

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

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Letter or Email Response:

My first reaction to the plan is disappointment that a stronger line has not been taken to fight against the proposed housing target for the district. The encroachment into the Green Belt, even though only a small percentage of it, does not seem to be justified by any exceptional circumstances. Much of the predicted housing need arises from 'migration'. This is in effect expansion of London, which the Green Belt was intended to curtail. Another reason to oppose significant growth in population is the potential shortfall in water supply for the whole of Essex. Taken as a whole the document contains many desirable aspirations, but little detail as to how these will be achieved. The only specific proposals relate to the sites selected for potential housing developments. Many of these seem to be in direct contravention of aims expressed elsewhere: e.g. preservation of playing fields and open spaces, car free travel to places of employment. The potential infrastructure problems associated with development are acknowledged, but are only 'under consideration' by various bodies. If any of the proposed major housing developments are to be included in the final plan the infrastructure (roads and transport in particular) to be provided should be clearly specified. In terms of the overall strategy, supporting the development of the High Tech M11 corridor to Cambridge is logical. But realistically this corridor only comes southwards as far as Harlow, which itself has obvious growth potential. The major infra-structure project of J7a on the M11 may ease some of the traffic problems, but transport into Harlow from the population areas to the south is poor. The southern part of the district, largely built up already, is effectively part of Greater London. The plan accepts that there is little scope for additional development, but goes on to suggest building on the few green spaces remaining. The strength of feeling about this totally unacceptable proposal, which is contrary to the Open Spaces Policy DM6, was made very apparent at the Council meeting on 18th October. My particular concern is Epping which lies in between London built up area and Harlow. The plan recognises the importance of retaining the Green Belt separating Epping from these built up areas, but does potentially allow some encroachment. In my view the plan should not provide for any significant new housing development in the Green Belt around Epping. In recent years hundreds of new homes have been built in the town, Currently there are three developments of apartments on the High street, and we are still awaiting details of the St John's Road site. Local resources are strained already. Additional commuters on the Central Line, or additional cars on the road into Harlow are both undesirable. It seems unlikely that many homes would be for people who work in the town. SR-0347 Epping Sports Centre. Yes, a good residential site, BUT where would the sports centre go? Will it be included on the St John's Rd site? Alternatively this might be a more realistic use of space above a town centre car park. The replacement MUST be available for use before existing site is closed. SR-0229 Station Car Park NO. Unsuitable location for housing. Second storey of parking should be provided - possibly with an array of solar panels above. This additional facility is desperately needed, not to encourage extra commuters, but to alleviate the parking problems in the Town SR-0132Ci Epping Sports Club. NO.

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This would be contrary to declared aim to provide for sports and recreation. If granted, provision of an alternative site would likely be used as an excuse to encroach onto agricultural Green Belt land. The plan also shows the field west of Bury Lane as part of this site - a totally unacceptable encroachment onto Green Belt. SR-0587 Laundry ?? Should be retained as an employment site if possible - in line with stated policy on employment. SR-0071 Land at Stonards Hill ?? NO As shown on the plan this site is not on Stonards Hill, but only accessible via the Lane off Kendal Avenue. Totally unsuitable, and unjustified use of Green Belt. SR-0153 North of Stewards Green Road NO. Undesirable intrusion onto Green Belt, Poor access to Town. Lands South of Ivy Chimneys and Brook Road. Possibly, but only as a least worst option if some Green Belt has to be built on. BUT This major development (up to 600 homes) would need substantial infra structure. Apart from all the utilities, drainage and sewage, a new road, from the top of Ivy Chimneys to the bottom of Bower Hill, bypassing the bottle-neck on Ivy Chimneys Rd, the school and the difficult railway bridge, would be essential before any building work started. On completion, adequate pedestrian (and cycle?) access through to the school, which would need to be significantly expanded would be essential. Alternatively, a completely new school, as part of the development, could free the existing school site for housing. Unless all the residents not employed in the town are to drive to work (contrary to Transport policy) easy access to the Underground Station, and the local buses from there, should be provided by creating a footpath (and cycleway) alongside the railway from Sunnyside Road. I am also concerned about the proposed large scale development at North Weald. with no realistic prospect of the central line being reinstated, and extended northwards towards the development areas, it should not be homes for London commuters. The Central line is so crowded anyway that neither an extension, a service by Epping-Ongar railway or a reliable bus link into Epping would make large scale commuting a good prospect. Unless there are major employment centres created in the immediate area the new residents will inevitably be driving to work , adding more traffic onto the already overloaded A414 into Harlow, and on the M11. This is in contravention of the sustainable transport policy in T1. Even if a safe cycle route to Harlow was created, the distance would deter all but the fittest. Further large scale residential development at North Weald, effectively as a satellite of Epping or Harlow , is undesirable. It would need to be a complete community, upgraded to District Centre status. Finally, while I am, in principle, opposed to any development on Green Belt land, I would accept that small scale provision of housing to meet strictly local need in rural communities should be allowed, as in policy H3. Clearly this will usually need to be 'affordable' and probably rented accommodation . Is it not possible to solve the viability problem of small sites by cross subsidy from developments elsewhere? In conclusion, I recognise that the document is at present a draft, subject to revision after the current period of consultation. I just hope that the revision process will remove some of the proposed developments which are in blatant contravention of declared policy, and perhaps take some account of the responses from the public. Clearly not all the sites identified need to be used to meet even the excessively high target number of homes. Presumably some had been included solely to be removed now, as a gesture towards the public. The events at the council meeting on 18th Oct only helped to support this cynical view. Ideally the final version of the plan will identify sites selected for major developments, with a clear indication of the type of development, the infrastructure which will be provided, and the time scale over which it is to be completed.

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