

NPPF DECISION TESTS: WHY GLADMAN'S CURRENT OUTLINE SUBMISSION SHOULD BE REFUSED

UTT/26/1635/OP | Land at The Broadway near Church End, Great Dunmow

Final submission document v15 — 11 August 2026

Decision position

This paper tests the submitted Gladman application against the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It does not rely on an aspirational Local Plan transport arrangement. The question is whether the material actually submitted for this 850-home outline proposal supplies enough reliable evidence for the Council to decide that it is safe, sustainable and acceptable now.

NPPF paragraphs 43 and 44 require fundamental questions to be addressed early and the right information to be available for a good decision. Outline permission can leave genuine design detail for later; it cannot leave the evidence needed to decide the principle of a development unresolved.

1. The transport evidence is incomplete and National Highways cannot yet assess the strategic impact

NPPF test: Paragraphs 43-44 require the fundamental issues and information needed for a good decision to be addressed early. Paragraphs 109, 115 and 118 require transport impacts to be understood, addressed and supported by an assessment capable of identifying likely effects.

National Highways has made a holding objection. It says the Transport Assessment Addendum is missing, the strategic modelling cannot yet be checked, and the Council should not determine the application before 2 October 2026. It cannot conclude that the development would avoid an adverse effect on the safe and efficient operation of the A120 strategic road network. This is not a minor post-permission detail: the required transport evidence has not been supplied. (National Highways response, pp. 3-4.)

2. Gladman has not demonstrated that its proposed construction-HGV route is safe for all users

NPPF test: Paragraph 115(b) requires safe and suitable access to the site for all users. Paragraph 115(d) requires significant transport impacts to be mitigated to an acceptable degree. Paragraph 117 requires safe, secure and attractive places, including access for service and emergency vehicles.

Gladman identifies St Edmunds Lane as the main construction-HGV route and forecasts up to 100 construction delivery vehicles per day: 200 two-way movements, about 80% of them HGVs. Its proposed parking restriction leaves only 5.5 metres of carriageway. A 32-tonne tipper lorry has an operational width of about 3.2 metres including mirrors; two such vehicles require about 6.4 metres before any clearance is allowed for passing, kerbs, lamp columns, parked vehicles or people using the footway. Gladman has not demonstrated how two-way HGV movements will operate safely on this residential street, nor how the necessary removal of on-street parking would work in practice. A proposal to relocate parked vehicles is not a vehicle-swept-path assessment, a pedestrian-safety assessment or a safe construction-routing plan. (ES Chapter 10: Traffic and Transport, construction-traffic assessment; Framework Travel Plan, pp. 18-19, paras. 2.28-2.34.)

3. Gladman has not demonstrated how a bus service can actually reach and serve the whole site

NPPF test: Paragraph 110 requires significant development to offer a genuine choice of transport modes. Paragraphs 115(a), 117(a)-(b) and 118 require priority for sustainable transport, high-quality public transport, accessibility for disabled people and an assessment of likely impacts.

Gladman identifies only one possible direct arrangement: a new or diverted service entering the northern parcel from The Broadway through the proposed access junctions. Its own Travel Plan says a bus would not enter the southern parcel because its roads are cul-de-sacs. The alternative routes mentioned elsewhere are not a solution: St Edmunds Lane is proposed to retain only 5.5 metres of carriageway, although Gladman acknowledges 6.75 metres is required for a bus route; and use of Church End Bridge remains dependent on an unresolved load assessment and possible future works. There is therefore no demonstrated bus route that safely serves the whole development. The exact route is still being discussed with Essex County Council and cannot yet be quantified. No operator, route, stops, frequency, first and last journey, fare, accessibility standard or service from first occupation is secured. The NPPF test is not met by saying a bus might be arranged later. (Framework Travel Plan, pp. 18-21, 39 and 44, paras. 2.28-2.40, 3.66 and 4.11.) Active Travel England's formal response confirms that the two regular-service bus stops are more than one kilometre from the centre of the site, only one walking route is lit, there is no convenient fully

accessible and lit cycle route, and the timing and delivery of the mobility hub remain unclear. Conditional approval from Active Travel England does not remove those recorded weaknesses; any relied-upon service and route must be specified, funded and operating from first occupation. (Active Travel England response 4787957, pp. 2-3.)

4. Groundwater, drainage and the identified private spring supply have not been conclusively protected

NPPF test: Paragraphs 44, 163, 170, 181 and 182 require the Council to have the information needed to assess climate and flood consequences, ensure development is safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and secure effective SuDS and lifetime maintenance.

Gladman's own Water Environment chapter records a domestic private water supply from a spring about 200 metres north-west of the site. It states that the proposal is very unlikely to affect that supply, but does not provide the site-specific hydrogeological monitoring, source-protection assessment or enforceable safeguards needed to demonstrate that conclusion. The Flood Risk Assessment proposes discharge to existing ditch watercourses and relies on future inspection, clearance and maintenance of culverts and drainage features. The Council must be satisfied that groundwater, flow paths, ditches, culverts and the spring supply are protected before permission, not assume that the system will work once the site is built. (ES Chapter 11, p. 5, para. 11.18; Flood Risk Assessment, drainage strategy paras. 2.4-2.5 and maintenance schedule.)

4A. The combined drainage effect and duration of flooding have not been modelled

NPPF test: Paragraphs 163, 170, 181 and 182 require development to be safe for its lifetime, avoid increasing flood risk elsewhere, address cumulative effects and provide effective SuDS with lifetime maintenance.

Attenuation ponds do not remove water from the Chelmer catchment. They store runoff and release it over a longer period through drains, culverts, ditches and watercourses. Across development around Tesco, Woodlands Park, Great Dunmow Grange and Broadway, delayed discharges may overlap, prolong high levels and leave less recovery time before another storm. The Council needs a combined model covering outfalls, discharge rates, storage, consecutive storms, saturation, exceedance and maintenance—not separate theoretical peak-rate calculations alone.

5. Water-supply and wastewater capacity have not been demonstrated

NPPF test: Paragraph 44 requires the information needed for a good decision. Paragraphs 56-58 allow conditions and obligations only where they are necessary, directly related, enforceable and fairly related in scale and kind.

The Environment Agency states that the submitted material does not confirm sufficient potable-water capacity for the proposal or identify the reinforcement, phasing or other measures that may be required. It records that a pre-development enquiry remains to be submitted. Separately, Anglian Water has confirmed that Great Dunmow Water Recycling Centre currently lacks capacity for additional flows from new development. It identifies a growth scheme, but says that scheme is being reviewed and re-issued because its forecast population-equivalent, flow and sanitary parameters have changed. Anglian Water recommends a condition preventing occupation until it gives written confirmation that sufficient treatment headroom exists. Gladman has not submitted a development-specific wastewater-capacity assessment, a funded works programme, a delivery timetable, or an enforceable occupation trigger that secures this headroom for 850 homes. The Council cannot assume that a future, still-revised growth scheme will be in place when residents need it. (Environment Agency response, p. 6; Anglian Water EIR response 2291, 30 June 2026, items 2b-3.)

The urgency is demonstrated by current conditions at Great Dunmow Grange, approved for 790 homes. Residents have reported months of severely reduced pressure, including a trickle or no water. Affinity Water said extensive development, ongoing construction and hot weather had strained demand. Great Dunmow Town Council has demanded assurance that the wider network is resilient enough for continuing growth and further large schemes in the planning pipeline. Another 850 homes cannot be approved without a published, development-specific and cumulative pressure and capacity assessment, funded reinforcement programme and enforceable occupation controls protecting existing residents. (BBC News, 11 August 2026.)

6. Gladman has not published the full and current ecological evidence needed to test its case, and the Environment Agency maintains a holding objection

NPPF test: Paragraphs 43-44 require the information needed for a good decision to be available at the decision stage. Paragraphs 187 and 193 require planning decisions to protect and enhance the natural environment, minimise impacts on biodiversity and secure measurable gains where relevant.

Gladman's Ecological Impact Assessment was prepared by CSA Environmental for this Broadway project (CSA/7444/03, June 2026). CSA commissioned the 209-page Essex Recorders Partnership / Essex Field Club datasearch EFC6965 (31 January / 7 February 2025) for the project land and its 2 km buffer. The report says that the Recorder Partnership data are updated regularly and will become out of date; where used after six months, the user

must contact the Partnership to confirm whether new records exist. Gladman used the February 2025 search for a June 2026 submission but has provided neither an updated search nor written confirmation that it checked for new records. The terms also require a search used to support a planning application to be placed in the public domain in full, as the supplied searchable PDF and without alteration or redaction. It is not among the published application documents: the applicant's Natural Heritage Appendix G contains applicant-produced desk-study maps, not the full record schedules, methods, dates, limitations and recommendations. Gladman must obtain a current datasearch, review and update its ecological conclusions against it, and publish the full report before determination. This is material because the Environment Agency says the great crested newt evidence is inconclusive: ponds were inaccessible and eDNA results indeterminate. It requires further survey or precautionary mitigation, more information on culverting and open-water habitat, and a habitat management and monitoring plan. Its holding objection remains. The Council cannot decide that ecology has been resolved while the applicant has withheld the full commissioned datasearch, relied on a search beyond its stated six-month update point without evidenced refresh, and the statutory environmental regulator still requires further work. (Environment Agency response, pp. 1-3; EFC6965, pp. 1, 3-4; CSA/7444/03, June 2026.) Essex Wildlife Trust separately maintains a formal holding objection and requires an updated botanical survey, proper assessment of ditches and hedgerows, compliance with the Hedgerow Regulations and a complete evidence base for mitigation and Biodiversity Net Gain. The Council therefore has two formal ecological holding objections that remain unresolved. (Essex Wildlife Trust response 4771985.)

The need for targeted river-corridor assessment is reinforced by a resident video recording two otters entering the River Chelmer beside Great Dunmow churchyard on 25 April 2023 and by three otter records in the Essex Field Club search. This shows otter use of the nearby connected corridor. Gladman must provide current competent surveys of the application site, riverbanks, ditches, culverts, riparian vegetation and crossing points, with assessment of disturbance, lighting, habitat fragmentation, drainage, access, mitigation and monitoring. Residents do not have to record an otter inside the red line before that assessment is required.

7. Stansted Airport maintains a holding objection to the proposed ponds, reed beds and SuDS design

NPPF test: Paragraphs 187 and 193 require decisions to take account of likely effects on the natural environment and to minimise biodiversity harm. They cannot justify a design whose environmental features remain unresolved because they create a separate, material safety risk.

Stansted Airport's safeguarding authority has issued a holding objection. It says that the submitted landscape, biodiversity-net-gain and SuDS proposals include ponds, permanently or seasonally wet basins, reed beds, swales, pocket wetlands and micro-pools that could attract hazardous birds. It requires design change or a Bird Hazard Management Plan, and says that the application should carry appropriate lighting controls and aviation safeguards. The application must resolve the conflict between the proposed water-based landscape design and airport safety before permission is granted. (Aerodrome Safeguarding response, pp. 1-2.)

8. A Planning Inspector has already rejected housing on part of this exact site for serious landscape harm

NPPF test: Paragraph 187 requires decisions to protect and enhance valued landscapes and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Paragraphs 207-208 require the significance of affected heritage assets and their setting to be described and assessed. Paragraphs 212-213 require great weight to conservation and clear and convincing justification for harm to designated heritage assets.

The application permits buildings up to 12 metres high across this open valley setting. Buildings of that height, in the numbers proposed and with their combined mass, would be highly prominent in views from Church End, Beaumont Hill, St Mary's Church and surrounding public viewpoints. They would create a major new built presence in the landscape, not an unobtrusive extension of Great Dunmow. Proposed landscaping cannot be treated as an answer to the underlying harm caused by the height, scale and mass of the development. In 2019 the Planning Inspector dismissed an appeal for up to 50 homes on the field east of Bigods Lane and north of The Broadway. That former appeal site is wholly inside the present application boundary. The Inspector found that the field formed part of the attractive Chelmer Valley landscape, that housing would have a strong urbanising effect on an important approach to Church End and Great Dunmow, and that screening would not integrate the development satisfactorily. Gladman's current heritage material records the former application and dismissal, but does not address the Inspector's site-specific reasoning. The present proposal is seventeen times larger, and Gladman's own landscape assessment records significant adverse effects during construction, at year one and after 15 years. Its heritage and geophysical evidence identifies effects on the setting of St Mary's Church, the Conservation Area and potential prehistoric, Romano-British and medieval archaeology. The Council must require a direct, current-policy response to the Inspector's findings and a proper assessment of this scale of harm before it can conclude that an 850-home scheme is acceptable. (Appeal Decision APP/C1570/W/19/3235257, paras. 6-13 and 29; ES Chapter 8, pp. 14-17 and 28-29; ES Chapter 7, pp. 19-20, 25-27 and 33-34.)

Gladman's own assessment assumes that its proposed planting and open-space mitigation has matured for 15 years. Even on that assumption, it says significant adverse effects will remain on six receptors: the arable farmland on the site; the landscape character of the site; views from the section of the B1057 The Broadway running through the site; views from the section of public footpath FP/21/18 running through the site; views from public footpath FP/82/18; and views from Broadway Cottage. The effect at Broadway Cottage is still assessed as substantial to moderate and significant after 15 years. Gladman also predicts moderate, significant adverse cumulative effects for users of the B1008 and sequential views from FP/21/18 when this proposal is considered with the River Chelmer/B1008 allocation. These are the applicant's own long-term conclusions after its mitigation has supposedly established, not an objection based only on the construction period or immature planting. (ES Chapter 8, paras. 8.116-8.140 and Table 8.2, PDF pp. 24-29; cumulative effects paras. 8.141-8.145, PDF p. 30.)

8A. Uttlesford also refused 115 homes on overlapping southern land

On 20 February 2020 Uttlesford refused UTT/19/1802/OP for up to 115 homes on overlapping southern Broadway land. The refusal notice found that urbanisation of this rural area would harm the setting of Church End Conservation Area, Grade I St Mary's Church and Grade II Crouches. The Council's conservation adviser said the open agricultural setting explains Church End's farming origins and that the scheme would replace the experience of St Mary's in that setting with a housing estate. Its landscape adviser described the land as an integral part of the broad, bucolic sweep on the approach to Church End and found significant detrimental landscape impact. (Refusal notice 3338302, p. 2; Conservation Advice 3294037, pp. 1-2; Landscape Comments 3299326, p. 1.)

The adopted 2026 Local Plan changes the policy context that applied in 2020, but it does not erase the Council's exact-site evidence. Gladman's current Planning Statement accepts that the development would harm Crouches Farm, St Mary's Church and the Great Dunmow Conservation Area. This is permanent heritage harm caused by the proposal and must be assessed with the damage to Church End's historic setting, the Chelmer Valley landscape and the cumulative effect of development across the site. A focused review found no express reference to UTT/19/1802/OP or UTT/19/0921/SCO in the current main Planning Statement, Cultural Heritage chapter or Landscape chapter. (Planning Statement 4764353, p. 31; controlled source review dated 10 August 2026.)

9. The housing mix, resulting population and travel demand have not been demonstrated

NPPF test: Paragraphs 43-44 require the information needed for a good decision. Paragraphs 109-110 and 115 require the likely transport consequences of significant development, and the availability of real transport choices, to be assessed before permission is granted.

Gladman seeks permission for up to 850 dwellings but has not fixed the dwelling-size or bedroom mix on which population, school places, healthcare demand, parking, traffic and public-transport demand would depend. The claimed population and trip effects therefore cannot be tested against a defined development. An outline application may reserve design detail; it cannot reserve the basic scale of demand needed to decide whether the proposed infrastructure and transport arrangements are adequate. The applicant must provide a transparent housing mix and a corresponding population, employment-travel and infrastructure assessment before determination.

10. Essential infrastructure is promised but not shown to be deliverable when residents need it

NPPF test: Paragraphs 43-44 require the Council to have the information needed for a good decision. Paragraphs 56-58 permit conditions and obligations only where they are necessary, directly related, enforceable and fairly related in scale and kind.

The outline scheme refers to a primary school, local centre, sports facilities, public open space and other infrastructure, but the current submission does not demonstrate a completed, enforceable package identifying what will be provided, who will fund it, who will own and maintain it, and the occupation trigger by which it must be available. This is particularly important where the proposal also relies on future bus provision, water works, drainage maintenance and active-travel links. The Council cannot grant permission on a list of future aspirations. It must know the delivery mechanism and timing now, or refuse the application. Essex County Council Education says the required Land Compliance Study for the proposed school site is missing and requires the full report and assessment. The Council cannot give weight to the promise of a school site until its suitability and deliverability are demonstrated. (ECC Education response 4786612.)

10A. Healthcare floorspace and the local centre do not guarantee additional services

NPPF test: Paragraphs 96-101 require decisions to support healthy and safe communities and plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces and community services.

An existing GP practice could occupy or relocate to the proposed facility without adding doctors, nurses or appointments. Planning weight should be given only to additional funded clinical posts, appointment capacity, opening hours and services secured by delivery and occupation triggers, with no loss of existing Great Dunmow provision. Likewise, an undefined local centre does not secure a pub, restaurant or evening venue. Residents will

continue to drive into Great Dunmow, while the Co-op customer car park cannot be treated as spare public capacity. Current evening, weekend and cumulative town-centre parking demand must be assessed.

11. The agricultural-land evidence promised by Gladman has not been published

NPPF test: Paragraphs 180 and 187 require decisions to recognise the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land and the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

Gladman's Planning Statement says an Agricultural Land Quality Report was submitted, but no identifiable report is published in the application corpus. The approximately 69-hectare site is mainly arable farmland. Without the promised report or an adequate detailed field survey, the Council cannot determine the proportions of Grades 2, 3a and 3b, quantify the loss of best and most versatile land, or assess soil protection and reuse. That evidence must be published and assessed before determination.

Requested decision

On the material currently submitted, the Council cannot robustly conclude that Gladman's 850-home outline proposal meets the NPPF decision tests above. The outstanding matters are fundamental: strategic-road impacts, safe local access, a real public-transport service, drainage and groundwater protection, water and wastewater-treatment capacity, ecology, airport safeguarding, landscape, heritage and archaeology. They are not details that can simply be deferred to reserved matters.

The application should be refused unless Gladman supplies a complete, site-specific and enforceable evidence package that resolves each of these tests. Any later proposal must be assessed on the evidence actually submitted, rather than on an assumption that future funding, future design work or future operator discussions will solve the identified failures.

Source control

NPPF: December 2024, amended 7 February 2025, paragraphs 43-44, 56-58, 109-110, 115, 117-118, 163, 170, 181-182, 187, 193 and 207-213. Application: UTT/26/1635/OP. Gladman/Iceni Framework Travel Plan (June 2026), pp. 18-21, 39 and 44; ES Chapter 11: Water Environment, p. 5; Flood Risk Assessment; ES Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual Effects, paras. 8.116-8.145 and Table 8.2, PDF pp. 24-30; ES Chapter 7: Cultural Heritage. Anglian Water EIR response 2291 (30 June 2026), items 2b-3. Appeal Decision APP/C1570/W/19/3235257 (2 December 2019), paras. 6-13 and 29. Statutory and formal consultees: National Highways response 4787951; Active Travel England response 4787957; Environment Agency response 4786541; Essex Wildlife Trust response 4771985; ECC Education response 4786612; Aerodrome Safeguarding response 4780295. Ecology: Essex Recorders Partnership / Essex Field Club EFC6965 (31 January 2025), commissioned by CSA Environmental for the Broadway project, pp. 1 and 3. The separate EFC4014 Lime Tree Hill report (3 June 2020) is independent historical context, not Gladman's commissioned evidence. The final portal corpus was refreshed and hash-verified on 11 August 2026. Historic Broadway applications: UTT/19/0921/SCO, Screening Opinions 2818920 pp. 2-3 and 2844356 p. 1; UTT/19/1802/OP, Refusal Notice 3338302 p. 2, Conservation Advice 3294037 pp. 1-2, Landscape Comments 3299326 p. 1 and Delegated Officer Report 3334175 pp. 14-15. Current local water-pressure evidence: BBC News, 'Woman buys back-up bottles due to water trickle', 11 August 2026. Otter evidence: resident video dated 25 April 2023 and Essex Field Club report EFC6965, PDF page 59.