

**REPRESENTATION ON PLANNING APPLICATION UTT/1522/12/FUL  
(STANSTED) FOR COMMERCIAL BUILDING, APARTMENTS & HEALTH  
CENTRE, LOWER STREET, STANSTED**

Dear Members

I apologize that I am away this week and so am unable to be at your meeting.

I wish to put forward reasons why I believe you should defer a decision on this application.

I attended a training session held immediately before your meeting in September. This was given by an officer of the council.

A bullet from one of the slides pointed out that officers spend a long time studying planning applications. The implication was that your judgment on the merits of an application cannot, therefore, be superior and so you should not often overrule the opinion of planning officers.

A second bullet in the presentation said that the views of parish councils are no more significant in planning than any other organisation or individual that has been consulted. It was pointed out that many parish councils are not elected. The implication was that their views as democratic representatives should not be taken over seriously.

I wish to show how inappropriate and misleading both these points are regarding this planning application for a major development in Lower Street, Stansted.

I first raised concern about inadequate car parking prior to and at the planning committee meeting on 30th May 2012. At this meeting you refused the first application for this scheme. I subsequently wrote to the committee chairman on August 19<sup>th</sup> exhorting her to ensure that the need for car parking would be rigorously evaluated with any revised application. Parking had not previously been appraised. I received no response to my email.

One of the reasons for your refusal of the first application was the size of the development. A natural consequence of the bulk and size of a development is its demand for car parking. Yet as late as three weeks ago your officers were telling me that parking was not part of the application and so was not an issue that needed to be addressed by them in their report to you.

I disagree. I am disturbed by this approach. I do not think that the amount of time your officers spend looking at an application necessarily means that their views are superior to yours. If they have not spent time addressing such fundamental factors as the need for parking by users of a development and its impact on other nearby businesses and the public, the advice you receive is incomplete.

Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council was also dissatisfied with this omission and, as you know, has recently commissioned a professional study.

The report says that “we are concerned that the proposed parking arrangements will not meet the needs of uses within the proposed building upon completion and into the future and have a serious impact on users of the existing public car park and the businesses presently served by it”. No advice could be starker than that.

The latest plan for parking arrangements, in what is the district council’s public car park, is not included in the application papers and has not been consulted upon. It has not been professionally appraised by anyone apart from the parish council’s consultant.

I think it is fair to say that Stansted’s elected parish council has played a valuable role in the planning process on this application. I urge the district’s planning committee to pay careful regard to what it is saying.

Your officers’ report at section 11.1 says if the freehold owner fails to enter into a legal obligation for parking improvements that are acceptable in terms of good quality design, the number and size of parking spaces, etc., then officers may refuse the application.

But no one has yet defined what would be acceptable and what would not be acceptable. The committee report is silent. Should not car parking needs be assessed so you can be informed before you make a decision?

I urge the committee to defer a decision until there has been a thorough assessment of car parking arrangements. The views of the parish council’s consultant, Essex Highways, local business and the public on car parking arrangements should be taken into account. The district council, as the owner and provider of this public car park, should declare whether it is able to give over this important amenity to the needs of this development.

**Please do not approve this application on Wednesday (this) afternoon! Ask for it to be fully and properly evaluated. Please defer a decision.**

**Cllr Alan Dean, Stansted Mountfitchet, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2012**