

In brief

Electrician has the spark of a nice idea



Electrician Steve Hogg

A Stansted electrician who went to the aid of an intensive care nurse whose home had been without power for several days has been praised for waiving the bill.

Steve Hogg, who owns Stansted Electrical Services, helped out after learning that the woman had been unable to fix the problem. He and a colleague spent a day repairing the fault at the property in Much Hadham.

Friends highlighted his kind gesture on Facebook: "It's a hard time for everyone, and even though Steve has bills to pay, his act of kindness was a great thing to do."

Steve said the nurse worked at Harlow's Princess Alexandra Hospital: "She looked so drained, and when she offered to pay I said 'absolutely not'. I told her that for what she's done for us, it's the least I could do."

Opening hours extended at Boots

Boots in Stansted has extended its opening hours now that staff are no longer self-isolating.

The Cambridge Road dispensary had come under fire for opening for only four hours a day, resulting in lengthy queues outside.

A spokeswoman said its opening hours were now Monday-Friday 8am-1pm and 2pm-7pm, Saturday 9am-1pm and 2pm-5pm. "We would like to thank all our patients in the Stansted community for their ongoing support," she added.

Teacher's garden marathon test

A teacher from Forest Hall School who was aiming to run 20 marathons in 2020 is now completing the challenge in his garden.

Paul Conlon, head of Year 11, had notched up four runs, but with all major events cancelled he had to rethink his plans.

He said: "I've measured it out and I need to complete about 2,740 laps to clock up the 26 miles. I've called it my Teddy Bear Marathon as I'll be going round and round the garden like a teddy bear!" Money raised will go to St Clare Hospice.

New homes plan highlights Uttlesford's planning chaos

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A formal application to build 168 homes on farmland next to Pennington Lane in Stansted has been unveiled – confirming many people's worst fears that the lack of a Local Plan in Uttlesford will lead to "planning anarchy".

The timing of Bloor Homes' submission during lockdown was criticised this week as "not appropriate" and parish council chair Cllr Maureen Caton said the village was once again preparing to fend off the advances of developers.

Bloor Homes will submit outline plans to Uttlesford District Council next month.

District councillors will convene tomorrow evening (Thursday) for a virtual meeting to consider proposals to start the Local Plan process again, following two failed attempts at gaining Government approval.

Having already spent £3.9m on the recently rejected engineering plan and £2m on the previous one, taxpayers are now facing costs of between £2m and £4m to produce the new planning vision which would set firm guidelines on areas for development.

Cllr Caton urged villagers not to

"I feel very concerned for the district because in the absence of a Local Plan we will get development in the wrong places"

Cllr Geoffrey Sell
Liberal Democrat

submit their comments on Bloor Homes' proposals ahead of the application being submitted to Uttlesford, but to press the developer to delay the scheme.

"As far as we are concerned, because we have no Local Plan and because our Neighbourhood Plan isn't finished, they [the developers] are trying to create more development while they have the opportunity," said Cllr Caton.

A parish council statement added: "If comments are submitted to Bloor ahead of that time it gives them an opportunity to amend their plan and to claim that they have taken note of public comment."

"We would suggest that the only feedback that you give via the Bloor Homes website would be to request a delay in submitting the application until such time as a proper and meaningful public consultation can take place."

A letter to Cllr Caton from Bloor Homes divisional chairman Andrew Marns said the current stage of the consultation was "in line with normal consultation requirements but takes account of current restrictions".



The Pennington Lane masterplan from Bloor Homes; inset, Cllrs Maureen Caton and Geoffrey Sell

And with Uttlesford facing a critical lack of housing supply, he added: "This position is becoming worse with the criticism of the Local Plan, and the planned development will play a proportionate and sympathetic part in assisting with improving housing supply in a sustainable and environmentally sensitive way, should it be approved."

Leader of UDC and chair of Residents for Uttlesford Cllr John Lodge said it would take four years to produce a fresh Local Plan and he was confident they would "get it right".

"We will have better people on the job and better councillors. This has been going on for many years now and the Tories have failed to get a plan in place, but we will do it – we

are confident this time."

Cllr Geoffrey Sell, a Stansted Liberal Democrat member on UDC, said: "Starting again would raise credibility with an inspector. On the other hand, I am concerned that it will take longer and in the meantime we are getting speculative applications and planning anarchy."

"I feel very concerned for the district because in the absence of a Local Plan we will get development in the wrong places. People cannot be certain it will be third time lucky."

Conservative Cllr Susan Barker added: "I believe we will come out of this at the end of the process with at least one new garden community and a lot of badly planned housing before we get a plan adopted."

A joint statement issued yesterday

by Stansted Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Strategy Group said: "We are utterly exasperated with UDC's failure to progress its Local Plan over the last 13 years. We urge UDC to get a grip on the Local Plan process."

Save Stansted Village chair James Hogg said that not only was the proposed access to the Pennington Lane site through the Hargrave estate, past Bentfield County Primary School, but that developers were "taking advantage of the 'lockdown' situation to avoid any proper scrutiny".

Bloor Homes had also "seen an opportunity to take advantage of the issues caused by the failure to agree the Uttlesford District Local Plan", he said.