

**(Draft Minutes)**  
**Birchanger Annual Parish Meeting**  
**Held on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2025**  
**At 8pm in Birchanger Village Hall**

**Present:**

Angie Driscoll, Chair (AD)  
Linda Pocklington (LP)  
Peter Sampson (PS)  
Geof Driscoll (GD)  
Keith Edgeworth (KE)

Keith Williams (Parish Clerk)

3 members of the public

Ray Gooding (RG) (county and district councillor)  
Nick Church (NC) (district councillor)

**047. Chairman's Welcome**

AD welcomed those attending the annual parish meeting.

**048. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024 were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

**049. Chairman's Report**

Good evening and thank you for coming along this evening to our Annual Parish meeting.

Having won their latest appeal, the travellers applied for 6 more pitches to accommodate their growing families which would make a total of 12. However, when allowing their first appeal, the Planning Inspector allowed only 6 pitches for 6 specifically named families. At their second appeal the Inspector again only allowed 6 pitches. The Parish Council have, of course, objected to this further incursion into the green belt and I know that many residents and the Residents Association have also objected. So far no decision has been announced by the district council but I'm sure if it's refused, as the previous two applications were, that the travellers will appeal.

There was also an application for 9 houses to be built on green belt which is presently used as a paddock. This application was refused.

In November we were informed by City and Country that they proposed to build 1050 new homes on green belt land between Birchanger and Stansted Mountfitchet. As part of drafting the new local plan, Uttlesford District Council had issued a call for sites (this is an opportunity for landowners to put forward their land for consideration) City and Country had put forward all their land between the two parishes, but this was all refused by UDC- it's green belt! In December Birchanger Parish Council and Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council met with representatives of C&C who were told, in no uncertain terms by both PCs, why we were against any development. Not only because it's in the green belt but because the local highways can barely manage with the present volume of traffic let alone the increase of another thousand cars, the lack of school places, doctors surgeries etc. and, of course, the green belt is there to avoid coalescence between communities. I was also contacted by Bishops Stortford Town Council who are against any development as well and were intending to contact C&C to inform them of this.

Any application to build would need to go before UDC and, as I've said, they are against building in the green belt.

C&C have a huge land bank and they are prepared to wait for years before applying for planning permission to build on any of it. Whenever they do, the Parish Council will fight to retain our green belt and trust that the residents of Birchanger will support us as they have previously.

The conversion of the Barn on footpath 26 into 4 small houses will be going ahead. The PC has raised concerns about large construction vehicles reaching the site via the lane and Harrisons but as this is a Highways issue I have asked our County Councillor to take this up with Essex Highways.

The UDC draft Local Plan has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate and it is hoped that a decision will be made in Spring 2026. Until a new Local Plan is in place Uttlesford continues to be open to speculative development.

The A120 roadworks were completed, way behind schedule, last July. However, there can be problems with vehicles on the A120 queuing back from the traffic lights blocking the exit from Birchanger Lane. Before the roadworks were completed I asked for a Yellow box junction and cameras to be installed but this was refused by Essex Highways. They thought the problem was caused by the traffic light phasing which would be adjusted. However, as the problem has persisted I understand that Highways are now considering installing a box junction.

The observant amongst you will have noticed that the village sign has been removed. It's been subject to sun, rain, frost and snow for 23 years and was deteriorating so it has been taken to a company in Norfolk to be refurbished.

We are also aware that the foundations of the war memorial are breaking down and so we are proposing to have the foundations repaired and the memorial cleaned. This seems appropriate as this year is the 80th anniversary of VE Day. Once again we have asked that the club to light a beacon in commemoration.

Our present national government has decided that local government is going to change in Essex and a few other counties. At present the 4 tiers are, the national government, county council, district council and town and parish councils. County and district councils will disappear and Essex will be divided into unitary authorities. I don't think any decision has been made yet regarding how many but no doubt our present county councillor will explain more.

Finally I remind you all again that we still have two vacancies on the Parish Council, so if you have a few hours a month to spare and would like to do something for our village, please think about becoming a Councillor.

My thanks as always go to our Clerk and Councillors for their help and support over the last year.

#### **050. Essex County Council Update from County Councillor Ray Gooding**

- Highways have installed yellow boxes at the junction of Birchanger Lane and the A120.
- Footpath repairs in Birchwood have been approved.
- Essex has been given an outstanding rating for Children's Services.
- There is a new train station outside Chelmsford, which is the first new station for 100 years.
- The County Council is considering the Government's devolution proposals. This would include the election of a mayor to cover the whole county. The consultation process is expected to be completed by late September following which a decision will be taken by the Government.

## 051. Airport Update by Brian Ross

BIRCHANGER ANNUAL PARISH MEETING – 26 March 2025

STANSTED AIRPORT UPDATE by Brian Ross

The public consultation on Stansted Airport's so-called "Sustainable Development Plan" (SDP) ended on 10 March and the airport is expected – very soon - to submit a planning application for expansion to a capacity of 51 million passengers per annum (mppa), 70% more than its current throughput of 30mppa.

But this is not quite as bad as it might first seem.

The SDP sets out the airport's expansion ambitions for the next 20 years and so the growth to 51mppa should be gradual. More importantly, the SDP states that the existing runway will be able to accommodate the planned growth. There will be no increase in the number of flights and no need for a second runway. The growth will be achieved through an increased in the number of passengers per plane. For example, the new Ryanair Boeing 737 aircraft will have 228 seats compared to 189 seats in the current fleet.

However, Stansted Airport will in future face much stiffer competition from other airports.

Since the change of Government last July:

London City Airport has been granted planning permission to expand to 9ppa compared to its current throughput of just 4mppa.

Luton Airport has just been granted planning permission to expand to 32mppa compared to its current throughput of 17mppa.

Gatwick Airport has been notified that the Government is "minded to approve" expansion to 73mppa compared to its current throughput of 43mppa. Final approval is expected in September. Heathrow Airport has been asked by the Government to bring forward its plans for a third runway by June. This will be a long term project which, when completed, will take Heathrow's capacity to about 135mppa, compared to its current throughput of 84mppa.

In summary, London's airports are on track to increase their capacity to 300mppa, compared to the present demand of 178mppa. Where will the extra passengers come from?

If this level of growth in air travel comes about, how can this be reconciled with the Government's commitment to tackle global warming and achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050?

Another fundamental question is at local level. An extra 21 million passengers a year at Stansted would put enormous strain on the local road network, and when considered alongside the extra traffic generated by all the new local housebuilding, how can our local roads possibly cope?

Finally, Brian Ross, flagged up the risk of a very significant increase in the number of night flights. The current limits expire in October 2028 and the new limits will be announced by the Department for Transport (DfT) about a year beforehand, i.e. in October 2027. Manchester Airport Group (MAG) are pressing the DfT to remove the current limits on the number of night flights at Stansted. MAG is trying to argue that night noise can be adequately controlled by using noise contours and noise quota points and without the need for a numerical limit. This is simply untrue and Brian Ross gave some examples to show why it was important to retain numerical limits on night flights.

Numerical limits are simple to understand and enforce, and they give a clear level of protection for local residents. On the other hand, noise contours and noise quota points are very difficult for most people to understand, almost impossible to verify and they can easily be manipulated.

There would undoubtedly be a very significant increase in the number of night flights if MAG was successful in persuading the DfT to abolish the current numerical limits. Our local District and Parish councils, as well as local residents, need to be alert to this risk and should make their views known to the DfT when a consultation on this issue is launched, possibly as early as next year.

ENDS

**052. Resolutions**

**1) This meeting rejects any expansion to Stansted Airport and proposals in any form relating to a second runway.**

The resolution above was passed with one dissenter.

**2) This meeting rejects any further coalescence with neighbouring towns and villages and will endeavour to protect the remaining Green Belt surrounding the village.**

The resolution above was passed unanimously.

**053 Closure of Meeting**

There being no further matters to discuss the meeting was declared closed at 20.49.