidence base for future investment.** Unique sources of information and

data can inform narratives (that applications for funding can be framed around). This is something that could be developed through a cultural/heritage network of organisations (some of the larger organisations already do this well).

- 13.13. Building local consensus on local needs for investment in culture (or other community) infrastructure, space and activities also provides confidence for funders that there is evidence of local support. This can be done on a project-by-project basis, can be recorded/publicised by local partners (including town/parish councils), or more formally through a Neighbourhood Plan for example (as is demonstrated by Saffron Walden Town Council).

#### Possible Actions and Recommendations

- 13.14. R1 - Address the current apparent deficit in applications to core funders including the Arts Council and National Lottery Heritage Fund, as well as Essex County Council and other trust and foundations. Funding of this kind can fund some important **capital interventions and will stimulate new initiatives, projects and programmes and build confidence in the cultural, arts and heritage sectors** (as well as new capacity). Support could be through UDC (where experience exists in external funding), or through mutual support networks for example. Seed funding to enable local groups and organisations to develop project ideas and concepts should also be considered.
- 13.15. R2 - UDC does provide some significant support for culture and heritage within the District through Saffron Walden Museum, Great Dunmow Museum, and through the Youth Initiatives Fund for example. Often this funding is matched by Town or Parish Council investment. **Coordination of funding should be encouraged to maximise impact, and smaller pots of investment could also be utilised to lever in additional external funding.**
- 13.16. R3 - **Identify mechanisms to support investment into the sector through the Planning System (including Section 106 contributions and Community Infrastructure Levy).** In relation to future planning policy, particularly in areas of significant future growth, it would make sense to consider the capacity of existing infrastructure including Village Halls and other community spaces to hold a range of cultural activities, and ensure where there is likely to be pressure on existing facilities that **funding is made available or new facilities established**. It is worth noting however that funding should also focus on long-term sustainability (ongoing revenue, staffing, maintenance etc.) and not only capital as the majority of such spaces are volunteer run through small local committees.
- 13.17. R4 - UDC should ensure that opportunities to secure investment for the wider creative sectors through **Government or Regional initiatives** are not missed. Uttlesford District will not be a priority for 'Levelling-Up' for example, but as part of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership area should seek to promote opportunities for future investment.
- 13.18. R5 - **Consider non-arts and cultural funding for arts and cultural activities and programmes.** Interest in the benefits of participation in cultural and creative activities for health benefits is growing, and there is good evidence emerging from Saffron Hall of the importance of cultural activities to health and social outcomes. In a District that has relatively high levels of social isolation, and older population (and a large younger population), commissioning cultural and creative activities utilising public health or other similar budgets should be a core consideration.
- 13.19. R6 - Collect data and seek to quantify **the value of arts, culture and heritage to the District** to build up a comprehensive picture of current (and potential performance). As would be expected, some organisations including Saffron Hall, Thaxted Festival and Audley End have good data collecting

systems and an ability to analyse this. This is time consuming and requires good processes and capacity, so collaboration through a Cultural Network (for example) may be necessary for mutual support. Funders including the Arts Council (and other charitable and Government sources) expect to see some evidence of potential wider impact from their investment.

### Some capital and property opportunities

- 13.20. It is clear from the research undertaken on the Baseline that there are a number of opportunities that could be taken forward over the next 12-18 months that relate to properties in public (or effective) public ownership. All of the opportunities could make a significant difference to cultural/heritage sectors locally, benefitting participants and audiences (local and visitors). Forming partnerships to progress these opportunities will be important to demonstrate support where funding (including external funding) is required or where strategic partners need to make key decisions.
- 13.21. Fairycroft House CIC is running **Fairycroft House as a very effective cultural hub for Saffron Walden**, with minimal funding and very limited staff capacity. This is a success that should be recognised and has been achieved despite the ongoing challenges of internal spaces that are not necessary fully fit for purpose. **The demand for the space throughout the week and weekends cannot be met.** Two key interventions would unlock new space and improve the functioning of existing spaces
- **Expansion of the operation into the Essex CC-owned facility adjacent to Fairycroft House.** This is used infrequently for youth activities (and occasionally for other community/health uses), and is therefore underutilised space close to the centre of town with car parking and good accessibility. Engagement with Essex CC is required. To support this Fairycroft House CIC and Saffron Walden Town Council have collaborated to produce an outline 'business plan' for the future use of the facility. Support from other partners including UDC and awareness raising of the opportunity with local cultural groups may support the process
  - Investment in improving facilities in the existing Fairycroft House. Most significantly removing the wall that limits space in the main function room/hall which is used regularly for gatherings, workshops and events (including music performances/live music).
- 13.22. Saffron Walden Museum has made progress in 2021 towards making a major application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) for investment in the Museum building and grounds. Audience Development research has been completed which will support an application. The various elements including in the current proposed outline of capital works would significantly enhance the operation and enable more activities and engagement of audiences and participants. Securing over £3.5m in funding from NLHF will be a major challenge and will require additional match-funding and the support of stakeholders. This should be a collaborative effort that presents investment in the Museum as a transformative opportunity not just for Saffron Walden (with the economic development and social benefits) but also for the wider North West Essex area with the Museum becoming an accessible 'heritage hub'. It is worth noting that while Saffron Walden Museum's operations (staffing etc.) are funded through UDC, the building and collections are owned by the Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd (and independent charity). Should, for whatever reason, the funding application not succeed, then other options could be considered including linking to future development through the Local Plan (as a key part of the District's cultural/heritage infrastructure and an important facility).

- 13.23. There are four Day Centres across the District which have been focused on provision of services for people over the age of 55. However, UDC are actively considering a broader role for these quality spaces which could include them being utilised as wider community ‘hubs’. Cultural activity could be important and UDC and other partners could work collaboratively to look at opportunities for this, perhaps working with existing programmes to establish more regular activities for families and older people. Existing budgets could be targeted towards unlocking additional funding to generate regular activities or specific heritage/cultural programmes. As with Fairycroft House, Saffron Walden Town Council has produced an outline business plan and vision for use of the Day Centre at Jubilee Gardens in Saffron Walden.
- 13.24. The ongoing capital improvements to the Fry Art Gallery on Castle Street will be completed during 2022, and this will mean the Fry Art Gallery Too building (Museum Street) that is owned by Saffron Walden Museum Society (UDC manage the lease arrangements) will be empty. Partners could collaborate to consider how this building can continue to contribute to the local cultural scene, perhaps through use for artist/creative studios.
- 13.25. Further to the above, **there is identification of need for a new arts/cultural space in Saffron Walden** in the Town Council’s Neighbourhood Plan for example (the Neighbourhood Plan is not yet ‘Made’). The above expansion of Fairycroft House would address this to an extent, but there does seem to be a very high reliance on non-specialist community and church spaces. Saffron Hall is not particularly accessible being located on a school site out of the town centre. Saffron Screen may also need to consider moving to a larger more dedicated space (this is noted in the Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan). Can a case be made for a new Theatre/Performance space in Saffron Walden? There are no obvious existing spaces of the scale required for this, so it may be a new build (which would require significant investment – perhaps linked to future development in the area).

#### Possible Actions and Recommendations

- 13.26. R7 - Support Fairycroft House CIC and Saffron Walden Town Council to **progress current outline proposals for regular use of the Essex CC-owned community building adjacent to Fairycroft House**. Space of this kind could significantly enhance cultural provision including for younger people and the partnership between the CIC and the Town Council makes a future business plan likely to be sustainable.
- 13.27. R8 - Support **Fairycroft House in securing some necessary capital funding for internal works** that will improve the functioning of the main hall to support greater levels of use throughout the week (day and evenings).
- 13.28. R9 - The proposed **major application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) by Saffron Walden Museum** is a major opportunity to enhance heritage/cultural infrastructure in Saffron Walden and across the District (and beyond). Partners should support the process
- 13.29. R10 - In considering the **future of the four Day Centres in the District, UDC could work with a range of organisations (including cultural and heritage) to identify opportunities for regular activities** that could engage local communities. Existing budgets could then be targeted at matching external funding (or matched to health and wellbeing budgets for example). All Day Centres have excellent and accessible facilities and could be real local hubs of activity.

- 13.30. R11 - Consider the future of **the Fry Art Gallery Too building on Museum Street as an arts/craft and creative space for studios for emerging creative practitioners**, taking inspiration from other studio spaces including Cuckoo Farm (Colchester) and Gatehouse Arts (Harlow). If this is not suitable there are other empty spaces in Saffron Walden and elsewhere that could be utilised in this way. Some public funding may be required (or external funding).

## **Focus on Maintaining Existing Cultural Infrastructure**

### **Networks, Advocacy and Representation**

- 13.31. There is not a coherent network or local system of collaboration between cultural/heritage organisations in Uttlesford. This is not necessarily a problem for individual operations and organisations as many are quite self-reliant and not necessarily focused entirely on Uttlesford. However, maintaining interest in investment in arts/culture and heritage with the many benefits this can bring to the District will be an ongoing challenge as there is more focus on specific development sites and broader infrastructure challenges.
- 13.32. Responses from the sector organisations to the survey indicated that there was reasonably strong support for a network or networks of some kind, recognising the opportunity to bring different organisations and groups together. The chance to influence a Cultural Strategy, share expertise and knowledge, and potentially get involved in shaping the future of cultural/arts and heritage provision in the context of significant development and growth in the District over the coming decades; all of this should be of interest to many. Other areas including Chelmsford City and East Herts that do have cultural networks and partnerships are seeing them continually evolve over time, and they are generally overseen and supported by the Local Authority.

### Possible Actions and Recommendations

- 13.33. R12 - **Consider forming an Uttlesford-wide Cultural Network**. Not to suggest that this will be a long-term solution (as things can evolve), but it would potentially strengthen advocacy of the cultural, arts and heritage sectors in the District and support partnership working, collaboration. Ideally a formative grouping could be initiated to inform the development of a Cultural Strategy that would identify priorities for investment, what kinds of support are needed for the sectors, and could further underpin any emerging policies through the Local Plan. Networks tend to need resourcing with administration, coordination and strategic input and oversight (often played by the Local Authority). A network could also take responsibility for updating the Baseline of culture, creativity and the arts on a regular basis. Ultimately the Network would have to decide the best long-term focus and structure with considerations relating to whether it remains District-wide (or localised), thematic, or related to specific development sites/opportunities.
- 13.34. R13 - **Outdoor events can be important cultural occasions** with opportunities for performances and collaboration between local organisations. The District is relatively strong on in this area and over many years there have been successful community festivals and fetes across the District. Ensure there is good support for organisations of all kinds to organise safe and engaging events that promote local culture and heritage. This could be organised through a Cultural Network with sharing of expertise and knowledge.

- 13.35. R14 - There are plans for a new **Visit Uttlesford tourism-related programme** which should result in new online and promotional resources that promotes the whole of the District. A major part of the tourism offer is related to the District's heritage and cultural scene. This should be seen as a real opportunity to bring different cultural, arts and heritage organisations together and **to work collaboratively on a core offer and narrative for Uttlesford**. Currently individual areas/town have strong identities but there isn't any clarity on the Uttlesford 'identity' (the diversity of the offer and distinct identities across the District can be a strong part of the tourism offer). This then could form a key collaborative grouping that could be sustained and involved longer-term in updating the Visit Uttlesford site and related information and promotional material. Through oversight from UDC, data on audiences and other evaluative material can be brought together to build up a picture over time of the performance of the District and its many assets, and any areas that need strengthening and investing in to support wider economic and cultural/heritage outcomes. This information would also support funding applications. Local communities are also audiences, so it should not only be about promoting externally.

### **Parish and Community Support**

- 13.36. The Uttlesford District has a wealth of community assets which include village halls and other community spaces across rural areas. There does not appear to be a supportive or collaborative network between Parishes and local community organisations to share expertise, knowledge and information despite the importance of these spaces to their local communities (and for cultural/heritage related activities).
- 13.37. There are some very good examples of excellent facilities being secured on the back of local developments (on rural Exception Sites for example - Manuden). Consideration should be given to how Parishes and local community groups can secure investment where it is needed, or how to develop new facilities where opportunities emerge.
- 13.38. Ensuring that Neighbourhood Plans are produced with evidence/insight on the need for investment in community and cultural infrastructure, or even a simple record of need in local meeting records or specific reports on related issues is important. This could be an invaluable evidence base to inform future development in local areas through the Local Plan process. Many Parish Councils across the District have limited capacity, and many did not see the importance of engaging proactively with the Baseline Assessment process (consultation fatigue and a less than productive relationship with UDC partly responsible).
- 13.39. Concepts including a rural touring programme could work very well in Uttlesford, and would not only bring audiences in to community spaces for quality cultural events, but would also identify new opportunities for investment and any existing or hidden challenges. The relatively poor relationship between the District Council and parishes should not be a limiting factor in terms of initiatives of this kind.
- 13.40. The role of the Recorders of Uttlesford History should be better understood and appreciated strategically and concern given to current facilities and resources available for the storage of artefacts, documents as well as interpretation and outreach. Heritage is an important consideration in relation to placemaking and how connected people might feel to the places in which they live (something recognised by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic England for example). The role of RUH in ensuring that local heritage remains relevant and accessible to existing and new



communities is important. Saffron Walden Museum offers some support where capacity allows, although the RUH are independent from other organisations or groups. There is a potential challenge with the sustainability of the RUH in some parishes given the age of many and the resources for undertaking activities and new initiatives is limited.

#### Possible Actions and Recommendations

- 13.41. R15 - Many village halls and spaces hold regular cultural and heritage related activities, and there is often a real commitment from local groups and Parish Councils to seeing this happen. With such a wealth and diversity of spaces and local knowledge, it would appear that **a collaborative network (or at least a way of sharing good practice relating to funding/development/investment for example)** should be investigated. Not all spaces are thriving and many could do with support.
- 13.42. R16 - Encourage Village Hall committees and other groups responsible for rural community buildings to join the **Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE)**. This way they can access experienced advice and support on a range of issues relating to village halls (planning and funding).
- 13.43. R17 - Seek to engage representatives from the **Recorders of Uttlesford History in a future Cultural Network** to fully understand their importance and contribution their local communities (there is good research relating to this), and to identify any immediate and future challenges that could be addressed (through funding, projects, supportive networks for example).
- 13.44. R18 - Consider a collaborative **Rural Touring programme for Uttlesford** that focuses on accessible (and potentially participatory) performances in rural locations (including Village Halls). Not only could be a good way of engaging new audiences and participants for cultural activities, it can also leave a legacy of more technical knowhow with local groups in staging events on a more regular basis and identify improvements required to community space to support more cultural activity.

#### **Enabling and Supporting Cultural and Social Events**

- 13.45. Hatfield Forest has been a major cultural location in the District due to Wood Festival taking place there. There are also opportunities to utilise the built spaces including Shell House more effectively for events, learning, workshops etc. Wood Festival will not happen again, but the National Trust are open to conversations about a new annual festival. A productive relationship with the National Trust to (perhaps through a network or through a focus on Tourism) could be important to identifying future cultural opportunities. It is the case however that Hatfield Forest is also under pressure ecologically as essentially the only major publicly accessible open space in the District (also serving large populations in East Hertfordshire).
- 13.46. Some areas to the west of the Uttlesford District are included in the Cambridge Open Studios programme each year (Saffron Walden and Newport). However, there is no programme to open up creative spaces (public and private) across the Uttlesford District and therefore probably a fair amount of unawareness of the creative ecology locally. Being linked to Cambridge Open Studios is obviously of great benefit to those studios and practitioners can take part, but the branding does not necessarily promote Uttlesford as a key creative hub or destination. Dunmow Art Group for example would be very interested in collaborating with others to secure investment (although they have limited capacity to lead a major programme).

- 13.47. The above are two specific opportunities, but through collaboration and a potential network of organisations across the cultural, heritage and tourism sectors, new opportunities may emerge or more effective support for existing programmes.

#### Possible Actions and Recommendations

- 13.48. R19 - Partners to work collaboratively with the **National Trust to consider a new festival or large-scale event that can not only offer audiences a great experience** but that can **also generate opportunities for the District's many creative practitioners and cultural organisations** to develop outreach, performances, and promotions. Essentially this is a good opportunity for a more locally-focused programme that supports the local creative and cultural sectors (in Uttlesford and Hertfordshire). This would replace the successful Wood Festival which will no longer run due to the impact of Covid and changing National Trust priorities.
- 13.49. R20 - **Support the National Trust in securing future investment for Shell House**, a unique heritage building that could provide new cultural participation space (craft for example) as well as for formal functions.
- 13.50. R21 - **Consider an 'open studios' programme that focused on all areas of the District**, or potentially beyond into Braintree District for example, could be a good way of promoting the varied and skilled cultural/craft sectors which, outside of events and fetes, are not generally accessible to the public given most practitioners operate in private spaces. This links to tourism opportunities. Some initial funding could be secured to support this with a lead organisation identified.

#### **Young People – Supporting their Cultural and Social Wellbeing through Culture**

- 13.51. Uttlesford has a relatively high percentage of both older and younger people than other areas of Essex. It is also a rural and dispersed District with very patchy youth service provision. Even in Saffron Walden there is very little formal activity at the main youth centre space (Essex CC building on Faircroft Road). Although there is a Youth Council it is limited in terms of its impact and voice (particularly since Covid), so the ability for young people to advocate for investment in facilities and services is relatively limited (although the situation may improve). Investing in multi-use spaces in rural areas and supporting the provision of cultural programming will continue to be important (and could be stepped up). This could be achieved through working with existing cultural organisations to undertake broader outreach programmes (would need funding). The UDC Youth Initiatives Fund could be targeted to lever in additional external funding (it is already fairly well matched to Town/Parish funding in some areas).
- 13.52. There is no Local Cultural Education Partnership in Uttlesford as there is for other areas of Essex and the East of England. Looking to put this kind of initiative in place with support from strategic organisations including the Royal Opera House Bridge (or whichever organisation emerges to provide this function) should be considered and can unlock potential sources of funding. Arts Award (a programme to encourage young people to take up cultural activities) does not appear to be prevalent in Uttlesford, although some state-funded secondary school extra-curricula activities appear reasonably strong on arts/culture.

### Possible Actions and Recommendations

- 13.53. R22 - Consider opportunities in **Uttlesford for a Local Cultural Education Partnership**. This could be a key initiative to bring partners together with experience and interest in working with young people and schools. This is often initiated by the Local Authority with input from other partners and educational representatives and funding can come from the Arts Council to support the initiative. Collaboration through a LCEP can help partners to clearly identify cultural opportunities and challenges relating to young people, and can engage schools productively.
- 13.54. R23 - Although the pandemic has had a fairly negative impact on youth activities and participation across the District, funding has been made available annually through the UDC Youth Initiative Fund (YIF). This **funding could be utilised to support additional external match funding (through cultural organisations' core funding or through external funding bids) to improve further cultural participation for young people** and make more regular use of existing youth spaces.
- 13.55. R24 - A lot of youth activity takes place at Fairycroft House supported by the Fairycroft House CIC team who have a great range of experience and knowledge. Some **capital investment (particularly in the main function room on the ground floor) in the existing building would ensure more activities throughout the week**.
- 13.56. R25 - Seek to **reinvigorate the Uttlesford Youth Council** to engage them in a Cultural Strategy and potentially enabling them to engage in the Local Plan process (young people are important stakeholders for future planning and placemaking). Smaller localised 'Councils' may be a way to support engagement (as young people may well associate more with their local area and will have a better understanding of it).
- 13.57. R26 - Encourage the taking up of **Arts Award** within schools and or local community and cultural organisations. This could support young people to engage more in arts and cultural activities across the District.

### **Extending Spatial Access to Culture and Heritage Assets**

- 13.58. It is clear that people living in or around Saffron Walden have much higher levels of access to cultural and heritage experiences than those living elsewhere in the District. This is not only due to Saffron Walden having a good offer, but also close proximity to Cambridge. Other more urban areas of the District (around Stansted for example) clearly have access to Bishops Stortford and Harlow (as well as easy access to M11 and Cambridge and London). Communities in the West of the District also have easier access to a national train line (to London and Cambridge).
- 13.59. The centre of culture, arts and heritage within the District is Saffron Walden, which is the largest town and has the highest population. However, there are some good local success stories in terms of facilities that do have good levels of community engagement in cultural activity including Newport Village Hall and Manuden (which is probably the best purpose-built community hall in the District). Learning from the Manuden example, in particular how the local community made a case for investment related to a specific development site on the edge of the village, would be a good way of

sharing the learning and supporting other communities to achieve something similar (where relevant and where a similar case can be made).

- 13.60. Along with ensuring good local provision across the District, there should also be consideration of how communities will access key centres for culture in the future (public transport, outreach, special offers for residents etc.) This will become ever more important as new sites are identified and development starts. It will be difficult to make a case for investment in public transport links to cultural destinations, but this can be considered as part of a wider case for investment in public transport on the back of development and growth through the Local Plan period. Considering promoting sustainable travel (by bicycle for example) as part of a wider cultural and heritage experience of the District could also be considered (would require further investment in cycle routes).

#### Possible Actions and Recommendations

- 13.61. R27 - **Utilise the Uttlesford District Council Geographic Information System (GIS) to map cultural assets**, taking information from the Baseline Database. This can be a specific information or data 'layer' that can then be overlaid with other information or data sources, as information on new development sites and potential transport improvements.
- 13.62. R28 - **Consider access to culture, arts and heritage activities and locations as part of the process of identifying strategic public transport initiatives** (including cycling which can be part of a cultural/environmental offer)

#### **Utilising cultural and heritage assets to support a vibrant economy**

- 13.63. Town Centres are at the forefront of many changes in the retail and leisure sectors with many across the UK facing significant challenges to their traditional roles. There are many ways for people to access the services, retail and experiences they want without visiting a town centre. Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow are the two largest towns, and along with Thaxted, Stansted Mountfitchet and Newport, appear to be doing well (certainly to many other towns across Essex). However, nothing can be taken for granted across Uttlesford and the importance of the heritage and cultural offer to town and larger villages is a key part of the appeal for visitors and residents.
- 13.64. For Saffron Walden in particular more could be done to attract visitors to some of the larger cultural/heritage destinations into the town centre. Saffron Hall, Saffron Screen and (probably most notable) Audley End tend to attract audiences directly to their sites, and these audiences may not necessarily visit Saffron Walden Town Centre (or indeed any other locations) as part of their visit. Around 180,000 people visit Audley End each year, so this is a big economic opportunity. Improved promotion and connectivity should be considered.
- 13.65. It is important to recognise the role of the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) in Saffron Walden and its importance to the town as a key asset that promotes the local heritage and cultural scene well. Much experience has been gained by Saffron Walden Town Council in funding and managing the TIC since 2008, including promoting and supporting cultural and heritage events and spaces. Great Dunmow had a part-time TIC operating from the Library until 2020, but this no longer functions, so there is an opportunity to bring this back as the Library Service are happy to see this happen.

## Possible Actions and Recommendations

- 13.66. R29 - Planning policies should recognise **the changing nature of town centre economies, with a shift away from traditional retail-focused sectors towards leisure, hospitality and experiences**. Along with good quality public realm and a historic environment, arts/culture and heritage can play an important role in a sustainable and diverse town centre offer. This should be a key feature in local economic, tourism and potentially planning policy.
- 13.67. R30 - The good work through Saffron Walden Business Improvement District (BID) Saffron Walden Initiative and the TIC (for example) in organising promotions and events should be recognised and supported, and key strategies developed that can support **efforts to get more visitors to some of the largest cultural/heritage organisations (Saffron Hall, Audley End in particular) to visit Saffron Walden town centre as part of their visit**.
- 13.68. R31 - Consider a **programme of regular evening events that engage local businesses in Saffron Walden to support the evening economy**. Cultural and heritage organisations can be key attractors or initiators and local partners including Saffron Walden Town Council can play a key role. A similar programme could take place in Great Dunmow as there is significant expertise through the Town Team, Town Council, local groups including the Dunmow Art Group and Dunmow Arts Centre.
- 13.69. R32 – Consider **re-establishing a Tourist Information Centre in Great Dunmow** (at the Library again or elsewhere in the Town Centre). A wider partnership of organisations from the South and West of the District could collaborate to better promote this part of the District (recognising that Saffron Walden is well catered for in this respect). More partners could mean funding requirements are shared more broadly.
- 13.70. R33 - The **facilities available for cultural/arts activities in both Dunmow Arts Centre and Dunmow Maltings (home to the Museum) appear relatively underutilised** (as well as the knowledge and expertise associated with both). Efforts should be made to promote them which would support their resilience and their cultural contribution to the town.

## **Meeting Future Provision**

### **Vision and Narrative Development**

- 13.71. **It is important to position culture, arts and heritage as central to Uttlesford's vision for sustainable and healthy communities now and in the future**. Given likely challenges around securing Government and other investment, strong new 'narratives' have to emerge that present the opportunities to a local and wider audience, based on a position of opportunity but also recognising the challenges of rural and social isolation. Strong and compelling narratives and place 'brands' can be utilised by many to support a strong case for funding (particularly for cultural and heritage infrastructure and programmes). This could link to tourism promotion (Visit Uttlesford for example) and something could be learned from neighbouring authorities taking a similar approach where investment in culture is strategically placed as a key enabler of wider economic outcomes (Chelmsford for example).
- 13.72. The narrative could well focus on diversity of the cultural, heritage and environmental offer across the District. By positioning culture and heritage as strategic priorities for place-making and place-

marketing, this should strengthen the potential for funding (from a range of sources), encourage collaboration between sector partners and the public sector, and position culture and heritage strongly in planning policies as they emerge through the Local Plan. Uttlesford isn't really a place; it is a local government construct from the 1970s. The key question therefore for partners and stakeholders is whether this is a good starting point to develop an effective District-wide place brand with culture and heritage (and environment) at the core, or whether it is better to focus on individual assets and places with their own strong identities. Diversity is certainly a strength however.

- 13.73. When considering the place narrative (or place brand) it is important to present the diversity of cultural and heritage offer (natural, rural and urban), play up key destinations and their links to surrounding areas, and ensure that the cultural and creative industries come through strongly (something distinct and different from other areas). Promote cultural and heritage destinations as part of a coherent offer to encourage visitors to take in more than one place (longer visits generate more local spend). It will be important to consider the 'audiences' for this (reflecting on information from Audience Finder for example).
- 13.74. Equally it can be important to create narrative and place-based concepts for new settlements, interpreting the cultural heritage and distinctive landscapes and identities. From a practical point of view this process should also include working with local communities to identify cultural and social infrastructure needs in any new developments/settlements.

#### Possible Actions and Recommendations

- 13.75. R34 - Potentially through a cultural network (and recognising the importance of the ongoing Visit Uttlesford work), **create a strong narrative for Uttlesford that positions arts, culture, heritage (including natural heritage) at the centre**, promoting a diversity of offer that is distinct

#### **Smaller spaces for creatives that are flexible and affordable**

- 13.76. It is notable that there are no artist studio spaces (or similar affordable workshop spaces) in the District that are available for low and flexible rents to emerging artists and creative practitioners (or more established but still needing space). This is not to suggest that there is not a vibrant creative and craft ecosystem with many different practitioners working across the District (and some selling products in local galleries or at craft fairs etc.) However, it would appear that the majority of practitioners utilise their own spaces at home, and this would indicate that many of the existing practitioners are probably more affluent and have access to the spaces and resources they need (although it could also suggest limited alternative options).
- 13.77. Space to develop and grow a creative, arts, or craft enterprise is an important part of any cultural and creative ecosystem, and will contribute to the local cultural scene and potentially generate employment (as well as keeping creative practitioners within the District). Ensuring spaces for less affluent and ambitious practitioners and groups could be a priority, and may require intervention in the market by the public sector (UDC or Town/Parish Council for example). Currently it is likely that those looking for space (including young people) would look outside of the District to find accommodation. Promoting the development of suitable spaces through the Planning system, or identifying opportunities for conversion of existing spaces could be a good strategy (this could include town centre spaces or rural/farm buildings). There are some opportunities to consider immediately including Fry Art Gallery Too (Museum Street) and the Essex CC-owned building at Faircroft.

- 13.78. Ensuring that parishes have a good understanding of the local need and challenges relating to creative spaces is important, as this can inform formal documents including Neighbourhood Plans and also their responses to development proposals through the Planning system.
- 13.79. Examples studio spaces in Essex that could help to inform a strategy in Saffron Walden include Gatehouse Arts in Harlow (town centre retail space), and Cuckoo Farm in Colchester (conversion of older farm buildings).

#### Possible Actions and Recommendations

- 13.80. R35 - Consider **identifying a location for flexible and affordable studio space within the District**, and work with partners including local arts and cultural organisations to progress a feasibility study that considers capital requirements and ongoing revenue, governance and management.
- 13.81. R36 - Ensure that policies emerging through the Local Plan are flexible to recognise opportunities for the **conversion of rural or farm related buildings to other uses including culture/creative space**.
- 13.82. R37 - **UDC to work with parishes/communities to identify need for creative/cultural spaces** of all kinds. This process could be linked to a Neighbourhood Plan (or in a less local parish plan) or officially recorded in Parish meeting minutes. This will support a local evidence base of need, support the case for investment.

#### **Succession Planning**

- 13.83. Governance is very strong in Uttlesford in relation to arts, culture and heritage sectors (as well as other sectors), and this is most likely to be down to a wealth of retirees with significant industry experience with time and resources to contribute something valuable and needed to the local scene. On the whole this does tend to be older people, and a strategic understanding of succession planning and an ability to engage younger people will be important. It appears from research and meetings with a range of organisations that this is not a major concern for many, but the situation should be better understood.
- 13.84. The same situation exists for many audiences, for example for Thaxted Festival, Saffron Hall and Fry Art Gallery. Will older people always come to events and concerts? Or does more have to be done to encourage younger audiences now (so they stay interested and engaged as they get older)? To some extent these are national challenges to do with classical music and formal art spaces (galleries), but better understanding of local communities and their existing and future interests will be necessary (as well thinking about future communities and how they are likely to be made up).
- 13.85. Is the purpose of the cultural offer to provide with greater levels of certainty and sustainability for those who are already attending events and cultural activities regularly? Or to mainly focus on engaging new audiences (younger people and those less inclined to take part/attend)? Probably both, but those already attending and playing an active role will tend to have a louder voice currently. To an extent some of these issues can be addressed through increased engagement with younger people and improved cultural provision (see above).

### Possible Actions and Recommendations

- 13.86. R38 - Through a future cultural network and Cultural Strategy, further **analyse the make-up of Governance of arts, culture and heritage organisations and groups in the District**, and identify any strategic challenges that may undermine their long-term success and sustainability. Support for community outreach and promotion may be opportunities to explore.



## 14. CONTEXT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FULL CULTURAL STRATEGY

- 14.1. This Baseline provides much of the information and context required to take forward a comprehensive Cultural Strategy for the Uttlesford District, as well as supporting the development of policies in the emerging Local Plan. A full Cultural Strategy for the Uttlesford District will enable partners to take forward and develop some of the issues identified in this Baseline, as well as other issues and opportunities that emerge. It should enable not only the identification of clear priorities over the next few years to support and enhance the cultural, arts and heritage sectors, but also be clear on who is responsible and where funding and or additional capacity will emerge.
- 14.2. At this stage the recommendations and key issues identified in this Baseline report are only recommendations, based on research and engagement with cultural practitioners and organisations. They need to be progressed (or perhaps not progressed), refined and where action takes place they need to be monitored.
- 14.3. Successful Cultural Strategies will have been progressed through meaningful collaboration between a range of stakeholders, and will often be initiated and supported by the Local Authority. They should also be informed by wider community consultation with the aim of really understanding how local communities see the future of arts, cultural and heritage provision and related activities in the District, and how they can be involved and engaged (where they want to be). **Communities need to have a say on the current provision of cultural infrastructure** (museums, galleries, multi-functional spaces etc), and creative practitioners of all kinds should be able to have a say on the accessibility and affordability (or otherwise) of **studio and commercially available space for making and exhibiting** for example.
- 14.4. Given how important the cultural and heritage offer of the District is to tourism promotion (this includes physical spaces like galleries and museums, but also broader cultural heritage and traditions including Dunmow's Flitch Trials), it is probably worth thinking **about aligning tourism strategies to cultural strategies**. This would recognise that investment in culture and heritage is good for the local visitor economy and hospitality sectors, as well as providing a useful economic case for investment in culture and heritage.
- 14.5. As explored in this document, a **Cultural Strategy should also take into account the important role that arts, culture and heritage can have on health outcomes**, particularly for older people and younger people. Saffron Hall's recent examples should provide some evidence for this, as should the wider interest **in arts and social prescribing** for example across the UK right now.
- 14.6. This last point also reflects the need for the cultural and heritage sectors to be able to collect and analyse **data sources on a range of factors that can point to trends and issues that could be used to influence investment decisions**.
- 14.7. A Cultural Strategy can also be a good opportunity for **partners and stakeholders to collaborate around creating a cultural vision or narrative for the District (or perhaps for local areas)**. This could link to wider tourism promotions and place-brand initiatives. No such coherent narrative exists, perhaps because of the dispersed nature of the main settlements and strong local identities. But this diversity is also a strength. Narratives and place-brands can frame and support the challenging

process of securing investment from a range of sources (something that Uttlesford is not currently strong on in relation to culture and heritage at least).

- 14.8. Now that there is a Baseline database that has been completed as part of this stage of work, this can inform future planning for the Local Plan process as well as provide insight into the range of spaces, activities and organisations that exist. However, such a **database has to adapt and be updated to reflect the dynamic nature of local cultural and heritage ecosystems and sectors**. This is also a potential focus for a Cultural Strategy and network.
- 14.9. And, perhaps most importantly, the potential to develop a Cultural Strategy for the Uttlesford District for the very first time provides a **great opportunity to bring together a District-wide cultural (and heritage) network**. This network should be formed with representation from some of the larger cultural and heritage organisations (recognising their scale and ability to have impact), as well as smaller voluntary run groups and individuals from across the rural parishes. This network may change over time, perhaps focusing around localised networks/groups feeding into to a smaller core District-wide network. A network is an opportunity to gain some much needed consensus on priorities for culture/arts and heritage – investment in spaces, activities, training, volunteering and promotions (perhaps linked to tourism).
- 14.10. From a Local Plan perspective, a well-functioning and resourced Cultural Network should be able to engage regularly with the planning process, continuing to identify new cultural infrastructure needs alongside new development (including at new Garden Communities), **advocating for the creative and heritage sectors and ensuring that culture remains central to achieving successful, vibrant and resilient communities**. This might include engaging with the development of a Community Infrastructure Levy strategy or scheme. It might also include influencing wider policies and strategies that are linked to culture, heritage and tourism – cycling and public transport for example.

## Appendix 1 – Spatial Distribution of Cultural, Arts and Heritage Assets across largest Parishes

The table is a summary taken from the Baseline Database that has been created specially to support this report.

	Saffron Walden	Gt Dunmow	Elsenham	Clavering	Great Chesterford	Newport	Stansted Mountfitchet	Takeley	Thaxted	Felsted	Wimbish
<b>Multi-use space (i.e. used for arts/cultural uses and other uses)</b>	5	9	2	1	1	2	2	2	5	3	1
<b>Museum</b>	1	2	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0
<b>Local History Group or practitioner</b>	4	0	1	3	1	2	1	1	2	0	0
<b>Archive</b>	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Heritage Building / Garden</b>	9	2	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	0	0
<b>Art gallery or public art location</b>	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Art trail, fair, festival, or open studio event</b>	4	7	2	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
<b>Artist (including visual art, sound, performing art and instillation)</b>	21	3	0	2	0	1	1	0	1	0	7
<b>Art studio space (providing studio spaces for artists)</b>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

<b>Music Venue/Music Studio or Music organisation / musician</b>	24	4	1	0	0	0	4	0	0	3	3
<b>Theatre or performing arts space (including dance) or theatre/dance practitioners</b>	13	7	1	1	0	3	0	1	2	1	0
<b>Craft, heritage craft, artisan practitioner or craft works space</b>	13	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	5
<b>Digital arts/creativity - animation, film, video, gaming</b>	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Cinema</b>	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Community / voluntary sector arts group or organisation (i.e. multi-arts focus)</b>	8	4	1	0	0	1	1	0	2	1	1
<b>Temporary Space for culture / arts (including outdoor spaces)</b>	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0

<b>Commercial Organisation or individual (i.e. design, architecture, digital/graphic business)</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Retail (Selling arts / cultural products)</b>	9	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	5
<b>Creative arts professional development support (support for arts / creative sector i.e. funding or project development)</b>	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Arts / creative education (i.e. skills training, courses or workshops- using arts / culture to support learning outcomes)</b>	9	3	0	2	0	0	2	0	1	1	2
<b>Other</b>	17	6	1	1	0	1	5	1	4	0	1