

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

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Method	Email			
Date	12/12/2016			

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Letter or Email Response:

To whom it may concern, I am writing with regards to the draft local plan document currently out for consultation by Epping Forest Council. Whilst one can appreciate that there is an ever growing need to provide affordable housing and that Councils are constantly looking for ways to produce additional revenue to compensate for government funding cuts, one has to question the thinking behind the Council's suggestion to build residential properties on green open space areas instead of identifying brownfield sites for redevelopment. Referring specifically to the National Planning Policy Framework which all Councils must comply with, I highlight that the Plan specifically encourages the use of brownfield land for redevelopment and discourages the use of areas which are of high environmental value. "Planning policies and decisions should encourage the effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value. Local planning authorities may continue to consider the case for setting a locally appropriate target for the use of brownfield land." Having looked at the sites allocated for residential development, 4 of the 13 proposed sites are open spaces which are currently enjoyed by residents who use these spaces for socialisation, family days, sports, etc. Referring once more to the National Planning Policy Framework, "Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

I therefore ask has the Council taken the National Planning Policy Framework guidance into consideration when identifying these open space areas which are frequently used by the local community? Additionally, it is concerning that other public spaces which provide value to the local community such as the Loughton Resource Centre and Loughton Library have been identified for development as well. The Council needs to acknowledge that the areas around the proposed sites are primarily family residential areas with local community needs such as open spaces and libraries. Quoting the NPPF again, "Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. The assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required." As a resident, I am confident that these open space areas are essential to the local community and are essential for the health and well-being of the local area. Has the Council conducted the relevant assessments to determine that these open spaces are not used by the local community or are at a surplus? With respect to the local

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community space point, one would like to highlight that although Loughton and Debden are very close to London, they are not London and as such the Council should look to preserve the local community feel instead of giving into the high density developments found in London which often produce anti-social behaviour and destroys community cohesion. Residents have moved to this area to get away from the congested concrete jungle and to have a close community feel whilst raising their families. By producing high rise developments on residential open spaces which are currently in use, the Council will be destroying the community feel that currently exists in the area. In terms of strain on the local area, one must highlight that these proposed developments will add an additional strain on the local community infrastructure. Of specific concern is the additional strain that will be felt on the local road networks. The works on Chigwell Lane/Rectory Lane causing vehicle tailback all the way to the M11 slip road entrance is an example of an already strained road network that will not cope with additional vehicle movements created by the construction works of these proposed developments as well as the additional vehicle trips generated by the future occupiers of these developments. The public transport, specifically the Central Line in the morning and evening rush hour is already at capacity with commuters struggling to get into trains. The 167 bus service may be ceased due to lack of funding by the Council. There currently is insufficient public transport capacity to deal with these proposed additional residential units. In terms of street parking, with households having on average 2 vehicles, parking can be challenging. This is especially challenging for young families whilst trying to load and unload their children from their vehicles or unloading groceries after a shop. Whilst we accept that we may not be able to park in front of our properties, we are finding it more and more challenging to park on the same street as our homes. These additional residential units will introduce further parking difficulties as a result. In terms of public health services, it currently takes around 2 weeks to get an appointment with our local GP. This suggests that our local GP is already at capacity and the introduction of additional residential units will mean that access to this vital service will be further delayed. One does accept that developments are usually required to submit monetary contributions to address the concerns raised above; however, having worked for local authorities, one is aware that Councils do not always invest the CIL funds appropriately and often, areas of deprivation continue to receive the least amount of investment and support. Please do not take our open spaces away from us; they are vital to the community and our health and wellbeing. Regards, **...Redacted...**