

APPEAL BY TAYLOR WIMPEY AGAINST UDC'S REFUSAL OF PLANNING APPLICATION UTT/13/1203/OP BENTFIELD GREEN, STANSTED

REPRESENTATION BY ALAN DEAN, RESIDENT OF STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET AND ONE OF ITS FOUR DISTRICT COUNCIL MEMBERS

Whether or not Stansted is a town or a village, Bentfield Green is the only corner of the community which has the ambience and tranquillity; the simple feel of a rural village.

I live in the urban centre but on the edge of the main recreation ground. Whilst that place has been great for my children and grandchildren to grow up and play, it is undoubtedly in the urban centre and is surrounded by bricks and mortar. It is host to goal posts where people of all ages rightly play football and sometimes rugby. It is a relatively noisy location. But what else can one expect from a recreation ground? I chose to live there and I never (or hardly ever) have cause to complain.

My family's favourite escape is to walk to Bentfield Green, especially late afternoon on a winter's day. There one can watch the sun set over the Stort Valley with an unimpeded view; enjoy the greens; have fun on the play equipment; spot the ducks on the pond; or make Bentfield Green the starting point or end point of a walk round the lanes to the west. The other end of that walk is Lime Kiln Lane and the windmill. We often do it on Christmas Day.

I have been doing this for 40 years; 26 of which have been as a member of this council. In that time I think I have learned where and when to welcome change and where and when to take a stand.

Much has been said about the conservation area. Bentfield Green really is worth conserving because it is our best example of a rural village setting.

A Taylor Wimpey estate and organised playing fields there would do damage that could not be reversed.

I wish to make four more points:

1. **Pennington Lane.** The official Essex County Council designation of Pennington Lane as a protected lane describes its aesthetic value as having "Open farmland views". It is lightly trafficked. It is another other escape route from urban Stansted for walkers and cyclists. Residents of major housing development on its western flank will naturally use this protected land to travel northwards by car as their estate will exit onto the lane. The lane is too narrow and windy for that. It would become an **unprotected lane**.
2. **Housing Growth.** I am not against housing growth. I actively supported a recent approval at Elms Farm in our south-east quadrant. Many years ago I backed the redevelopment of the former Rochford Nurseries, which has now become Forest Hall Park. It has boosted our population; it has enhanced our community life; it has caused Stansted's population to increase by approaching one-third in less than ten years. The social need for more homes

is undeniable. The only real question is Where? Bentfield Green is the last place on my map where this growth should take place.

3. **Planning committee decisions.** The planning committee approved the nearby Walpole Farm application by a large majority. It has far better road access for a start. Whilst I personally did not agree with them on that occasion, the committee does discriminate between very bad locations and less bad locations. They refused the site at Bentfield Green which is the subject of this appeal by a very large majority. I believe that decision should be respected because it demonstrates that local democracy can work to get a fair balance, even though not all the people will be happy with any one decision.
4. **Five year housing land supply.** Much has been said about this in the past two days. Much of what has been said is contestable. I have been researching the issue over the past few weeks.
 - a. Since the planning committee meeting on October 24th there have been exactly 2,500 deliverable home sites in the five-year housing land supply chain. I confirmed this in writing with the council's chief executive yesterday.
 - b. The well tested annual housing target from the former regional spatial strategy is 430 homes per annum. That is the figure which has been used at all planning applications to date. Dividing 430 into 2,500 gives a supply period based on this tried and tested target of 5.8 years. That is well ahead of the NPPF expectation.
 - c. It is correct that the council has begun to look at a higher annual target of 523 homes per annum. A higher annual delivery than 430 may indeed be appropriate for the local plan. The higher figure will be undergoing at least the first stage of internal scrutiny next week. **It has not yet been agreed by the cabinet or any other decision-making body of the council. When a new target is agreed it will still have to go out to public consultation and scrutiny. So at present 523 homes per annum has no formal standing.**
 - d. IF 523 had already been adopted, today's annual supply period - by dividing 523 into 2,500 - would give 4.8 years' housing supply. So we have what may become the future target only a whisker away from the somewhat arbitrary - in my opinion - horizon of a 5-year housing land supply.
5. **Conclusion: Given these facts and forecasts, I can see no justification whatsoever for this appeal to overturn the well balanced judgment of Uttlesford District Council's planning committee to conserve the remaining oasis of rural village ambience in my community at Bentfield Green.**

Alan Dean

Stansted, 6th November 2013