

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:

Response to proposal to move Field 'SR-0181' out of Green Belt in order to allow a property developer to build housing. Having reviewed the ARUP site evaluation and compared the scoring with other sites I would like to point out the inaccuracies in the scoring completed. Furthermore I would like to point out where these incorrect scores leave the decision to put the Field on Mill lane referred to in this document as SR-0181 forward for exclusion from Green Belt protection open for challenge at this and future stages of this review process. 1. The report refers to this Field as "infill", it is currently surrounded on three sides by fields and or gardens of the old Ongar Windmill and Mill cottage dating back to the 1700s. Infill misrepresents the Field and implies that it is surrounded by development. On the last remaining side is council owned "Village green" type land approx. 25m wide and then Mill Fields road. Furthermore It is outside the village ribbon. By definition it is not 'Infill' and so has been incorrectly scored and incorrectly included in the plan. 2. The Field is referred to as a brownfield site. It is not, it is Greenbelt land. It has been a Field for as long as records exist and the only building on the Field is fencing and stabling for Horses. (the Field housed horses when it belonged to the prior owners of Mill Cottage which ran a riding school). By definition it is not Brownfield and so has been incorrectly scored and incorrectly included in the plan. 3. The report describes the Field as of 'No Green Belt value'. The Field contains two trees with TPOs on, including one which by definition with Canopy of its size is an Ancient Oak. It forms part of the setting for the old Windmill which dates back to the 1700s and Mill cottage which dates back to the 1700s, it is between the conservation area of the high Street in High Ongar and the listed properties on Mill lane and form all angle forms part of the setting for these protected elements of Heritage. The report by LUL stated that 'Summary of Harm to the Green Belt as Very High (fig 4.5) and a Purpose 3 rating of Strong. This has been completely overlooked in the ARUP report. By definition it is not of 'No Greenbelt value' and so has been incorrectly scored and incorrectly included in the plan. 4. The ARUP report states that SR-0181 is under 'single' ownership, it is not. The Field is owned by Mr H Preston, a property developer has an option on the land. To the North of the Field is an area of land approx. 25m wide which is owned by Epping Forest District Council, The verge which meets Mill Fields road is owned by Essex County Council, The garden area forming the West and around to the South of SR-0181 is owned byRedacted...., The trees and garden area forming the South of SR-0181 belong toRedacted.... There is a private sewer which runs straight through the centre of SR-0181 and dissects it pretty much down the middle. In addition the Trees which have TPOs are protected. There are Two rights of access and a Waylieve in place all of which would have to be untangled. By definition this is not in 'single ownership' and so has been incorrectly scored and incorrectly included in the plan. 5. The ARUP report describes the Field as 'Vacant scrub land' This is a Field which LUC in its Green Belt study scores a top mark of 'Strong' as value to the Green Belt and follows it up by saying of removing this Field from the Green Belt; 'Potential level of harm to Green Belt harm' as 'Very High'. By definition the description of

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the Field is not 'Vacant scrub land' and so has been incorrectly scored and incorrectly included in the plan. 6. The ARUP report states that "Suitable access already exists". There is no vehicular access currently to the Field and access has been denied on previous occasions by Essex Highways on the grounds that it is not possible to safely gain access to the Field from the public roads. By definition the description of "Suitable access already exists" is incorrect and so has been incorrectly scored and incorrectly included in the plan. 7. The ARUP report states that the proposed development is 'Unlikely to involve the loss of open space' and yet in order to gain access to this field, one of the very few areas of green play space available to local children (the area 20m wide or so between Mill Fields road and the Field) would have to be removed and an access road to the houses established, (assuming the current owner (Epping Forest County Council) were to be willing to sell the land to the developer. This would be a significant loss to the community and local residents. As such this score cannot be appropriate and so has been incorrectly scored and incorrectly included in the plan. 8. In addition to the above there is no mention in the report on the sustainability of the development and impact on local amenities. There is no capacity in local schools. High Ongar is oversubscribed and already takes one whole class of children more than it has rooms for. It is a listed building and has been refused capacity to expand to meet current demand despite the children already being there. Chipping Ongar last year was full to capacity before it had covered a third of its supposed catchment area. It would have to increase in size to take children from a catchment area 36 times larger in order to take children from this area. The local police station has closed, there is no capacity at the local doctors surgery. None of this has been considered. 9. A lack of consideration for other suitable sites. There are several applications for planning registered with Epping forest Council which have been refused which are for conversion of use or building in gardens or genuine infill sites within village ribbons which would have none of the issues identified above. These have been refused planning. Surely all of these should be considered before taking the extreme action of changing the greenbelt boundary. Furthermore there are brownfield sites owned by the council which could be converted into housing which are unused, eg the old recycling centre on Mill Lane. These could offer housing which the council and community would benefit from, rather than just a developer benefitting. I believe from all of the above that the inaccuracies and untruths identified make the continued consideration of this Field untenable. Furthermore now that these inaccuracies have been pointed out and should the appropriate action not be taken to remove this Field from consideration I believe the entire current selection process is left open to legal challenge.

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