

PLANNING COMMITTEE REPRESENTATION ON BENTFIELD GREEN, STANSTED UTT/13/1203/OP

I wish to focus my comments on the consultant-officer's interpretation of the National Planning Policy Framework and the use of the term "a presumption in favour of sustainable development".

Firstly, may I say that I am here to oppose this application and to seek its refusal? I do not oppose all housing growth in Stansted. On the contrary, more homes at appropriate locations are needed. I oppose this application at Bentfield Green because the location is the worst possible; beside a relatively tranquil conservation area.

It has always been my understanding that the planning system was founded on the assumption that development should be allowed unless there are sound reasons why it should not take place. Conversely, a landowner should be refused the right to development to protect people from pollution, to protect the natural environment, because access to the site is poor, etc. etc.

So the presumption is favour of SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT in the NPPF is nothing new, apart from perhaps the introduction of the word "SUSTAINABLE".

But what is "sustainability"? It means that development will last and serve not just a short term gain or need; but will be good for future generations. So in principle, any proposed development which is within or on the edge of an existing community MIGHT be said to be more sustainable than a housing development in the middle of nowhere. As has always been the case, a decision has to be based on a balancing exercise of the pros and cons.

I would like to refer the committee to paragraph 10.2 of the consultant-officer's report.

(PAUSE IF MEMBERS WANT TO READ THE PARAGRAPH?)

This paragraph confirms that protection and enhancement of the natural environment remains an important part of sustainable development. The report then says that the NPPF takes a positive approach rather than a protective one. The report seems to be saying that what were bad impacts of an application before the NPPF came into force have now to be seen as good! That cannot be! I ask you to disagree with the consultant-officer's reasoning, because her whole rationale for approval is founded on this paragraph.

Paragraph 10.2 goes on to say that whilst your Policy S7 on enhancing and protecting the environment is still a relevant consideration at Bentfield Green, there remains a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

But, as I have already tried to explain, there has always been a presumption in favour of sustainable development in Stansted. That does not mean that everything anywhere must be automatically approved.

Therefore, I ask the committee to conclude that **nothing has changed** since an application for sports facilities only in this same area was refused on appeal in 2009 - except we now have a major housing component in addition to the sports facilities. The appeal for the sports facilities alone was dismissed, according to the inspector's letter, because:

1. It introduced urbanising features
2. It harmed the important rural setting of Bentfield Green – (there are upper and lower greens)
3. It eroded the transition from a specially protected part of Stansted to the attractive adjoining countryside
4. It caused noise and disturbance from players and vehicles, reducing the ability of people to enjoy the tranquil nature of the area
5. And the inspector concluded: it caused damage to the immediate setting of the conservation area.

WHAT MORE DAMAGE WILL BE CAUSED TO THE BENTFIELD GREEN AREA BY 140 OR MORE HOMES IN ADDITION TO THE SPORTS FACILITIES?

The damage will be immeasurable. Nothing has changed in the past three years for this committee to want to cause even more damage. Not even the NPPF and the absence of a 5-year land supply makes any difference, as I have attempted to explain.

If this most sensitive of applications is approved, then nowhere in Uttlesford is safe!

CONSERVATION WILL BE A REDUNDANT WORD IN UTTLESFORD!

I URGE YOU TO REFUSE THE APPLICATION.

Cllr Alan Dean

Member for Stansted South, Uttlesford District Council