

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

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Method	Letter			
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Letter or Email Response:

To Whom It May Concern: Please accept this letter in response to the Draft Local Plan put forward by Epping Forest District Council. Part of the plans have highlighted green spaces within the Debden Estate as sites for the construction of new homes, notably Jessel Green, Rochford Green and Lucton's Field. While I understand the need for more affordable housing, I object completely these plans to use our green spaces. These greens aren't just pieces of real estate on a map, they are a past generation's legacy to the future. The estate was designed with a garden city feel for a reason. It has often been identified that open spaces and parks offer numerous health benefits 1. In its 2015 report A Brief Guide to the Benefits of Urban Green Spaces 2, The University of Leeds said: "Spending time in green spaces has been shown to produce levels and patterns of chemicals in the brain associated with low stress and positive impacts on blood pressure. Positive links have also been demonstrated between how well people perform at attention- demanding tasks and time spent, either beforehand or during, in green space" The report also cites the use of green spaces as encouraging "physical activity by providing a pleasant environment in which to exercise; linear woodland trails encourage walking and cycling, whilst large sport and community parks encourage more formal physical activity". This physical exercise and positive impact on stress has a direct economic impact, according to Leeds. Moreover, given the proportion of elderly residents in the area, the report also found that this "can be particularly important in maintaining a high quality of life for elderly people". And it is obvious if you look at the greens on the Debden Estate that they are used daily by dog walkers, kite flyers, exercise classes and more and do have a positive impact on the wellbeing of residents. By building on them you would unequivocally harm the health of residents, both mentally and physically. Futhermore, you are stealing something from the next generation of residents - the children. Not only is there not enough school spaces already in the area (and no detailed mention of the schooling plans in your proposal), there is no consideration on the impact on my children. These greens are not just hills, places of exercise, real estate or potential building sites, they are memories. My children first sledged down Jessel Green. First flew a kite there, first jumped on a bouncy castle there. What you propose is to rip those memories asunder and replace them with high density housing. This cannot happen. Physically, the area around these greens already has inadequate infrastructure to support the existing traffic. Jessel Drive and Burney Drive are constantly full of potholes, damaged by passing busses. With more vehicles the damage would only worsen. The bottom of Jessel Green - the proposed area to build initially - is swampy and unstable, leading to constant subsidence under the road at the bottom of Jessel Drive. While this is fine for local residents using it for exercise, it will only increase the cost of building. Alternative sites need to be considered, such as housing as part of the new retail park on the far side of the tube line towards the M11. Brownfield sites, like the area of Clinton Cards or, better yet, look to Theydon, Abridge for green space. Those areas certainly have more green area than Debden, though this might make it harder to get a seat in the tube in the morning. Speaking of which, where in

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the local plan is the transport requirements for commuters heading into London. Trains on the Epping branch of the Central Line are already crowded. 11,000 homes will make it almost impossible to get a seat, let alone get on a train in the first place. I would suggest looking towards creating a whole new town, as Debeden was in the 1950s and Harlow was too. It might cost more, but for the residents of both the proposed areas now and the 'new town' would be better for it. It would also allow the opportunity to use smarter infrastructure and smart city building. Just look at the towns Elon Musk is building in California. Epping Forest could lead the way in sustainable smart urbanisation. Please, please, please put yourselves in the shoes of residents here. Come to Debden, walk on these greens, take in the views and understand they are the heart and lungs of our community. Don't take them away from us. Yours passionately, Niall Hunt