

Epping Forest District Council Representations to the Draft Local Plan Consultation 2016 (Regulation 18)

Stakeholder ID	4304	Name	Tim	sheridan	G-CGIL- North Weald Airfield Aircraft Group
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Date	11/12/2016
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Letter or Email Response:

I am one of 5 co-owners of a light aircraft. Our group was established approximately 9 years ago and is based and operated from our aircraft hanger at North Weald Airfield. As an airfield tenant, I now have some very serious concerns about the recently published current Draft Local plan, as I see these proposals as potentially impeding very greatly, on not only our group's ability to continue to operate as currently, but to those of all the other aircraft operators and businesses based at the airfield. I previously reviewed the North Weald Master Planning Study, published in September 2014. It made some reasonably balanced proposals about how staged development in the area could look, taking into account the need to avoid conflicts between new developments near the airfield and the businesses and activities, including aviation, already based and operating there (as you are aware, aviation activities have been taking place there since 1916). However, I am extremely concerned that the current Draft Local Plan does not appear to be as sympathetic to these important issues. Some of my concerns are expressed below:- 1) I am very, very disturbed by the proximity of the proposed housing (225 homes) to the airfield along Merlin Way. I would like to challenge very seriously this aspect of the Draft Local Plan. If these house are in fact built in the proposed area, a significant number could be directly under the flight path of the East-West runway. This will then doubtlessly lead to curtailment of that runway use on the grounds of safety and noise abatement, once the private homes become occupied. Although the Master Planning Study suggested that this land between Merlin Way and Church Lane should be "mixed use", to include commercial and other developments which could compliment continued aviation and other existing activities, and that the undershoot of the East-West (cross) runway should be protected from development, the Draft Local Plan identifies this area as a site for housing. Unfortunately, domestic housing occupation and overhead aircraft activity are generally not considered to be activities which compliment continued aviation use. Why cannot the Master Planning Study proposals for mixed use be implemented, rather than domestic dwellings? This would be a far better use of the land as it would enable airfield activity to continue and provide opportunities for aviation related and other business opportunities to operate comfortably side-by-side, thereby significantly reducing the risk of any future conflicts otherwise arising. By way of illustration of this major issue, I would like to point out that the previous development of domestic housing at Blenheim Square off Merlin Way right next to the airfield has already resulted in issues and conflicts for some of the businesses and activities. These conflicts have imposed serious operating restrictions to those businesses already long established on the airfield to the detriment of the businesses concerned. The fact that these conflicts arose after the houses were built so close by, is not at all a good omen for what will inevitably happen if the proposal to build houses and not use the area for mixed development as originally proposed, should occur. 2) The

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entire airfield site has been identified in the Draft Local Plan as a "potential new employment site", whereas in the Master Planning Study, only various pockets of land around the airfield were identified as such. Bearing in mind that the Local Plan will dictate planning policy and serve as a backdrop for planning application decisions for the next 17 years or more, I believe that this poses a serious threat to many of the activities on the airfield in the mid to long term. Again, I would therefore challenge this aspect of the Draft Local Plan. Although the current EFDC cabinet has expressed its declared aim is to retain aviation at the airfield, this may not necessarily become long term policy unless adopted into and clearly reflected in the Local Plan. The site allocation in the Draft Local Plan does not make this at all clear and could leave the door open for the airfield to be used instead for other types of development further down the line. I would be grateful if you will confirm to me that you will definitely take into serious consideration the various points I have raised in this letter when devising the final version of the local plan.