

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

Stakeholder ID	4447	Name	dean	walton	Ongar rail
Method	Email				
Date	12/12/2016				

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Letter or Email Response:

Epping Forest District Council Draft Local Plan Consultation Response The Epping Ongar Railway (EOR) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft Local Plan. The EOR is a major visitor attraction welcoming over 40,000 people a year to our facilities with the potential to welcome even more. At present the Railway has a season based on around 100 operating days and runs heritage bus services in the local area to bring passengers to our stations in the district from Epping Underground and Shenfield National Rail stations. The Railway is staffed by over 200 volunteers providing around 8,000 work days a year in addition to 6 people employed by the Railway. Through our volunteering work we provide valuable social support and engagement for many retired and working people. With this in mind the Railway's ambition is to grow passenger numbers substantially over the coming years to pay for ongoing maintenance of the track and infrastructure, rolling stock and also to provide funds for improving our passenger facilities. In addition to providing year-on-year growth through marketing and simply increasing awareness that the Railway is here and open for business, the EOR is keen to establish a rail-to-rail interchange at Epping Station which it believes will lead to dramatic increased in passengers numbers and consequently the local economy. Similar dramatic increases have been achieved elsewhere and a good recent example is the Bluebell Railway in Sussex which saw an increase in passenger numbers of 60,000 when it opened its extension to East Grinstead. With 8 million people in London boosted significantly by tourists in the capital the scope to bring people to Epping by tube and then onto the EOR and other facilities in the district is significant. Draft Policy E4 The Visitor Economy The EOR, as a major visitor attraction, welcomes the proposals of E4. The Social and Economic Value of Heritage Railways (<http://www.bramleyline.org.uk/Value-of-heritage-rail.pdf>) published by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Heritage Railways in July 2013 explains the main benefits in some detail. However one finding in the report is particularly important - for every £1 spent on Heritage Railways it is estimated the the local economy benefits to the value of £2.71. EFDC is urged to review this document and incorporate it into the evidence base for the EFDC local plan. E4 A vi) & v) Whilst many of our visitors come to the district by car there is scope for dramatically increasing the number of visitors to the EOR and consequentially the district by the Underground via a rail-to-rail interchange at Epping. As a result it is important that EFDC should consider adopting support for a rail-to-rail interchange at Epping as part of its planning policies. The interchange and increased passenger numbers would also allow the EOR to provide services that are commercially viable throughout a longer running season and contribute therefore to support for a "year-round visitor economy" Draft Policy T1:Sustainable Transport Choices The EOR is first and foremost a visitor attraction - the main reasons (lack of passengers, cost of upgrading to requirements for modern rolling stock, and ongoing operating costs) that led to the closure of the Epping-Ongar line in 1994 still exist. Further, development around our stations at Ongar and North Weald have also ensured that a commuter line would have to rely extensively

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on passengers within walking or cycling distance of our line which naturally imposes a limit on the numbers of passengers that could be carried. However it is important to say that many local residents see the reintroduction of regular services on the line as an important aspiration and where the evidence exists EFDC should seek to support that. However the EOR is keen to ensure that its interchange at Epping would also provide a good means for local people to get to and from the tube at Epping and will seek to ensure that the track remains linked to keep options for future developments open. This would be entirely consistent with the proposals in T1, which we support. Draft Policy T2 : Safeguarding of routes and facilities The EOR supports this policy. Draft Policy DM 7 Heritage Assets As custodians of an important part of the district's industrial heritage - the railway line and its buildings from Epping to Ongar, the EOR takes the issues of preservation and conservation seriously and supports this policy. Draft Policy DM8 Heritage at risk The EOR supports this policy. Chapter 5 Places The EOR has considered the plans for places which are in the immediate vicinity of the railway's current or possible operations - Epping, North Weald and Ongar. Draft Policy P1 Epping As a general comment the development plan for Epping Town Centre should note our ambition to create a viable rail-to-rail interchange at Epping and if possible support this. SR-0229 The conversion of the car park at Epping Underground Station is opposed by the EOR. Many of our visitors, coming to the EOR at the weekend, make use of the car park there as a particularly convenient and direct place to start their day with us. SR - 0071 This site is adjacent to the Railway. Whilst the Railway does not want to undermine the scope for additional and much needed housing in the area it is important that the future amenity of residents in that development takes account that they will be living next to an operational railway running steam and diesel trains. Draft Policy P4 Chipping Ongar As noted elsewhere the visitor economy needs to provide proper facilities for visitors including parking. The possibility of providing parking space within say SR-0120 which would be of use to those visiting the EOR and also the Town Centre should be considered. Draft Policy P6 North Weald Bassett The EOR in supporting the visitor economy has previously identified the airfield as a place to provide a new visitor attraction - a sort of 'transport museum' with good parking, bus links to the EOR and the scope for having links to other attractions. As such it is important that any housing proposals such as SR-0119 and SR-0415 do not impact on this. Further there is support for within the district map (Figure 5.15) for EMP-0016 & EMP-0015 which may reasonably accommodate such a use. Draft Policy D4 Community, Leisure and Cultural Facilities The EOR provides meaningful and valued volunteer activities for a large number of people - both local and from wider afield. EFDC should recognise our contribution to the 'social fabric' of the district as well as to the visitor economy.

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