

Niall Hunt

29/1/18

To the independent EFD Local Plan Inspector

Dear sir/madam

I am writing to object wholeheartedly to the inclusion of Site LOU.R5 in Regulation 19 Epping Forest District Submission Local Plan.

This description (LOU.R5) in itself trivialises the issue at stake by reducing it to a number in a plan drawn up in the planning offices of local government. Let me spell it out. Epping Forest District Council wants to build 154-plus dwellings, possibly multi-storey, on an area of land that lies at the heart of the community of the Debden estate. An area of land specifically designed in by benefactor Sir George Jessel in plans to make the area a new garden suburb.

Let's take a look at some of the clearest reasons why this land should not be built on.

Infrastructure and security

Cuts announced in 2011 saw 388 officers and more than 700 support staff dropped¹, with the number of police stations in the county due to be cut from 80 to 30², including the nearest police station in Loughton. Between 2019 and 2020, Essex Police are expected to make a further £63m in cost savings³. There is simply not enough policing in the area, as proven by crime increasing across the board (see UKcrimestatistics.com)⁴. There is no additional police provision in the plan.

Secondly, schools are over-subscribed, with the three nearest primary and two secondary schools struggling under the burden and Essex County Council has no plans to build schools over the next decade, nor are there any in the plan. (School stats are here⁵)

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Transport in the area has been cut – the 167 stopped serving the Debden Estate last year and the 20 bus route, that also serves the area is also under review. At Debden station, westbound trains are already full during rush hour, and TFL is considering reducing the service and are considering the introduction of four-carriage shuttle tubes.

There are four GP practices in the area, servicing nearly 40,000 residents between them. It is very public knowledge that the NHS is under tremendous strain. Residents of the Debden Estate already face two-week waits for doctor's appointments. There is not enough healthcare provision.

The roads around the estate are already in a poor state of repair with their current load of traffic. While residents welcomed the complete resurfacing of Burney Drive (running at the bottom of Jessel Green), the rest of the roads in the area are full of potholes and buckling under the strain. Where is the road maintenance in the local plan?

Local objection and use of Jessel Green

It has been said that local residents don't put Jessel Green to good use. Let's consider this for a moment. Is there a number of people per hour that constitutes 'good use'? I live just off [redacted], my bedroom window looks out onto it. Seeing that hill there relaxes me, it is as good a view as you can get without living in the countryside proper.

What do I see when I look out? Dog walkers, kite flyers (and boarders), children playing, sports and martial arts clubs training, people playing football, sledging (though not at the same time) and generally taking in the fresh air this green space provides. And this doesn't include the formal events put on by the local council, such as the Fun Day. How much use do you need? It would be used much more if it were a protected village green, which it should be.

Despite the initial objections to the draft plan, which counted hundreds of letters and signs in almost every house in the area, Jessel Green was kept in. Now, with a petition with close to 5,000 signatories and countless objections such as this, the notion that there is no local objection is frankly a nonsense.

What about other objections? It is interesting to note that part of the reason for proposed housing in nearby Theydon Bois – home to our local MP – was the impact housing would have on Epping Forest, yet the same objection was at the time rejected – yet surely a larger area of land, this close to Epping Forest would have a greater impact. Think of the

picnickers and dog walkers! It is hypocritical to accept that rejection there, but not in Debden.

Finally, I would challenge the need for more housing. I accept that there is a general housing problem in the UK and that central government has mandated local councils to offer up land for housing. But if you look at demand in the area, such as for the 80+ flats built on the site of the Winston Churchill pub, there is little evidence. Those flats are still only 80% sold. So what of the 150+ on Jessel Green?

I am not trying to be a nimby, but this hill, this area of greenery on my doorstep is more than a piece of real estate, it is a breath of fresh air on a council estate. It is memories, it is where my son first built a snowman and where both my children learn to sledge. It needs to be left for the next generation to enjoy. Don't build on it, give it back to the residents as a village green and let it fulfil its full potential.

If you don't believe that it is put to good use, don't count objection letters, don't look at petition numbers, come and spend some time with us and see how passionate we are about saving Jessel Green⁶.

Sincerely,

Niall Hunt

¹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-14253249>

² http://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/15389559.Essex_Police__Tackling_cuts_to__the_force_head_on/

³ <http://www.essex.pfcc.police.uk/news/policing-has-to-change-to-be-fit-for-the-future/>

⁴ <http://www.ukcrimestats.com/Subdivisions/CTY/2225/>

⁵ https://www.essex.gov.uk/Education-Schools/Schools/Delivering-Education-Essex/School-Organisation-Planning/Documents/Meeting_demand_for_school_places.pdf

⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/SaveJesselGreen/>