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THE PARISH PLAN – AN OVERVIEW

The timing of the preparation of the Parish Plan coincides with a major period of change for Stansted Mountfitchet:

- *The construction of Foresthall Park* will add about 30% to the population of the parish (assuming boundary changes) with the challenges to create a single community and to handle a substantial addition in the workload.
- *The planned move of St. Mary's School* to Foresthall Park and the possible construction of a major new health centre on the same development will create more activity at the South East of the parish and will have implications for traffic flows.
- *Two other factors*, whilst uncertain as to timing, are likely to have consequences for the parish, namely the rate at which the airport expands its activity even without the prospect of a second runway and the decision by Uttlesford District Council as to the quantity and location of new housing.

The Parish Council is determined to fight to maintain Stansted Mountfitchet as a separate community with an active life of its own and to work to improve the quality of life for long-standing and new parishioners. To achieve the latter will need much detailed work to mitigate the universal problems of traffic and parking and resources to add to the facilities particularly for recreation to meet the needs of this growing community. Alongside these ambitions the scope of the responsibilities taken on by the Parish Council and the resources needed to deliver these responsibilities at an acceptable cost to council tax payers will need to be resolved.

Although the preparation of the Parish Plan has taken much work (and thanks to all who have contributed), **this worthy project will only be judged a success if action follows**. We will all need to continue to contribute ideas as the detail of the plan is executed. Hopefully patience and hard work will produce rewards. Meanwhile may we welcome our new parishioners on Foresthall Park and the Council looks forward to working with you to build a successful community.

CREATING A PARISH PLAN

Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Plan is a document describing how this community could be developed over coming years to improve the quality of life for those who live here. The Plan should be seen as a strategic document, which has been strongly influenced by the responses to the completed questionnaires. The conclusions highlight issues from local residents and the means and priorities associated with tackling them. This is not a static document and over time there will be the need to respond to new and emerging issues, pressures and trends. With the information received, the Parish Council will be in a position to provide guidance to the councils for Essex and Uttlesford, and other agencies, relating to your preferences in respect of the future development of our community. Where appropriate, policies under the Adopted Uttlesford Local Plan are identified.

THE PROCESS AND THE QUESTIONNAIRES

Following an open day held in February 2008, a number of working parties were established to research and advise on key areas. With the help of a company specialising in consumer marketing, questionnaires were drawn up and delivered by hand with a stamped addressed envelope for replies. Following the deadline for responses, the statistical analysis was undertaken by IDA Consulting Ltd at a cost of £7,800 whilst the ad hoc comments were collated through the Parish Council. In March 2010 a presentation of the results was made to the Annual Parish Meeting while a summary was included in The Link magazine which is delivered free to every household. Subsequently draft reports were prepared for each area and considered and amended in April and May 2010 with the proposed action points again published in The Link. A second and more formal draft was completed during the early summer and amended in September 2010.

After consultations with other authorities and agencies, the Plan was finally approved by the Parish Council in October and lodged with Uttlesford District Council in February 2011.

Three questionnaires were distributed with the aim of obtaining answers from adults, younger citizens aged 11-18 years and businesses. The response rate was as follows:

- **Adults** – A total of 5000 questionnaires (two per household) were distributed with 950 being returned, some 19% of the total. However, this probably understates the response as, in many instances, a couple returned one questionnaire. As such the percentage return is likely to have been closer to 30%, an acceptable level given the size of the village. The level of returns varied between different areas within the village with two major housing estates, Hargrave and Mount fitchet, generating a relatively low response. The over 60 year age group generated nearly half the returns but 45-59 year old group and the under 45 years category contributed 25% each. Many of the respondents have been long-term residents.
- **Youth** – A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed through schools in the village, Newport, Saffron Walden and Bishop's Stortford and the opportunity was given to respond on line. A total of 79 questionnaires were returned, some 40 % of the total issued, with some 85% of the returns being generated by pupils at the Mountfitchet Mathematics and Computing College. This response has been much appreciated so thank you to all who contributed.
- **Business** – Of the 50 questionnaires distributed, 23 were returned, a level which is considered reasonable.

The Steering Group and the Parish Council are grateful for the time and thought given by so many residents, without which this Plan would not have been written.

THE PARISH OF STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET

- **Recent History - Key Developments since World War 2**
 - *Stansted Mountfitchet, in the aftermath of the Second World War, was a self-contained community with a population of about 3,000. With some 64 shops, a full range of services, sports and recreational organisations and bus and rail transport, this provided a centre to serve the surrounding agricultural area.*
 - *Development over the following sixty years has about doubled the population. Apart from the Mountfitchet Estate - municipal housing built to the east of the railway line - most of the new housing has been to the west of Silver Street/Cambridge Road (the old A11) with Blythwood Gardens (1950s), Hargrave Estate, Cannons Mead and Wetherfield (1960s) and Bentfield Gardens (1970s). Smaller developments have*

taken place in the centre of the village including St John's Road and Burnells Way (1950s), Meadowcroft and Spencer Close in the 1980s followed by Norman Court, Five Acres and Birchalls also in the 1980s. The 1990s have seen the construction of Old Bell Close and Windmill Close but most notably the building of a large number of flats on Silver Street.

- *The balance of population in the village will see another change once the estate of some 700 dwellings is completed at Foresthall Park* (on the site of the former Rochford Nurseries). Once finished and occupied this will increase the population of Stansted Mountfitchet by around 30% (assuming an enlargement of the parish boundary). The split of the population will be much more even with % west of the B1383, % in the centre and % to the east of the railway line. In total, the population will be between 7500-8000 people.
- *Educational provision has changed.* At the primary level St Mary's School moved from Lower Street to St John's Road in 1964 and will move again in 2012 to a larger site on Foresthall Park, whilst Bentfield School opened in 1979. Mountfitchet Secondary Modern School moved from Chapel Hill to its present site in 1960, became a comprehensive, lost its sixth form in the 1980s and became the Mountfitchet Maths and Computing College in XXXX.
- *The number and range of shops has decreased* reflecting changing patterns of shopping. However, the village still retains shops serving most daily needs while there are signs of some new openings including a possible development in Lower Street.
- *Churches and chapels are still prominent* but major changes have occurred. St Mary's Church was declared redundant in 1989 with St John's having become the Parish Church. However, the building of St Mary's has been well maintained. St Theresa's, the Roman Catholic Church, moved into the Mill House in 1957 before moving into a new purpose-built church on High Lane in 2000. The United Reformed Chapel became the Free Church in 2006 having come together with the Methodists.
- *New sports facilities have been added* in recent years including the indoor Romeera Leisure Centre 2003, the skatepark in Lower Street (2004) and the Multi Use Games Area on the Mountfitchet Estate (2009).

- *A noticeable longterm trend has been the decline in local employment and the rise in commuting. The closure of Rochford Nurseries in the early 1970s and the transformation of the Parsonage Farm Industrial Estate in 2009 have been notable events while Sworder's moved into the village and then to the outskirts into purpose-built premises. However, the village still has the Riverside Estate, the M11 Business Link and five miles away Stansted Airport with the latter's expansion having a material impact on the area including surface transport links.*

- *Government and public services have altered but not always for the better. In 1973 Saffron Walden Rural District was replaced by Uttlesford District Council. Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council moved in 1981 from Lower Street to a new complex on Crafton Green which incorporated an enlarged library, a Day Centre, a clinic and car park (whilst in Lower Street UDC provided a car park in 19xx). The police moved into a station at Hargrave Close in the 1960s but now appear set to close the station which in turn reflects a substantial decline in the number of officers based in the village. The doctors' practice has been in St John's Road since 19xx but is expected to move into a major new health centre, hopefully in 2012-13.*

Stansted Mountfitchet continues to grow but still retains the feel of a village, albeit large. One can only speculate about what our community will look like in twenty, alone fifty, years.

- ***Local Geography***

Stansted Mountfitchet is situated close to the southern boundary of Uttlesford District and the northern western edge of Essex. The village is located between Bishop's Stortford in Hertfordshire, three miles to the south, Saffron Walden, ten miles to the north and Great Dunmow, nine miles to the east. The parish covers about 1620 square hectares. The landscape to the north and west is one of gently undulating agricultural land, mostly grade two, interspersed with small areas of woodland. To the south lies Bishop's Stortford while to the east is Stansted Airport at a distance of six miles with Hatfield Forest beyond as well as further agricultural land.

? Special landscape areas

? Map of area

- ***Community Links***

The most significant communication links are provided by the B1383 (formerly A11), which divides the village and the London-Cambridge railway line which effectively acts as another divide especially as there is a narrow railway bridge on Church Road. One other feature may be mentioned – Chapel Hill which is steep and which acts as a divide between the two commercial areas, Cambridge Road (B1383) and Lower Street. With the M11 situated three miles away and with a station in the village, the change has been made from a self-contained rural economy to one where commuting for employment has become significant. The proximity of Stansted Airport some six miles distant completes the triumvirate of transport links.

The attractiveness of the area coupled with the road, rail and air links creates development and resulting traffic pressures on an inadequate local road network.

THE KEY ISSUES

The likes and dislikes about living here provide a flavour.

- *The pluses stressed heavily the desire to live in a village with a heritage of old buildings and being close to open countryside. Maintaining a separate identity with a community spirit was complemented by being in easy proximity to Bishop's Stortford and the motorway link.*
- *The major negatives were first and foremost the level of traffic, nearness to the airport, quality of public transport, inadequate affordable housing and anti-social behaviour.*
- *The overall quality of life in the village is thought to be worse than ten years ago but this view was driven by those of older years and is hardly an uncommon conception.*

Traffic and parking concerns recur throughout the response.

- Traffic speed on all main roads
- Inadequate off-street parking and the use of pavements to park
- More pedestrian crossings
- Improved street lighting, including all night, everywhere

The local environment is important to all age groups.

- Stansted Mountfitchet must remain a separate community surrounded by countryside
- Reduction in the volume of through traffic
- No further expansion of the airport beyond current permissions. This would still permit a doubling in the number of passengers per annum to 35 million.
- Support for care of woodlands and hedges including more tree planting
- Footpaths and their proper maintenance is a high priority
- Opposition to any substantial housing development while extensions and infilling must be in keeping with the surrounding environment, ie lower density

Crime and policing continue to worry many respondents

- Main concerns are speeding, vandalism, litter and drunkenness
- Wide demand for more and a more visible police presence
- Longer opening hours at the police station along with quicker communication and response

Other issues which command widespread support.

- Need for better health facilities
- Strong support for adding a sixth form to Mountfitchet Maths and Computing College
- Widespread approval for a swimming pool
- The need for better and more imaginative play equipment
- Desire for a venue suitable for drama and music
- Development of routes for safer cycling
- Additional organised facilities for younger age groups in the school holidays
- Approval for Parish Council to add selectively to its responsibilities
- More communication through meetings and a website would be welcomed
- Opposition to any further major development in the village or at the airport

Despite widespread support, not all of these aspirations may be achievable.

RESPONSE FROM YOUNG ADULTS

- The issues important to this age group are surprisingly similar to their older peers - education, crime, places to hang out, health and the environment
- No great demand for additional facilities apart from a swimming pool and a juice bar
- Support for an arts centre
- No great differences on the shape of the village in the future with opposition to major new housing developments and a second runway
- Little support for establishing a youth council

WHAT IS IN THE PLAN?

The Plan is divided into sections, one for each subject. Each section contains a summary of the context, current position, and way forward while at the end of the report a list of action points provides a programme to achieve the desired objectives. All the action detail such as timescale, who should lead on the action and how, if known, it will be funded. Where policies are quoted, these refer to the Uttlesford Adopted Local Plan 2005. The Parish Council has printed copies for each household in the parish including all the new dwellings on Foresthall Park. Copies will also be available at the Parish Council Office, the Library and the local schools, or you can download it from the website: www.parishcouncil@stansted.net

WHAT NEXT?

The Plan has been based on wide-ranging consultation and thanks are due to everyone who has participated by completing the questionnaire, coming to meetings or helping on working parties. The Council recognises that the Plan will not please everyone in every aspect – in a large village like Stansted Mountfitchet, even an action supported by 90% of the people could be opposed by as many as 500 people. Nonetheless, the Plan is the closest to a consensus as to how Stansted Mountfitchet should develop over the next decade. If the Plan is to be realised, the community must continue to be involved. The Parish Council has the responsibility to carry out, or encourage others to carry out, the actions laid out in the Plan. So please give it your support. A successful implementation of the Plan could sustain and enhance our community for many years to come.

THE FUTURE SHAPE OF STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET

The context

The addition of Foresthall Park to the catchment area of the parish represents a step change. Strong opposition would be mounted to any other attempt to enlarge further the community.

The current position

- *The size of the population is in the process of rapid growth.* Following a period of relative stability, a quantum leap in scale is now occurring with the construction of around 700 dwellings at Foresthall Park which in turn will increase the population by about 30%. This assumes that the whole development, following a parish boundary review, falls into this parish (currently about two-thirds of Foresthall Park is located in Birchanger Parish).
- *The fulcrum of the village will be moved to the east.* Following the construction of Foresthall Park the proportion of the population living to the east of the railway bridge will rise from 24% to about 41%. The relocation of St Mary's School to the new development and the construction of a major health centre will have implications for a number of areas to be discussed in the following sections.
- *The proposal under the Local Development Framework to construct a new town, or indeed any substantial number of dwellings, in the area of Elsenham-Henham would, given current infrastructure, pose serious problems for this parish.* Following policy changes by the new government future development in Uttlesford District is under review.
- *Stansted Mountfitchet remains a community with development limits and the protection of green belt which has maintained it as a village separated from Bishop's Stortford, Birchanger and Elsenham.*
- *Stansted Airport has permission to expand up to 35mppa on the existing runway.* The new government has stated that no second runway will be built although such a decision may not prove permanent. The impact of the airport on employment, air quality, noise issues, local traffic and public transport remain significant for this parish especially with the potential for capacity to double.

- *The growth in the housing stock, prior to the development of Foresthall Park, has, in recent years, consisted of flats and infilling, the result of which has been to increase the density of development.*

The way forward

- *Stansted Mountfitchet must remain a separate community with coalescence towards Birchanger, Bishop's Stortford or Elsenham considered unacceptable. [Policies S6 and S7]*
- *Support retention of greenbelt apart from minor variations at Elms Farm or Pines Hill which would result in substantial gain for the community.*
- *No major housing development in or around the parish given the need to build a community including Foresthall Park.*
- *No second runway to be built at Stansted Airport received 76% support, while more efforts need to be made to ensure that the needs of the local community are balanced relative to those of airport users.*
- *A number of small sites with potential for development have been identified in Uttlesford District Council's Strategic Housing and Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). The Parish Council agrees with six sites – two on Cambridge Road (Sworders and Concord), Bentfield Road commercial site, (application for 9 dwellings submitted February 2011), Braefield on High Lane, Elms Farm (subject to planning and highways issues being resolved) and Pines Hill. Two additional sites at the Three Colts (Cambridge Road) and St Mary's School (assuming relocation) are also worthy of consideration. If these sites were developed then, depending upon density, about 166-267 dwellings would be added to the stock of 3300 once Foresthall Park is complete. This would represent an increase of between 5% and 8%. [Policies S1 and H1]*
- *Greenbelt boundaries should largely be retained and are supported by over 90% of respondents. [Policy S6]*
- *Oppose construction of large, out of character blocks of flats especially where there is no outdoor space. [Policy GEN2]*
- *Require that all new buildings should be sympathetic to the surrounding environment. [Policy GEN2]*
- *Oppose gated developments as creating an unnecessary divide within a safe community.*
- *Consider creating more conservation areas around the St John's Area.*

HOUSING – SPECIFIC RATHER THAN GENERAL NEED

The context

There is need for smaller houses suitable either as first time family homes or to meet the requirements of down-sizing, while there is opposition to the construction of more small flats built to a high density.

The current position

- *The need for alternative housing was indicated by 7% of those responding to the questionnaire with a desire for larger or smaller dwellings, the needs of elderly relatives and employment featuring as reasons. Affordability is the main obstacle.*
- *Most people were looking for 2-3 bed homes with only 10% seeking one bedroom and 16% four bedrooms.*
- *Houses and bungalows were by far the most desired form of accommodation with little desire for flats.*
- *No place like home? Over a third of those who moved away would like to return to the village.*

The way forward

- *Concentrate on building two and three bedroom family houses. [Policy H10]*
- *Seek to meet the demand for bungalows*
- *Adapt existing sheltered accommodation such as Mead Court to modern standards and add additional accommodation*
- *Demand for one bed flats is modest and, if built and sold as buy to let, may be socially disadvantageous to the community*
- *Affordable housing remains a priority. [Policy H9]*

ROADS, TRAFFIC AND PARKING

The context

Throughout the consultation and in the survey responses, *these issues recur frequently with over 50% registering the level of traffic as their main dislike in living in Stansted Mountfitchet*. Over the past thirty years the increase in car ownership and use, the expansion of Stansted Airport, the increased size and weight of heavy goods vehicles and housing development in the area have all combined to increase substantially the volume of traffic, raised parking issues and increased risks, actual and perceived, in the context of a local road system that has barely changed in decades. The M11 has prevented local gridlock but traffic volumes on many roads are at, or above, pre-motorway levels.

The current position

- *The most serious traffic problems* are parking, speed, the number of goods vehicles, traffic volume, congestion and noise.
- *Danger was an issue for 73% of pedestrians and 57% of drivers* with specific locations being Cambridge Road, Chapel Hill followed by Silver Street and Church Road (with approaches to the railway bridge posing particular concern).
- *Measures to reduce speed receive strong support* including vehicle activated speed warning, village entry and weight and width restrictions, as well as traffic calming measures, of which 20 mph speed limits received overwhelming support. On bus routes it is recognised that speed humps will not be the means to achieve this end.
- *Pedestrian safety measures* were dominated by the wish to stop parking on pavements, followed by more dropped kerbs, cleaner pavements and more crossings.
- *Street lighting is regarded as reasonable or better* but there are many ad hoc comments which suggest that standards/coverage can be improved.

The way forward

There are a substantial number of recommendations to attempt to resolve a number of these issues. A full list is shown in the action points towards the end of this report. At this point we will highlight some key ideas.

- *Help parking issues* by using part of wide footpaths, introducing regulations to reduce commuter and airport parking and seeking incentives to increase the use of car parks.
- *Reduce traffic speed* by introducing 20 mph zones on the Mountfitchet, Foresthall Park and Hargrave estates and the Bentfield area, by introducing traffic calming measures on High Lane and finding the means to improve safety on the approaches to the railway bridge as well as improving the traffic flows through the Grove Hill traffic lights.
- *Improve pedestrian safety* by increasing the number of crossings whether refuges or full scale crossings. Install a footpath on Foresthall Road, widen the Church Road footpath and improve the route over the brook.
- Investigate ways to create *safer cycling routes*.

CRIME AND SECURITY

The context

There is a widespread fear of crime whether actual or in people's perceptions. Reported crime figures for the parish suggest that perception of crime is greater than reality. Some 16% of respondents, however, say that they have suffered from crime. Speeding, vandalism, litter and drunkenness predominate but theft from property and cars also feature.

The current position

- *A number of areas in the parish are considered to be unsafe*, particularly around the station and the Recreation Ground. These fears are shared by 18-24 year olds. The problem arises from groups of youngsters with the main issues being noise, litter, broken glass and vandalism.
- *The level of visible policing is heavily criticised*. More police on the street was highlighted by 44% as the single measure most likely to reduce crime.
- *The speed of response is also criticised* given the limited opening hours at the police station and the dependence on response teams who may be some distance away.

The way forward

- *Information to enable parishioners to have a realistic assessment of crime and behavioural problems.* A regular analysis of crime statistics with comments should be published in The Link.
- *Make it easier to communicate information to the police* by ensuring that local telephone contact is available at all times (or at least until midnight). To provide access to the Police within Crafton Green which would be more accessible to parishioners than the existing police station which is rarely open.
- *More police and more visible policing would help in controlling the anti-social behaviour,* SMPC should press at least for an additional police constable as well as perhaps looking to recruit special constables.
- *Continue to build Neighbourhood Watch* not only to add eyes and ears but to improve the dissemination of information to strengthen crime prevention. As the use of email continues to rise, the ability to communicate quickly to a large number of people will grow.
- *More activities should be developed to meet the needs of young people.* The Youth Centre is doing good work especially among younger teenagers but the club should be open five nights a week, Sunday afternoon and during some part of the school holidays.
- *Additional education in relation to drugs and drink should be organised* through the police, schools and the involvement of parents.
- *The use of surveillance equipment to deter crime.* The existing equipment is inadequate and thus its usefulness to the police has thus been limited. The Parish Council is seeking funding for an upgraded CCTV system.
- *Better street lighting is needed* in the eyes of many parishioners who also believe that lights should not be switched off at night. Research is already underway to decide on a programme of upgrading as is an assessment of the impact of night lighting.

CONSERVING AND ENHANCING THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

The context

Stansted Mountfitchet is for the most part surrounded by attractive farmland and countryside while the village itself has many trees. These factors rank highly in the

decision of many parishioners to live here. Conserving and enhancing this scene requires detailed effort.

The current position

- The substantial majority, at least 74%, feel that *all aspects of the countryside are important* to them including fields, woods, hedges, water courses and farm buildings. [Policy ENV8]
- *Improving the village environment* would be achieved by keeping verges mown and tidy, ensuring additions and extensions are in keeping or complement the street scene and reducing footpath parking. More hanging baskets, flowers and trees are supported.
- *The natural breaks between this community and other settlements* are rated very important by 80% of respondents.
- *Footpaths are well-used* for recreational walking and their proper maintenance receives a high ranking.
- *Environmental services* received mixed reviews but road and footpath maintenance, road gritting in winter and street cleaning, including dog fouling, received criticism.
- *The disabled or mothers with pushchairs face obstacles* on footpaths including parked cars and billboards.
- *Surplus agricultural land* should not be used for more housing but sustained for rural leisure activity.

The way forward

- *The maintenance of the greenbelt is a prime objective* to prevent coalescence with other communities with defence of the eastern boundary a priority. [Policy S6]
- *The maintenance and promotion of footpaths* should receive a high priority including the 'twichels' within the village. All footpaths should be walkable with stiles and gates maintained.
- *New or improved footpaths* should be completed on Foresthall Road, Church Road and over the Brook to Millfields.
- *Visual enhancements should be pursued* with more troughs and hanging baskets, refurbishing the area around the fountain and improving the appearance of the car parks by screening the recycling bins and planting.

- *The proper maintenance of the verges* would be a significant gain. Narrow verges on the Mountfitchet estate should be removed and orderly parking partly on the then pavement permitted.
- Negotiations should continue with the objective of *enabling Stansted Park to be used* as a public open space as well as providing land for junior football.
- *A review of all street furniture* should be undertaken and subsequently regular consideration should be given to maintaining what is necessary in a good condition.
- *Stansted Park provides stunning views* from Chapel Hill and the Mill and this should be protected at all costs. The Park itself could provide open space.

SPORT AND RECREATION – ENJOYMENT AND FITNESS

The context

The Parish has a reasonable range of facilities available but there are areas of inadequacy, and some facilities, which may be very desirable but hard to obtain.

The current position

- *Available facilities* include two cricket clubs, a football club, a tennis club, a bowls club, a skate park, an all-weather pitch and an indoor Leisure Centre adjacent to the secondary school.
- *The amount of open space does not meet required standards.* There are three play areas – Recreation Ground, Mountfitchet Green and Bentfield Play Area.
- *There is a network of well-used footpaths,* both within and without the development area.

The way forward

- *The additional facility most desired is a swimming pool* with 65% of respondents indicating interest. Investigations need to be undertaken as to siting, capital availability and revenue support.
- *The preservation of Hargrave Park as a sports area* or as an important green area, an objective which is supported by 60% of the responses.

- *There is widespread support for junior football* and a search for up to ten acres of land on a suitable lease or for purchase will continue to be pursued. [Policy LC4]
- The number of people using the *Romeera Leisure Centre* could rise subject to costs and the variety of classes.
- *There is a demand for cycle paths* especially among the young.

LEISURE AND THE ARTS

The context

There is a wide range of leisure pursuits on offer with many organisations but there are gaps notably for some of the younger age groups. There are ways at relatively modest cost to improve some of the inadequacies. The proximity of Bishop's Stortford is a factor in determining the viability of some facilities.

The current position

- *The equipment on the three play areas* at the Recreation Ground, Mountfitchet Green and Bentfield Green is limited and is criticised as being unimaginative as well as not meeting the needs of older youngsters.
- *Brownies, cubs and scouts* have troops located in the parish but guides have to join in Manuden (latter reflects a lack of any local base). Most groups operate waiting lists.
- *The skatepark and the all weather games area (MUGA)* are relatively recent facilities with the former being well-used. It is too early to make a judgement on the MUGA. Use of the skatepark in Autumn/Winter would increase if there is an economic way to install lighting.
- *There is a wide range of organisations* covering varying interests including the Local History Society, Gardening Club, Music Club (Music @ Stansted), Women's Institute, Shalom Group and political parties. In addition there are numerous ad hoc events arranged by the churches and other organisations, including walks. Adult education classes are available.
- *Activities devoted to those in or around retirement* include the Day Centre, the over 60's club and most recently U3A. The Day Centre has seen declining numbers. On the other hand U3A, which began operating locally in May 2009

now offers over 18 activities and has quickly recruited 227 members. U3A has no age limit.

- *Reading remains a major leisure pastime* and the library is well-used. In 2009 the library had 1328 members and lent 38,100 books. Out of the total number of readers 580 were under sixteen years. The trend in borrowing over the past few years has remained static.
- *The Children's Centre and Youth Centre* located in Lower Street are playing increasingly important roles in meeting the needs of toddlers and parents and young people. The Youth Centre, with some financial help, now opens four nights a week and plans to add a fifth. About 110 young people are currently members, while average attendance per session is 30. Further funding is needed to allow these activities to be expanded.
- *The provision of accommodation to hold activities* comprises a number of halls, none of which are owned by the Parish Council.
- *Improvements to the skatepark* are considered possible by about a half of the youth respondents.
- *Organisations are the lifeblood of the village* and are sustained by volunteers. However, help in the provision of suitable premises on acceptable terms may sustain and even stimulate this effort.
- Responses from the main and youth surveys suggest that *additional facilities and activities* would be well-received, including drama and live entertainment/music, a cinema, arts centre and swimming pool.

Main survey

Youth survey

Drama
Live entertainment/Music
Cinema
Swimming Pool (see Sport)

Arts Centre (see below)
Swimming Pool (Sports)
Juice Bar
Internet Cafe

- *An Arts Centre* would provide facilities for theatre, performing arts workshops, arts and crafts workshops and concerts.
- *A new flexible purpose built complex*, possibly on the Crafton Green site, could be possible and could incorporate the space for drama, music, workshops and could possibly incorporate facilities for film, video making, photography and dance (hip hop, modern, street and ballet were the leaders in this category).

- *Discussions are in train to improve community services* on the Crafton Green site including better library facilities, a community information centre, police and a new Parish Council office..
- *Demand for allotments is rising* and the 34 currently available are over-subscribed. The provision of allotments is one of the defined responsibilities and as such additional land is being sought
- *Village events have in the past contributed to community life.* With the loss of the Carnival and the Arts and Craft Exhibition, there are concerns whether this indicates declining enthusiasm to sustain voluntary activity in this area. However, the questionnaire responses suggest that there may be a pod of volunteers prepared to renew these events. Other organisations such as the schools run major community events.

The way forward

- *A decision needs to be reached on the desirability and viability of a major development at Crafton Green* (or indeed elsewhere in the parish). Subject to the result other options may need to be considered to meet demands for drama, music and workshops. More research will be needed to assess the depth of support for the desired activities and to analyse whether other venues could accommodate these needs.
- *To pursue discussions* with Essex County Council, Uttlesford District Council and the Police Authority over services to be available at Crafton Green.
- *Consult and decide on schemes to improve equipment in play areas.* Once plans and costings are finalised, external funding will need to be secured.
- *Discussions should continue with the Youth Centre* to ensure that the centre is open from Monday to Friday in the evenings and possibly Sunday afternoon as well as for some weeks in the school holidays. Identify funding if required.
- *Open talks with local schools to develop a playscheme* in the summer holidays. The age group most in need of support is probably between 5-12 years.
- *Initiate discussions with users of the skatepark* to consider ways to improve the facility. Funding to be sought to provide secure fencing.
- *Seek land to provide allotments* for rent. If a suitable site is identified then a costed scheme will need funding, most of which will have to come from external sources.
- *Attempt to contact volunteers* to see whether village events such as the *Carnival and the Arts and Craft Market* can be restarted.

- *Redesigned play areas to stimulate more imaginative play as well as satisfying older children.*
- *Seek to ensure that leaders and premises are available to meet the needs of brownies and guides and cubs and scouts.*
- *Support the work of Spangles (young children) and the Youth Centre. The latter should be open more often in the week and for the least part of the school holidays. The youth survey confirms this as a desired objective.*
- *Arrange more activities for children and young people especially in the long summer holidays, another request in the youth survey.*

RETAILING, RESTAURANTS, PUBS AND SERVICES

The context

The village has retained a reasonable range of shops given the commercial pressures and the proximity of Bishop's Stortford while the number of eating places has grown and the range of local services has been sustained. Continuing to maintain this position will need constant effort. [Policies RS2 and SM1]

The current position

- *The number of shops has fallen over the past twenty years with about twenty having closed. The businesses which have closed traded in a wide variety of products while all the antique shops have closed. Given the pressure on independent retailers and the proximity of Bishop's Stortford, a major shopping centre, it may be argued that the parish has done well to hold on to as many retailers.*
- *The village retains a reasonable range of shops serving regular needs with three food shops, a butcher, a greengrocer, a baker, two newsagents, a florist and a chemist.*
- *The remaining outlets are largely directed towards carpets (2), furniture and furnishings. There are no clothes shops. Two premises are vacant.*
- *Shops in the village are used daily if only for top-up and late shopping (nearly 80% of respondents confirm this) while weekly shopping in supermarkets is conducted in Bishop's Stortford and Thorley.*

- *Factors working against the local shops* appear to be too narrow a range available, lack of short-term on-street parking and too high prices.
- Unlike retailers, *the growth in eating out or buying takeaways has grown apace* and this has been reflected in the number of restaurants. Currently there are nine restaurant/cafes, twelve takeaways, while seven pubs also serve food in varying forms.
- *Local services are generally well-used* including the post office, garages, hair dressers and beauticians, builders, plumbers, electricians, gardeners and a vet.

The way forward

- *Convenient parking is important to customers.* If parking is regarded as difficult then it is easy to drive to Bishop's Stortford. This may be particularly true for residents on Foresthall Park.
- *The maximum amount of limited waiting on street parking* in Cambridge Road and Lower Street should be provided. In addition the businesses should be dissuaded from parking their own vehicles on the streets for long periods, thus depriving customers of convenient parking for what is often a short visit.
- *Negotiations should be undertaken to provide pedestrian access from the Crafton Green car park to Cambridge Road.* The arrival of Tesco Express has increased the urgency for a short convenient route to the car park. Negotiations should take place with Uttlesford District Council to permit one hour parking without charge in both pay and display car parks.
- *The environment of the main shopping streets must be attractive.* Lighting, the state of street furniture, signage and the use of baskets and tubs all have a role to play. Resurfacing of footpaths in Station Road would be beneficial as would baskets outside the station.
- Discussions are in progress to see whether Lower Street could benefit from *Christmas decorations.*
- *The car parks in Lower Street and Crafton Green need to be seen as safe and attractive.* The planned upgraded CCTV system should help to improve security while selective planting could soften and improve the appearance of these areas. The repainting of the recycling containers in the Lower Street car park will help the appearance but consideration should be given to screening these containers.
- *The removal of the skips* from the far end of the Lower Street car park and strengthening the fencing should reduce the amount of litter and scavenging.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The context

The village is fortunate to have a station and several bus services but there are ways in which these services could be improved for the benefit of parishioners.

The current position – Rail

- *Stansted Mountfitchet is located on the line operated by National Express East Anglia between London Liverpool Street and Cambridge, and lies between Bishop's Stortford and Stansted Airport.*
- *The village is served by the slow line to Cambridge and the fast airport service although all trains are restricted to two lines as far as Hackney Downs apart from three passing points at Bishop's Stortford, Harlow and Broxbourne. This restricted line capacity presents problems in terms of the number and speed of trains.*
- *The train service operates seven days a week with a mix of fast (airport), semi-fast (slow to Cheshunt) and slow (all stations to Bishop's Stortford)*

(insert table into left hand column)

- *The station ticket office is open between 6am and 1pm Monday - Saturday and between 8am and 3pm on Sunday. There is one ticket machine on the Cambridge platform while the waiting room on the London platform is closed at 1pm. The station has not been maintained to the standard of others along the line.*
- *A substantial proportion of those using the rail service are commuters, most of whom travel to London (27% in the survey). The number of commuters, most of whom are season ticket holders, is estimated at in excess of 500 and is growing. For these users the peak period service is critical.*
- *The quality of the rolling stock reflects its age while the quantity of stock available is inadequate to meet rising demand.*

- *Overall, however, the rail service was rated as reasonable or better* by nearly three-quarters of those who replied to the questionnaire although the high number of over-60's responding probably underplays the issues facing commuters during peak periods.

The way forward

- *Improvements need to be made to the train timetable* to increase capacity, speed and usefulness by increasing the number of expresses which stop at Stansted on weekdays (one per hour in each direction and two in peak periods). Change the next stop from Harlow to Bishop's Stortford, a more useful destination. More publicity to encourage use of routes to the North.
- *Create a better station* by improving the furniture, lighting and signs to the standard seen elsewhere on the line and provide a ticket machine on each platform. Open the waiting room all day and at weekends and preferably encourage the provision of a proper coffee shop.
- *Over the medium term increase comfort and capacity* by ensuring an efficient on-train heating system and by increasing the platform length to take twelve coaches.
- *Replacing outdated rolling stock* remains a priority which means that all the new stock ordered should not be directed towards the Stansted Express.
- *In the long term, doubling the number of lines* between Bishop's Stortford and Tottenham Hale would change capacity and speed.

The current position – buses

- *Stansted Mountfitchet receives five bus services* – 7, 7a, 301 and recently the 510 and 300.
- *The 7/7a* cover a number of villages, the airport and Bishop's Stortford as well as the Herts & Essex Hospital.
- *The 301* serves the route between Bishop's Stortford and Saffron Walden.
- *The 510* travels between Harlow, Bishop's Stortford, Stansted Mountfitchet by means of Foresthall Park to Stansted Airport.
- *The 300* runs between Tesco Saffron Walden and Tesco Bishop's Stortford.

- *The timing of services*, the reliability of services, access for the disabled, cleanliness of buses and availability of information are all key factors.

The way forward

- *Negotiate timing adjustments to routes 7/7a and 301* in order to provide a bus service at approximately half hour intervals.
- *Negotiate extension of route 7/7a* to Walson Way on Foresthall Park thus providing connections for the new estate to the village and for parishioners to Harlow.
- *Negotiate a re-routing of the 301* via Forest Hall Road to link Foresthall Park to the village and on a direct link to Saffron Walden.
- *Seek to establish flexible ticketing* between buses and trains by means of a residents' card with discounts.
- *Seek to establish a direct bus service* from Stansted Mountfitchet to *Stansted Airport*.

EMPLOYMENT

The context

Stansted Mountfitchet and the surrounding districts of Uttlesford and East Herts are areas of high employment but not necessarily locally of high earnings. The future development of Stansted Airport may have a substantial impact, both direct and indirect.

The current position

- *Employment levels* are high in this parish.
- *Stansted Airport provides direct employment* for about 12% of parishioners while other businesses supplying goods and services add indirectly to the numbers.
- *A substantial proportion* of parishioners commute to work with London being the major destination followed by Bishop's Stortford, Saffron Walden and Harlow.
- *A third of those responding* to the questionnaire who are working part-time would like to increase their hours.

- *Those seeking employment* use a number of methods, including local press, word of mouth, the job centre and the national press.

The way forward

- There is *strong support for a job vacancy board* to be displayed in the parish.
- *Attempt to retain existing commercial areas* in order to sustain a balanced community.

HEALTH

The context

Primary health care at Stansted Mountfitchet also serves a number of adjacent villages. Plans are in train for a major new health centre which would very belatedly supercede the inadequate facilities in St John's Road and the cramped conditions for the clinic at Crafton Green.

The current position

- *The two-floor surgery in St John's Road has a list of 8,624 patients with 50% living outside of the parish.* Residents also attend practices in Elsenham, Bishop's Stortford (South Street) and, to a much lesser extent, Newport. The existing surgery is cramped and not up to standard.
- *The clinic located on the ground floor of Crafton Green House* covers speech therapy, child protection and a diabetic eye clinic as well as providing a base for midwives and health visitors. The accommodation is again far from ideal.
- *There is a dental surgery in Woodfields* but there is no provision for NHS patients (another practice closed about six years ago).
- *The Boots pharmacy on Cambridge Road is well-used* and delivers an efficient service. Any threat to this facility would cause great concern.
- *Other facilities in the village* include two chiropody services (one private and one NHS for elderly patients), one private chiropractor and two private physio therapists.
- *The Herts & Essex hospital* now offers only limited services including a minor injuries unit (weekdays), limited testing and x-rays. In patient facilities are

restricted to a geriatric unit. *Saffron Walden Community Hospital* offers various out-patient services.

- *Major hospital services* are provided at Harlow (Princess Alexandra), Epping (St Margarets) and Cambridge (Addenbrooks). The nearest private hospital is the Rivers Hospital at Sawbridgeworth and is owned by Ramsey Healthcare. The distances to the three main hospitals range between 12-24 miles.

The way forward

- *The provision of the new health centre* (after fifteen years of discussions) *is the key primary objective*. The need is urgent for both patients and medical staff. It is hoped that this major facility will be located in the centre of the village or on Foresthall Park.
- *The new health centre* will incorporate additional services as well as providing space to meet the needs of a growing population.
- *With perhaps 2000 people at Foresthall Park*, pressure on primary care services will increase. The existing complement of two full-time and two part-time doctors will be inadequate to service 10-11,000 patients.
- *The appointment system at the present surgery comes in for considerable criticism* with difficulty in making contact and in making forward bookings. In the new centre more appointments should be bookable in advance with longer opening hours and weekend availability. Even at the existing surgery changes need to be made.
- Wherever the new health centre is located *there will be the need to provide regular public transport* between Foresthall Park and the centre. The major needs in relation to hospitals are a reduction in and/or more flexible parking charges.

EDUCATION

The context

Happy and successful schools make an immense contribution to a community and as such, whilst having little power in this area, the Parish Council wishes to understand issues facing schools and to help where possible and lobby a cause if necessary.

The current position

- *There are three schools within the parish* of which two are primary (Bentfield and St Mary's) and one is secondary, Mountfitchet Mathematics & Computing College (MMCC).
- *At primary school level* about 60% of children attend the two village schools with the remainder attending schools in a number of surrounding villages.
- *At secondary school level* the position is more complicated with the schools in Bishop's Stortford in Hertfordshire, which have been viewed as offering high standards, having taken a percentage of Stansted pupils. Newport and Saffron Walden, particularly the former, are other destinations. Overall maybe 72% of children attend secondary schools outside of the village while at MMCC 28% of the roll come from Stansted.
- *As MMCC does not offer education beyond the age of sixteen years*, pupils move to other schools offering sixth form choices particularly Saffron Walden County High (where there is a relationship), Harlow and Cambridge.
- *The schools in Stansted Mountfitchet are all facing significant challenges:*
 - *St Mary's*. The school is set to move from its existing location in St John's Road to a new site encompassing an enlarged school on Foresthall Park. Whilst the prospect is exciting, there will be practical problems of access to overcome and possibly, in the longer term, airport noise.
 - *Bentfield*. The school has emerged from special measures following an Ofsted inspection and has now received a good report.
 - *MMCC*. Subsequent to an Ofsted inspection in the Autumn of 2009, the school, totally unexpectedly, has been placed under special measures. A new head has been appointed from September 2010 and significant progress has been made in correcting outstanding issues.
- *The lack of a sixth form or vocational education has had an adverse impact on the reputation of MMCC* and persuaded a sufficiency of parents to look else where. The school achieves outstanding results with dyslexic children and others with special needs. Although the school is one of the smallest in Essex, it has considerable potential and demand is likely to increase following the building of Foresthall Park.
- *Adult education classes*, which cover a variety of subjects and activities for a roll of around 80 regular attendees, take place in St John's Road on the site of the former Peter Kirk School. In addition there are a number of ad hoc

courses as well as a range of courses for people with learning disabilities (regular attendees number between 12 and 16).

The way forward

- *The provision of vocational and sixth form education at MMCC should be pursued* and the plan set to achieve this objective which was shelved for financial reasons should be revived. There is a lack of facilities for vocational training and education throughout the district of Uttlesford.
- *Relationships between the Parish Council and MMCC should be developed* to the benefit of both. There is a ready route through citizenship courses, formal and voluntary, to achieve position results.
- *Access to both MMCC and the planned new primary school on Foresthall Park needs improvement.* A new footpath from the Foresthall estate to MMCC needs to be constructed, the footpath on Church Road needs to be widened and the route from Foresthall to the centre of the village must be improved over the brook and beyond.
- *The increase in the volume of traffic*, both vehicle and pedestrian, makes it even more essential to improve safety on the approaches to, and over, the railway bridge on Church Road.
- *The provision of improved transport links* to Foresthall Park becomes even more of a priority with the proposed move of St Mary's School.
- *A more detailed assessment should be made into the state of adult education* looking closely at the subjects and activities offered, the timing of classes and charges. Meanwhile additional publicity should be considered.

COUNCILS AND COUNCILLORS

The context

Three councils exercise responsibilities affecting the daily lives of residents. It is desirable that parishioners understand the division of responsibility, the people involved and are able to seek ways to improve standards in a cost-effective way.

The current position

- *Stansted Mountfitchet is served by three councils, County, District and Parish:*

- *Essex County Council* is responsible for strategic services such as Education, Highways, Libraries and Social Services. Stansted forms part of the single member Stansted County Division which includes many other villages such as Newport and Elsenham. The electorate is approximately 14,000. The last county elections were held in 2009. The Council is based in Chelmsford although there is an area highway office in Harlow.

- *Uttlesford District Council* is the planning authority and is also responsible for services such as environmental health, housing and refuse collection. For electoral purposes Stansted is divided into two wards each returning two councillors. Stansted North also includes the parish of Ugley. Stansted South includes part of the Foresthall development. The Council is elected every four years and the next is due in May 2011. The Council is based in Saffron Walden.

- *Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council* is the only tier that speaks exclusively for Stansted. It is composed of 15 members, 7 representing the Stansted North Ward and 8 representing the Stansted South Ward. The council is elected every four years and the next elections are due to be held in May 2012. The Parish Council is responsible for open spaces in the village, litter collection and the majority of street lighting in the village. The Council is also a co-trustee of the Windmill.

- The main findings of responses to the Parish Plan questionnaire were:

- *Essex County Council* is seen to be reasonably effective in meeting most of its responsibilities. The best areas are libraries and street lighting. The greatest area of concern is Highways. A third of respondents said they knew the name of their County Councillor and how to contact him.

- *Uttlesford District Council* is seen to be reasonably effective in meeting most of its responsibilities. Best areas are refuse collection and street cleaning. The greatest area of concern is Local Planning. Nearly half of respondents say they knew the name of the District Councillors and how to contact them.

- *Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council* is seen to be effective in meeting most

of its responsibilities. The best areas are: baskets & troughs, litter collection, gardening, grass-cutting and street lighting. However, provision of open spaces and play equipment were areas which respondents identified as areas for improvement. Nearly two thirds of respondents stated they knew the name of some of their Parish Councillors and how to contact them.

The way forward

- *More than one authority is involved in the provision of services* such as lighting and the maintenance of verges. If possible such duplication should be avoided. There is support in the questionnaire for the Parish Council to become the sole lighting authority.
- *There are opportunities for SMPC to take on additional responsibilities and powers* covering areas such as community information (including tourist information), the remainder of the street-lighting (currently owned by ECC) and enforcement activities. Much will depend upon the financial and staffing implications but the possibilities need to be examined.
- *Consider the provision of a Community Information Centre* in conjunction with the District Council which will provide access to all tiers of local government under one roof. If agreed it will depend upon space in or around Crafton Green House once the clinic moves to the new health centre.
- *Convene an annual round table conference with voluntary organisations* to consider issues and needs.
- *To argue at a parish boundary review for Foresthall Park* to be included in one parish with SMPC the most logical choice.

COMMUNICATIONS

The context

Most people have little interest day-to-day in the work of their local councils unless a specific issue prompts involvement. Regular and convenient means of communication can prompt interest and develop a cohesion in the community. With a major new development being built this is an even greater need and challenge.

The current position

- *The Parish has a wide range of facilities for communication:*

The Link	Village magazine available to all, with a 90% favourable response in the Survey
Noticeboards	Six available to all except commercial interests
SMPC Newsletter	Included in The Link and on the Parish website
SMPC Office Councillors	Open to everyone, either by post, phone or as walk-in Accessible to all in person, by phone or e-mail. Contact details displayed in SMPC pages in The Link and on the web site*
Council Meetings	The public can attend all Parish Council meetings and have the opportunity to address them. In addition, there is the Annual Parish Meeting and, from time to time, other ad hoc meetings.
SMPC Web site Email list	For the computer literate with Internet access* New feature as a result of the development of the website, but still being tested
Helpline	Voluntary phone service aimed at elderly, disabled or housebound population

- *Most parishioners (69% based on the questionnaire returns) are happy with the availability of information about village affairs. Of those having difficulty the majority fell within the 18-24 year old age group.*

The way forward

- *To review the services offered at Crafton Green through the efforts of the Parish Council and to review the opening hours of the office.*
- *New noticeboards to be erected on Foresthall Park.*
- *SMPC's answering phone message to include a reference to the website.*

- *Email addresses for Councillors* to be included with other contact details.
- *Profile Councillors and staff* members with photographs in the newsletter and online.
- *Continue to build an email list of parishioners* to receive information online.
- Consider creating a *specific section on the SMPC website for young people*.
- Encourage *village organisations to create/update web pages* linked to the SMPC website.
- Display information related to younger parishioners on the *Youth Centre notice boards*.
- Consider, when feasible, creating an *online forum* for discussion of village issues.

FORESTHALL PARK

The context

Once fully built and occupied this major new development, located to the south east of the existing community, will increase the population of Stansted Mountfitchet by approximately 30% (assuming the current parish boundary with Birchanger is not taken into account). Such an enlargement will require major efforts relating to maintenance, access and transport as well as the need to bring the new residents into the active life of the village. [Broadly this is in line with Policy SM4/BIR1 although there is no provision currently for suitable shopping or community facilities.]

The current position

- *Foresthall Park, which is being built by three developers*, has about 270 occupied or sold dwellings, out of a planned total of between 600 and 712. Once fully developed there will be, under current plans, 51 five-bed houses, 168 four-bed houses, 246 three-bed houses, 132 two-bed houses/flats and 60 one-bed flats. [Policy H1]
- *The new estate will have a new primary school*, St Mary's, which will replace the existing smaller school in St John's Road. Subject to no funding problems the school should open after the Autumn half term in 2012.
- *The Primary Care Trust* has taken the decision to build a substantial new health centre. Two sites - the Castle Lotus site in Lower Street and the original site at Foresthall Park - are being pursued in parallel with the preferred option

being Lower Street. Provided there are no planning or funding issues, the centre should be open by the end of 2013.

- *Access and transport issues will provide early challenges* given a population of 1750, a new school for 280 pupils plus staff and, if this is the location a health centre which is anticipated to generate between 200 and 250 traffic movements per day. On Mountfitchet Green, situated within a half mile, there is an all purpose play/sports area. Footpath links and public transport are currently inadequate.
- *Community facilities on the estate are few.* The new school will provide a hall of 190sq.metres, plus kitchen facilities, which is self-contained from the rest of the school and which will seat about 120 people. Only a few hundred metres from the estate is the Romeera Leisure Centre. There is no shop or pub.
- *Play areas have been provided.* There are two of any size – one off Walson Way which is open and the other is planned on the land behind the houses in Brook View. In addition there are at least four very small areas whose value is open to question. The equipment and the play areas will need surveillance and maintenance.
- *The landscaping of the estate poses considerable maintenance costs.* Not only are there many grassed areas and verges with some of the latter unlikely to be able to be well maintained but the many shrubs and trees, some of which have already died, will require costly attention.
- *The ponds adjacent to Forest Hall Road,* which form the habitat of the protected great crested newt, may require special maintenance which is likely to add substantially to costs whilst the ponds themselves are not visually attractive.
- *The collection of litter and dog mess* will require either or both parishes to add to staff as well as requiring the provision of bins (and subsequent regular emptying).
- *The development under current arrangements* is divided between the parishes of Birchanger and Stansted Mountfitchet with about two thirds of the estate falling into the former. If, after a boundary review to be conducted by Uttlesford District Council, the present position was confirmed then a joint maintenance agreement with apportioned costs would need to be negotiated by the two parishes.
- *The monthly Link magazine is distributed free to every house/flat* and provides a breadth of local information. This publication is supported by Stansted Parish Council.

The way forward

- *A quick resolution of the parish boundary issue* is essential. In the view of Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council a divided estate makes no sense. Given its separation from Birchanger and its contiguous boundary with Stansted Mountfitchet, the rationale strongly favours all of the estate being moved into Stansted parish especially as most residents will look to Stansted for services.
- *Review play equipment* as to range and standard of equipment.
- *Any takeover of responsibility* for play areas, landscaping maintenance and litter collection will be dependant upon negotiations with Uttlesford District Council and the developers to secure an acceptable financial settlement.
- *Limiting litter and the collection of litter will require defined policies.* The location and number of litter bins and poop/scoop dog bins coupled with a decision on which streets should be regularly litter picked will need to be considered.
- *Noticeboards (possibly two) will need to be erected.* Locations will need to be agreed.
- *The handling of a major extension to grasscutting and gardening* demands as compared to the existing requirements of the parish will require debate. Should contracts be split or will economies dictate seeking a single contractor? In addition the layout of verges and shrubberies needs to be analysed as to sustainability.
- *Footpath access* close to the estate and between Foresthall Park and the centre of Stansted Mountfitchet will need improvement with most of the work being funded out of the Section 106 monies. (This is a financial contribution made by the developers as part of their planning consent). Four specific requirements may be identified:
 - *Forest Hall Road* – a footpath from the southern end of Palmer Close to Church Road to permit a safe route to MMCC and the Leisure Centre.
 - *Black Bridge to Millfields* – improve bridge over the brook and the footpath up to Millfields to provide a safer route to the centre of the village and St John's Church.
 - *Widen Church Road footpath* or provide an additional footpath to improve safety from MMCC and the estates.
 - *Provide a pedestrian link from Jordon Close to Walson Way* to improve on current unsafe access along Church Road.
- *Consider traffic calming measures along Walson Way and Church Road.*

Important given the likely increase in pedestrian and vehicle traffic from residents and to/from the school and health centre.

- *Public transport links to the village are non-existent* although a good bus service (510) connects the estate to Stansted Airport, Bishop's Stortford and Harlow. The 7/7A services need to be extended to connect Foresthall Park to the centre of the village as well as allowing existing parishioners to reach school and especially the health centre.
- The bottom line is to work towards *meeting the needs of new residents* to the area and hopefully to involve as many people as possible into the life of the community. All organisations should be encouraged to reach out to our new parishioners to the mutual benefit of all.
- *To press for additional off-street parking to meet the future needs of St Mary's School.* It is estimated that up to fifty places may be needed compared with the current provision of twenty three.

STANSTED AIRPORT

The context

An airport which currently handles less than 18.6 million passengers per annum (mppa) and reducing and which has planning permission to handle thirty-five mppa, will have material economic and environmental impacts over a broad area which includes this parish. Vigilance, co-operation and negotiation will need to continue with the airport, the planning authorities, public transport providers and the Government to minimise the severity of these implications. Also, this will ensure future growth within permitted capacity and existing agreements made with the planning authority are undertaken in a way which minimises their impact on the parish.

There also needs to be recognition that BAA's aspirations are for not only additional growth beyond 35mppa on the existing runway but also a second runway when the time is right. Steps need to be taken now to encourage Government policy to be developed in a way which provides safeguards for the future and which puts up barriers to airport expansion to be allowed at the expense of community well-being.

The current position

- *The weakening economy has taken its toll* on the number of passengers using the airport with a *fall* of 21% from the peak annual figure of over 24mppa in the 12 months to Nov. 2007.
- *Airlines at the airport concentrate largely on leisure destinations in Europe* with low cost airlines accounting for over 95% of the passenger numbers. Ryanair and easyJet are the dominant players – in 2009 they handled about 87% of all passengers. Long haul airlines have come and gone but currently Air Asia X appears set on a growth path. Currently they operate seven flights per week, however, these account for a disproportionate share of the noise complaints made by the community to BAA because of the noisy aircraft which this airline uses.
- *Low cost airlines need to use their aircraft in an intensive manner* with each flying an optimum four round trips per day to maximise profitability. This translates into early starts in the shoulder periods 6 - 7am and late finishes in the evening shoulder period 11 – 11.30 pm. Sleep is compromised during these periods. Early and late flight movements in turn require transport whether by road or rail to be available through the night.
- *The airport received planning permission, after a long and acrimonious public inquiry, to increase its annual passenger numbers from 25mppa to 35mppa* on the existing runway. However, the refusal of the Coalition Government to permit a second runway has resulted in BAA withdrawing its application for this. It is not clear what the policy of any future Government would be.
- *The number of flights* reached a 12 months peak of 193,700 in November 2007 whilst in the year to the end of August 2010 the number was 148,004. This compares with the permitted maximum of 264,000 of which 12,000 may be at night (between 11.30pm and 6am). The number of night flights will be reviewed during 2012. Cargo, meanwhile, shows a different pattern. In the 12 months to August 2010 it rose by 10%. Aircraft used for freight tend to be noisier and are often flown at night, further adding to the noise burden during critical sleep periods.
- *Larger aircraft*, such as the Airbus A380 are expected to start using the airport in 2011. Noise levels may be a concern and, if so, should be addressed (Source .XXX
- *The impact of the airport's operations on this parish* and the surrounding area

is both positive and negative. The Parish Council does not have an issue with the airport as such, but has argued that expansion by an order of magnitude (alone to rival some of the largest airports in the world) would create pressures that would forever change the pattern of life in this beautiful and rural area. It is against this background that the way forward needs to be considered.

The way forward

- *Stansted Airport is established and is likely to grow over coming years* albeit that the rate of growth will depend upon economic trends. However, the long-term outturn points to the airport reaching a scale which may offer some benefits but which will create significant issues for the parish and the area unless these can be mitigated by careful planning and investment.
- *The Parish Council or indeed the parish on its own is unlikely to exercise much influence on the key issues* but it is crucial that concerns are not overlooked and should be brought to the notice of the airport and other relevant authorities. To achieve this the Parish Council should attempt to start again regular meetings with management at the airport to open a conduit for discussion and hopefully to improve mutual understanding.
- *Stop Stansted Expansion has been very effective* challenging the airport on current issues and even more on its proposals for expansion. This organisation has also established close contacts with Government Departments and all local MP's to help them represent the community concerning airport related issues. Close relations, and where necessary financial support, should be maintained with its successor body.
- *The near-term success in removing proposals for a second runway from the agenda needs to be consolidated* with a binding moratorium, ideally through a commitment not to proceed for at least fifty years, but preferably indefinitely. This would provide security for the local area and allow time, if required, to see the future of aviation against policies to combat global warming and the availability/pricing of fuel.
- *Other key issues which are likely to adversely affect living in and around this parish include:*
 - *Local road traffic*, including the use of roads through the centre of the village for traffic from the north and west and from the A120 through the village.
 - *The need to balance the requirements* of the Stansted Express with those of regular rail passengers on the Cambridge to Liverpool Street line. These relate

most importantly to the frequency of fast services and the acquisition of modern rolling stock.

- *The threat, as the airport grows, that the limit on the number of flights will be raised.*
- *Ensuring that noise levels from aircraft movements are minimised by monitoring, that flight paths are adhered to and ensuring that any revision of flight paths does not worsen the noise contour for local residents.*
- *Stansted Airport has in many respects been a success story benefitting from the growth of so called low cost carriers, hopefully this will continue in the next two decades. For the most part the original planning condition that all airport and airport-related activity should be confined within the perimeter of the airport has been adhered to so that many of the problems related to development surrounding Heathrow and Gatwick have been largely prevented. There will need to be vigilance to ensure that gaps in this policy are not permitted – Otherwise the advantages gained will be soon lost.*

