

CHAPTER ELEVEN - BUSINESS AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Each chapter in the draft Neighbourhood Development Plan is under constant review and refinement. Not all of the Appendices are yet available but they will be posted on the website as and when they are ready. The text in the chapters should be sufficient, however, to enable you to respond to the questions which are in the leaflet and repeated at the end of the section for your convenience.

Objectives

- To pursue policies to protect the commercial and business infrastructure of the village.
- To create conditions which will encourage businesses to expand and new businesses to choose Stansted Mountfitchet as a location.

Historical Trends

- The number of shops has declined from 35 in the 1950's to 10 today with a similar pattern for pubs seeing seven closures thus leaving seven today (including the Social Club). The reduction in shops trading has been most evident in the non-food sector. Virtually none exist today. However, the pattern is reversed if restaurants and takeaways are considered with none trading in the 1950's, apart from a fish and chip shop.
- Employment patterns have changed with a decline in agriculture, retail and small industrial businesses being replaced with commuting particularly to London, the opportunities at Stansted Airport and the rise in self-employment driven in part by the internet.
- The rise in the number of restaurants and takeaways has enabled premises vacated by retailers to be occupied.
- The medieval village at Stansted Castle constructed in 1985 and one of the best Toy Museums in the country were visited by over 35,000 people in 2019. A substantial number of the visitors are school parties.
- A number of employment sites have been opened including Riverside Business Park, M11 Business Link and outside, of the Parish but close to the village, Woodside Industrial Estate and Stansted Distribution Centre.

The Current Position

- The village remains self-sufficient in shops meeting daily needs with three supermarkets, one with a Post Office, a butcher, a greengrocer, a baker, a newsagent, a florist, two pharmacies, one of which has a dispensing licence, and a cobbler (see Appendix ???)
- This theme continues with hospitality which include twelve restaurants (including three pubs serving food), three cafes, six separate takeaways and seven pubs (see Appendix **).
- Other services are met by a taxi firm, a travel agent, four barbers, four hair salons, an undertaker, a chiropractor, a tanning salon, four estate agents, two petrol stations with shops attached, two car lots and two car repair/MOT businesses. This list is indicative but not comprehensive (see Appendix ?????)
- There are an estimated ????? businesses operating in the community although this may be an underestimate.
- Pre Covid-19 there was little unemployment in the parish. Three contributory factors may be particularly identified.
 - Stansted Airport has grown rapidly which, at the peak in the year to March 2019, handled 28.4mppa. It is estimated that ??? employees live in the parish with even more if indirect employment is included
 - Commuting to work has grown substantially since the 1970's with perhaps ???% of residents estimated to travel away to work especially to London.
 - The move towards self-employment, albeit difficult to quantify, is another contributory factor.
- A number of employment sites has enabled varying sizes of business to become established. Details of these sites, which are listed above, are shown in Appendix ???.

- The Castle and Toy Museum are important tourist attractions although it is questionable how much other businesses benefit from this flow of tourists.
- The establishment of Stansted Business Forum in 2014 has been successful and currently has 48 members. The central theme of the Forum is to use and recommend members' businesses. It has successfully promoted local businesses through the distribution of its bi-annual directory and maps initiative. The SBF has also been a good forum for members to work with each other to promote their services in and around Stansted. There is a regular monthly breakfast meeting held at Linden House in Stansted.
- In 2018 Stansted Mountfitchet officially "twinned" with the town of Rungis, a suburb of Paris and home to the largest covered market in Europe. It is, like Stansted Mountfitchet, close to a major international airport, Orly. This is another example of a good working relationship, not only with the Stansted Business Forum but also with local schools who have welcomed the opportunity to form ties with those in Rungis.

In summary, in relation to many communities of a similar size, Stansted Mountfitchet has sustained a healthy commercial infrastructure. However, there are fragilities which could change this assessment, and which need to be addressed in the policies covering the next fifteen years.

Questions Arising From Covid-19 And Critical Environmental Issues

- Will working from home become a permanent feature for a substantial number of residents and, if so, does this have implications for local office demand and other local businesses?
- Will shopping patterns change providing more opportunities for local retailers and greater dependence on home delivery/click and collect?
- Will demand for international travel recover and resume a growth pattern as was seen pre Covid-19 or will a hangover persist and be reinforced by the need to reduce carbon emissions as part of a broader policy to meet environmental targets?
- Will the move away from cities continue and, if so, will demand for housing in this area with good communications increase with a consequent pressure for development in Stansted Mountfitchet and Elsenham as well as Bishop's Stortford.

There are no definitive answers to these questions but the Council's assumptions are as follows and are based on successful vaccination programmes restoring confidence.

- Working from home will be more prevalent. Even accepting that a return to offices is likely the net change in working patterns could have important consequences.
- Shopping convenience will remain more important but socialising and visiting shops will recover. However, local shops will have opportunities to exploit.
- International travel will recover with confidence, but it will take time and may be affected by environmental policies. The airport will remain important for employment.
- For decades there has been a move from London into Hertfordshire and North Essex. Recent events may, or may not, accelerate the trend but the underlying move will continue. A rising population here and in the local districts will provide business opportunities.
- The upside from these trends will have to be set against the significant downside, namely the pressure on the infrastructure particularly in terms of local roads.

What Will Be Needed In The Next Fifteen Years

The first priority will be to protect what is currently serving the village well and the second is to establish conditions to encourage new, or existing, businesses to grow.

- Development proposals or change of use applications should not be permitted for properties classified as Class A1 shops in the two commercial areas with the primary and secondary shop frontages as defined in the emerging Uttlesford District Local Plan (see location plan in Appendix ????)

- Traffic and parking are key concerns for retailers, services and indeed most businesses. Under the Neighbourhood Plan efforts will continue to facilitate traffic flows in the central area of the village (see chapter 9) so as not to discourage customers who may otherwise choose to go elsewhere.
- Comments from local businesses have for the most part highlighted issues with parking. Three concerns have been raised
 - Raise waiting period on street to two hours (currently one hour on Lower Street and thirty minutes on Cambridge Road). The existing limit appears to work well while, in each location, there is a carpark within five minutes of the street. For periods of two hours or longer it is not unreasonable to use a carpark.
 - Reduce parking charges in off-street carparks. Ease and cost of parking are important. The layout of the carparks coupled with a review of tariffs will be reviewed with Uttlesford District Council.
 - The cost of the longer term parking for employees should be substantially reduced. It would be preferable to encourage as many employees as possible to park off-street with those who live in the parish being expected and encouraged to walk or cycle. Discussions on parking tariffs will be held with UDC.
- For environmental and health reasons reducing car dependence not only to cutback carbon emissions but to gain health benefits from improved air quality.
The Parish Council will continue to press Essex County Council to reduce or exclude the number of heavy and wide vehicles.
Policies should be pursued which make walking easier and safer not least by providing convenient crossings on busy roads along with dropped kerbs.
- Existing employment sites/business parks (see [Appendix ?????](#)) will be safeguarded with change of use for Class B or sui generis use of employment nature to be resisted without compelling evidence of non-viability and effective marketing of the site over twelve months.
- Support will be given to expand or use existing employment sites more effectively provided the proposals are sustainable in relation to the community including an assessment of such proposals on the local road network.
- Support will be given to the development of employment sites at the North Stansted Employment Area (55 hectares with uses Class B1 'Business', Class B2 'Industrial' and B8 'Warehousing') and land at Alsa Street (three hectares adjacent to the existing auction house and associated businesses). Both should increase the number of jobs for residents.
- Encourage new businesses and growth in established small businesses by pressing for reliable, fast broadband services with new developments required to connect to 'superfast' broadband networks with a minimum speed in the region of 80Mbps and the capacity to extend to 'ultrafast' speeds. (? Appendix showing variability of speed)
- To work with the owners of Mountfitchet Castle and Norman Village and the House on the Hill Toy Museum to sustain its success and to seek ways of increasing tourist spend elsewhere in the village. Promoting the Windmill could add to tourist appeal.
- By maintaining, or preferably, improving, services in the village and by ensuring a clean and attractive environment thus increasing the argument for moving a business to, or starting up, a new venture in Stansted Mountfitchet whilst benefiting for convenient road, rail and airport connections.

POLICIES

SMBLE 1 - The plan supports allocation of the following sites for employment generating uses:

- Land at Alsa Street (3 hectares to support extension of the auction house and related businesses)
- Walpole Meadows – 600m² of land for office use to satisfy small and start-up businesses

- North Stansted Employment Area (55 hectares of business, not-strategic warehousing and industrial uses). This is outside the Neighbourhood Plan Area but within the boundary of Stansted Airport.

- SMBLE 2 -** Employment sites in the Plan area should be retained for employment use. Changes of use will only be considered if the current activity significantly harms the adjacent area or greater benefit would accrue to the community or it is demonstrated that the existing use of the site is no longer viable by marketing for an acceptable period or an independent assessment taking into account the site's existing and potential long term demand in its current use. This opposition to unwarranted and unsupported change of use also applies to petrol stations.
- SMBLE 3 -** Change of use from A1 (retail) or A3 (food & drink) to non-town centre uses at ground floor level shall not be permitted within the defined primary and secondary shop frontages. Development proposals involving the conversion of A1 or other commercial uses at ground level to residential shall be refused.
- SMBLE 4 -** Change of use on upper floors where the Local Plan viability test conditions for conversion of the whole building have not been met, will be supported if partial residential or other conversion is shown to benefit the business, enhance the appearance, and not reduce the commercial viability of the ground floor.
- SMBLE 5 -** To support proposals which would improve the environment for existing or new businesses including facilitating traffic flows, providing cheap short term off street parking, improving pedestrian access and safety and lobbying for high speed broadband throughout the Parish.
- SMBLE 6 -** Planning applications for additional hot food takeaway establishments will be subject to considerations of impact on local amenity including litter, parking and smell as well as public health.

SMBLE 7- Broadband?

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

- 1 Do you shop locally? What would encourage you to increase your support of local businesses?**
- 2 Did you commute to work? Do you expect this pattern of work to change following your experience during the Covid-19 pandemic?**
- 3 What steps would encourage you to start a new business or expand an existing business in Stansted?**
- 4 What is your experience of broadband speed? If the service is poor, please state the location.**
- 5 Is there a need to develop more purpose-built offices or industrial premises?**

Relevant policies in the ULP and UDLP

- ULP Policy E1 Distribution of Employment Land
- ULP Policy E2 Safeguarding Employment Land
- ULP Policy RS2 Town and Local Centres
- ULP Policy SM1 Local Centres
- UDLP Policy EMP1 Employment Strategy
- UDLP Policy SA1 North Stansted Employment Area
- UDLP Policy RET1 Town and Local Centres
- UDLP Policy RET3 Town and Local Centres and Shopping Frontages
- UDLP Policy STA4 Land at Alsa Street
- UDLP Policy STA5 Development Opportunity Development Site

Relevant Evidence Base Documents

- UDC Retail Study update, Savills, 2018