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via post and email

Roger Harborough Esq
Director of Development
Uttlesford District Council
Council Offices
London Road
Saffron Walden
Essex CB11 4ER

Dear Roger

**Planning Application UTT/0372/10/FUL - relating to the removal of a planning condition restricting the use of commercial buildings within the perimeter of Stansted Airport to uses 'directly related or associated with the activities carried out at Stansted Airport'.
Due for consideration at Development Control Committee, 7 April 2010.**

As a result of an administrative error by Uttlesford District Council, Takeley Parish Council was not notified of the above application until last week and so we also have only just become aware of it. We note that it is due to be considered next week and so we are sending you this immediate notice of our strong objection. Shortage of time prevents us from carrying out more detailed analysis of the local property market which we confidently believe would have provided indisputable evidence for one of our grounds for objection.

Our position, in summary, is that we are astonished that officers are recommending approval of this application in view of the clear policy framework to the contrary, the departure from the Council's longstanding approach, the risk of setting a precedent and the risk of giving encouragement to developers with more ambitious plans. We now explain these points in more detail.

The application is for the removal of a planning condition which has existed since 1985 restricting the use of commercial buildings within the perimeter of Stansted Airport to uses 'directly related or associated with the activities carried out at Stansted Airport'. For 25 years it has been a consistent feature of UDC's planning approach towards Stansted Airport to restrict commercial development within the airport perimeter to airport related activities. This important planning policy is a fundamental part of maintaining the vision of an 'airport in the countryside' and is enshrined in the adopted Uttlesford Local Plan ('ULP') where Policy SP4 clearly states:

Patron: Terry Waite CBE

Stop Stansted Expansion is a working group of the North West Essex and East Herts Preservation Association

*'Policy S4 - Stansted Airport Boundary - The boundary of Stansted Airport is defined on the Proposals Map. Provision is made for development directly related to or associated with Stansted Airport to be located within the boundaries of the airport. **Industrial and commercial development unrelated to the airport will not be permitted on the site.**'*
[our emphasis]

Only last month this policy was spelt out yet again in paragraph 6.3 of the *Uttlesford Core Strategy – Further Consultations on Preferred Options*:

'Based on the Council's preferred scenario of full use of the existing runway land within the airport will continue to be safeguarded for operational and directly associated airport employment.'

The position in the ULP is mirrored in the East of England Plan, where Policy E7 states:

'Land within the boundaries of Stansted Airport should be safeguarded for operational and directly associated airport employment purposes. Employment development not directly related to the Airport's operation should be located at Harlow and other nearby towns, identified through Development Plan Documents in accordance with the RSS spatial strategy.'

It is difficult to imagine a clearer policy framework and it exists for very good reasons, including the need to safeguard against the risk of Stansted Airport diversifying to become a general provider of commercial and business premises. Proposals for an airport business park (or even a 'Business City') have been around for some time and it is vital that no shred of encouragement is offered to those who would promote such proposals.

The justification for the recommendation to approve appears to be solely out of sympathy for the applicant's commercial interests arising from its inability to find an airport-related tenant, despite extensive marketing and the offer of a reasonably priced rent. However, the downturn in the local commercial property market is not unique to Stansted Airport. There are many vacant commercial properties in the vicinity of the airport, some of which have been vacant and actively seeking new tenants for a very long time.¹ Allowing the airport to attract non-airport related tenants would make the market even more difficult for other local commercial landlords. It is, in effect, a zero sum game.

There would also be a fundamental unfairness if Stansted Airport were allowed to compete in the wider market for commercial lettings, namely, because BAA can compulsorily purchase land at its undeveloped value from local landowners. It would be patently wrong if such land, acquired at well below the open market price for commercial development, were subsequently to be used for anything other activities *'directly related or associated with the activities carried out at Stansted Airport'*.

Finally, we attach no great significance to the fact that the applicant seeks 'only' a temporary (seven year) removal of condition C.90J. If permission were to be granted for seven years, the principle would have been established and the Council would find it difficult to refuse to renew the derogation because to do so would most likely mean that an established business would need to be evicted, with consequent redundancy implications. It would also be more difficult for the Council to refuse any similar future application for removal of the same planning restriction on other commercial sites within the airport perimeter.

¹ Had more time been available we could have conducted a survey of vacant commercial property in the vicinity of Stansted Airport.

We are confident that on proper reflection the Council will recognise that this application is fraught with danger and must be refused.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peter Sanders". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.

Chairman
Stop Stansted Expansion

cc Development Control Committee
Council Group Leaders