

## **Land Opposite the School and the Downs**

Stebbing Parish Council (SPC) objects to this speculative application which is seen as a direct challenge to the 'made' Stebbing Neighbourhood Plan and specifically the inappropriate attempts to undermine the democratically made decision of Stebbing residents to vote Yes at the Referendum in June 2022 at 97% of the votes recorded. The Stebbing Neighbourhood Plan reflects the thoughts ideas and ultimately the will of the community balanced against planning policies and requirements. This application seems to effectively ignore and try to negate them.

This application is on two pieces of pastureland that are part of a much bigger agricultural holding. They are outside the Development Limits and adjacent to the Conservation Area, forming breaks that separate the dwellings on the west side of the High Street and those on the Downs. These two fields are designated as Local Green Spaces in the Stebbing Neighbourhood Plan (SNP) and should be treated as Green Belt when development is proposed in them. (**NPPF para. 103**) To do this the applicant **must** show and prove very special circumstances as to why development should be allowed. Whilst the applicant's covering letter says they have identified circumstances, nowhere are these highlighted or explained. What they show are superficial promises; offers; ideas; and reasons but nothing with real substance.

## **Uttlesford Local Plan Policies**

Stebbing Parish Council consider this application should be tested against

- Policy S7 – The Countryside
- Policy ENV2 – Development Affecting Listed Buildings
- Policy ENV3 – Open Spaces and Trees
- Policy ENV4 – Ancient Monuments and Sites of Archaeological Importance
- Policy ENV7 – The Protection of the Natural Environment
- Policy ENV8 – Other Landscape Elements of Importance for Nature Conservation
- Policy ENV9 - Historic Landscapes
- Policy GEN7 – Nature Conservation
- Policy H9 – Affordable Housing

## **Neighbourhood Plan Policies**

Stebbing Parish Council consider this application contrary to the Stebbing Neighbour Plan namely:

- STEB1:** Respecting Stebbing's Heritage – Design & Character
- STEB2:** Green Infrastructure and Development
- STEB4:** Local Green Space
- STEB7:** Important & Protected Views

**STEB9:** Design Principles & Location of New Development (part 2)  
**STEB10:** Meeting Local Needs  
**STEB11:** Affordable Homes  
**STEB15:** Supporting the Local Economy – Small-Scale Employment Space  
**STEB19:** Protection of Play, Sports, Recreation, Leisure & Community Facilities  
**STEB20:** Protection of Community and Leisure Facilities  
**STEB21:** Health & Medical Care  
**STEB22:** Promoting Sustainable Transport?

## **Reasons**

### **STEB1- Respecting Stebbing's Heritage – Design & Character**

This application for 28 dwellings does not respect Stebbing's Heritage, it is adjacent to the Conservation Area and does not contribute positively to the street scene, it is not sympathetic to the neighbouring buildings or street scene, especially, creating a continuous line of dwellings. The visual appearance of the properties is out of character from those surroundings and does not complement them.

It has been noted that in previous ULP assessments of landscapes, the intermittent views across the valley should be preserved. Permitting this application would be contrary to NPPF paragraphs 147; 148 and 149.

The inclusion of the car park along with the dwellings would create an urban look to what is an agrarian historical landscape that causes harm to the listed buildings within the Manorial setting, namely Stebbing Park Grade II\* & Stebbing Park Barn Grade II

The applicant states that the Scheduled Listed Ancient Monument – Stebbing Motte (Mount) will not be impacted as cannot be seen, which is not so, especially during the winter months. The design of this application will neither conserve nor enhance any of these heritage assets. This is why STEB1 is complemented by STEB4 and visa-versa with the Designation of both fields highlighting the value of these two fields to the community as are all LGS.

The application will cut down/through hedges to form car and pedestrian entrances that will neither enhance nor retain the existing boundary of the two parcels of land.

Whilst supporting the use of green energy, the putting of Solar Panels on the roofs of the proposed dwellings would not be in keeping with the design and character regarding this policy of respecting Stebbing's heritage.

### **STEB2 – Green Infrastructure & Development**

This application's proposals do not enhance the visual characteristics of either of these two Local Green Spaces.

### **STEB4 – Local Green Spaces**

**Local Green Spaces (LGS) designated** within the neighbourhood are in accordance with the NPPF paragraphs 101-103 and were examined and considered by the Inspector of the Plan to be consistent with the NPPF.

They stated that the **Field Opposite the School** '.....is valued for its historic importance and is popular with walkers who enjoy the views across the site it is adjacent to the Mill Lane recreation ground and Cricket Field but lies mainly outside the conservation area with only a small element falling within the conservation area. I note that the heritage assessment considers the space to form part of the setting of the Conservation Area and that its Parkland

character contributes to its significance indicating it is clearly part of historic Stebbing Park. It is contiguous with the Mill Lane recreation ground and Cricket Field'

**Field Opposite the Downs** '..... Is enjoyed for the views by walkers and other recreational users as well as its historic importance I saw at my visit the site affords views.' Both LGS are as stated in the NPPF 101 '..... capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.' They were designated for the reasons of landscape, and heritage. To gain approval for development an application must show that they have proven exceptional circumstances of the need for dwellings in local Green Spaces. Stebbing Parish Council does not accept or agree that this application does.

Carrying on from NPPF paragraph 103. Policies for managing development within Local Green Spaces should be consistent with those for Green Belt. The relevant paragraphs in the NPPF that illustrate this are Para 147; 148; 149. Stebbing Parish Council regard the construction of new buildings in this application are inappropriate.

The applicant cites upheld appeals to justify their case, however, the recent **S62A/23/0018** illustrates the

very special circumstances of an application on Green Belt in Stansted Mountfitchet and the Inspector's comments from paragraphs 78 & 79 and 83 & 84 for example that very special circumstances apply.

Landscape and the heritage setting go along with the tranquillity and stillness of these two LGS throughout the days, months, and seasons.

Much is played by the applicant in their proposal that '..... all components of the scheme and the public benefits are completely intertwined and will be delivered as a complementary package ..... with the complementary investment involved SNP's LGS allocation would become more robust and considerably enhance its prospects of enduring beyond the end of the plan period' (2033) Stebbing Parish Council does not agree and points to the SNP, the reasons for these allocations the examiner's agreement and the 97% Yes to the Referendum. Stebbing Parish Council is loath to comment on this but the above comment in the applicants' proposal could be perceived as a threat.

#### **STEB7: Important & Protected Views**

Stebbing Parish Council (SPC) does not believe that the application with all its proposals, is in any way sympathetic or necessary to the local character including landscape settings, that respect the views both looking towards the Downs from the 'Mount' (Motte); views from the Downs towards the 'Mount' and from the Downs towards Stebbing Park. The views are open, agrarian, and valued greatly by residents. The Landscape Partnership report explains the criteria behind their recommendations.

#### **STEB9(2) - Design Principles & Location of New Development (part 2)**

These application sites are within the countryside and outside of the Development Limits and do not meet this Policy or **ULDP 2005 S7**. The two identified Local Green Spaces are not 'Exception Sites' therefore to suggest Affordable housing with market housing is contradictory to this policy, nor does SPC believe that these proposals meet NPPF paragraph 80(e) as the design is not of exceptional quality nor appropriate in the setting.

## **STEB10/11 – Meeting Local Needs/Affordable Housing**

The implication within the applicant's supporting material is that affordable rent housing will be allocated to local people, implying that Stebbing residents will be housed in at least eight rentals. As far as Stebbing Parish Council is aware there is only one Housing Association that will allocate to residents of the host community. Therefore, cannot comply with policies.

## **STEB15 – Supporting the Local Economy**

The **inclusion** of the Commercial / Community use building within this application is detrimental to the amenity of the surrounding area of the Local Green Space. This area although offering community car parking for the school and the local community is also parking for the Class E-commercial building. Stebbing Parish Council considers that this creates an urbanisation of the High Street and will cause harm. It should also be noted that the proposed entrance to the commercial building, car park and affordable housing if allowed would cut across the yellow zigzag lines marking the school area, the Parish Council think this unacceptable and contrary to policy. This proposed inclusion is contrary to **STEB15**. The village does not need a commercial building of any sort, so close to the village school. Please see the criteria in this Policy which this application is contrary to.

Please note the applicant states in Paragraph 2.3 of the Planning Statement that there are various commercial premises within easy walking distance of the application site this SPC would say is an inaccurate statement.

## **STEB19 – Protection and Provision of Open Space, Sports Facilities and Playing Pitches**

Stebbing Parish has a variety of open spaces, sports facilities and playing pitches as can be seen on page 63 of the Neighbourhood Plan. Stebbing Parish Council owns and /or maintains many of the above for the benefit of the residents of the Parish. The others are owned/managed by community members. The proposed development with its Open Space does not enhance this space but detracts from it.

Stebbing Parish Council is very aware of the cost of maintaining, improving, or enhancing all its assets and would therefore ask.

- Who would be responsible for the upkeep of these so-called improvements to the designated Local Green Spaces?
- Where would the financing of this upkeep come from and for how long?
- who would be responsible for the management plan for the maintenance and continued enhancement of the allegedly improved biodiversity?
- Would the residents of the dwellings should this application be successful (including the affordable rental dwellings) be tied to a management company?

Stebbing Parish Council (SPC) note the space designated for village events. This is not needed as Mill Lane Field is easily accessible for all residents this being the venue for example of the annual Village Fete.

## **STEB20 – Protection of Leisure & Community Facilities**

**Stebbing** needs no other Community-based buildings in the village, it is very well served as may be expected it has the richness to serve the various needs within the community. These can be seen on pages 63 & 64 of the SNP. Therefore, the proposal for a community-based

building is unnecessary and a superfluous suggestion in a village that is so well served. It should be noted that this building would appear to sit above the dwelling given permission in the curtilage of Laurel House.

### **STEB21 – Health & Medical Care**

Many residents use medical practices that are not in Great Dunmow, so to make the assumption that the NHS charge /costings would go towards local practices would be inaccurate and in fact, would actually be in a different ICCB area also.

### **STEB22 – Promoting Sustainable Travel**

Stebbing Parish is greatly concerned with the addition of 4 new highway accesses and two footpaths onto the High Street and the Downs

- There appears to be no provision for a footpath on the roadside of the development for either of the proposed developed fields.
- This will not encourage walking or children on bikes
- it should be noted that apart from the core part of the High Street there are footpaths/pavements on one side and then on the other side of the road throughout the village.

### **Highways**

SPC is greatly concerned about the 4 accesses into these 4 separate sub-divisions of the two designated Local Green Spaces. our concerns are:

- Access to the proposed commercial building, car park and affordable housing would be cut through the zigzag hazard lines opposite the school. SPC finds that unacceptable.
- the next two entrances are on the bend which allied to being on either side of the driveways for Falcons and Stebbing Park exacerbates the danger of usage.
- the entrance to plot A is on the straight where cars speed up even more so than just passing plot B

### **Biodiversity**

This application promises an increase of 10% in Biodiversity, however, to achieve that they will have to:

- bring the built form into what has been two open fields /meadows with their own wildlife using and living in them.
- animals and birds etc will be disturbed by the building of the dwellings, their continued residents' lives impacting on these fields where this was a minimal impact previously.
- Manage the area – who will do this and where will the money come from?

The Parish Council to give an example has just recently created a Woodland Walk at the bottom of Mill Lane Field with the help of a grant from UDC's Climate Change and Biodiversity Grant Scheme. there is already an increase in biodiversity, and we are managing this for improvement. We also have a management plan for Stebbing Green which is a 'Local Wildlife Site.' This all takes continuing financing, but there is no explanation of how much or where the funding might come from for this and all other 'benefits' muted in this application.

## Conclusion

Stebbing Parish Council understands that the Stebbing Neighbourhood Plan and the Uttlesford Local Plan make up the Development Plan for the District and that is what must be considered together with the relevant policies when decisions are made. Uttlesford District Council can now demonstrate a **'5.14 years' housing land supply** as shown in its 2022/2023 Monitoring Report. Therefore, a presumption in favour of sustainable development with this application could be applied in accordance with **NPPF para11(d)**. However, with this application, it must also be considered against **NPPF paragraph 14 (sections a - d)**. All apply to the Stebbing Neighbourhood Plan as follows:

- a) it became part of the development plan (being made in July 2022) less than two years ago;
- b) the policies and allocations met its identified housing requirement.
- c) UDC has at least a three-year supply of deliverable housing sites etc;
- d) UDC's housing delivery was at least 45% of that, required over the previous three years.

Stebbing PC submits that this very speculative and challenging application to the democratically voted for Stebbing Neighbourhood Plan does not meet or conform with the Uttlesford LP, the Stebbing NP or the NPPF and should therefore be refused. This statement was approved following a vote by the PC at an Extraordinary PC meeting on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023.