

## STANSTED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP

(A Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council working group of district & parish councillors and business representatives.)

**Representations on planning application to Uttlesford District Council UTT/13/1126/FUL | Mixed use development comprising 14 No. dwellings, ground floor retail unit with independent first floor office and 2.5 storey commercial building including associated garages, car parking and landscaping | Rear Of 14 Cambridge Road Stansted Essex CM24 8BZ**

### Status

This representation is submitted on behalf of the working group. It will also be forwarded to the parish council when it considers the planning application at a later date. This representation is likely to be updated as more evidence becomes available.

### Summary

The working group objects to this application and seeks its refusal. The application does not meet the aims of the planning authority and of the parish council for a comprehensive redevelopment of the application site as one part only of a three-part Development Opportunity Site. (Uttlesford District Council Local Plan Position Statement March 2013.)

The application contains a “master plan” for redevelopment of land at 10 Cambridge Road and on the parish council’s land at Crafton Green without any means of delivery. There has been no discussion by the applicant with the other interested parties about the submitted “master plan”. The current application cannot, therefore, be considered to be part of a comprehensive plan that can achieve acceptable outcomes for the Development Opportunity Site.

The application for a 14-home housing development varies little from two applications from Bellway Homes in 2012 that were refused by Uttlesford’s planning committee for the following reasons: (26 July 2012) *The proposed development would be unsuitable on land which could otherwise be used for employment purposes. The proposed scheme would lead to an overdevelopment of the site contrary to the general character of the area.* The current application is substantially the same as those previously refused.

### Community and economic needs in the Cambridge Road area

The principles agreed for the Cambridge Road development opportunity site by working group members on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2013, and subsequently endorsed by a meeting of the parish council, were that:

1. Development should help build on Stansted Mountfitchet’s location as a place to do business (this aim preceded the award of Eco-town Status by Google),

2. No scheme should permit traffic to exit onto Cambridge Road from besides the Tesco store,
3. Achievement of an off-road delivery bay for Tesco and the Co-op on the London & Stansted site,
4. A through vehicular route from Cambridge Road to the Crafton Green car park is needed,
5. A pedestrian route to and from the car park to Cambridge Road is needed,
6. The parish council would wish to maximise community facilities on the sites (it already had one plan for a new community centre) and not split up its operations between different locations,
7. Any scheme should maximise employment on the London & Stansted site,
8. Car park capacity must be adequate for future activities on the three adjacent sites forming the development opportunity site,
9. A scheme that is largely housing on the London & Stansted site, such as the one (then and) currently being promoted by Mr Henrik Darlington, will prevent these objectives being met.

## **National Planning Policy Framework**

Text in italics is extracted from the NPPF.

*Page 2 Achieving sustainable development. There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.....Paragraph 7*

- *an economic role – building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation.*

The application site is a town centre site adjacent to other employment and service providing sites. Sustainable development means development that will meet the long-term needs of the commercial centre of Stansted Mountfitchet, its workers and its residents. Short-term financial gain from mainly residential development on this site will preclude for ever *sufficient land of the right type (being) available in the right place and at the right time to support growth and innovation.*

- *a social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generation; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being.*

Permitting a largely residential development on this land will undermine the accessibility and availability of local services in an area where they need a boost from better access and parking infrastructure that a true master plan and redevelopment could deliver. The need for housing can be met elsewhere. The Cambridge Road area is already surrounded by

residential area that have ready access to it, so additional housing in this location will bring minimal economic benefit that will be more than offset by the loss of the true potential of the Development Opportunity Site.

*Paragraph 8 – The planning system should play and active role in guiding development to sustainable solution.*

*Paragraph 9 – Pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment....making it easier for jobs to be created in cities, towns and villages.*

*Paragraph 10 – Plans and decisions need to take local circumstances into account, so that they respond to different opportunities for achieving sustainable development in different areas.*

*Paragraph 14 – Plan making means that local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area.*

*Paragraph 17 –*

- *planning should be genuinely plan-led, empowering local people to shape their surroundings.*
- *encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land)*
- *take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.*

These extracts from the NPPF call for an active engagement from the planning authority with the Stansted business and residential community for the achievement of a sustainable outcome from redevelopment at Cambridge Road by effective reuse of the land. It would not be constructive for Uttlesford to declare the creation of a Development Opportunity Site and then approve the first planning application that comes along for only one-third of that site. Local people, including councillors, are *trying to shape their surrounding*, but they need more *active support* from the planning authority to ensure *empowerment is real*. The Development Opportunity Site contains significant potential for improving health, social and cultural wellbeing. Uttlesford District Council is urged to refuse this application and then to engage in enabling a true master plan to be produced.

*Building a strong, competitive economy*

*Paragraph 18 – The Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth in order to create jobs.*

*Paragraph 19 - The Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth. Therefore significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system.*

*Paragraph 20 - To help achieve economic growth, local planning authorities should plan proactively to meet the development needs of business and support an economy fit for the 21st century.*

The economy of Stansted Mountfitchet is changing but is vibrant. Previously unoccupied premises have been let and demand is increasing. (Quantitative evidence to be added.) Car park usage at Crafton Green has increased by around 25% since 2012 and businesses are complaining about lack of capacity and loss of custom. The London and Stansted Furnishing application site contained elderly premises until 2012 that were occupied and providing employment and services. The site has not been marketed as part of a Development Opportunity Site for commercial or mixed regeneration. At no time prior to its closure was a "To Let" or "Redevelopment Site" notice placed outside the premises on Cambridge Road. The buildings were deliberately demolished in recent months not because they were not functional but, it would seem, to demonstrate that the site was no longer available for employment purposes. The aim appears to be to maximise a short-term financial return on the site from future residential use.

This sequence of events and the aim of the planning application does little to achieve the aims of the NPPF at paragraphs 18-20. It would undermine the ability of the other two parts of the Development Opportunity Site to achieve economic improvement.

*Paragraph 21 –*

- *support existing business sectors, taking account of whether they are expanding or contracting and, where possible, identify and plan for new or emerging sectors likely to locate in their area.*
- *identify priority areas for economic regeneration, infrastructure provision and environmental enhancement*

Stansted was awarded a Google Eco-town trophy in 2013 at the most successful town in the East of England and the third most successful town in the United Kingdom for the use of the internet, email, social media, etc. by local businesses. There is a growing (as yet unquantified) population of small businesses in Stansted. Some work from business premises and some work from home. It is likely that many home-workers will need to migrate into larger and more professional premises over time. There is believed to be a latent demand for business incubator premises. None of this has yet been properly evaluated. Nevertheless, the Cambridge Road Development Opportunity Site offers an opportunity to meet some of this need provided that the application site and other parts of the DOP is marketed properly and retains its use primarily as an area for employment and local services.

*Paragraph 22 - Planning policies should avoid the long term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose.*

*Land allocations should be regularly reviewed. Where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for the allocated employment use, applications for alternative uses of land or buildings should be treated on their merits having regard to market signals and the relative need for different land uses to support sustainable local communities.*

The part of the Cambridge Road Development Opportunity Site subject to a planning application does not fall within the scope of paragraph 10 because it has not been out of employment use for more than a year and the reason for the present absence of employment on the site was because of constructive action by the applicant.

### ***Ensuring the vitality of town centres***

*Paragraph 23 -*

*Planning policies should be positive, promote competitive town centre environments and set out policies for the management and growth of centres over the plan period. In drawing up Local Plans, local planning authorities should:*

- recognise town centres as the heart of their communities and pursue policies to support their viability and vitality;*
- promote competitive town centres that provide customer choice and a diverse retail offer and which reflect the individuality of town centres;*
- allocate a range of suitable sites to meet the scale and type of retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural, community and residential development needed in town centres. It is important that needs for retail, leisure, office and other main town centre uses are met in full and are not compromised by limited site availability. Local planning authorities should therefore undertake an assessment of the need to expand town centres to ensure a sufficient supply of suitable sites;*
- allocate appropriate edge of centre sites for main town centre uses that are well connected to the town centre where suitable and viable town centre sites are not available.*
- recognise that residential development can play an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and set out policies to encourage residential development on appropriate sites.*

If these guidelines from the NPPF are followed for Stansted Mountfitchet, the Development Opportunity Site must be used to enhance the vitality of the town centre for *retail, office, leisure and other main town centre uses*. They must be *not compromised by limited site availability*. It is agreed that residential development can play an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres but most of Stansted's existing residential development is within close walking distance of the town centre. Providing more residential property on the application site will bring minimal benefit to town centre patronage and will, on the contrary, undermine its potential vitality by preventing a deliverable and effective master plan to be drawn up and delivered for the whole Development Opportunity Site.

Issue 1

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