

PORA

for the protection of the Roydon area

Epping Forest District Local Plan – Submission version

PORA comments

The new Epping Forest Local Plan will cover the period up to 2033. EFDC states that the Plan “will guide decisions on whether or not planning permission should be granted for different types of development within the District”.

The Plan identifies sites for limited housing developments within Roydon Village which are broadly acceptable, but the major concern for us is the proposal to expand Katherines and Sumners - the so-called “Water Lane Area”. This area lies within Roydon Parish and will have major implications for all who live within the parish and the surrounding area – implications which have not been fully assessed in the Plan. We believe that more detailed consideration should have been given to the impact of the Plan on local residents, the way in which existing settlements can retain their rural character, the Plan’s far-reaching consequences for the natural environment and the impact of traffic on the area.

PORA calls into question the “soundness” of the Plan in the following respects:

1. The community impact of the Water Lane Area development

No consideration is given to the impact of the Plan on those who presently live within the designated planning area. This aspect of the proposed developments appears to be largely ignored. For example will existing properties be protected? What information is being provided for those who discover that their dwelling is now designated as part of an urban development plan? And will steps be taken to protect the integrity of communities such as Old House Lane and Broadley Common through landscape management, woodland planting and controlled housing density? Or does the Plan assume that these communities will be absorbed within the new urban area?

2. Protection of the natural environment

The ARUP Site Suitability Assessments questioned the suitability of the designated area for development because it would cause high or very high harm to a sensitive landscape and to a wider countryside; it would cause loss of high grade agricultural land; and it would have an adverse effect on the community of Old House Lane. The area contains ancient and veteran trees including a group of rare female native black poplars. Ensuring adequate protection for these trees would inhibit the use of the land for development. The incursion into the Green Belt is particularly damaging in such a sensitive area.

3. Transport and traffic

The Water Lane Area development threatens heavy extra pressure on an already busy local road network which will be exacerbated by development of other road networks and additional employment likely to be created, for example by Public Health England. The planned 2,100 houses implies at least the same number of extra cars, in addition to heavy vehicle traffic. The Plan forecasts overcrowding of the road network by 2026, but Roydon Village is already feeling the effect of long traffic queues, especially at rush hours, while commuter street-parking in Roydon High Street is a growing concern.

The eastern river crossing, the improved route into Harlow from the Eastwick roundabout and a new M11 junction will have a limited impact, and will no doubt produce new bottlenecks, while expansion of Harlow to the West will inevitably lead to further pressures on the network of local rural roads which are already experiencing rising volumes of heavy goods traffic sourced through Nazeing and Dobbs Weir. All such developments will jeopardise the “rural and local character” of the village which is envisaged by the Plan.

4. Conclusion

The Plan includes far-reaching commitments to ensure environmental protection within the Water Lane area and to make the area an attractive place to live, but the real test will come as EFDC sets out more detailed planning obligations for developers. The Plan as it stands does not give sufficient information on how existing rural communities will be protected or how the border between the built-up area and the surrounding countryside will be created and sustained as development proceeds.

(PORA was set up in 2003 for Protection of the Roydon Area and since then has worked actively to oppose developments which could be inappropriate in the surrounding countryside, all of which is Green Belt land. PORA works closely with Roydon Parish Council and has broad support across the Parish).

Alan Burgess, Chairman PORA