

RPS

## Planning Statement

In respect of

Greenstead Road,  
Chipping Ongar

On behalf of

Mr Peter Heaney

RPS Ref: DS/JM/23184

January 2018

*Secure & Stable*  
ADDING VALUE

# QUALITY MANAGEMENT

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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- 1.1 This statement has been produced in support of the site allocation in the Epping Forest District Local Plan – Submission Version 2017. This statement relates to Land at Greenstead Road, Chipping Ongar (the representation site).
- 1.2 The representation site adjoins the settlement of Chipping Ongar. The representation site is promoted by Mr Peter Heaney, who is the site owner. The size of the representation site is approximately 3.3 hectares (8 acres) in total.
- 1.3 The representation site is currently in the Metropolitan Green Belt. It is requested that the site be released from the Green Belt and allocated as a housing site. The representation site is included as a housing site in the Draft Plan (see Policy P4 – Chipping Ongar, Site ONG.R5). The representation site is allocated for approximately 107 homes.
- 1.4 It is considered that the Submission Version of the Local Plan is sound, in so far as provision is made for additional housing in Ongar. However, this representation does not address the adequacy of housing requirements across the District as a whole.

## 2 BACKGROUND

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- 2.1 The Local Plan sets out planning policies and land allocations for Epping Forest District up to the year 2033. Notably, the Local Plan seeks to allocate sufficient housing land in the district to accommodate requirements for the next 15 years.
- 2.2 Epping Forest District Council, along with other local authorities in Essex, have undertaken work in relation to population, household and job growth forecasts, so as to assist decision making on new housing targets. Notably, the relevant authorities have worked together to produce a technical document, known as the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). The most recent of which was published in July 2017. Based on the SHMA, the housing requirement in Epping Forest is for 11,400 homes. Accordingly, Policy SP2 of the Submission Version of the Plan seeks to provide a 'minimum' of 11,400 new homes.
- 2.3 By its nature, providing for an increase in sites to accommodate this level of housing in Epping Forest is extremely challenging. As recognised in paragraph 1.23 of the Draft Plan, the district is largely rural and over 92% of land is currently designated as Green Belt. Furthermore, and in addition, large parts of the district are either designated as "Forest" or fall within a flood plain. Accordingly, it has been accepted by the District Council for some time, as reflected by the Draft Local Plan, that it is necessary to release Green Belt land adjoining settlements in order to accommodate housing requirements. Indeed, prior to the publication of the Draft Local Plan, the Council undertook a comprehensive review of Green Belt sites in the district.
- 2.4 In light of the above, Policy SP2, states that the Council will provide for approximately 11,400 new homes through the Local Plan. The Local Plan seeks to divide up this requirement between various settlements. For example, and relevant to this representation, the Local Plan (within Policy SP2) allocates 590 new homes to be provided in Chipping Ongar.
- 2.5 This statement seeks to support provision for this amount of housing in Chipping Ongar. The statement is able to conclude that the representation site is well placed to accommodate additional housing in Chipping Ongar.

### 3 CHIPPING ONGAR

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- 3.1 The Local Plan identifies a hierarchy of settlements in the district. This is based on the designation of towns, large villages, small villages and hamlets. The Local Plan has prepared “visions and policies” for all settlements categorised as a town or a large village, as they represent the largest settlements within the district. Significantly and important to this representation, Chipping Ongar is identified as a “town”.
- 3.2 In light of the District’s pressing need for more housing, it is sensible to consider the potential of towns and large villages to accommodate an increase in housing. Indeed, it would be illogical not to do so.
- 3.3 Notwithstanding its designation as a town, Chipping Ongar is an obvious candidate to accommodate an increase in housing. In summary, the merits of Chipping Ongar in accommodating housing growth can be summarised as follows:
1. Attractive town centre, offering a range of national and independent retailers
  2. A number of pubs and restaurants
  3. Two primary schools
  4. Recently opened secondary academy
  5. Health centre
- 3.4 Furthermore, it is understood, as reflected by the Local Plan, that there is an aspiration for Chipping Ongar to remain self-sustaining. Accordingly, a sufficient number of homes are required to support existing services.

## 4 GREENSTEAD ROAD SITE

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### General

- 4.1 In the context of Epping Forest's challenging housing requirement, it is logical to promote additional housing within the defined towns. It is also apparent, both in Chipping Ongar and also elsewhere within the district, that the release of Green Belt sites is essential, if housing requirements are to be met, enabling the Local Plan to be "sound."
- 4.2 Notwithstanding the fact that it is defined as a town, opportunities for new housing sites in Chipping Ongar is constrained by the large areas of land in and on the edge of the town, which fall within the flood zone, by virtue of the River Roding and the Cripsey Brook, which flow through the town. Also, parts of the existing built up area, including the town centre, fall within a conservation area. Furthermore, very little brownfield land is available for redevelopment.
- 4.3 The merits of the Greenstead Road site can be summarised as follows:-
1. Although the site is currently within the Metropolitan Green Belt, it is relatively unconstrained in planning terms. Notably, the site is beyond the defined Epping Forest, it is not subject to any landscape designation, nor any wildlife designation. Furthermore, the representation site does not include land within a conservation area or an SSSI.
  2. The site immediately adjoins the built up area of Chipping Ongar and is in a sustainable location. The site is well served by buses, with regular bus services being available within walking distance. Furthermore, the site is within close proximity to a local primary school.
  3. The site is large enough to provide for a range and mix of housing, plus provision of open space.
  4. The ability of the representation site to meet the five 'purposes' of the Green Belt, as set out in the NPPF, is limited. Notably, it does not have a 'strategic' function in preventing neighbouring towns from merging into one another. Nor does the land preserve the setting and special character of an historic town. With suitable landscaping and boundary treatment, development on the representation site can be achieved so as to avoid unrestrictive sprawl. Furthermore, the site is enclosed, with very few public vantage points. Consequently, release of the site from the Green Belt will not materially harm the function and purpose of the Metropolitan Green Belt in this part of the District.
  5. The representation site is in one ownership and is not the subject of covenants or other matters, which could prevent residential development coming forward. Accordingly, the representation site is suitable, available and deliverable.
- 4.4 For information, it should be noted that the landowner has instructed a development team, including a local architect, to work up proposals for the representation site. Work to date demonstrates that a residential development in the order of 107 homes is achievable. Work has also been carried out to demonstrate that proposals are acceptable in terms of highways matters. Accordingly, the representation site is available and residential development is deliverable.

## Arup Report on Site Selection

4.5 Analysis of the work undertaken by Arup (September 2016 report) highlights the suitability of the representation site. As set out in the Arup assessment (site reference: SR-0026B), the points in favour of development of the representation site are as follows:-

**1.1 – Impact on Internationally Protected Species** – effects of allocating the site for the proposed use do not undermine conservation objectives.

**1.2 – Impact on Nationally Protected Species** – based on the impact risk zones, there is no requirement to consult Natural England because the proposed development is unlikely to impose a risk to SSSI's.

**1.3A – Impact on Ancient Woodland** – site is not located within or adjacent to Ancient Woodland

**1.3B – Impact on Ancient/Veteran Trees outside of Ancient Woodland** – no ancient or veteran trees are located within the site.

**1.4 – Impact on Epping Forest Buffer Land** – site is unlikely to impact on Epping Forest Buffer Land.

**1.5 – Impact on BAP Priority Species or Habitats** – no effect as features and species could be retained or due to distance of BAP priority habitats from site.

**1.6 – Impact on Local Wildlife Sites** – site has no effect features and species could be retained or due to distance of local wildlife sites from site.

**1.7 – Flood Risk** – site within Flood Zone 1.

**1.8A – Impact on Heritage Assets** – effects can be mitigated.

**1.8B – Impact on Archaeology** – existing evidence and/or lack of previous disturbance indicates a high likelihood for the discovery of high quality archaeological assets on the site.

**1.9 – Impact of Air Quality** – site lies outside of area identified as being at risk of poor quality.

**2.1 – Level of harm to Green Belt** – site is within Green Belt, where the level of harm caused by release of the land for development would be high.

**3.1 – Distance to the nearest rail/tube station** – site is more than 4,000 metres from the nearest rail or tube station.

**3.2 – Distance to nearest bus stop** – site between 400 metres and 1,000 metres of a bus stop.

**3.3 - Distance to employment locations** – site is within 1600 metres of an employment site/location.

**3.4 – Distance to local amenities** – site is less than 1,000 metres from the nearest town, large village or small village.

**3.5 – Distance to nearest infant/primary school** – site is less than 1,000 metres from the nearest infant/primary school.



**3.7 – Distance to nearest GP surgery** – site is between 1,000 metres and 4,000 metres from the nearest GP surgery.

**4.2 – Impact on agricultural land** – development would involve a loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land (grades 1-3).

**4.3 – Capacity to improve access to open space** – development is unlikely to involve the loss of open space.

**5.1 – Landscape sensitivity** – the site falls within an area of high landscape sensitivity.

**5.2 – Settlement character sensitivity** – development is unlikely to have an effect on settlement character.

**6.1 – Topography constraints** – topographical constraints exist in the site but potential for mitigation.

**6.2A – Distance to gas and oil pipelines** – gas or oil pipelines do not pose any constraints to the site.

**6.2B – Distance to power lines** – power lines do not pose constraints to the site.

**6.3 – Impact on Tree Preservation Order (TPO)** – the intensity of site development would not be constrained by the presence of protected trees either on or adjacent to the site.

**6.4 – Access to the site** – suitable access to site already exists.

**6.5 – Contamination constraints** – no contamination issues identified on the site to date.

**6.6 – Traffic impact** – area around the site expected to be uncongested at peak time, or site below the size threshold where it would be expected to affect congestion.

4.6 In terms of the criteria assessed by Arup, only four negative points were identified. Two of the points relate to Green Belt/landscaping. Whilst the site clearly is in the Green Belt, as explained previously, it is necessary for a substantial release of Green Belt sites in the Epping Forest district to take place, if housing requirements are to be met. Additionally, it is not accepted that the Greenstead Road site is a sensitive Green Belt site, largely on the basis that this site does not meet the five 'purposes' of the Green Belt. Furthermore, the site is largely enclosed, with very few public vantage points. In any event, it is possible to include a significant amount of landscaping in a scheme proposal, so as to complement the surrounding area and to protect the amenity of adjoining housing.

4.7 The next was Point 4.2 impact on agricultural land. Arup are of the opinion that development will involve the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grade 1 – 3). However, the quality of the representation site in terms of agricultural land has been explored further. It is considered that the representation site is of limited agricultural value, owing to its shape and size. The final point relates to archaeology. This is capable of resolution by way of archaeological investigation,

4.8 Based on this assessment, Arup were able to recommend to the District Council that the representation site should be allocated for housing (see Appendix B1.1 of September 2016 report).

## **Conclusion**

- 4.9 It is absolutely clear from the above that the representation site has merit. It represents a site in Chipping Ongar, capable of assisting in meeting housing requirements. The site's contribution to meeting the five purposes for including land in the Green Belt is limited and therefore it is an obvious site for a housing allocation. Furthermore, the site is available and a residential development is deliverable.

