

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

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### Letter or Email Response:

Transport The required transport infrastructure should be put in place to support the needs of both the current and future residents before any new housing is built. Buses The buses servicing the village are low quality, unreliable and infrequent. The more regular of the services only go to Harlow or Epping meaning it is necessary for most journeys to take place in the car. The Local Plan Report on Site Selection states 'Public transport is limited and unreliable. There is no tube station and bus services are infrequent'. The Master Planning Study of 2014 along with other Local Plan technical documents also confirm this. If you want residents to use transport other than cars then it needs to be provided on a sustainable basis. Congested Roads Travelling into Epping is difficult as The Plain at Epping cannot cope at rush hour with traffic from North Weald and Harlow. People from Harlow travel to Epping to pick up the cheaper Central Line at Epping instead of catching the more expensive overland trains from Harlow. This regularly causes delays to my journey to work at St Margaret's Hospital (at The Plain in Epping). Essex County Council has highlighted that funding for road infrastructure is limited. The Plain is a significant constraint to any development taking place at North Weald. Any development at North Weald will further add to the congestion problems in Epping and no development should take place until the current problems can be remedied. Green belt All of the proposed development sites in North Weald is on Green Belt land, an area put in place to protect open space. The Local Plan itself states that 'The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence'. EFDC seems to choose to ignore this as they see fit. They also seem to ignore the fact that many residents in North Weald have bought their property in the knowledge that it borders Green Belt land i.e it is protected and would not be developed on. Agricultural Land in the Green Belt North Weald is surrounded by Grade 2 agricultural land. This land in North Weald is of a higher quality than what is found (generally) across the rest of the Epping Forest district. It could be better used for food growth. Weald Common and Radio Station Land This area is possibly the most attractive in the area, with rolling landscape, wildlife and heritage. This is an area of great value to the community in North Weald. People walk their dogs or just walk in general. It's a place where you can very quickly distance yourself from roads and the hustle and bustle of everyday life, appreciating the fresh air and the outdoors. It is a place that people can 'escape' to in stressful world. The gradient of this area means that it is a flood risk to the village in bad weather, to turn it into hard landscaping could have serious consequences to the village. Flood alleviation projects have protected the village over the last decade or so but this year North Weald flooded again. If this area was to be developed, flooding could again become a very frequent occurrence. The land currently absorbs a great deal of water, if this was to be developed then the water would only have one way to go. The cost to incorporate sufficient alleviation schemes would be immense. It would be a huge loss if this area was developed in any way, it provides an enormous benefit to quality of life and the

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environmental impact of it changing would be irreversible. The Ongar Redoubt in this area of land is a scheduled monument which should be preserved which should also mean preserving its surroundings. Heritage Epping Ongar Railway and Underground Extension The Epping Ongar Railway is a fantastic asset to North Weald, it draws visitors into the village who also use other businesses whilst here i.e The King's Head and village shops. It would be very beneficial to the local area if this could be reinstated as a commuter service to Epping but it must be a through service onto Ongar. North Weald could not cope if it was to become the end of the line, it would destroy our village feeling and it would only move problems currently suffered by Epping to one stop further along the line. North Weald would effectively become a car park. A commuter line is needed but it must go on somewhere in order to spread the burden. The Master Planning Study does have a suggestion to include a new station on the Airfield which links to Epping. This is a good idea if that line then goes on further i.e to Harlow, in order to spread the burden of parking, traffic and people. If this did go on to Harlow, this would also improve traffic at Hastingwood roundabout, at The Plain in Epping and alleviate the pressure on residential streets of Epping that the Underground brings. If the line was only to be extended to North Weald, there is no benefit, it will only move the problems of Epping to 2.5 miles down the road, a longer extension would be required. Airfield North Weald Airfield celebrated its centenary this year, it has enormous heritage value. Surviving 2 World Wars it still stands today but is severely underused. You could say that that has been on purpose in order to cause reason for it to be sold off for development. Aviation should be continued at the Airfield at all costs. However, a change of licence should be encouraged to enable the site to be used for business aviation purposes to bring in revenue to support its upkeep and its protection. The Halcrow Report of 2002 identifies North Weald Airfield as having 'the greatest potential' for business aviation capacity in the region due to the length of its runway. The airfield and the Epping Ongar Railway should be protected, they are educational resources as well as having a very real potential to bring economic benefit to the area through tourism and business aviation. The airfield could be many things for years to come but aviation MUST be maintained to preserve the heritage of the village. The draft Local Plan's vision for North Weald refers to retaining the village's military heritage. Commercial Centre North Weald's current commercial centre does need improvement, however, it needs improvement now, to cope with the current village population. Whilst the plan suggests that North Weald should become more self-sufficient, it does not need a supermarket or industrial estates. A large commercial site would dominate our village and would go against preserving a 'discrete' village feel as mentioned in the Master Planning Study. We could do with more 'local' shops but they should be spread throughout the village i.e some improvement near The Talbot so that residents do not need to travel down to the village centre (by car) to pick up a few necessities. Perhaps some small village shops near to Blenheim Square and the current employment area on the edge of the airfield would be beneficial and remove some of the burden on the High Road and the shops in the centre of the village. Schools A secondary school may be required in the area however it does not belong in North Weald itself. To place a new school in the village would have a significant impact on village life. Secondary education should continue to be available at a distance of 2-3 miles of the village with improved bus services used for transportation. Latton Priory would be at a suitable distance. Housing The allocation of housing proposed for North Weald is excessively disproportionate to the allocation across the district, going directly against the wishes of residents as per the Issues and Options Consultation in 2012. The vision for North Weald as per the draft Local Plan says 'North Weald Bassett will seek to become more self-sufficient while retaining its local character'. There will be no local character left if housing is increased by 1580 homes (78%). North Weald will be unrecognisable. Flats The 'vision' for North Weald talks about 'retaining its local character'. Until Blenheim Square was built, North Weald had only one residential building where there was more than a ground and first floor (with an exception of loft rooms) as far as I am aware. This was a small block of flats located on the corner of Wellington Road/High Road. A small scale development softened by trees and green areas around it. The flats at Blenheim square stand out, being seen from the other end of the village and of a style and density which is not sympathetic to the village. To retain its local character, North Weald cannot accommodate the suggested level of housing and it cannot accept the proposed density on some of these plots. Multi-level (greater than ground and first floor) residences are not appropriate in North Weald village. Any development should consider the impact of such spaces on existing residents. Density I do not agree with North Weald Parish Council's response concerning an increase in the proposed density of housing in North Weald. Families of today have children who stay at home into their mid to late twenties, it is very common therefore for a household to have between 3 and 5 cars for a considerable number of years. Parking at 1.5 spaces per household is not sufficient to 'retain its local character'. Narrow roads on modern developments is not acceptable when there is not sufficient off street parking provided close to the front entrance of each house. The social and physical impact of any development should be considered past the point of sale of a property. SR-0003, SR-

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0417 and the southern area of SR-0158A If these areas are developed for housing then the risk of flooding will be increased as they currently lie higher than the existing village and run alongside the sections of the village that are flood risk zones 2 and 3. I would be supportive to sympathetic development in the northern part of SR-0158A along Vicarage Lane to bring some village life to the area around St Andrew's Church. However, it would need to be in keeping with the rural nature of this area and include another area of village shops to reduce car journeys into the existing village centre. Creating housing on the scale proposed for North Weald will put further strain on our local infrastructure which struggles to cope with the level of current residents. SR-0417 and SR-0003 lie within the approach zone for the short runway on the airfield. Any development here could be detrimental to the operations of the airfield and not in line with the vision to preserve the military heritage. Due to the restriction posed by forest land between Epping and North Weald, it will not be possible to improve the infrastructure to be able to cope with development on the proposed scale. Healthcare Village Surgery There is an existing doctor's surgery in North Weald (part of The Limes Medical Centre) but it is not being used full time. It could and should be modernised but simply opening full time would be an asset to the village and reduce pressure on the Limes at Epping during peak times. There is sufficient demand for a full time surgery. This would also reduce journeys on the North Weald to Epping Road. The demographic of North Weald is made up significantly of people aged 60+ who will become more reliant on health services over the plan period and it is therefore of high importance that a full time health service is provided in the village.