

# 10. Economy and Retail



This Chapter sets out the more detailed policies that will be used to determine planning applications relating to the economy and for retail.

## Introduction

- 10.1 The Plan seeks to provide a positive policy framework, which supports jobs, businesses and investment, to build a strong and competitive economy. It sets a framework to reflect the different drivers within Uttlesford's economy with the aim to build and sustain a vibrant, diverse and resilient local economy; that encourages both large and small scale opportunities throughout Uttlesford in appropriate locations, which are set out in our Spatial Strategy (Chapter 4) and Area Strategies (Chapters 5 to 8).
- 10.2 This Chapter sets out the more detailed policies that will be used to determine planning applications relating to the economy and for retail. The policies included in this chapter are:
- **Core Policy 45: Protection of Existing Employment Space**
  - **Core Policy 46: Development at Allocated Employment Sites**
  - **Core Policy 47: Ancillary Uses on Existing or Allocated Employment Sites**
  - **Core Policy 48: New Employment Development on Unallocated Sites**
  - **Core Policy 49: Employment and Training**
  - **Core Policy 50: Retail and Main Town Centre Uses Hierarchy**
  - **Core Policy 51: Tourism and the Visitor Economy**
  - **Development Policy 6: Hot Food Takeaways**
  - **Development Policy 7: New Shops or Cafes in Smaller Settlements**
  - **Development Policy 8: Tourist Accommodation**

## Existing Employment Space

- 10.3 It is important that we protect our existing employment sites to help ensure that an appropriate level of employment provision is provided across the district.
- 10.4 Where a site no longer has reasonable prospect of being used for employment purposes, applicants will be expected to demonstrate that the site is no longer viable for its present, or any other realistic and suitable, employment use. They must demonstrate that the site has remained un-sold or un-let for at least 12 months. In addition, applicants will need to provide evidence demonstrating that the site has been appropriately marketed for its present use or related employment use for a minimum period of 12 months immediately prior to the submission of the planning application. Applicants are thereby required to demonstrate that despite genuine and sustained attempts to sell or let a site on reasonable terms for employment use, they have failed to do so.
- 10.5 The site's potential contribution to the local and wider economy must be considered, both currently and in the long term, taking proper account of the economic cycle and the likely future needs of the economy. The Council will need to be satisfied that the change of use of all or part of the employment site would not jeopardise the provision of sufficient employment land across the district to meet the identified need.
- 10.6 Existing employment sites to be protected are identified on the Policies Map and listed in **Appendix 14**. These areas are home to many successful businesses that contribute to Uttlesford's economy. There will inevitably be a degree of change within these areas over the plan period as businesses form, expand, contract and close.

## Core Policy 45: Protection of Existing Employment Space

Existing employment areas as identified on the Policies Map and in **Appendix 14** will be safeguarded for offices, warehouses, workshops, industrial and complementary sui generis uses i.e. B2, B8, E(g) and sui generis use. Proposals which promote development or reuse of vacant sites located within existing employment areas for employment use will be supported subject to their degree of compliance with other relevant policies in the Plan.

Proposals that result in the loss of permanent jobs or employment floorspace on any site (not limited to safeguarded employment in paragraph 1 above) will only be permitted where:

1. There is evidence to show that the site/building has reached the end of its useful economic life for employment use by:
  - o demonstrating that there is no demand for the reuse of the building/site, following a minimum period of 12 months marketing for the existing employment use with a recognised commercial agent at a reasonable price reflecting typical local land values, and
  - o demonstrating that the physical adaption or reuse of the building/ site for employment use is uneconomic\* in commercial terms, and
2. The proposed alternative use would not conflict with any existing or potential other employment uses in the employment area in terms of environmental, traffic generation or any other planning matters. The following considerations are likely to assist in demonstrating this, including:
  - o that the proposed scheme provides better quality employment space allowing for mixed use is , and/ or
  - o that the application demonstrates a clear need for community facilities that would be met by the proposal, and/ or
  - o the existing use of the building/ site is unsuitable to continue as business use due to environmental considerations.

Any non-employment use that contributes or may contribute to making B2, B8, E(g) or Sui generis use unsustainable or unviable will not be permitted (unless supported by **Core Policy 47: Ancillary Uses on Existing or Allocated Employment Sites**).

There will be a presumption against the loss of any employment uses outside designated existing employment sites. Development (including change of use) resulting in the loss of employment uses will not be permitted unless:

- i. the loss of a small proportion of floorspace would facilitate the redevelopment and continuation of employment uses (within B and E(g) use class or sui generis research institutes) on the site and that the proposed redevelopment will modernise buildings that are out of date and do not meet business needs; or
- ii. the site is vacant and has been realistically marketed for a period of 12 months for employment use, including the option for potential modernisation for employment uses and no future occupiers have been found.

PPG Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 66-001-20190722, Revision date: 22 07 2019. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/effective-use-of-land>

## Alternative Uses for Allocated Employment Sites

- 10.7 The allocated sites in **Core Policy 4: Meeting Business and Employment Needs** and as set out in the Area Strategies chapters, are crucial to delivering the identified employment land needed over the plan period, however there is a need for flexibility and for the plan to react to changing economic conditions. Therefore, **Core Policy 46: Development at Allocated Employment Sites** clarifies the circumstances whereby alternative development could come forward. This is supported by NPPF Paragraphs 122 and 123 .

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### Core Policy 46: Development at Allocated Employment Sites

The strategic employment allocations, as listed in Core Policy 4: Meeting Business and Employment Needs and as set out in the Area Strategies are safeguarded for employment uses\*. Alternative uses will be considered if they provide ancillary supporting services (in accordance with Core Policy 47) or meet a need identified through a subsequent Local Plan Review, or exceptionally where a reassessment of the latest available district-wide Employment Land Review, demonstrates that these sites are no longer needed over the full plan period. All new strategic employment allocations made in Core Policy 4 are to be treated as though they are designated existing employment sites after completion and are covered by this policy.

\*Defined as use classes B2, B8 and E (g)

### Ancillary Uses on Allocated Employment Sites

- 10.8 Providing facilities ancillary to the main business uses on large employment sites can help to make them more attractive to incoming firms and improves the quality of the working environment for employees. Ancillary facilities also help employment sites to develop sustainably by reducing the need for traffic movements.
- 10.9 It is important that any ancillary uses are necessary to support the main employment uses as set out by Core Policy 47: Ancillary Uses on Existing or Allocated Employment Sites. The provision of larger scale retailing, such as food superstores and non-food retail warehouses, will not be supported.
- 10.10 Where there is sufficient demand, amenities for employees may include small-scale shops and cafés, a gymnasium and/ or early years childcare facilities.

72 NPPF, 2023. Available at:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1182995/NPPF\\_Sept\\_23.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1182995/NPPF_Sept_23.pdf)

## Core Policy 47: Ancillary Uses on Existing or Allocated Employment Sites

Proposals for uses other than E(g), B2 and B8 business uses on existing or allocated employment sites will only be permitted if the following criteria are satisfied:

1. the use is ancillary to the main business or employment function of the wider site, and
2. the use, either alone or combined with other existing or proposed uses, would not adversely affect the vitality and viability of any town centre or shopping centre (including local centres) or the social and community vitality of a nearby village.

Conditions may be imposed to limit the scale of the operation and to restrict the range of activities proposed or goods sold, where necessary, to ensure that the criteria set out above are met.

### Development on Unallocated Sites

- 10.11 The Local Plan 2041 sets out the employment allocations within Core Policy 4: Meeting Business and Employment Needs. There is a strong focus on our Key Settlements and their localities (Great Dunmow, Stansted Mountfitchet and Saffron Waldon) with less focus on the Local Rural Centres for new strategic employment provision, other than protecting existing sites. **Core Policy 48: New Employment Development on Unallocated Sites** complements our new allocations by supporting appropriate employment development on unallocated sites across the district, where there is a demonstrable need.
- 10.12 In the wider district, including outside the Key Settlements and Local Rural Centres and our Larger Villages, new employment activities can be accommodated with least impact on the landscape/ environment through the re-use, conversion or adaptation of suitable existing buildings. However, there is some flexibility for new employment buildings to come forward in the rural areas if there are no suitable existing buildings available for re-use, providing that the proposals meet other criteria set out in **Core Policy 21: Rural Diversification**.

## Core Policy 48: New Employment Development on Unallocated Sites

Proposals for new employment (Use Classes E (g), B2 or B8) will be supported on unallocated sites in or on the edge or, the built-up area of Key Settlements, Local Rural Centres and Larger Villages, where there are exceptional circumstances, provided that the benefits are not outweighed by any harmful impacts (through consideration of other policies within this plan), taking into account the following:

- i. a demonstrable need for the employment that cannot be accommodated on existing allocated sites
- ii. the effect on the amenity of nearby residents and businesses
- iii. the provision of safe site access for pedestrian and cyclists and for all types of vehicles likely to visit the sites, and measures to promote the use of sustainable modes of transport where possible, and
- iv. the scale, nature and appearance of the employment development on, and its relationship with, the settlement, its character and its landscape setting.

In Smaller Villages and the open countryside, the re-use, conversion, or adaptation of suitable existing buildings for employment will also be supported subject to criteria (i)- (iv) where applicable. Other proposals in Smaller Villages and the open countryside will be considered, provided that, in addition to criteria (i)-(iv) where applicable:

- v. the proposal cannot reasonably be accommodated on existing employment and identified as vacant or developable, and
- vi. it can be demonstrated that the proposal will benefit the local economy and will not undermine the delivery of the strategic employment allocations.

## Supporting Training & Skills

- 10.13 Economic growth creates opportunities for training and to develop the skills of residents in Uttlesford. The Council is keen to ensure that these opportunities are increasingly made available to residents.
- 10.14 Uttlesford's population is relatively well qualified, and the district is relatively affluent, however the success of the district is not equally distributed and there is room for improvement. Some key factors include:
- Uttlesford has a relatively large population aged 0-15, in comparison to the average for England and second largest in comparison to neighbouring Local Authority Districts<sup>73</sup>
  - 4.5% of the working age residents (aged 16-64) have no qualifications, which is lower than the average for the East of England and England
  - Uttlesford does not fall within the 40% most deprived areas in England, but there are pockets of relative deprivation in the southern part of the district
  - skills and education of the labour force are crucial to economic viability, flexibility and competitiveness of the Local Economy, and
  - Stansted Airport Employment & Skills Academy is located within Uttlesford and delivers courses, training and apprenticeships across many careers and industries in partnership with London Stansted Airport and Harlow College.

73 The Local Economy of Uttlesford – Socio-Economic Baseline(July 2021). SQW (p3-4)

- 10.15 The Council supports the creation of opportunities to provide apprenticeships or training thus raising skills and attainment and supporting people into higher paid employment, potentially connecting employers and employment opportunities to local schools, colleges, training organisations and voluntary services.
- 10.16 It is the Council's ambition that one new apprenticeship would be capable of being generated by every 2,500 sqm of employment development or every 100 residential units provided. Apprenticeships may be from the construction or end-use phase of the proposed development, or combination of the two.

### **Core Policy 49: Employment and Training**

The Council will support employment and training schemes to maximise local employment opportunities and help address skills deficits in the local population. Planning obligations will be used to ensure large-scale development proposals contribute to this aim by fulfilling the requirements set out below.

Applications for large-scale development, 100 dwellings or over 2500sqm, must include a site-specific Employment and Skills Plan (ESP) and the developer will be expected to agree to deliver and monitor the commitments secured in the ESP. The ESP should address, in detail, how the developer intends to deliver the following requirements:

- i. the number of apprenticeships
- ii. employment and training initiatives training and work experience for younger people, including those who are not in employment, training or education, and
- iii. best endeavours to maximise local labour, and
- iv. local procurement agreement – providing potential for local businesses to be included in any tender list.

## **Retail and Town and Local Centres**

### **Introduction**

- 10.17 The retail strategy is to provide a broad range of retail and other facilities in the town and local centres, maintain their roles and enhance the historic nature of the town centres which attracts people to visit them. The Uttlesford Retail Study Update (August 2023)<sup>74</sup> underpins the approach, identifying when retail needs arise and how these can be met sustainably without harm to the town and local centres. The Retail Study was undertaken after the coronavirus lockdowns and reflects how the retail sector has responded to the threats and challenges posed by restrictions on consumer movements.
- 10.18 The current Retail Study shows post pandemic growth in retail spending and a slight decline in online spending, The study also shows a movement in the retail vacancy rates over the past two years due to renewed acquisition activity and in some cases due to reductions in the overall footprint due to floorspace being repurposed to other uses. One of the positive impacts of the lockdowns was the resurgence of local spending due to travel restrictions and people working from home thereby leading consumers to shop and visit facilities closer to home. This has been a boost to local/ or neighbourhood centres, as well as smaller and independent stores.

<sup>74</sup> UDC, Uttlesford Retail Study Update2023. Available at: <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/article/4924/Local-Plan-evidence-and-background-studies>

## **Town and Local Rural Centres**

- 10.19 The Local Plan seeks to maintain the vibrant market towns of Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow and Stansted Mountfitchet and the six Local Rural Centres namely Takeley, Thaxted, Hatfield Heath, Elsenham, Newport and Great Chesterford as the main focus of new retail development as well ensuring that these centres play a vital and wider role in in the provision of facilities and services to the residents. The retail Study recommends a retail hierarchy that reflects the level of facilities and the role that Town and Local Centres play within the district, with Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow, Stansted Mountfitchet and Thaxted being designated as top tier ‘Town Centres’, and Takeley, Hatfield Heath, Elsenham, Newport and Great Chesterford as ‘Local Centres’.
- 10.20 The Council’s Economic Development team has and continues to work closely with local retailers to encourage retail recovery. For the three main market towns, Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow have town teams and Stansted Mountfitchet has an economic development working group. In 2022, the Economic Development Team launched the “Discover Uttlesford” marketing campaign to encourage recreation visitors to the district.
- 10.21 The Council’s economic team is also working 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 and a new Strategy is currently being updated. One objective of the Plan is to foster the development of existing town centres as vibrant locations for business and leisure. It has been identified that the pandemic has increased the pace of change towards online shopping that has heightened the impact on traditional commercial centres.
- 10.22 Policies in the Local Plan 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.

## **Loss of Shops and Other Facilities**

- 10.23 The Local Plan, by supporting appropriate development in our Key Settlements, Local Rural Centres and Larger Villages, will play a role in helping to support the vitality and viability of local shops and services and facilities, thus making an important contribution to the community and economic sustainability of our settlements. The existing level of provision in Small Villages will be retained and reused where possible.
- 10.24 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, and children’s nurseries.

- 10.25 Regulations allow for some changes in use without the need for planning permission. The Local Plan can only inform planning applications for a change of use in certain circumstances<sup>4</sup>. Where planning permission is required the Council will apply the tests in Core Policy 50: Retail and Main Town Centre Uses Hierarchy. 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.

## **Town and Local Centres Hierarchy and Retail Uses**

- 10.26 The Uttlesford Retail Study August 2023 provides an up-to-date assessment of retail need, occupancy, vacancy rates, issues and opportunities. The evidence recommends a town and local centres hierarchy which differs slightly from the settlement hierarchy in Core Policy<sup>3</sup>, with Thaxted providing a higher level and more strategic retail and main town centre uses role catering for a wider rural hinterland. An overview of the key issues and opportunities at the district's largest retail centres – the Town and Local Centres are as follows:

### **Town Centres:**

#### **Saffron Walden**

- 10.27 Saffron Walden is the primary retail and leisure destination in the district, providing a range of services and amenities not widely available within the smaller settlements. The majority of the Saffron Walden Town Centre is designated as a Conservation Area which is important to protect the historic and attractive centre, but might also act as a barrier to entry for new businesses. Most of the vacant units in the Town Centre were previously occupied by national multiple retailers. The Local Plan policies will seek to retain and encourage the location of shops and food and drink establishments within the Town Centre.

#### **Great Dunmow**

- 10.28 Great Dunmow is the second largest centre in the district comprising independent retailers and a limited number of national multiples. The convenience goods units in the town centre are limited to a Co-operative food store (725 sqm net), One Stop shop and smaller independent convenience units. The low vacancy rates within the Town Centre means that there is a lack of available space (by unit size). In order to maintain viability and vitality in the Town Centre the Local Plan will seek to maximize opportunities and will consider market demand where planning applications seek subdivisions or amalgamations.

#### **Stansted Mountfitchet**

- 10.29 Stansted Mountfitchet is the third largest centre in the district comprising two locations, which means the centre lacks cohesion and doesn't act as one. In total there are 6 convenience and 6 comparison units within the centre. The centre lacks potential development sites and available premises for future expansion. The Local Plan will seek to maintain the vitality of the town Centre by applying the sequential approach.

## **Thaxted**

- 10.30 Thaxted is located to the east of the district and is approximately six miles from Saffron Walden. The centre provides a range of services and is surrounded by predominantly residential dwellings. The majority of the units are located along Town Street and Watling Street. The focal point of the centre is the Guildhall. The health- check of Thaxted Local Centre indicates that the centre caters very well for its local catchment area. The range of goods offered is limited, but the household survey indicates that there is little discontent with any aspects of the centre.

## **Local Centres**

- 10.31 In addition to the four Town Centres, there are also five Local Centres in the district which fulfill an important more local role for the next tier of settlements and their rural hinterlands:

### **Elsenham**

- 10.32 Elsenham is a small village centre located approximately two miles north-east of Stansted Mountfitchet. It is located immediately adjacent to a double-roundabout which can make accessibility by car challenging. The centre has just four town centre units comprising a Tesco Express store, a post office, a hair salon and a take- away.

### **Great Chesterford**

- 10.33 Great Chesterford is the northern-most centre in the district and is located approximately four miles north of Saffron Walden. The centre has no recognisable retail centre and just two main town centre use units; a bakery and food hall and a public house.

### **Hatfield Heath**

- 10.34 Hatfield Heath is located to the far south of the district, around seven and a half miles south of Stansted Mountfitchet. It is the largest of the village centres and is home to 14 units in main town centre use. The centre is fully let and vibrant comprising 2 convenience goods units, 3 comparison goods units and 8 service goods units. There are a number of small restaurants and/or take-aways.
- 10.35 The centre faces on to the attractive heath, incorporating a church building, war memorial and cricket ground as well as public open space. Parking is on a crescent off the main Stortford Road.

### **Newport**

- 10.36 Newport is located approximately four miles south-west of Saffron Walden. It has 11 retail units, including one vacancy. Six of the units are in service uses, two are in convenience use (a small Nisa food store and a bakery) and two further units are in comparison goods use (a pharmacy and a home interiors shop).
- 10.37 The centre is located exclusively along the linear High Street is highly attractive with a number of historic features and Listed buildings. The centre is relatively lightly trafficked (in terms of retail patronage). Parking is largely on-street with high-quality public realm.

## Takeley

- 10.38 Takeley has eight units in main town centre use. It is located on a very busy cross-roads between Dunmow Road and Parsonage Road, making accessibility around the centre difficult. However, there are signal-controlled junctions in all directions and off-street parking is provided off Dunmow Road. The centre has low environmental quality being car-dominated and with little by way of greenery.
- 10.39 Takeley centre comprises two convenience units (Londis and a newsagents), a small pharmacy and five units in service uses (a public house, tyre store, dry cleaners and two take-aways).

## Town Centre Boundaries and Primary Shopping Areas

- 10.40 The NPPF states at paragraph 86<sup>75</sup> that planning policies should define a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long-term vitality and viability; and define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas, and make clear the range of uses permitted in such locations, as part of a positive strategy for the future of each centre.
- 10.41 The updated Retail Study (2023) has been used to define the boundaries used to guide planning applications for main town centre uses and to apply the sequential test.
- 10.42 The town centres of Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow, Stansted Mountfitchet and Thaxted the five local centres of Elsenham, Great Chesterford, Hatfield Heath, Newport and Takeley are identified on the Policies Map and **Appendix 15**. In relation to Stansted Mountfitchet, the following policy will apply to both Cambridge Road and Lower Street centres. For the purposes of this policy, main 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 Centres Include Primary Shopping Areas

- 10.43 Primary Shopping Areas 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. The remainder of the town centre area boundaries (beyond the defined Primary Shopping Areas) provide a mix of main town centre uses such as restaurants, commercial services and leisure facilities which support the centre as a whole.
- 10.44 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 located within a primary shopping area any ground floor proposal that would amount to a material change of use away from Class E should be supported by evidence that a Class E use has been marketed unsuccessfully for a period of time. In order to consolidate the provision of retail floorspace in Primary Shopping Areas and effectively apply the sequential test the Council will use planning conditions to control the location of new retail floorspace within Class E.

75 NPPF, 2023. Available at:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1182995/NPPF\\_Sept\\_23.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1182995/NPPF_Sept_23.pdf)

- 10.45 Meanwhile uses can further support town centres by allowing occupiers to temporarily occupy vacant units and test new business concepts, pop-up stores and event spaces where they support the vitality and viability of the town centre. Such uses will be supported by the Council.
- 10.46 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. **Core Policy 50: Retail and Main Town Centre Uses Hierarchy** below ensures that ground floor level shops are not lost to residential uses.

### **Core Policy 50: Retail and Main Town Centre Uses Hierarchy**

The Council will promote the continued role and function of its town and local centres to positively contribute towards their viability, vitality, character and public realm. The hierarchy of centres in the district is:

- Town Centres: Great Dunmow, Saffron Walden, Stansted Mountfitchet and Thaxted
- Local Centres: Elsenham, Great Chesterford, Hatfield Heath, Newport and Takeley.

All Town and Local Centres have designated Town Centre Boundaries, whilst only the Town Centres have designated Primary Shopping Areas. The boundaries of the Town and Local Centres' and their respective primary Shopping Areas (where appropriate) are defined on the Policies Map and by **Appendix 15**.

To ensure the long-term vitality and viability of the Town Centres, the Council will apply a 'town centre first' approach to retail, services and other main town centre uses in accordance with the established hierarchy of centres. The Council will use planning conditions to assist with the application of the town centre first approach in the context of Class E flexibilities introduced by the Use Classes Order.

Retail and other 'Main Town Centre Uses' will be directed towards these centres. Where such uses are proposed outside these centres the Council will apply the sequential approach as set out in the NPPF.

Where planning permission is required for any retail or leisure proposal outside these centres, they will be subject to an impact assessment, appropriate to the use. In Uttlesford the threshold for such an impact assessment is over 1000 sqm (gross).

The Council will support the provision of new local centres containing a small number of shops of limited size with the allocated strategic housing sites set out in this Local Plan and as specified within the Development Site Templates (**Appendices 2 to 4**).

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## **Core Policy 50: Retail and Main Town Centre Uses Hierarchy**

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The Council will support proposals for new small shops or extensions to existing shops within or adjacent to existing settlements that are required to serve local needs.

In locations 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 18 months; or
- ii. the facility is not financially viable; or
- iii. the replacement land use offers compelling benefits which outweigh the loss.

Proposals for development that affects the design of a shopfront will need to ensure consistency with the Uttlesford Shopfront Design Guide.

### **Primary Shopping Areas**

Where planning permission is required, proposals resulting in the loss of Main Town Centre Uses\* at ground floor level within a Primary Shopping Area must demonstrate that:

- i. the unit has been proactively and appropriately marketed for at least 12 months and it has been demonstrated that there is no longer a realistic prospect of the unit being used for E Class Uses in the foreseeable future
- ii. the proposal meets the needs of residents within the local neighbourhood, and
- iii. the proposals will not have an adverse impact on the vitality and viability of the centre as a whole.

Notwithstanding the flexibilities allowed under Class E of the Use Classes Order the Council will use planning conditions where appropriate to support the availability of retail floorspace within the Primary Shopping Area, and limit new floorspace in out of centre locations.

The Council will support main town centre uses as meanwhile uses on a temporary basis within Primary Shopping Areas. Such uses would be controlled by condition as a temporary use (up to 18 months) so as to not permanently lose retail floorspace unnecessarily without justification.

\* Defined using the NPPF definition as retail development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres); leisure, entertainment and more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, nightclubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres and bingo halls); offices; and arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities).

## Hot Food Takeaways

- 10.47 We are committed to improving health and well-being outcomes for residents, and to reduce health inequalities. One of the challenges we face in promoting healthy eating is the availability of foods high in fat, salt and sugar in local neighbourhoods, including the prevalence of hot food takeaways in some areas. We will therefore support opportunities for communities to access a wider choice of healthier food options and resist the proliferation of particular types of hot food takeaways in inappropriate locations, such as adjacent to schools and playgrounds.
- 10.48 As 'Sui Generis' uses Hot Food Takeaways also have the potential to cause nuisance to nearby residents due to general activity, particularly during the late evening, cooking odours, increased traffic movements and litter.
- 10.49 To minimise the likelihood of disturbance, hot food takeaways will be resisted in predominantly residential areas unless the premises are situated within a neighbourhood shopping centre or other commercial frontage. Even in those situations, permission may be refused if an existing residential property is likely to experience nuisance. In predominantly residential areas, we will seek to impose planning conditions to limit the late-night opening hours of hot food takeaways.

### Development Policy 6: Hot Food Takeaways

Proposals for 'sui generis' hot food takeaways will only be permitted where supported by a Health Impact Assessment and provided they:

- i. would not result in significant harm to the amenity of local residents, or highway safety
- ii. would not result in harmful cumulative impacts because of any existing or consented outlets in the immediate vicinity, and
- iii. the proposal is not located within a five-minute walk of a school or playground, unless within an established local shopping centre.

Where harmful impacts are predicted planning permission will either be refused or mitigated through planning conditions relating to the variety of food sold (enabling healthier choices) and hours of operation.

### New Shops or Cafes in Smaller Settlements

- 10.50 Where there is interest in opening a new shop or café within or adjoining a settlement 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, based on the intended operator, location and the scale of the shop. If there are existing shops within this catchment area, an impact assessment of the effect on these shops will be required, including likely trade diversion.
- 10.51 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 applies to settlements without a defined centre.

## Development Policy 7: New Shops or Cafes in Smaller Settlements

The Council will support proposals for new small shops or extensions to existing shops within or adjacent to existing settlements that are required to serve local needs where the following criteria are met:

- i. the shop would be of a size appropriate to the settlement the site would be well related to the settlement, with the potential to reduce the need to travel by car, and
- ii. there would be no significant adverse impact on the character and amenity of the area including visual intrusion, noise and traffic generation.

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

## Tourism and the Visitor Economy

- 10.52 The district's visitor economy represents the second most important income strand for the district after retail spending. The town centres and villages contain several regionally and nationally important attractions. The charming Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow and Stansted Mountfitchet town centres are a draw to many visitors and shoppers alike. They both offer a range of independent stores alongside cafes and service businesses. The Local Plan seeks to harness these opportunities by supporting the visitor economy through encouraging provision of leisure facilities, increased footfall in town/local centres, visits, day and overnight stays.
- 10.53 In the rural areas accommodation including hotels, Bed and Breakfast, Self-catering, Country Inns and camping will be supported in line with **Core Policy 51** below.
- 10.54 In addition, Stansted Airport is an important draw to the area for tourists and visitors passing through. Applications for other types of development relating to Stansted Airport are dealt with under **Core Policy 11**.

## Core Policy 51: Tourism and the Visitor Economy

The Council encourages new development to advance tourism and the visitor economy for leisure and business purposes. Proposals will be supported as follows:

- i. within the built-up areas of the Key Settlements and Local Rural Centres – larger scale developments including conference facilities, museums, heritage centres, hotels, guest houses and associated facilities for visitors
  - ii. within the built-up areas of the Larger and Smaller Villages - smaller and proportionately scaled developments that are in keeping with the character of the settlement, including museums, heritage centres, hotels, guest houses, self-catering accommodation and associated facilities for visitors
  - iii. at Stansted Airport and Chesterford Research Park – ancillary business hotel and conference facilities, and
  - iv. at service areas on the main transport corridors, hotel accommodation.
- (continued over page)

## **Core Policy 51: Tourism and the Visitor Economy**

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Outside the above locations, small-scale development to support the visitor economy, including farm diversification and equine development, will be supported provided that proposals are in keeping with the scape and character of the locality and which would not adversely affect heritage assets or their setting. Larger developments will only be supported in exceptional circumstances, for example to sensitively re-use a historic building, or to proportionally support or enhance enjoyment of a significant and established visitor attraction where this cannot reasonably be achieved from a town or village location.

## **Development Policy 8: Tourist Accommodation**

### **Self-Catering Accommodation:**

Proposals for self-catering accommodation will only be permitted where they:

- i. are provided through the conservation and conversion of existing buildings, including agricultural buildings, or
- ii. are appropriately located within the existing built form of settlements.

Exceptionally, proposals for new-build, short-stay, self-catering units that are directly associated on-site with a tourist attraction, and required to sustain the viability of the tourist attraction, may be acceptable.

### **Removal of Occupancy Conditions – Holiday Lets:**

Applications for the removal of occupancy conditions on holiday accommodation that has been built or converted for that purpose outside Development Boundaries will not be permitted other than in exceptional circumstances.