

UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Members for Stansted South: Councillors Alan Dean & Iris Evans

**Please reply to home address: 49 Recreation Ground, Stansted, Essex, CM24 8BD
25 Park Road, Stansted, Essex CM24 8PB**

15 March 2013

Your ref:

Our ref:AD15031301

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Cllr Susan Barker
Cabinet Member for Environment

Dear Cllr Barker

LOWER STREET CAR PARK, STANSTED: PROPOSED AGREEMENT WITH PELHAM STRUCTURES

We write to request that the cabinet withholds agreement with Pelham Structures over use of the Lower Street car park until firm assurances can be given that the capacity of the car park can and will be maintained adequate for the general use of residents and local businesses as well as for the proposed users of a future health centre, retail unit(s) and residential apartments under a Heads of Terms.

In concert with Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council we have endeavoured to enter into a constructive dialogue with council officers since February 14th 2013 to resolve concerns. This has not proved to be possible. Last week a meeting was requested with officers by both district members and the parish council to discuss a range of concerns. This request was declined.

We support strongly the need for new health facilities for Stansted and surrounding villages. We would be delighted if the scheme which received planning permission in late 2012 can be made to work. Yet we feel that the matter of car parking has been repeatedly brushed to one side and not rigorously addressed. At the planning stage we were told that car parking was not relevant to the planning application as the car park was not within the "red line" on the application map. Yet only this week an application for an adjacent site has been temporarily withdrawn to ensure that the "red line" is redrawn to encompass all features of the application. We are disturbed at this inconsistency. We fear that the community of Stansted Mountfitchet will suffer in future years from an over-burdened car park whose capacity has not been adequately and transparently assessed.

We ask for a firm commitment from the cabinet that it will increase the capacity of car parking in the Lower Street area of Stansted by, for instance, creating a deck or decks above the car park's ground level. The developer's agent, Mr Bill Bampton, offered the prospect of this when he addressed the parish council in 2012, but the offer has not been followed through. The cabinet ought to address the financing of such a project at this time and not after the development is completed or possibly taken over by another party.

We also seek the cabinet's assurance that the values of the spaces that are proposed to be leased to the tenant of the development have been assessed in line with the normal valuation of a public asset in relation to their benefit to a commercial developer. We note that the only proposed charge is at season ticket rates for members of the public. We feel that the District Valuer may have a different opinion. We understand that the District Valuation Service has not been engaged in this case. We consider that to me a material omission.

Our detailed concerns

1. Public Complaints

There was a complaint in correspondence from a member of the public with officers and local members in March 2012 that "Short term parking at Lower Street Car Park in Stansted has become impossible. You can no longer find a space to park for a short time in the general part of the car park as nearly all the spaces are taken up with commuters parking all day and taking the train to London". This complaint has repeatedly occurred in the past 12 months. As far as we are aware, there has been no formal review of the capacity of this car park to cope with existing demand and to understand what the current trend in usage is.

2. Extra parking spaces

The Heads of Term provides for only 21 additional pay-and-display spaces to cater for what would become Stansted's largest retail unit. That is way below the likely demand and parking standards for such a retail unit of around 50 spaces for shoppers' use. No assessment of demand has been published.

The allocation of one space only within the agreement for high standard apartments with up to three bedrooms is inadequate and will put extra pressure on the car park for either parking spaces within the proposed lease from UDC or will put further demand on season ticket spaces that are already let at a ratio approaching two tickets for each space.

The figure of only 21 additional spaces is based on the assumption that the tenant takes up the discretionary option of leasing from UDC a further 21 spaces beyond the basic allocation of 64 for use by the development. This would bring the total leased to the tenant to 85. It will make little difference to the number of spaces available to the public whether or not the additional 21 are allocated to the tenant. If they are not, the demand from users of the development is likely to be the same, but via the pay-and-display or season ticket route.

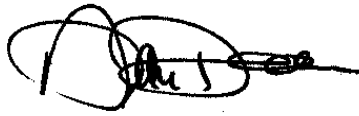
3. Car Park Layout

The usefulness of the car park to the public will be reduced because spaces will be relocated beyond the skateboard park at a considerable distance from local amenities unless the spaces in those locations are allocated for the tenant's use or for season tickets.

4. Representations by Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council

We support and endorse the concerns raised by the parish council with the qualification that action referred to previously should be taken now to guard against inadequate provision and that monitoring of usage should begin immediately.

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
p.p. Iris Evans

cc: All cabinet members
Stansted district members
Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council
Peter Snow – for cabinet papers