

9. Provision of Services and Community Facilities

This chapter covers:

- Retail
- Education and skills
- Health, wellbeing and emergency services
- Community and cultural facilities
- Open space, sports and recreation facilities

Retail

Introduction

1. The retail strategy is to provide a broad range of retail and other facilities in the town centres, maintain their roles and enhance the historic nature of the town centres which attracts people to visit them. The Uttlesford Retail Study (November 2021)¹ underpins the approach, identifying when retail needs arise and how these can be met sustainably without harm to the town centres. The study was undertaken and produced after major Covid-19 lockdowns and restrictions, but the reality is that the impacts of the pandemic are still materialising.
2. The Council's economic team has and continues to work closely with local retailers to minimise the effect of the pandemic on trading and to encourage recovery. An economic recovery plan was approved by the Council in December 2020, valid until 31st March 2022 and pending an understanding of what the "new normal" would look like. One objective of the plan was to foster the development of existing town centres as vibrant locations for business and leisure. What is certain is that the pandemic has increased the pace of change towards online shopping, heightening the impact on traditional commercial centres.
3. In May 2021, the district's shops and centres had experienced a 29% reduction in footfall compared to pre-pandemic levels, but there is evidence of resilience in the retail sector. A "Click it Local" scheme provided a platform for local independent businesses to trade online and deliver goods to people's homes. This is likely to have contributed to lower vacancy levels than elsewhere, as did the largely independent nature of trading.
4. The study concludes that the town centres are in reasonably good health, with little evidence of increased leakage to destinations elsewhere compared to the

¹ Uttlesford Retail Capacity Study November 2021

last surveys in 2016. There has been some switching away from town centres to out of town locations, particularly in Saffron Walden. Existing foodstores are overtrading, leading to an unmet capacity for new convenience floorspace in the district.

5. The study concludes that by the mid-2030s capacity might exist for a small to medium foodstore in Saffron Walden and a large foodstore in Great Dunmow. Any planning application that is submitted will need to follow the sequential test as set out in chapter 7 of the NPPF. Applicants will have to demonstrate that any new foodstore that is provided would not have a detrimental impact upon the health of existing town or local centres.
6. The study finds very limited capacity for comparison goods floorspace, and then only towards the end of the plan period.
7. Policies in the local plan will seek to promote long-term vitality, viability and to protect the character of towns and villages so that they continue to provide an attractive environment for the people who visit them.
8. The two main market towns are Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow, and both have town teams. Stansted Mountfitchet and Thaxted are local centres, the former having an economic development working group. All benefit from tourism. The made Great Dunmow Neighbourhood Plan includes policies protecting and enhancing the town centre. The made Thaxted Neighbourhood Plan supports the diversification and enhancement of shops, services, and community facilities where they preserve or enhance the conservation area.
9. Beyond the district, centres like Cambridge, Chelmsford, Harlow and (to a lesser degree) Braintree, Haverhill and Bishop's Stortford provide a wider range of shops, services and recreational opportunity and there is a leakage of expenditure to these centres.

Retail Strategy

10. The Uttlesford Retail Study (November 2021) provides an up-to-date assessment of retail. In relation to the main centres, the key issues are as follows.

Saffron Walden

11. The town centre is well maintained. It has a historic street pattern and is highly walkable although pavements are narrow in places. A more permanent solution to the coned widening of the pedestrian area in Hill Street is needed. The car parks seem well used, although visitor signposting to them would be beneficial. Crime is 63% lower than the 2020 Essex average.
12. There is a slightly higher vacancy rate than the UK average, but there are no areas of concentrated vacancy. There was evidence of a number of units being refurbished at the time of survey. Several vacant units were previously

occupied by national multiple retailers. The centre seems increasingly accented towards independent retail.

13. Provision of convenience goods shops is slightly below the UK average, but comparison goods provision is well above, which is to be expected in the largest town centre in the district. There has been a notable increase in service sector provision in the town centre (43.8% compared to 32% in 2020). Financial services and health and beauty are especially prominent. The evening economy is enhanced by several pubs, restaurants, takeaway units and two hotels.
14. Further new convenience floorspace should be provided in line with Policy RET1 and should take into account identified need and the impact on the town centre. Two development opportunity sites are proposed within the town centre to facilitate new development and redevelopment for retail and other town centre uses.

Great Dunmow

15. The town centre displays a pleasant shopping environment. It has a number of quality buildings (such as the old town hall) and good quality shop fronts. Public realm improvements would be beneficial, including a general “greening of the town centre and a focal area by the war memorial. The lack of free car parking is an issue for traders and local residents and is a feature of the made neighbourhood plan. If the town centre started to exhibit features of decline, focus could sharpen on this issue. Car parks appear to be well utilised. The prevalence of crime is 33% below the Essex average.
16. There is a low number of vacant units spread throughout the centre which is a feature of health but can make it difficult for new entrants. The Council will listen to market signals on whether amalgamations or sub-divisions are appropriate.
17. The town centre predominantly comprises independent retailers with a limited number of national multiples. The number of comparison units has declined from 34 in 2010 to 24 in 2021. Service provision is relatively high. The evening economy is enhanced by several restaurants, hotels and drinking establishments, with the Co-operative and One Stop stores open until 10pm.
18. Further new convenience floorspace should be provided in line with Policy RET1 and should take into account identified need and the impact on the town centre. A small opportunity site is proposed incorporating the Post Office sorting yard and the Council’s depot off New Street and potentially the parking area to the rear of 48 High Street. The Council recognises land ownership and configuration issues on the site but equally its value to town centre expansion, encouraging additional town centre uses. In terms of convenience floorspace, planning permission exists for 1,400sqm of additional floorspace to allow for a medium sized main trader as part of the existing permission for the mixed development at Chelmsford Road.

Stansted Mountfitchet

19. Stansted Mountfitchet provides primarily convenience shopping. Environmental improvements could be made to the centre, including “greening” and pavement improvements. Sufficient parking was observed to be available at the time of survey, although there have been capacity issues in the past. There are regular bus and train services and nearly half of those surveyed last walked to the centre.
20. Stansted Mountfitchet has 2 small local centres, Cambridge Road, and Lower Street, both containing one foodstore. The number of comparison units (largely independent) has more than halved between 2010 to 2021 although the total number is small. Otherwise, it is very accented towards the provision of services (74.5% of all units). The centre has numerous public houses, bars, and brasseries as well as restaurants.
21. There was only 2% vacancy which is an indicator of very good health. The lack of clear development sites and available premises may reduce the potential for new traders. The Lower Street centre is likely to be reliant on train commuters, particularly as one Stansted Express train per hour stops at the station. Footfall may need careful monitoring in the light of changed post-pandemic working patterns.

[Policy RET1 and supporting text make reference to specific sites and so are coming to LPLG on 18 May]

Location and Impact of New Retail Development

22. In accordance with Paragraph 87 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the District Council will apply a sequential test to applications for main town centre uses not in town centres or in accordance with an up-to-date plan. The main town centre uses, as defined in the NPPF, should be located in the town centre, then in edge of centre locations, and only if suitable sites are not available, should out of centre locations be considered. When considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference will be given to accessible sites that are well connected to the town centre. The District Council and the applicant will demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale. The District Council will also require an impact assessment to be submitted with proposals that exceed 1,000 sqm (net).

Policy RET2 The Location and Impact of New Retail Development

Any proposals for retail and other town centre uses outside the defined town and local centres or other sites allocated for those uses must demonstrate compliance with the impact and sequential tests in the National Planning Policy Framework. A retail impact assessment must accompany proposals that exceed 1,000 sqm (net) in Uttlesford District.

Town and Local Centres and Shopping Frontages

23. The town centres of Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow and the local centres of Thaxted and Stansted are identified on the Policies Map. In relation to Stansted Mountfitchet, Policy RET3 will apply to both Cambridge Road and Lower Street centres. For the purposes of this policy, town centre uses are defined under the NPPF as including retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, culture, community and residential development needed in towns. The town and local centres include primary and secondary shopping frontages.
24. Primary frontages are the retail core where the majority of footfall and activity occurs. These are the main shopping streets along which Class E shops should be retained. Secondary frontages extend from the primary ones to the edge of town or local centre and provide a mix of town centre uses such as restaurants, commercial services and leisure facilities which support the centre as a whole. Recent changes to the Use Classes Order (including the new Class E) increase freedoms within town centres, although pubs, drinking establishments and takeaways are excluded from Class E. Where within the primary shopping frontage a ground floor proposal would amount to a material change of use away from Class E requiring planning permission, the Council will expect details of marketing to be submitted.
25. Residential uses can add to the vitality of town centres and within those areas the District Council will support the change of use of upper floors to residential. Mixed schemes on development opportunity sites could also include a residential element but the District Council would expect to see town centre uses at ground floor level on the street frontage. At the community stakeholder forum, concern was expressed about the loss of shops to residential at ground floor level, and the Council shares this concern.
26. Tourism is important to all the district's town and local centres especially because of visitor attractions like Audley End House (Saffron Walden), Stansted Mountfitchet Castle and Thaxted. Development which supports tourism like art galleries, craft workshops, cafes and bed and breakfast accommodation would be appropriate within town and local centres.

Policy RET3 Town and Local Centres and Shopping Frontages

Along primary shopping frontages as identified on the Policies Map, changes of use of ground floor premises in Class E use to non-Class E use will only be permitted if the applicant is able to demonstrate that the unit is not viable for Class E purposes. Non-viability will need to be demonstrated by marketing for a period of 12 months.

Along secondary shopping frontages as identified on the Policies Map, change of use of Class E shops to pub/drinking establishment or

takeaway “sui generis” (of its own kind) uses will normally be permitted. Along secondary shopping frontages and elsewhere within town and local centres, development that would enhance tourism will be supported where it conserves or enhances the character of the townscape.

Along both primary and secondary shopping frontages, change of use to residential will be permitted on upper floors. Mixed use schemes with a residential element will be appropriate within the town and local centres.

Loss of Shops and Other Facilities

27. Within the towns, but outside the designated town and local centres and in the villages, individual shops, small parades of shops and other facilities like public houses, places of worship, village halls, health services and cultural facilities can be important to the local communities they serve. These shops and facilities provide a vital role in reducing car dependency and provide an accessible service at a local level and within the more rural communities. Some villages also have specialist outlets like antique shops, garden centres and restaurants which may contribute to the tourism economy, including through their tourist value. There have been continued losses of services in recent years through conversion to other uses, mainly housing. It is important to recognise that some facilities perform a number of functions, and their closure could result in a significant loss to the community and more travel as a result. Examples would be rooms in pubs or places of worship used by local groups as meeting rooms, children’s nurseries.
28. The District Council is generally unable to prevent the loss of these facilities but can determine planning applications for a material change of use. Where planning permission is required the Council will apply the tests in Policy RET4 below. Applicants will be required to demonstrate that the use is no longer viable. It is important that communities make good use of local facilities to make a sound case for refusal of planning permission. Facilities which the community feels are important to their social well-being can be listed as Assets of Community Value.

Policy RET4 Loss of Shops and Other Facilities

Beyond the defined town and local centres, change of use (that require planning permission) of shops and other community facilities will only be permitted where the applicant can demonstrate that:

- i. there is no significant demand for an alternative town centre use in that catchment area, demonstrated by marketing for 12 months; or**
- ii. the facility is not financially viable; or**
- iii. the replacement land use offers compelling benefits which outweigh the loss.**

New Shops in Rural Areas

29. In villages where there is interest in opening a new shop the District Council will allow provision outside development limits where no sites are available provided the chosen site is well located to the village, is walkable and is of an appropriate scale. Applicants will be expected to define the catchment area that the new shop is intended to serve. If there are existing shops within this catchment area, an impact assessment of the effect on these shops will be required.
30. The District Council will encourage community run schemes and schemes which provide a mix of facilities which might include a shop, post office, meeting rooms, internet access and possibly local transport hub. This policy settlements without a defined centre.

Policy RET5 New Shops in Rural Areas

For settlements without a defined town or local centre, planning permission will be granted for new shops where all the following criteria are met:

- i. the shop would be of a size appropriate to the village;**
- ii. the site would be well related to the village, with the potential to reduce the need to travel by car;**
- iii. there would be no adverse impact on existing shops within the catchment area;**
- iv. there would be no adverse impact on the character and amenity of the area including visual intrusion, noise and traffic generation; and**
- v. The site is within development limits or there are no suitable alternative sites within development limits.**

Sites that could provide a mix of local facilities will be particularly welcomed.

Education and Skills

31. In this section Education refers to early years and childcare, primary, secondary, and further education and adult learning provision including for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and where there is a residential element. For schools, the NPPF stresses the importance of ensuring sufficient and choice of school places to meet existing and future needs. Housing growth must be supported by the delivery of education facilities in a timely and phased manner. Additional school places can be

provided by the expansion of existing schools/academies or the opening of new “free schools” or academies. Most of the primary schools are close to capacity, with limited space on site to expand, in part the result of unplanned under-provision over the past twenty years or so because of the absence of an up-to-date plan and the cumulative effects of such development.

32. Normally, the County Council leads on the delivery of new schools, working with developers and the Department for Education. The County selects an Academy provider to run each new school although there is no guaranteed catchment area. For new and expanding communities the County has published a [guidance](#) that covers likely school infrastructure needed for the larger growth sites.²
33. Developers can refer to the County’s *Ten Year Plan- Meeting The Demand For School Places In Essex 2021-2030*, updated annually around January. Its purpose³ is to set out the demand for mainstream school places in the next ten years (e.g. from academic year 2021/22 to academic year 2030/31) for each District and the County Council’s plans to address this demand. The scope of the *10 Year Plan* is mainstream statutory age education provision with Special Educational Needs (SEN), Early Years, sixth form and other forms of education provision outside the scope of the plan though they considered in the County’s capital investment.
34. Because children with special needs have a range of different types of need, a SEN school will have its own specialism and will provide for children with that need from across the county. Currently there are no SEN schools in Uttlesford, but the Education Authority considers how to meet the SEN profile at any one time and may require, as part of the overall growth proposals, land or facilities for SEN during the plan period. The developer of any new community may be required to contribute to this provision, proportionate to their proposals where the SEN contribution details will necessarily be determined at that particular time.
35. Developers should also refer to the Essex County Council Local and Neighbourhood Planners’ Guide to School Organisation (2019).⁴ This plan explains how ECC can assist in ensuring sufficient school places are provided, arising from new development. It sets out the data required by ECC to test the proposed housing scenario in order to estimate required provision.

² School rolls and ‘entry sizes’ (Published Admission Numbers) are on the web site - [School organisation and place planning: School forecast data - Essex County Council](#)

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https://assets.ctfassets.net/knkzaf64jx5x/1sTwHeX9pKGl7ebfWZQ8yS/64c4aca7768117ae8a77fb0ba51fd260/ECC_10_year_plan_school_places_2021_2030.pdf

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https://assets.ctfassets.net/knkzaf64jx5x/64wpmMGfhiSgaDs7bc2f2B/95972b3171202201d57a514ed2501318/ECC_Local_and_Neighbourhood_Planners_Guide_to_School_Organisation.pdf

The role of the School in the Community

36. Easy access to good quality learning, skills and educational provision is important for supporting economic growth and prosperity, and as an ingredient of culture and to improve health and social well-being, sustaining the quality of life. Established schools and related educational facilities contribute to the sense of community, are a valuable community resource use and provide essential support to housing growth. Education providers and institutional users are encouraged to improve facilities and make efficient use of their assets and landholdings, including sharing access to their assets with the wider community. New educational establishments should plan and design the buildings, outside and sports facilities so that they can be made available for community access and use provided that this does not impact adversely on the safety of students nor the functioning of the school, and that there is no expectation of free access to the facilities.

Early years and childcare:

37. All Local Education Authorities are required by the Department for Education (DfE) to publish an annual report to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare. The Essex Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Summary (2019) ⁵ report contains data that has been submitted to ECC by childcare providers across Essex and relates to the available childcare places; an update should be available by mid-2022.
38. The Council, advised by ECC, will seek new early years and childcare facilities preferably co-located with new primary schools, funded through developer contributions. It may be preferable to locate new early years and childcare facilities alongside other essential services and/or close to major new or existing employment locations. The minimum size is normally a 56-place co-located early years and childcare facility, required where new development creates 700 houses or 1,400 flats.

Primary Schools

39. The most appropriate size of primary school is 2 Form Entry (2FE). The formula to estimate the number of pupils is 0.3 pupils per qualifying house and 0.15 pupils per qualifying flat so that c1,400 houses would require a 2FE school.

Secondary Schools

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https://assets.ctfassets.net/knkzaf64ix5x/7lKntMzJWxZ3OaA7QTLR54/d88f849526410eb4b17607c85b635e49/Early_Years_Sufficiency_Report_2019.pdf

40. ECC aims to establish secondary schools of at least 6FE and applies a formula to estimate the number of pupils from new homes as 0.2 pupils per qualifying house and 0.1 pupils per qualifying flat. A 6FE school is required for developments of 4,500 houses.

POLICY EDU1: New and Enhanced Education Facilities

New or enhanced education facilities will be required in development proposals where there is a clear need because of population growth or existing deficiency. Permission will be granted in sustainable locations for education buildings, built to net zero standards on allocated, prepared, and serviced sites to be agreed with the local education authority and in accordance with the County's site and building guidance.

Sites must be accessible by public transport and by safe cycle and walking routes, to be provided or improved as necessary and as part of the masterplan process.

Primary schools should be located within a 15-minute walking distance of the majority of homes in new developments where the surrounding highway network should conform to the Walkable Neighbourhood principles in the County's Design Guide and/or as otherwise agreed through the master planning process with the Local Planning Authority.

Developers should engage with the County Council at the earliest opportunity and work cooperatively to ensure the phasing of residential development and appropriate education provision including transport and outside sports/play facilities are made available in a timely manner. This will be agreed through the planning application process and section 106 Agreement.

Developers are expected to collaborate on a Community Use Agreement with the provider at the appropriate opportunity and as advised by the education authority; this may require that outdoor facilities be provided in advance of the school opening and to collaborate on a suitable body to manage and maintain them in the interim.

The Council, as advised by ECC, will seek new early years and childcare facilities, co-located with new primary schools where appropriate, and which will be funded through developer contributions. Sufficient early years and childcare provision needs to be considered alongside other essential services and infrastructure such that it may prove necessary or preferable to locate new early years and childcare facilities close to major new employment locations, where demand is identified.

Developers are expected to contribute to the cost of the education provision in accordance with guidance and schedules published by the County.

Developer Education Contributions

41. Easy access to good quality educational provision is important for supporting economic growth, developing strong sustainable communities, promoting economic prosperity, and sustaining quality of life. It is therefore appropriate for new residential development to contribute towards the cost of education provision, either towards the expansion of existing facilities or the funding of a new school, probably through planning obligations.
42. The County's Developers' Guide 2020⁶, and any updates, set out the scope and range of infrastructure contributions ECC may seek from developers and landowners to mitigate impact and make development acceptable in planning terms; education tends to be one of the more significant areas of contribution required.

Land Requirements For New Schools

43. Land needs to be suitable for educational in accordance with County Schools guidance. This includes a suitable location, infrastructure, decontamination, safe access, site levelling and in all respects prepared for building. The developer's contribution needs to embrace County policy that all new schools are now to be built to net zero carbon standards, backed by Government funding requirements. Smart meter monitoring technology must be costed and installed too in order that the school can be managed and operated to match the net zero building standards.

⁶ The Essex County Council Developers' Guide to Infrastructure

Contributions (2020)

<https://assets.ctfassets.net/knkzaf64jx5x/5aKhke88Ey5zkdMvSQj44w/0d71817cad70b9394d76e7a490ac7bd7/developers-guide-infrastructure-contributions.pdf>

Health and well-being

44. Health and Well-being are inextricably linked to socio-economic and environmental factors: the quality, accessibility and sustainability of the physical environment, and opportunities for social interaction and cultural engagement. The way in which an area is planned and managed can have a significant impact on quality of life, mental health and well-being. Development and infrastructure which supports the improvement of physical and mental health in the district is strongly encouraged. On strategic sites, all partners will work together to integrate planning, transport, housing, environmental and health provision to promote healthy lifestyles and support and enhance healthcare provision.
45. Uttlesford Council is committed to improving the health of its communities. Its Corporate Plan 2021-2025 has a key aim of promoting healthy lifestyles and builds on the Uttlesford Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2017-22 which defines a healthy community as a good place to grow up and grow old, where it supports healthy behaviours and reductions in health inequalities and enhances the physical and mental health of the community. The Strategy has five main priorities:
- combatting loneliness and social isolation
 - supporting people to age well in Uttlesford
 - enabling people to eat well and be active
 - alleviating winter pressures and fuel poverty
 - planning for healthy communities.
46. The principles of health and wellbeing are a common embedded theme in the Essex Design Guide (EDG). It recognises that access to opportunities for physical activity, open spaces, natural environments, informal and formal recreation opportunities with transport networks that encompass cycling and walking contribute significantly to good health and at the same time, the reduction in carbon emissions. Although this health infrastructure in the widest sense is addressed in policy in this chapter; prevention and treatment for poorer health needs to be balanced by appropriate infrastructure in new development to facilitate access to good medical care and personal services, adult social care, special needs and substance misuse etc. Many of these are County Council services or shared in delivery with the NHS through its new integrated services structure planned to follow on from the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in mid-2022.
47. Public Health England's health profile for the district was updated in 2018. Compared to the England average, the district has above average life expectancy for both men and women and lower levels of deprivation. However, it indicated a rise in levels of overweight and obesity and more than half of adults were affected, with 13.2% of children aged 10-11 classified as obese. This is attributable to several factors including low levels of physical activity, and availability of unhealthy, energy dense foods, including hot food takeaways. This trend is similarly correlated with increasing levels among

children. The Foresight Obesity System Atlas (2007)⁷ indicated that in the physical activity categories of recreational, domestic, occupational and means of transportation, the more opportunities in each category, the more likely activity will occur.

Health Impact Assessments (HIA)

48. Acting within its powers as civic leader and responsible local planning authority the Council can create opportunities to provide safe, healthy, active lifestyles in requiring and acting on the findings of a Health Impact Assessment (HIA). The Council will continue to liaise with the West Essex CCG or the successor body when assessing the scope of these likely impacts, the nature of mitigation required, and the amount of detail in a stepped approach needed from the HIA according to the scale of development proposed.
49. Physical activity and healthy eating are lifestyle choices that are influenced by the planned environment. With childhood obesity as a growing issue, it is important that policies which can mitigate this. Assessment of the HIA may lead the LPA to seek contributions towards new or enhanced provision of infrastructure, designed to encourage safe walking and cycling, and well-designed open space, sport, recreational facilities, and services.
50. The HIA provides a means of assessing the positive as well as the negative impacts of development proposals, with the aims of
 - Identifying, recognising, and maximising positive benefits e.g. job creation
 - Avoiding, minimising, or mitigating negative impacts e.g. through redesign of proposals or through compensatory measures
 - Identifying unintended consequences and impacts of development proposals on health and wellbeing that may not have been identified through other processes or assessments
51. The level of detailed required for an HIA will be proportionate depending on the type and nature of development, as well as its location. The County's stepped HIA process allows for consideration of the type of HIA required on a case-by-case basis, with the detail varying from a desktop review to a comprehensive assessment.⁸

POLICY HW1: Health Impact Assessments (HIA)

Developers are required to submit a final HIA as part of the planning application and in accordance with the checklist set out by the County and the advice and best practice for such assessments published by the Department

⁷ Tackling Obesity: Future Choices- Obesity System Atlas (Foresight, 2007).

⁸ This approach is outlined in the Essex Planning Officers' Association (EPOA) HIA Guidance Note – Essex Healthy Places – Advice Notes for Planners, Developers and Designers.(page 9).

of Health, Public Health, and other agencies, such as the West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group and the Council's Building for a Healthy Life guidance⁹.

HIA's are required for the following:

- Use Class C3 Residential development proposals of 50 dwelling units and above
- Use Class C2 Residential care homes, sheltered housing schemes and nursing homes
- Non-residential development of 1,000m² and above
- Where hot food takeaways are included in proposals.

All significant negative impacts must be identified, mitigated or negated as part of the evolution of the scheme and should be demonstrated in the final submission. The level of detail required in the HIA should be agreed with the local planning authority at the beginning of the process.

The need for section 106 contributions to support primary care services and facilities will be agreed in accordance with criteria available from the newly established Integrated Care Service (ICS) or CCG and subject to discussion with the health authorities and providers over the needs arising from the development.

Where significant negative impacts are identified, infrastructure provision and/or funding to meet the health service requirements of the development should be set out and will be secured by planning obligations.

The Council may apply through planning condition control to reduce any negative impacts identified through the HIA. Hot food takeaways (Class A5) will not be permitted within a radius of 400m from all gates in all schools that cater for students up to the age of 19, nor in proposed new developments, or new communities. Opening hours will normally be limited to defined out of school hours so that takeaways may not open before 9am, and may not open between the hours of 3pm and 5pm on weekdays during state and private school term times, whichever is the earlier and later in the calendar respectively for each term and half term so as to ensure that these restricted opening times apply only when the schools are open.

Developers are also encouraged to submit their schemes for the Living Well Accreditation administered by the County to help benchmark their scheme and to give confidence in its credence in helping to create healthy and sustainable environments.

⁹ UDC Building for a Healthy Life guidance

Policies to address other aspects of health not directly related to Infrastructure such as air quality and internal space standards are covered in the design and climate change chapters.

Community and Cultural Facilities

52. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2021)¹⁰ acknowledges that the social objective of a sustainable development will be attained in supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities through their “social and cultural well-being.” The NPPF also stresses the need to plan ‘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.
53. The Council’s Corporate Plan 2022 states that it will work with partners and stakeholders to deliver new sports, play and community facilities and secure greater benefits for our community from new development ¹¹ The Local Plan should provide for preserving, enhancing, and building spaces and sites that can be used by communities for cultural activities and pursuits. The provision of recreation leisure, and open space infrastructure, education and health is considered other chapters of the plan.
54. Cultural provision can be defined as any location where activities of a social, artistic, or cultural nature take place. Community facilities themselves include:

- the provision of traditional and complementary medical or health services,
- the provision of education schools, sixth form colleges and training centres
- a crèche, day nursery or playgroup;
- youth provision
- a place of worship or religious instruction;
- community centre, public hall or meeting place;
- community hub for multi-use incl working from home support
- public library
- community -run shops
- public house
- public conveniences
- the provision for the emergency services
- leisure, sports, and entertainment facilities, including arts and cultural facilities such as museums, performance/theatre venues
- Public art and sculpture

55. The First Consultation on the Local Plan identified the importance of community facilities, heritage and a sense of place and elicited these views:
- Community facilities are valued – need to be provided within walking distance in new developments, including open space.
 - Tree planting to be of the correct species and location.

¹⁰ See National Planning Policy Framework

¹¹

- Range of services is not expected in small settlements.
- Access to countryside is valued.
- Need for more open space and increased planting to combat climate change, both on open land and within developments.
- Need better recreation and sports facilities in some areas.
- Greater protection for open spaces, including Hatfield Forest.
- Provide more seating in public spaces
- Improve the Flich Way.
- Provision of facilities to suit different needs.
- Concern that villages with services risk becoming a target for development.
- Ensure leisure facilities are fit for purpose.
- New communities need to be self-supporting

Towards a Cultural Strategy - baseline evidence and community spaces

56. In recognition of the role of culture and community activities in good settlement and development planning, Uttlesford District Council commissioned a study to establish the baseline of such spaces and activities. The Culture Baseline Assessment (February 2022)¹² identified nearly 400 venues for artists and cultural activities of which around 170 are physical places ranging from heritage sites, private studios, music venues and nearly 80 multifunctional facilities. The latter are predominantly village halls run by the Parish Council or the community offering venues for multifarious cultural activities provided by itinerant professionals and local informal groups, often self-starting and self-sufficient and not aligned with an outside organisation.
57. In terms of the distribution of physical cultural, arts and heritage assets, 29% are located in Saffron Walden, 10% in Great Dunmow, 6% in Thaxted, a total of 45% for these three settlements. Saffron Walden is the main cultural centre with most of the larger museums, galleries, markets, events, and other cultural opportunities along with strong amateur and community groups and high levels of participation. Key cultural/heritage destinations include Saffron Hall, Fry Art Gallery, Fairycroft House, Audley End, Saffron Walden Museum and Stansted Mountfitchet Castle.
58. Nevertheless, across the district there is 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, small cinemas, museums, archives and heritage buildings. There is however a limited availability of practical space for emerging Creative Practitioners with most operating in private spaces that limits their growth or even 'set-up' if space does not permit. The Plan will seek to secure the development of new creative spaces to be leased on an affordable and flexible basis, addressing the issue from an economic/employment as well as a cultural perspective. Ensuring good provision in terms of facilities and access will then

¹² Culture Creativity & the Arts. Baseline Assessment. The Cultural Engine. (March 2022) [LINK](#)

provide much of the necessary infrastructure for the wider creative sectors to thrive. Specific interventions where a gap in provision has been identified could include new community halls, local museum/galleries, artist studios and public art.

59. It is important that when new developments generate the need for community facilities, the need is met by on-site provision. Locally available childcare facilities, for example, are important to increase economic activity rates, to minimise travel distances, to reduce social exclusion and to permit wider participation in social, and economic, activities. Leisure, art, cultural and entertainment facilities can provide a vibrant and culturally diverse range of activities, for local people and also as a stimulus to the visitor economy. Community buildings (and open spaces) provide this basis and can be a key to the community life as a location for activities and events, minimising the need to travel to larger centres. They should be provided for in masterplans in accordance with the standard of 200m² of floorspace for a small community centre and 500m² of floorspace for a large community centre; for new communities the standard applied elsewhere in Essex is 0.44m² of space per dwelling which gives a threshold for a small community centre of 450 dwellings and 1,100 dwellings for a large centre.
60. In relation to specific land use opportunities, the Cultural Baseline Assessment identifies the need to consider:
- a. identifying a location for flexible and affordable creative arts/studio space within the District
 - b. The Saffron Walden (emerging Neighbourhood Plan) identified need for:
 - 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

The Council welcome feedback and proposals for enhancing the cultural facilities and infrastructure offer as part of this consultation.

Youth Services

61. New development proposals will need to pay heed to local youth provision. The 2016 Uttlesford Sports Development Strategy¹³ identified 54 centres in Uttlesford, one per 1,471 persons, and all within a 10-minute drive of most local centres. The Essex Youth Service seeks to help young people and support community groups to develop local provision. The service offers help with: developing new youth provision; accessing targeted youth work programmes and Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme; support for Young Carers; accessing volunteering and training opportunities, and work experience. The baseline

¹³ Ploszajski Lynch Consulting Ltd (2016) Sports Facilities Development Strategy [online]. Available at: https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/media/5608/Sports-Facilities-Development-Strategy-January-2016/pdf/Sports_Facilities_Development_Strategy_January_2016.pdf?m=635913231609400000

study identified that at least one facility is required, details to be agreed on advice from the County Youth Services.

Libraries

62. The County Council provides library services with four public libraries at Stansted Mountfitchet, Great Dunmow, Saffron Walden and Thaxted. A mobile library and home library service visits settlements fortnightly. The ECC Future Libraries work¹⁴ identified a significant decline in the use of libraries and funding shortfalls which resulted in the need for a review of library property. The strategy suggests that by 2024 most libraries will not be provided in their current buildings, but will be located in buildings which share other services. All options require significant funding for set up and to ensure sustainability. One option is to share Community Spaces and possibly to offer 'self-serve' library facilities using digital technology to allow customers to access resources, check in and out items. Community spaces could also be used as outreach posts, taking library services to residents in the form of a 'pop-up library' with activities such as baby and toddler Storytime. The Mobile Library Service is considering acquiring new, smaller, more accessible vehicles.

POLICY COM1: DELIVERING NEW COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Planning applications will be supported for new or extended cultural and community facilities, and where:

- **They are expected to be an essential component in the creation of balanced and sustainable new communities or large settlement extensions, and should be integrated, along with public art, in the masterplans for development proposals. Developers should submit proposals for the community management of new facilities and for new settlements in line with the principles of community stewardship in accordance with garden city principles.**
- **There is existing or proposed access from good public transport, cycling and walking routes, and will be accessible to all users**
- **In new, or large-scale additions to, settlements a youth facility should be considered for which developers should seek advice from the County Council**
- **Multifunctional uses are encouraged with a range of cultural and community facilities in the new development, designed to ensure secure and safe access for the different users and including for those with different disabilities.**
- **Temporary or pop-up cultural and community uses are encouraged where they contribute the quality of life and where they do not adversely**

¹⁴ ECC (2019) Essex Future Library Services Consultation summary and survey form [online]. Available at: <https://libraries.essex.gov.uk/media/1015667/draft-essex-library-services-strategy-summary.pdf>

impact on amenity, but are encouraged to be designed and operate so as to enhance the public realm or other open space

- **All proposals, including the re-use or proposed change of use of existing buildings and spaces for community purposes, must reduce carbon and energy impacts in their design, construction, and operation. Proposals should incorporate measures that address issues of climate change mitigation and should be designed to the carbon net zero standard in new buildings or in refurbished buildings, retrofitted to a higher-ranking energy performance measure as far as is practicable and viable. The inclusion of small-scale solar or wind energy generation devices of domestic scale are encouraged on all appropriate community buildings in the associated public realm.**

63. Community facilities as assets have a wide impact on quality of life in a community and may operate to serve a wider catchment area. Their retention is paramount to a sustainable settlement pattern and function. Their loss will be resisted unless evidence is provided that either there is no longer any demand or that it is not possible to continue to operate the facility including exploration of all forms of management and community ownership arrangements.

64. In the rural areas, facilities such as public houses, post offices, local shops and petrol stations can perform a similar welfare function ensuring the vitality of rural communities. Such existing community assets should be protected from changes of use or redevelopment as far as possible. Proposals for the change of use of public houses will need to be accompanied by evidence to show that use as a public house is not economically viable and is no longer required to meet the needs of the local community.

POLICY COM2: PROTECTING COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The loss of a community facility, as defined in paragraph 55, or its change of use will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that it cannot be converted viably to another use or a new equivalent or enhanced replacement facility is provided in the vicinity and in advance of demolition.

Any alternative community facility should be provided to at a standard no lower than the current facility in relation to its space standards or accessibility to users. Furthermore, any alternative facility will enhance considerably the water and sustainable energy resource efficiency standards, improve links by walking, cycle or public transport access and be of high design quality and in accordance with the District or site's design code or guidance prepared by the council or within the relevant Masterplan as appropriate.

Open space, sports and recreation facilities

65. The protection, enhancement and provision of recreational public open space, indoor and outdoor sports facilities and playing pitches can contribute to healthy and active lifestyles. This is a key aim of the Council's corporate plan. Making sure there is enough recreational open space and indoor and outdoor sports facilities to meet current and future needs is a key aim of the local plan.
66. The needs of the district have been assessed in the evidence:
- Uttlesford Indoor Sports Facilities: Needs Assessment (December 2018)
 - Uttlesford Indoor Sports Facilities: Strategy (February 2019)
 - Uttlesford Open Space: Assessment Report (2019)
 - Uttlesford Open Space: Strategy (2019)
 - Uttlesford Playing Pitch: Strategy Assessment Report (May 2019)
 - Uttlesford Playing Pitch: Strategy and Action Plan (May 2019)
67. In terms of open space, quantitative shortfalls were identified in the provision of parks and gardens, space for children and young people and for allotments, although at the time of survey only Elsenham Parish Council had a waiting list for the latter. Quality was generally above average, particularly for allotments and amenity greenspace where smaller sites were likely to be those below standard. Most spaces were judged to be of high value to such aspects as social inclusion, health and developmental benefits.
68. Quantitative shortfalls were identified in football pitch and artificial (3G) surface provision, and in relation to most sports, issues relating to surface quality and security of tenure affected the availability of spare capacity. The district does not contain any purpose built athletics facilities, which places demands on parks and recreation grounds for path quality, access to toilets and car parking.
69. 3G football pitch provision could free up indoor space in sports centres to meet future demand, but any new facilities would need to be appropriately sited. Demand for swimming could eventually equate to a new 6-lane 25m pool although there are no current demand hotspots. Health and fitness stations are undersupplied. In relation to indoor sports (badminton, basketball, gymnastics, netball and swimming/aquatic sports) there is a need to generally increase public availability and coaching opportunities.
70. Village halls had no specific deficiencies or surpluses.
71. To meet the needs of current and future residents, additional facilities are required as set out in the reports, strategies, action plans and accompanying standards.
72. The current standards for sports pitches and play are set out in Tables 9 and 10 below:

Table 9: Playing Pitch Standards*- refer to Sport England for preferred design and construction standards.

Facility	Area	Threshold
Grass pitches-	.	1.2ha per 1,000 population
Grass pitches- adult	0.75ha required per adult pitch .	260 dwellings
Grass pitches- youth	0.6ha per youth	209 dwellings
Grass pitches- child	0.15ha per mini pitch	52 dwellings
Artificial grass pitches	Standard to be applied should conform to Sport England requirements	
Indoor	A single court indoor sports facility	1,458 dwellings.

*source: Fields in Trust and Sport England

73. There is no quantitative threshold for indoor sports centres, but developers of large sites will be expected to consult with Sport England and to provide for formal indoor sports facilities bearing in mind existing provision and cumulative need arising from population growth. The provisions in Policy INF2 ST2 regarding the timing of new facilities will apply.
74. Where the Strategies identify a community need which can be met through existing school and college sports facilities, this will be encouraged subject to suitable arrangements to access their use to be set out in a Community Use Agreement with the Council, educational establishment and potentially other relevant third party if appropriate (such as a sports club or parish council).

Table 10: Recreational Play Standards (ref Fields in Trust)

Provision	Area	Other details
Children's Playing Space Local Area for Play (LAP) for children up to the age of 6.	0.25 ha per 1,000 population	Walking distance: 100 m Minimum activity zone: 100 sqm Minimum buffer zone: 5 m
Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP) One per 600 dwellings	0.36ha	Walking distance: 400 m Minimum buffer zone: 20 Minimum activity zone: 400 sqm m

Provision	Area	Other details
Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP) One per 1,418 dwellings	0.85ha	Walking distance: 1,000 m Minimum activity zone: 1,000 sqm comprising an area for play equipment and a hard surfaced area of at least 465 sqm, the minimum needed for five-a-side football
MUGA, one per 1,334 dwellings	0.8ha	

75. Current provision of open space in Uttlesford in comparison to national benchmarks is shown in the table below. The evidence recommended that current provision levels be used as recommended quantity standards for Uttlesford and stated:
The national benchmark quantity standards are not deemed as appropriate for use as they do not take into consideration the local circumstances, distribution and historical trends of the area. An approach using locally derived quantity standards ensures more reflective standards are set as they are based on and take consideration to current local provision levels and views.

Table 11: Comparison of current provision and national benchmarks

Typology	Hectares per 1,000 population	
	Current provision levels	National benchmarks
Parks & gardens	0.10	0.80
Natural & semi-natural greenspace	5.81	1.80
Amenity greenspace	1.60	0.60
Provision for children & young people	0.10	0.25
Allotment / community food growing	0.25*	0.25

Source: *Open Space Standards Paper. Knight, Kavanagh, Page (KKP). February 2019 (Table 3.4.1 p 11)*
*adjusted for UDC analysis (2020)

76. However, responses to the First Consultation on the Local Plan identified a lack of accessible natural green space, parks and gardens and the desire for a new Country Park. Also, although the current provision of natural and semi-natural greenspace appears high, Hatfield Forest contributes the majority (75%) of this natural greenspace, and the forest is under pressure from recreational use.

Allotments

77. A large proportion of the district is within 4 km of the nearest allotment site though areas in the north-west, north-east, and small areas along the south-east and south-west border have no allotment provision.
78. The evidence (KPP 2019) identified 27 allotments sites, providing 17.21ha of allotments. Further desk analysis (UDC 2020) identified a total of 41 allotment sites providing 21.95ha.
79. The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners recommends a national standard of 20 allotments per 1000 households., equating to 0.25ha per 1000 populations. Based on the population of Uttlesford (87,684) KPP suggested the minimum amount of allotment provision should be 21.92ha (Uttlesford Open Space Assessment Report. KPP 2019. (8.2 p49)).
80. Although 85% of sites are considered high quality[1] there is also a deficiency of allotments around Takeley and the Priors Green new developments. No allotments are recorded in 30 parishes, equating to approximately 31% of the population of Uttlesford.
81. Allotments are a traditional land use, typically 250m² (the size of a doubles tennis court) requiring a high commitment of time and tend to be adopted by keen gardeners. There is an opportunity to explore and ascertain interest and need of different types of growing space, including smaller more flexible spaces, through community engagement.
82. All new development proposals should include allotment and/or community growing space provision where there is a deficiency or in new communities. The standard is outlined below:

Table 10: Allotment Standard

Type	Level of Provision M²/Person	Threshold for On-Site Provision	Threshold for Off-Site Provision
Allotments – minimum size 0.25ha.*	2.5m ² /person	In all development of 10 dwellings or over	All developments under 10 dwellings and development of 10 dwellings or over where on-site provision is not possible, adequate provision should be made off-site

¹ Uttlesford District Council (2019) Open Space Assessment Report [online]. Available at: https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/media/9619/ED14B-Uttlesford-Open-Space-Assessment-Report/pdf/ED14B_Uttlesford_Open_Space_Assessment_Report.pdf?m=636969740431630000

POLICY REC1: Provision of New Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities

All proposals will be required to comply with the Council's open space standards that take account of recommendations in the Council's Open Space and Sports Strategy, Playing Pitch Strategy and Play Strategy and in accordance with Sport England Standards. For children's play space, they must comply with the Fields in Trust minimum standards.

Proposals for large new settlement extensions and new communities must include provision for recreation, sports, play and open space and be integrated within the masterplan for the development proposals. Allotments must be provided in new community proposals and large settlement extensions.

Proposals for recreation facilities, green space and landscaping must be accompanied by a costed maintenance plan to ensure long-term quality and facility viability. Permission will not be granted for new recreation facilities unless applicants make available an endowment to cover the first ten years of maintenance and management by a suitable body, the details to be set out in the section 106 Agreement.

- 83.** It is clearly important to ensure the protection, enhancement and provision of accessible open space, sports facilities, playing pitches and associated facilities. Existing facilities for recreation, sport and play together with formal and informal open space will be safeguarded and their accessibility and quality enhanced wherever possible or as part of a development proposal. The KK&P assessments will be used to determine whether a site or facility is surplus to need. In the absence of an up-to-date assessment, a robust assessment of local need for the local catchment will be required demonstrating that there is surplus provision within the catchment and that the site has no special significance to sport or recreation.

POLICY REC2: Protection Of Open Space, Sport, Recreational Facilities

There is a presumption against any development that involves the loss of open space, community, sport, recreation or play facilities, allotments, including playing fields forming part of an education establishment, except where it can be demonstrated that alternative facilities of equal or better quality and convenience will be provided as part of the development. Permission will not be granted unless:

- i. This represents an opportunity to enhance the existing provision in terms of providing facilities for people with disabilities, modernisation or extension including the incorporation of energy or water conservation measures or renewable energy generation**
- ii. It can be demonstrated that there is no longer a need and/or it is allocated for another use**
- iii. Replacement facilities will be provided of an equivalent or better standard in terms of quality, quantity, frequency of potential use by virtue of its construction (such as an artificial pitch designed to the appropriate standard or located under cover) and in a suitable location, to serve the needs of the area; and which will be made available before development of the existing site begins and hence prevents its use for recreation or sport purposes. The design must be supported by the relevant sports governing body and/or Sport England**
- iv. The plans for alternative facilities must be accompanied by demonstrable appropriate management arrangements to ensure they are viable and will be maintained in the long term. An endowment to support the replacement facility will normally be required of the developer.**
- v. For school, college and other educational grounds, the loss through development may be permitted where the development meets a demonstrable educational need and provides alternative playing fields in accordance with Sport England policy. A Community Use Agreement may be sought to permit public access having regard to the primary purpose of the facilities for safe educational uses**

84. Unless specified in the relevant detailed site allocation policy, publicly accessible formal open space, or improvement to existing accessible open space provision will be in accordance with the standards in Table 5.

Table 5: Standard Requirements for Open Space Infrastructure

Type	Level of Provision M ² /Person	Threshold for On-Site Provision	Threshold for Off-Site Provision
Amenity Greenspace	10	All development of 10 dwellings or over	All developments under 10 dwellings and development of 10 dwellings or over where on-site provision is not possible
Provision for children and young people (LAPS, LEAPS and NEAPS)	2	All development of 10 dwellings or over	All developments under 10 dwellings and development of 10 dwellings or over where on-site provision is not possible

Policy REC3: Safeguarded Open Space

Development will not be permitted that would result in the loss of the whole or part of areas designated as Public Open Space, as defined on the Proposals Map or which will harm the character of, or lead to the partial, cumulative, or total loss of protected open spaces.