

## **ELMS FARM, STANSTED PLANNING APPLICATION: PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING 6 JUNE 2013. REPRESENTATION BY COUNCILLOR ALAN DEAN**

### **Public access to Stansted Park**

Public access to Stansted Park has been an aspiration of community leaders in Stansted for several decades. The proposed footpath network, water and landscape enhancements and public open space meet those aspirations. The views of the parkland, the valley and the village from the proposed footpaths are a joy to behold.

For this reason alone I support this planning application and urge the planning committee on this occasion to approve an application for housing that your officers have recommended for refusal.

### **My reservations**

I wrote in my earlier representations that I needed reassurance on flooding before giving unqualified support. This concern has been satisfied by the Environment Agency's letter of 30<sup>th</sup> May. Flooding risk is not a reason for refusal.

I also sought reassurance about the impact on the view of Stansted Park from Chapel Hill. That reassurance has been given in the modelling work. The reference in the officer report to visibility of some buildings on the periphery of the field of view from Chapel Hill is, in my opinion, insignificant and mainly amounts to seeing some buildings above existing buildings in the line of view towards Church Road. Hardly a reason to refuse a planning application, I feel.

I am pleased that the parish council has achieved in principle an agreement with the landowner to safeguard the parkland for the future.

### **MGB**

The only remaining reason for refusal is the Metropolitan Green Belt. This is what I said in my written representation on this application:

"The Elms Farm site is no longer a credit to the centre of Stansted Mountfitchet. It is right that the site is redeveloped. Formally the site is in Metropolitan Green Belt (MGB) but it has an extant planning permission for a commercial development. I was involved in the establishment of the MGB between Bishop's Stortford and Stansted in the 1980s/'90s. After some debate it was agreed that the MGB would not include the then Rochford Nurseries; now developed as Forest Hall Park. Otherwise, the MGB was drawn close up to the built environment of the village, without regard to what boundary would prevent coalescence between Bishop's Stortford, Birchanger, Stansted Airport and Stansted Mountfitchet and what boundary might attempt to preserve its special areas that would benefit from eventual redevelopment.

"Elms Farm is a suitable site for redevelopment. An exception to MGB policy should be made for this site because it has an extant commercial planning permission and

because the housing proposals will enhance the environment in the area proposed for development. The associated proposal to enhance the landscape of Stansted Park will be a better benefit to true green belt than leaving it unenhanced and will arguably be a stronger buffer between village and airport than exists now.”

There are far worse places being proposed at present for housing in Stansted. The Elms Farm represents the most suitable site currently being proposed. It brings with it such significant benefits that have been sought for decades by local people. These are, in my opinion, very exceptional circumstances that warrant an exception being made to green belt policy. I urge the committee to approve the application.

**Alan Dean**

**6<sup>th</sup> June 2013**