

The Town Hall
Market Street
Saffron Walden
CB10 1HR

T: (01799) 516501



5 October 2026

Via email Cllr Peter Harris – Leader of the Council

Dear Cllr Harris

Essex County Council Review Net Zero and Climate Action

I write on behalf of Saffron Walden Town Council (SWTC), regarding the Essex County Council report titled: Review Net Zero and Climate Action, dated 3 August 2026.

SWTC is dismayed to read that ECC is removing its net zero and greenhouse gas reduction from its policies and strongly objects to this resolution. Removal of these policies is contrary to the 17 United Nation Sustainability Goals, the 2008 Climate Change Act and the Government's Seventh Carbon Budget.

The ECC report acknowledges (5.4):

“by taking this decision, there is a risk that ECC may reduce active travel planning with schools, which promotes safe walking, cycling, and wheeling, which not only keeps our children safe but also helps them reach their 60 minutes of activity per day, reduces local traffic congestion, and lowers emissions around school gates. As well as contributing to increasing physical activity, reducing obesity and improving air quality, Essex also has higher rates of road traffic accidents, safe active travel routes reduce the number of cars on the road and reduce the likelihood of this.

The government has just launched its ‘active travel initiative’ which sets a national goal for 55% of short trips in towns to be walked, wheeled, or cycled by 2035, and for 60% of children to travel actively to school. Any reduction in our ability to deliver active travel planning will have a negative impact on us being able to meet national government targets.”

This is unacceptable. Removing these policies jeopardises the wellbeing of future generations, while also putting current residents at greater risk by undermining highway safety measures and safe active travel routes.

Policy removal also affects the delivery of the Uttlesford Local Plan and Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan – both identify Essex Highways as a key partner in delivery of environmental and ecological schemes as well as sustainable highway infrastructure. Withdrawing climate commitments, undermines the need for evidence and support from the Highway Authority.

SWTC therefore urges Essex County Council to reconsider and reverse this decision, retain clear net zero and greenhouse-gas reduction commitments, and maintain sufficient officer capacity and funding to deliver them.

Should the decision not be reversed – SWTC requests a clear written explanation as to how ECC will continue to deliver and support its responsibilities, thus supporting District and Parish Councils in the delivery of Local and Neighbourhood Plans and policies.

Yours sincerely

Saffron Walden Town Council

Copy of correspondence sent via email to Essex County Council:

Councillor Russell Quirk - Deputy Leader of the Council

Cllr Paul Gadd - Saffron Walden Member

Samantha Kennedy – Director, Environment and Climate Action