



Earls Colne Business Park Application 18/02263/FUL – Planning Committee Speech

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Malcolm Hobbs and I am the manager and part owner of Earls Colne Business Park and the wider Airfield.

My family has spent over 50 years turning a derelict World War II airfield into an Estate that now employs over 1,500 people in a wide variety of jobs and in many different sectors of industry.

On site, there is the large Golf & Country Club called 'The Essex', which provides facilities for many different sports and has over 2,000 members. The Essex is currently undergoing a £1.5 million refurbishment. This is important background as it shows the success of the location in attracting both businesses and people for leisure activities.

With regards to this application, the one thing lacking on the Park and indeed in the wider District, is a modern office facility to support the small and growing businesses that need flexible, but professional premises to operate from.

Your Officers have acknowledged this in their report, stating that the proposed office space is a perfect fit for the micro businesses that make up nearly 90% of the total business base within the District, which currently has a lack of grow-on office space.

This means that businesses either do not grow in order to remain within their manageable spaces, or leave the District to grow, which also represents a significant barrier to attracting businesses from outside the area to locate to the District.

A serviced office in this location would provide a place for many small businesses to base themselves, rather than travelling out of the District to find premises. If you consider the number of new homes being built now and over the next 10-15 years, then anyone can see that small offices with flexible leases is clearly the way to help existing and future businesses grow.

It is clear that Braintree District Council are creating the right conditions for the local economy, by trying to help and assist businesses as we look to recover from COVID-19, with one such example being the adoption of the Local Development Order for the Horizon 120 Business and Innovation Park. We are seeking to provide another example of trying to do right for the District.



Whilst this site is technically within the countryside, its location is unique, as it is located within close proximity to the existing Business Park and its extensive facilities, and there is further business land beyond the Airfield adjacent to this site. As set out by your Officers, whilst a departure from your Development Plan, the economic benefits of our proposals are significant and include the creation of up to 250 new jobs within the District, but also benefits for local traders, who will see an increased footfall in passing trade.

It has been over two years since I began work on this application, and following extensive discussions with your Officers, which have resulted in amendments to the design of the building and its commercial offer, we firmly believe that the proposals present the opportunity to provide a high quality, pleasant working environment to support local businesses. This includes the provision of significant tree planting and landscaping within the site, which will help us achieve biodiversity net gain.

My agents have reviewed the proposed conditions and feel that, subject to a few revisions that they have expressed to your Officers, these are appropriate to secure a successful development.

My one concern is in the respect of the request for me to make a contribution towards off-site formal sports provision. My agents have expressed to your Officers that this is simply not necessary as the wider Park offers a full range of recreation and open space opportunities, which are easily accessible for future employees at discounted rates. I ask that Members take this into consideration and waive this contribution.

As an alternative and of more value to the local community, is the opportunity to provide a cycle path that will help connect Earls Colne and Coggeshall. Following discussions with the Parish Council and Marks Hall Estate, I would be willing to upgrade the part of the route that runs through my land, and make a further contribution to Marks Hall Estate to help them construct the route through their land. This cycle path would not only encourage safe and sustainable travel between the villages, but would also encourage future employees to cycle.

Madam Chairman, and Councillors, I respectfully ask you to agree with your Officer's recommendation and grant planning permission, to allow me to create a facility of which Braintree District Council can be proud. Thank you.