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

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Method	Email			
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Letter or Email Response:

Dear Planning, I am exercising the right to send my comments in writing and for expediency via email as the questionnaire I feel does not reflect the answers I wish to submit Planning policy should be sustainable in the long term and protect our area – Epping Upland. I do not believe that the impact on this area is covered in the questionnaire ie the potential erosion of the Green Belt which would forever alter the character of the area, the throughput of traffic to Epping and that new infrastructure could potentially require use of the Green Belt. On this basis I am responding to the consultation in writing and for expedience by email. 1 The Parish of Epping Upland is an ancient landscape and unique in what it provides to Epping, Harlow and surrounding areas. When Harlow was developed the uniqueness of the Upland character was maintained when Harlow was cleverly designed to fit snugly into a 'bowl'. This is also very much the view the Parish Council on behalf its residents takes. It is vital that this area continues to form a bridge between the two settlements of Epping and Harlow, and the lungs to both. It is a beautiful landscape and an important area for agriculture – an industry that is still vital nationally that we should not lose sight of. There are several ridge lines in the parish for example from Rye Hill to Parvills Farm, which are stunning. These are worth preserving as they are integral to the locality and one of the reasons that there are so many visitors to the area who traverse the criss-cross of footpaths. 2 Too great a development on the edges of the parish will impact significantly on traffic through the area eg pollution from fumes and noise, and the real threat to its use as an amenity to its inhabitants and visitors. On that basis overall the District Council should consider the impact of additional emission on the highly protected Epping Forest. Light pollution is becoming an increasing issue from surrounding large settlements eg Harlow and Waltham Abbey. The Epping Green and Epping Upland areas have already been greatly affected by extra traffic from Harlow as drivers seek to avoid more time consuming road layouts and use the B181 as a short cut to Epping and transport services, and an informal diversion for works on the M11 and M25; in effect it has already become a rat run. The transport system would not be able to cope. Harlow should be further considered in view of its rail and traffic links eg M11 junction 7a. Epping Upland needs to retain its separateness and identity as does other villages in the area. We need more open spaces not less. 3 I certainly have reservations about the definition of 'limited release of the Green Belt'. Protection of the Green Belt should be paramount in view of its purpose which is particularly defined in the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) as follows :- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land The NPPF further states that "Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance

landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land" and 'very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations." The Green Belt's release for development should therefore be as an absolute last resort if at all. Not enough attention has been given to the use of brown field sites. 4 It is considered that there are sufficient retail outlets in Epping and the other town/district centres and additional outlets would only exacerbate existing parking issues. Many shops have closed and remain empty, some eventually being converted to residential use. There is a tendency in the centres for a plethora of shop types eg cafes/restaurants, barbers. Independent retailers can no longer afford to trade on the high street witness by the plethora of charity shops. The way that people shop has changed particularly with the popularity of internet shopping. 5 There is insufficient information to properly respond to the question on employment sites and development; it is noted that further detailed work is being undertaken and there is scant information as to the types of employment and whether this will provide the salaries to pay for the proposed housing. 6 Commenting on infrastructure is not easy in the absence of planning proposals or applications. Do the draft policies encompass the infrastructure requirements for current housing which is already inadequate as well as taking account of new developments? If there is an increase in housing then there should be an increase in infrastructure eg schools and GPs, proportional to the housing increase. What will be the impact of building on car parks and the level of upheaval and displacement while the development/new car park works are being carried out? Commuters from Harlow already travel to Epping for the tube which would only increase. As a tube user daily the Central Line is already overloaded and cattle in trucks are better served than commuters. 7 The Interim Sustainability Appraisal document is not easily visible and had to be found with the assistance of EFDC. Its relationship to this consultation requires clarity. I struggled to find it and found it difficult to read and understand. The importance of this document is certainly unclear 8 As there are 56 draft policies it is surprising that specific questions have only been asked on 21 policies, leaving me and no doubt others at whatever level to unravel and comment on the remaining policies, trawling through at least a 233 page document in a un-user friendly environment. I found the documents provided complex and would be surprised if most people have read them. What would be the penalty for not complying with the policies? Currently it appears that in the majority of cases either no action is taken by the planning authority or there is a requirement to seek retrospective planning permission which is invariably granted. Why was there no Executive Summary or similar summary, or questions asked with the relevant narrative and information proximate? It is recognised that the substantive documents have by their nature to be very comprehensive and that a tremendous amount of effort has gone into reaching this stage. However it certainly does not provide a clear picture of what the District proposes other than a rush to build to appease the government. What has happened to local democracy? Yours Sincerely ….Redacted….