

# place services

Ref: Urban Design assessment of development opportunity sites

Title: Site to the rear of Cambridge Road/Chapel Hill, Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex

Client: Uttlesford District Council

Date: January 2013

**Place Services at Essex County Council working in partnership with Uttlesford District Council**

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## **Executive Summary**

Following consultation on the proposals for a draft Local Plan in June/July 2012 the site to the rear of Cambridge Road, Chapel Hill and Crafton Green in Stansted Mountfitchet was identified as a development opportunity site. Through a process of viability testing, context analysis and urban design appraisal, the future development potential of the site has been explored and development principles established.

This document sets out the principles for the future development of the site, ensuring that any development fits into the surrounding context, while providing the town with a suitable mix of uses which meets the needs and requirements for the future growth of Stansted Mountfitchet.

The follow summary sets out the key development principles future proposals will need to address:

- A comprehensive development of the site would be the only way to ensure a mix of development uses which would benefit and enhance the future of Stansted Mountfitchet.
- Future development proposals need to be suitably phased, taking a regard for land ownership, development mix and viability
- Connecting Cambridge Road with Crafton Green possible as a one way or partial one way route
- Sustaining the current levels of public car parking while exploring more convenient locations for accessing Cambridge Rd and the businesses, retail and community facilities on site
- Creating a convenient, safe and direct pedestrian route to the retail units on Cambridge Rd
- Suitable residential development which reflects the immediate context of the site to be located adjacent to the surrounding residential areas with adequate parking
- Establish additional retail/commercial units to the rear of the existing units fronting Cambridge Rd
- Improvements to the servicing / delivery arrangements to existing food retailers on Cambridge Rd to alleviate congestion.

## **Purpose of this report**

Uttlesford District Council is assessing the viability of a number of development opportunity sites in Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow and Stansted Mountfitchet. This report follows on from another commissioned report undertaken by Carter Jonas titled; 'Assessment of Development Opportunity Sites' November 2012. The Carter Jonas report sets out the future viability of development options for each of the identified sites. This report takes the findings of the Carter Jonas document and begins to establish urban design development principles and options for each site including future uses.

## 1. Local Context

Stansted Mountfitchet has two commercial centres, one close to the railway station providing a more traditional centre and a second on Cambridge Road, originally the A11 and the main trunk road between London and Norwich. The two are some 450m apart and linked by Chapel Hill. Cambridge Road is a busy thoroughfare particularly in mornings and early evening.

### Location

This site is in the village centre and benefits from good public transport links. The identified site comprises some 1.09 hectares (2.7 acres) with two access points onto Cambridge Road and a more significant access from Chapel Hill. The site has a number of existing uses, including land for used car sales with access from Cambridge Road, a public car park with access from Chapel Hill with some community buildings, including the public library and Parish Council offices. At the northern end of the site are the former Sworders sale rooms with the second access to Cambridge Road alongside the Tesco Express store.



## **2. Policy and Viability Context**

### **Emerging Site Allocation Policies (LDF Working Group Oct 2012)**

Stansted Mountfitchet Policy –Development Opportunity Site

The Council will support development and redevelopment opportunities for town centre uses in the following town centre locations.

- East of Cambridge Road/Crafton Green

Development should form part of a comprehensive development or not prevent the development of any other part of the site. Development will need to be implemented in accordance with design guidance approved by the Council and other Development Management policies. Implementation of the proposals will be regulated by legal obligation in association with the grant of planning permissions.

### **Assessment of Development Opportunity Sites report (Carter Jonas Nov 2012)**

An allocation for town centre uses across the whole site is unlikely to find developers interested in resolving any ownership issues and promoting any schemes for the site.

This could leave the northern part of the site derelict whilst the southern part of the site would continue with its existing uses. In time there will be occupiers looking for space in the centre and it is important for the future of Stansted that space for them is retained but this would not require a site of this size.

However the allocation does provide an opportunity for the preparation of a comprehensive plan for the redevelopment of the site which can properly address the needs of the village as a whole, providing new retail units on Cambridge Road with proper links to adequate car parking, space for new town centre related development and could also include some residential development on part of the site which would support some of the less commercially viable town centre uses. Any such proposals would also need to consider the existing community services on the site and how these are to be maintained. We would recommend that the site be extended to include the vacant former 'You're Furnished' unit which was part of the recent planning application. This could provide an entrance into the new development and improve traffic flows on Cambridge Road and is shown shaded yellow on the Council's allocation plan attached.

#### **Viability**

Speculative commercial development on the site is unlikely and development will only occur in response to an identified need. A comprehensive scheme would be viable if it includes an element of residential and could create new retail units on Cambridge Road, improved access to relieve congestion on Cambridge Road, and identify sites ready for other town centre uses when the occupiers are identified. The allocation of this site should provide an opportunity for this important part of the Village to be considered as a whole. Development may well include some residential use but piecemeal development is unlikely to secure the benefits that this part of the Village urgently requires.

#### **Summary**

- Suitable balanced mixed use development
- Town centre uses and residential to aid viability
- Comprehensive development plan
- New retail units on Cambridge Road
- Proper links to adequate car parking
- Commercially viable town centre uses
- Consider the existing community services on the site
- Include the vacant former 'You're furnished' unit
- Speculative development unlikely
- Improved access to relieve congestion on Cambridge Road

### **3. Historical Context**

#### **Summary of Stansted Mountfitchet Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals (Approved April 2007)**

The southern edge of the site lies on the opposite side of Chapel Hill to the Stansted Mountfitchet Conservation Area. Within the conservation area there are no listed buildings with direct visual relationship to the site, though development might affect the historic setting of the Grade II listed Water Fountain and associated green. On Cambridge Road there are a further five listed buildings of relevance to the site given they adjoin, albeit from their rear aspect, or face on the opposite side of the street.

There are no trees affecting the site which are protected by tree preservation order.

Opposite the main site entrance, the Conservation Area Appraisal also identifies 1 Silver Street as having important architectural/historic value, being a very interesting 19th century house including gothic-style windows.

#### **Archaeology report**

The historic settlement of Stansted Mountfitchet comprised a polyfocal settlement pattern with historic development occurring in a number of locations. The earliest recorded evidence comprises the Motte and Bailey Castle which was constructed in the 11th Century to the west of Lower Street. The medieval market would have been located close to the castle. At a later date development occurred along the main London to Cambridge Road with many listed properties being representative of this expansion along Cambridge Road.

The Historic Environment Record shows no known excavation within or in the immediate vicinity of the study area. There is the possibility of previously unknown deposits being identified within the area, however, the level of modern development would have caused considerable disturbance to this area. A number of listed buildings dating from the 17th to 19th century front onto Cambridge Road. The setting and nature of these buildings should be taken into consideration as part of any proposed design.

Cartographic evidence indicates that the area behind the street frontage onto Cambridge Road has comprised areas of open fields or possibly parkland/orchards well into the 20th century.

It is unlikely that any archaeological requirements will be necessary unless there are significant changes on the Cambridge Road frontage.

## 4. Site Analysis

The plan below highlights the principle context surrounding the site.

The site is made up of vacant land and buildings including a used car sales yard, a public car park and a community day centre. The car park suffers from poor pedestrian links to the retail units along Cambridge Road, meaning that pressures for on street parking and deliveries are magnified. The site is well screened from the neighbouring residential areas to the north and east. The community uses make the site a destination point which would help encourage additional footfall to the rest of the site if developed.

The site has an area of 1.09 hec .



Photographic survey



Top: Cambridge Road is congested with on street parking and deliveries for the Tesco and Coop stores. The used car yard site provides opportunity for key street frontage for a larger store.

Middle: The surrounding residential areas to the east and north are screened with mature planting. Land to the rear of the Cambridge Road retail and office uses is utilised by parking.

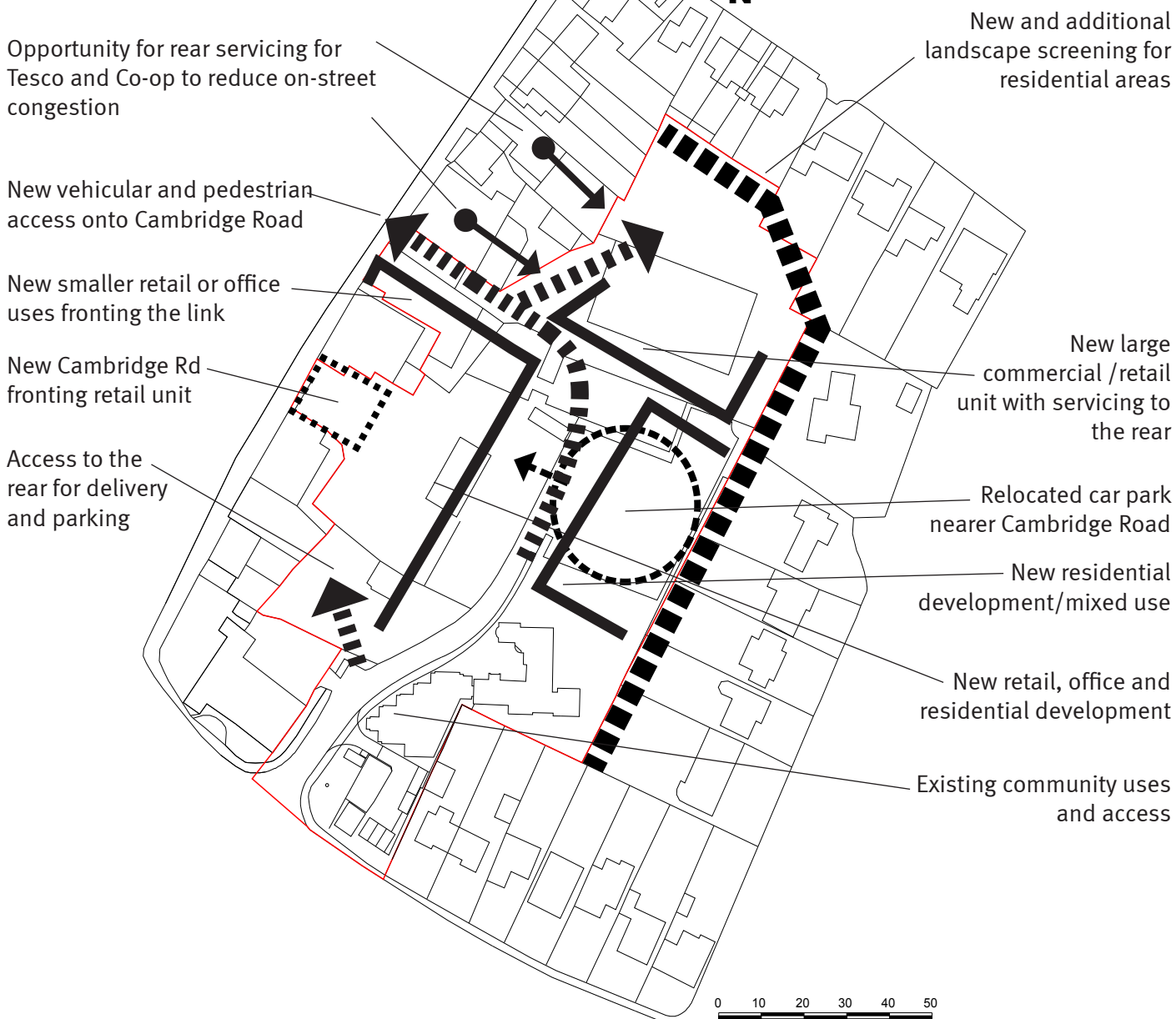
Bottom: The fenced vacant land in the centre of the site is largely open with redundant buildings.

## Key Principles

The development principles plan below highlights the key criteria for the future development of the site to follow. This plan represents the main development opportunities of the site while indication the constraints of the site and the neighbouring properties.

Development principles:

- 1500-2000sqm retail development would be most suitably located towards the northern area of the site
- Opportunities to create a shared service yard (including Tesco & Co-op) would help alleviate Cambridge Road
- Access connecting Cambridge Road and Crafton Green
- Relocated the public car park to the centre of the site nearer the main retail area: the principle aim being to increase the capacity for parking and to improve access to it.
- New mixed use development backing onto the rear of the Cambridge Road facing units
- Varied size, scale and mix of retail and office units including options for business incubation & starter units
- Landscape screening for residential areas
- Enhanced community facilities (a key priority)





## Indicative Outline Proposal

The indicative proposal below sets out one of many options for the site, but has been drawn up to allow for three phases of development taking use and landownership into account. This are; the car park and day centre, north of the site and the car sales and backs of the Cambridge Road fronting units.

### Development breakdown

storey	units	type	car parking	garden (average)
2	2no.	2bed detached town house (100sqm)	200%	32sqm garden
2.5	5no.	3bed terrace town house (120sqm)	200%	80sqm garden
2.5	2no	4bed terrace town house (200sqm)	200%	85sqm garden
1	1no.	large retail unit (1665sqm)	public car park	na
2.5	1no.	retail unit on Cambridge Rd (850sqm)	at rear	na
2	4no.	retail/office units fronting new link (140sqm)	public car park	na

Options for various sizes of dwellings and retail units may increase or decrease depending on market demand, viability and parking space provision.

The public car park has 53no. spaces.

The delivery bay could be shared with the adjacent Tesco and/or Co-op.

Large anchor unit with pedestrian friendly links to the car park and Cambridge Road

New access road

4no. new retail/office units

1no. new dual frontage retail/office unit with parking (This could be sub-divided in a number of ways to suit potential end users)

Landscaped public car park

19no. parking spaces for the retail units fronting Cambridge Road. (This could rise to a maximum of 32no. spaces depending on layout arrangement).

Proposed concept plan for the new community hub

Residential dwellings with parking at the rear (assumed development on the existing day centre)

The area indicated in grey could be used to provide more parking spaces for the large retail unit if required



## Consultation

As part of the preparation of this report the following groups were consulted on in regard to the future development of the site;

Strategic Development Management, Essex County Council Highways

- Conservation Officer, Uttlesford District Council
- Tree Officer, Uttlesford District Council
- District, town and parish councillors
- Historic Environment Specialist, Place Services

Relevant district, town and parish councillors were invited to a 'walk and talk' meeting on site to walk around the site and discuss key issues including setting out their aims objectives for the site.

The 'walk and talk' day was held on Thursday 13th December 2012. A summary of the comments are included below as well as any additional thoughts the councillors provided.

### Strategic development highways comments

- Cambridge Road has TRO along both sides
- Parking is abused on the Cambridge Road
- Deliveries on site
- Same size car park as existing
- Link between Crafton Green and Cambridge Road possible
- Residential on site needs appropriate parking
- Parking survey needed to assess the current and future needs

### Walk and Talk summary

- Phased approach to the site needs to be factored into any proposal linking development phases with land ownership boundaries
- Under used car park has greater potential as part of a wider proposal
- The car park could be moved to a more convenient place in the centre of the site, making space for residential development in its current location
- Linking Crafton Green with Cambridge Road via the entrance gap adjacent to Tescos would seem help alleviate traffic congestion on Cambridge Rd while opening the site up for increased footfall and vehicle movement
- The vehicle link could be one-way from Cambridge Road to Chapel Hill
- An anchor store could be located to the north portion of the site with shared delivery/service yard with the Tesco and Co-op store
- A retail/commercial use corner development facing the new link entrance could provide floor space for new smaller units
- Additional commercial/retail space could be provided backing onto the rear of the units fronting Cambridge Road but space for parking and rear servicing would be the priority
- If Crafton Green House becomes redundant the site could be available for redevelopment. There is no current intention to remove the day centre unless similar facilities were incorporated into the new development.
- Opportunities to widen Crafton Green in the future must not be compromised by the community Hub building

In addition:

Consider whether the access from Chapel Hill should be two-way, as it seems to me that this would be desirable to avoid access to the car park and possible community facilities and homes being allowed only from Cambridge Road. Please address the width of the existing access road to the car park.

Councillor's invited to contribute (3rd December 2012):

Cllr Salmon, Cllr Rich, Cllr Dean, Cllr Evans, Parish Council (c/o Ruth Clifford)

## **Contacts**

This document has been prepared on the request of Uttlesford District Council and has been produced by Place Services, a trading company of Essex County Council.

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### **Reference Documents**

Uttlesford District Council Local Plan (2005)  
Uttlesford District Council  
2005

Parking Standards: Design and good practice  
Essex County Council  
2009

Assessment of Development Opportunity Sites  
Carter Jonas  
November 2012

Stansted Mountfitchet Conservation Area Appraisal and Draft Management Proposals  
Uttlesford District Council  
Approved April 2007

Retail Site allocation policies  
LDF Working Group  
October 2012