

UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Member for Stansted South: Councillor Alan Dean

Please reply to home address: 49 Recreation Ground, Stansted, Essex, CM24 8BD

9th April 2014

Your ref:

Our ref: AD08041401

Mr Joe Chell
School Organisation Team
Essex County Council
By email:
school.organisation@essex.gov.uk

Telephone: 01279 813 579
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Dear Sirs

Consultation: Farnham Church of England (VA) Primary School

I write as a member of Uttlesford DC with an interest in the wellbeing of the whole of the district, including Farnham. I am also writing as a member for Stansted and so with particular responsibilities for the residents of that community.

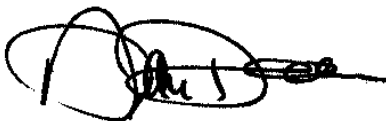
I object totally to the proposals contained in the consultation launched on 26th February 2014 for the following reasons:

1. The proposals have mistakenly conflated two separate needs; achieving the future success of Farnham Primary School and the delivery of extra primary school capacity in Stansted. I perceive that this has led to considerable confusion and distrust amongst stakeholders. The two issues should be addressed separately to achieve appropriate outcomes in both villages.
2. The village of Farnham would be poorer as a community were it to lose its primary school. The governors of the Farnham & Rickling Federation of Church of England Schools should retain their focus on raising the take-up of places at Farnham and the success of their federation in these small villages. They risk losing focus on their main mission if they become entangled in the establishment of a new school in the much larger community of Stansted Mountfitchet. I believe that it is in their own interest and that of the families they represent that they reject the current proposal to "move" the Farnham school.
3. The proposal to create a new school at St. John's Road in Stansted is deeply flawed as presented. St. Mary's Primary School was relocated to Forest Hall Park both to increase its capacity and to abandon premises that were old and unfit for purpose. They are now significantly dilapidated. Stansted has two primary schools at Bentfield and at the new St. Mary's whose premises are in good condition. They are well regarded by parents

and children. The proposed renovation of the old premises at St. John's Road will be regarded as second best by parents and children, creating the risk that the new establishment would become a sink school of last choice in Stansted. This would be an unacceptable outcome and has been rejected by all constituents with whom I have come into contact over these proposals. I endorse the similar opinion of Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council.

4. Stansted needs a long-term solution to its pending shortfall in primary school places. It wants a 21st Century answer to a 21st Century need.
5. If the chosen location for the extra school capacity is the site at St. John's Road, the former St. Mary's site should be considered together with the adjacent Peter Kirk site to ensure that the best long-term solution is found. It would be wrong to shoe-horn a future educational establishment onto the footprint of the old school before a thorough evaluation of alternatives has been conducted. This project should be seen as part of a comprehensive redevelopment of both educational sites which may take place in phases over coming years. Future plans should not be unnecessarily constrained by past layouts.
6. Access to the site and parking on the site must also be addressed in a comprehensive way, taking into account the parish council's intention to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan which will include this central part of Stansted. In future years access to the site from Lower Street may become possible through a piece of land in commercial use and so should be taken into consideration.
7. The new school for Stansted should also have a governance team whose focus is on Stansted. Arrangements imported from other villages whose needs are diverse owing to the different size and nature of those communities and educational establishments will not be conducive to good governance.
8. In summary, I urge the governors of the federation to reject the proposals in their entirety. Should the governors choose to accept the proposals, I urge the county council's portfolio holder, Cllr Ray Gooding, to dismiss the current scheme and to come forward with a new, long-term initiative for Stansted and to support Farnham school as the governors and parents desire. For the sake of both the federation schools and the future needs of Stansted's children, I ask that the decision to abandon the proposed scheme is made promptly and is not, as I have heard has been suggested, delayed for several weeks.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Dean', with a large, loopy initial 'A' and a horizontal line extending to the right.

Alan Dean

Cc: Cllr Ray Gooding, The Federation, Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council, Mr Daniel Brett