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Sent: 13 March 2025 15:34
To: Section 62A Applications <section62a@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Subject: Comments - S62A/2025/0077 – Land West of High Street, Stebbing

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S62A/2025/0077 – Land West of High Street, Stebbing

I have lived in Stebbing for over 30 years and object to the application to build 28 houses on the 2 parcels of land west of the High Street for the following reasons:

- **An almost identical Application (UTT/23/2496/FUL) has previously been rejected by Uttlesford District (UD) Planning supported by written objections from the Stebbing Parish Council and over 100 residents. Despite Montare’s rationale for submitting directly to the Inspectorate by-passing the appeal process, the reasons for UD refusal still apply and refusal should be upheld.**
 - **Montare’s rationale for resubmission is based on the updated NPPF (Dec 2024) and tries to undermine the current Stebbing Neighbourhood Plan (SNP/NP), which was adopted in 2022 following an independent examination and endorsed through referendum by 97% of the 551 residents who voted. The SNP is current and valid and should be given full weight in decision making until an updated version can be made by the Parish Council and endorsed by residents.**
 - Montare argue that the newly updated UD Local Plan (2021-2041) allocates 109 additional houses to Stebbing, whilst ignoring the current SNP. However, the additional houses were only very recently assigned to Stebbing and are not allocated until 2034-41!
 - The current SNP does not identify these 2 parcels of land as suitable locations for houses but as Local Green Space (LGS) with protected views. The NPPF is clear that the SNP should be the starting point in decision making and if conflict arises between an application and the NP as here, the NP takes precedence and the application should be refused.
 - The current SNP (developed and endorsed following due process) is valid and must be given full weight in decision making. The Parish Council in conjunction with residents should be given time via appropriate activities to plan for the future, agree suitable locations around the village and update the SNP to align with the UD Local Plan. Approval of this new application without considering the current SNP undermines the fundamentals of local planning and democracy.
 - **Montare suggest that the 2 parcels of land proposed for development could be considered Grey Belt under the updated NPPF. This ignores the NPPF’s intent to preserve the character and settings of historic locations such as Stebbing and to protect the countryside. As LGS these parcels of land should not be assigned as Grey Belt for development.**
 - The NPPF’s intent is to prevent urbanisation and protect the countryside including in rural locations/villages. Green Belt specifically seeks to preserve the setting

and special character of historic towns and to prevent neighbouring towns from merging (143 d and b). Stebbing is an historic village that has evolved from the hamlets of Bran End, Stebbing centre, Church End and Stebbing Green, the latter three all being conservation areas. Despite some infill in the 20th century, these hamlets have retained open spaces between them, adding to Stebbing's special character and unique layout. The historic Grade II* Stebbing Park and the motte, along with the 2 parcels of land are between the village centre and Bran End and serve as the natural break between these former hamlets. The land was part of the Stebbing Park estate until the early 1900s and so key to its history and its setting; as noted in the UDC refusal and the objections raised by Historic England. The SNP identifies the land as LGS highlighting its value to the community and acknowledging its historic importance.

- For all the above reasons the land should not be considered Grey Belt.
- **The SNP designates the 2 parcels of land as LGS with protected views, highlighting their value and important benefits to the Stebbing Community. The LGS designation complies with the NPPF and so should be upheld. The proposed housing will have an irreversible impact on these LGSs and a detrimental impact on the community and its well being.**
 - The designation of the 2 parcels of land as LGS complies with NPPF given that they are a) in close proximity to the community; b) demonstrably special to a local community (eg its beauty, historic significance, tranquillity and rich in wildlife); and c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.
 - Both parcels of land were part of the Stebbing Park estate and as such are old, virtually untouched meadows with many species of flora and fauna. They have public rights of way (PRoWs) running through them, so are already wonderful amenities for villagers who walk or jog and enjoy nature, as well as ramblers who visit Stebbing. I and many residents use these PRoWs regularly as a circular walk either around Stebbing or out of the village into the countryside. We derive benefit from the LGS not only through exercise but as a place to watch nature, taking in its wonderful views across the Stebbing Brook valley, particularly from the Downs and the lime tree entrance of Stebbing Park. Returning to the village from the west or along the boundary path the PRoW provides lovely views towards the Downs and the setting of Stebbing Park. The boundary PRoW has wonderful views of the castle motte/Mount in winter and in spring its daffodil covered slopes and nesting swans. Looking eastwards there are views over the field towards the hedgerow on the High Street. These are areas where buildings are discrete and one can enjoy nature, its tranquillity and benefits of the countryside without having to get in a car.
 - Although the current houses on the Downs/High Street can be seen, they form a subtle backdrop to the LGS; this would not be the case with the proposed development which will cover a significant amount of land and by virtue of its sloping nature they will dominate the valley. The PRoWs will by necessity run close to the new properties and will lose their openness taking on an urban feel; many of their benefits will be lost.
 - The proposed houses will irreversibly impact these LGS and their treasured views, to the detriment of my family as well as the wider community who enjoy and value them. Montare imply the protected views of the SNP may be retained,

however this is misleading since they will be squeezed between buildings and drastically altered forever. Hedgerows and meadows will be replaced by buildings, driveways and a car park - how can this be an improvement of LGS? The green spaces being proposed in Montare's plan are artificial and urban-like and will no longer have a rural feel; importantly they do not compensate for the loss of the open space for current residents.

- The benefits that these LGS bring to the community should not be underestimated; COVID showed the important link between nature and well being. LGS are not just about exercise but the benefits gained from being in the rural landscape: fields as they change with the seasons and the joy of hearing, seeing and smelling nature in all its glory. For this reason alone the 2 parcels of land assigned as LGS should be preserved for future generations of Stebbing residents, so that they may too benefit.
- **• The proposed development will increase the risk of accidents on the Downs/High Street and at the school entrance and result in severe congestion at peak times.**
- There are 4 proposed access points onto the Downs/High Street, 2 situated on either side of a blind bend located at the entrance to Stebbing Park and 1 (also the proposed car park entrance) located opposite the school entrance/car park. In the original application to UD the traffic survey showed that 66% of cars on the Downs exceeded 30 mph with an 85th percentile of 38mph, highlighting the risk due to speeding cars. These 4 additional access points on the Downs/High Street will increase the risk of accident, as cars enter/exit the developments and pedestrians try to cross the road, particularly during busy times.
- Montare propose a 23-car parking area opposite the school entrance and suggest school buses might use the car park. This proposal shows a lack of appreciation of the area which is already a point of significant congestion; if approved this proposal will cause more chaos with significant risk of accident: i) cars trying to enter/exit 2 car parks opposite each other and exiting cars trying to turn in two directions, ii) a large number of parents and children standing or walking on the pavement or trying to cross the road iii) whilst cars, vans etc on the High Street/The Downs continue to try to drive through. Any proposed pedestrian crossings may reduce some risk, but it will cause gridlock as cars will be unable to exit the car parks or pass through, increasing driver frustration which itself can be dangerous and lead to potential accidents.
- **The proposed house designs are NOT in keeping or sympathetic with the High Street/the Downs, nor with the houses in the nearby conservation area. They will dominate the LGS and the views from the High Street/Downs and the landscaping does not mitigate the negative impact of the proposal.**
- Montare's proposed 'barn' designs are not in keeping or sympathetic to the High Street/the Downs; they are completely inappropriate for this location. Most are tall 2 storey builds, having large glass frontages overlooking the LGS, with balconies, terraces and canopies. The large number, dark facia, similarity in design, size and elevation of such buildings would be incongruous on the High Street/Downs, where houses are different styles. They are very much at odds with the houses in the conservation area. The 'stunning views' described by Montare from the new houses is a selling ploy for prospective occupants only,

and will be at the detriment of the villagers who walk/cycle or drive along the Downs/High Street to the local facilities, as well as the householders opposite the new properties, who will lose their existing views and see the backs of these large properties. The residents of Falcons will be severely impacted by Plot B. Placement of a few trees and hedges around the development will not mitigate the urban feel that will be created or that will be seen from the Downs/High Street.

- Creation of orchards and a composting facility in the land that has been used for grazing and historically as a deer park will not improve the LGS, instead it will urbanise it, creating a setting more appropriate for a housing development in a large town or city. It is disappointing that many of Montare's landscaping documents provide photos of the LGS taken during the winter months with bare trees, dead scrub, boggy land and no flowers. It is no wonder that the impression these reports give is that the LGS can be improved upon! The existing brambles, nettles, wild flowers as well as trees and hedgerows look very different in spring to autumn and are very important for biodiversity.
- **The proposed facilities do not enhance the village or provide any new benefits to current residents. Montare describes the proposed benefits to the village as: offering new green space, a forest school, linking the village, and a potential area for village events. These do not offer any new benefits to the Stebbing community, which is already well served with such facilities; we really don't need them!**
 - There are several existing amenity areas within Stebbing (see SNP for full details): the largest is the Mill Lane cricket ground with its pavilion and playground – this is has hosted village fetes and national celebrations for many years and is extremely suitable for all open air community functions, being a large flat field easily accessed by foot from both ends of the village, with toilets and a kitchen in the pavilion. At the lower end of the cricket ground a woodland walk has been created in existing old woodland, villagers are contributing by planting bulbs and wild flowers and placing nesting boxes etc. The cricket ground links to several ProWs in both directions through wooded areas and along the length of Stebbing Brook, which in some places is already accessible to the public.
 - Stebbing Primary School has a Forest School ethos with facilities in its large sports field, with access to private meadows in the village (see School Website).
 - Stebbing Parish is also lucky to be well served by many ProWs and permissive paths as well as byways, many of which are through ancient woods, along streams or field boundaries, as well as some quiet lanes; ramblers, joggers, dog walkers, horses and cyclists are regularly seen using all these facilities. So residents young and old are well served by existing natural amenities that permit exercise and the enjoyment of nature.

In summary, I strongly object to this planning application; the plans have already been refused by UD and the reasons for refusal still apply. The SNP and its LGS is valid and should be given full weight in decision making. The proposals by Montare are not in alignment with the SNP and offer no significant benefits to the village, but will be detrimental to the wider community not just during the building phase but will irreversibly change the character, setting and enjoyment of our LGS and

historic village. I urge you to come to Stebbing to visit our historic sites and see for yourself our LGS and its wonderful views, to fully understand why this application should be refused.

Richard Lincoln