

4. This representation relates to

Paragraph 5.29

Policy SP2

Site reference

Settlement Loughton

5. We consider that this part of the Submission Version of the Local Plan is

b) Sound: No

because it fails

Positively Prepared

Justified

6. Details of why we consider the Plan to be unsound

6.1 Summary of lack of justification for allocation of dwellings to Loughton and other settlements

6.1.1 Lack of proper justification for Loughton

Amazingly, given the volume of background material supplied with the Plan, there is nowhere in the documents submitted any specific justification for the numbers of homes allocated to Loughton. Instead, there is merely a vague reference to the number having been “informed” by an aspiration for it to continue to be a major townⁱ. This appears in paragraph 5.8 of the 2016 version of the Local Planⁱⁱ, without any justification. It is wholly unclear how these “aspirations” have been arrived at, or how they affect the choice of sites in particular settlements.

At earlier stages in discussions on the Plan, the Council referred to a “proportionate” distribution of housing between settlements, but this doesn’t appear in the current version of the Plan.

The lack of any proper justification for the spatial strategy appears to us, we believe, enough to invalidate the whole Plan.

6.1.2 Lack of proper justification for other settlements

We are concerned with Loughton, but the same appears true of the other settlements.

6.1.3 Specific effects of the failure

6.3.1.1 Numbers of dwellings

The Council says that it has adopted a “sequential” approach in selecting sites (Policy SP2)ⁱⁱⁱ. It has then overlaid this with specific dwelling targets for each settlement, which must mean that a site or sites in one settlement may have been selected for development despite there being a site or sites in another settlement(s) which has not been selected for development despite being higher in the sequential table.

However, we think the Plan has achieved nevertheless an element of accidental functionality in its spatial aspect. We see the two main failures are over-cramming Loughton and disproportionately high development at North Weald, whilst not giving enough thought to the critical mass of the proposed Garden Town, which has been underestimated.

6.1.3.1.2 Other effects

There is also a serious conflict between the proposed level of development in Loughton and the Plan’s own requirements in relation to Policies T1 B & C (p74)^{iv}, which require that developments should seek to minimise the need to travel and should only be permitted where they do not result in unacceptable increases in traffic generation.

6.2 Background

6.2.1 The views expressed in consultations

6.2.1.1 Paragraph 1.1 (p2)^v states that it is based, *inter alia*, on the results of the 2010, 2012, and 2016 consultations.

6.2.1.2 The 2010/11 consultation

In the 2010/11 consultation there were no specific site based questions, but in the Community Visioning, the first and preponderant response was to preserve and enhance the green and open spaces of the District. Response priority (a) was stated in the report to the LDF Cabinet Committee on 7 February 2011 (paper LDF-020-2010-11^{vi}) as "To protect and enhance green spaces, whilst encouraging the growth of jobs and businesses", and (b) Better protection for green spaces, reducing traffic...and more job opportunities". The predominant public reaction was (as reported to Cabinet 7.3.11^{vii}) to protect and enhance green spaces, whilst encouraging local businesses.

6.2.1.3 The 2012 consultation

In the 2012 consultation the site was not included. However, paper C-006 2014-14^{viii} states that "some respondents suggested developing some of the urban green spaces in the town", but it was later stated by the report author that the number of such suggestions was very small.

In the 2012 Report, a majority (29%) of respondents selected one of the two *development away from the Central Line* options as compared with 24% who preferred proportionate distribution. (Paragraphs 49 & 50, Report to Cabinet 10.6.13^{ix}).

6.2.1.4 The 2016 consultation

In the 2016 Regulation 18 consultation^x, the consultation relied greatly on the concept of "aspirations for each settlement, which appear to have been based on an earlier so-called "proportionate" distribution of housing in the District; but 79% of respondents to the consultation disagreed or strongly disagreed with this. There was an overwhelming public response against any development on Jessel Green. Figures are difficult to quote from the published evidence base, but it is believed some 2,000 individual objections were received (information stated to an Council Members' workshop on 22 April 2017; officers when question admitted responses in favour of Jessel Green were "very few"). The strength of public feeling restated that expressed at a public meeting held by Loughton Town Council on 17 November 2016^{xi}.

6.2.1.5 LRA thus believes that if the Council has adopted some form of proportionate distribution, this would not be based on the results of the public consultations, which showed less support for this approach than for the alternative cited above.

6.2.2 Lack of justification for the dwelling allocations

However, it is nowhere stated in the Regulation 19 version of the Plan how the Council has arrived at the dwellings allocations, whether proportionately or otherwise.

6.2.3 No form of proportionality is apparent

Assuming for the moment that the Council has adopted some form of proportionality, we have been unable to discover what it might be. A proportionate distribution of the 11,400 dwellings over the 139 square miles of the District would result in 79 dwellings per square mile; but what is proposed results in 19 per sq mile in Theydon Bois, 120 in North Weald, and 196 in Loughton, with none at all in Lambourne. As a proportion of population (which would in itself be irrational), the figures are 0.4% in Theydon Bois, 17.4% in North Weald, and 3.3% in Loughton. On either basis the allocations to Loughton and North Weald appear unjustifiably high.

6.2.4 Lack of information on site selection

The inclusion or exclusion of sites by the Council appears to have been haphazard and arbitrary. We can find no mention in the main text of the Plan, Appendix 6 or the Technical list of sites of any indication of which category each site falls in in the Council's sequential list (see end-note iii), or any "score" to justify its selection. Sites were added or removed in the run-up to the publication of the draft Regulation 19 version of the Plan, and no real opportunity was given at the Council meeting on 14 12 17^{xii} for these to be subjected to proper scrutiny (indeed, we understand that the Council circulated a restricted document^{xiii} to Cllrs stating that no consideration of individual sites would be allowed at the meeting.

6.2.5 Why we consider the Garden Town to be “underweight”

We consider that the critical mass needed for the District’s Garden Town has been underestimated.

“The delivery of key infrastructure will be vital to support the number of homes and jobs required over the Plan period.”(page 276) The success of the Garden Town Communities will be dependent on the amount of public services they can attract and support. A garden town of for example, 3,000 dwellings would be able to support many more facilities (GPs, clinics, schools, both primary and secondary, Library, parks, playing fields, shopping) than one of 1,500 dwellings.

6.2.6 Traffic generation

Up to 30% of households in extra building in Loughton and Epping can be expected to travel into London,

We reach this figure from the following:

1. Population of Loughton: 31,000
2. Usage of Loughton and Debden stations 5.96mpa over 300 days, equivalent to 20,000 per day (10,000 in 10,000 out)--just over 1 in 3 use the trains
3. Some of these users will be commuters who have driven in from elsewhere in Essex, but the recent introduction of residents’ parking zones near to both stations has significantly reduced (but not eliminated) this aspect.

The level of development proposed for Loughton thus contravenes Policy T1B and T1C (see end-note iv) which provide

“B Development should seek to minimise the need to travel,....”

“C. Development proposals will be permitted where they:

.....

(iv) do not result in unacceptable increases in traffic generation

This supports our view that the allocations of dwellings are unsound.

6.2.7 Jessel Green (site LOU R5)

We have argued in a separate submission that this site should not have been included in the Plan.

Its omission would of course go some way towards rectifying the problems which we are dealing with here.

6.2.8 View of the Conservators of Epping Forest

We note from their submission^{xiv} to the 2016 consultation that the Conservators are concerned about the proposed distribution of housing being concentrated around Epping Forest with the vast majority being within 6km of the SAC boundaries. We also note that they express specific concerns about two Loughton sites, particularly Jessel Green (LOU R5)

7. Changes needed

7.1 The removal of a substantial number of sites from Loughton is needed to make the Plan sound.

8. Participation in the oral part of the examination

Yes, we wish to participate in the hearings.

9. We consider this to be necessary because

We think that it is necessary for us to participate at the hearings

- Because of our local knowledge (see description of Loughton Residents Association below)
- Because of the Council’s failure to take proper action in respect of the views expressed in public consultations or in feedback from local Cllrs (see for example our representation on Site LOU R5 Loughton.
- Because this matter is vital to the future of the town as a pleasant place to live – the very aspect which has led in the past to people moving to the area

About Loughton Residents Association

Loughton Residents Association is a very active group of local residents who care for Loughton and its environment. Our membership is around 1,000 households, and we have been in existence for over 35

years. We are independent of any political party. We seek, and listen to, the views and concerns of Loughton residents and take action in support. We have a majority of the councillors on the Loughton Town Council, are the second largest group on Epping Forest District Council & are represented on Essex County Council. We provide our own regular printed and email newsletters to residents and our own website, www.loughtonresidents.org.uk

10. We wish to be notified when the Plan is submitted for independent examination

Yes ✓

11. Have you attached any documents to this application? No

David Hunt.

Signature:

28/01/18

i. The provision of approximately 1,021 homes has been informed by the aspiration for Loughton to continue to be a major town, providing retail, education and employment in the District, supported by appropriate residential expansion to support the two successful retail centres, and out-of-centre Epping Forest Shopping Park.”(5.29 p122)

ii Epping Forest draft Local Plan 2016

5.8 The Council has: surveyed the Town Centres to establish the District’s Town Centres’ offer; rolled forward the Epping Forest District Council Town Centres Study, to align with the Plan period; established aspirations for each Town Centre; and defined Town Centre boundaries, Primary Shopping Areas, Primary and Secondary Retail Frontage.

<http://www.efdclocalplan.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Epping-Forest-Draft-Local-Plan-2016.pdf>

iii **Policy SP 2 Spatial Development Strategy
2011-2033**

A. Within the period 2011-2033 the Local Plan will provide for a minimum of 11,400 new homes allocated in accordance with the following sequential approach:

- (i) The creation of Garden Town Communities around Harlow recognising its strategic economic role and needs;
- (ii) A sequential flood risk assessment – proposing land in Flood Zone 2 and 3 only where need cannot be met in Flood Zone 1;
- (iii) Sites located on previously developed land within settlements;
- (iv) Sites located on open space within settlements where such selection would maintain adequate open space provision within the settlement;
- (v) Previously developed land within the Green Belt;
- (vi) Greenfield/Green Belt land on the edge of settlements:
 - Of least value to the Green Belt if the land meets other suitable criteria for development.
 - Of greater value to the Green Belt if the land meets other suitable criteria for development.
 - Of most value to the Green Belt if the land meets other suitable criteria for development.
- (vii) Agricultural land:
 - Of Grade 4-5 if the land meets other suitable criteria for development.
 - Of Grade 1-3 if the land meets other suitable criteria for development.
- (viii) Enable small scale sites in smaller rural communities to come forward where there is a clear local need which supports the social and economic well-being of that community.

iv **Policy T 1 Sustainable Transport Choices**

.....
B. Development should minimise the need to travel, promote opportunities for sustainable transport modes, improve accessibility to services and support the transition to a low carbon future.

C. Development proposals will be permitted where they:

- (i) integrate into existing transport networks;
- (ii) provide safe, suitable and convenient access for all potential users;
- (iii) provide on-site layouts that are compatible for all potential users with appropriate parking and servicing provision; and
- (iv) do not result in unacceptable increases in traffic generation or compromise highway safety.

v **The Purpose of the Plan**

1.1 The Epping Forest District Local Plan sets out the strategy for meeting the District's needs from 2011 up to 2033. It is based on up to date evidence and the results of the previous consultations undertaken in 2010/11, 2012, and 2016.

vi **Report to the Local Development Framework Cabinet Committee
Local Development Framework - Community Visioning Results
Report to the Local Development Framework Cabinet Committee
Local Development Framework - Community Visioning Results
Executive Summary**

.....
The key findings of the community visioning were as follows: a. Priorities for the District over the next twenty years: To protect and enhance green spaces whilst encouraging the growth of local jobs and businesses b. Most important planning issues facing local areas: Better protection for green spaces, reducing traffic congestion and providing more local job opportunities c. Favoured approaches to the location of new houses and jobs: To locate growth close to public transport links and around/within existing towns whilst considering a combination of options throughout the District where appropriate.

<http://rds.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/documents/g6215/Public%20reports%20pack%2007th-Feb-2011%2019.00%20Local%20Development%20Framework%20Cabinet%20Committee.pdf?T=10>

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vii The Cabinet Committee were informed of the three key findings from the Community Visioning. The first key finding was that the priority for the District over the next twenty years was to protect and enhance green spaces whilst encouraging the growth of local jobs and businesses. The second key finding was that the most important planning issues facing local areas were better protection for green spaces, reducing traffic congestion and providing more local job opportunities. The third key finding was that the favoured approach to the location of new houses and jobs should be to locate growth close to public transport links and around or within existing towns whilst considering a combination of options throughout the District where appropriate. " Cabinet 07 03 11, Supplementary agenda item 50 (page 46).

<http://rds.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/documents/b8358/Cabinet%20Supplementary%20Agenda%20XIII%2007th-Mar-2011%2019.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=9>

viii Q40 Have we identified the right potential development options for Loughton?

Yes 79 (24%) No 254 (76%)

Comments The majority of respondents disagreed with the development options identified for Loughton. Some people felt that the town was a sustainable location for growth given the level of services and facilities

on offer, and its proximity to public transport links. However, a large number of responses suggested that there had been enough recent development in the town and that traffic congestion was a significant issue. In addition, there was concern that development of some of the potential sites would result in the loss of valuable employment land. As an alternative to the options presented in the consultation document, some respondents suggested developing some of the urban green spaces within the town.

<http://rds.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/documents/g7394/Public%20reports%20pack%2010th-Jun-2013%2019.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10> Q40, p88.

^{ix} Report to Cabinet 10.6.13 p43

Responses to the Community Choices (Issues & Options) consultation for the Local Plan.

Spatial Options – Potential Patterns For Distribution Of Growth (Questions 19 To 21)

48. The consultation document discussed seven different potential ‘Spatial Options’, i.e. distribution patterns for whatever level of development is eventually chosen. Spatial option 1 is the most ‘basic’ as it suggests that each area takes some development proportionate to its existing size. The other six options include focusing development (a) towards transport nodes e.g. Central Line stations and overground rail stations; (b) away from Central Line stations (because of capacity issues); and (c) only on the larger settlements in the district.

49. The seven options were: • Spatial Option 1: Proportionate distribution • Spatial Option 2: Transport Focus – proportionate distribution • Spatial Option 3: Transport Focus – equal distribution • Spatial Option 4: Development away from the Central Line – proportionate distribution • Spatial Option 5: Development away from the Central Line – equal distribution • Spatial Option 6: Large Settlements – proportionate distribution • Spatial Option 7: Large Settlements – equal distribution

50. The consultation asked whether respondents preferred one or more options. The total number of ‘votes’ for each option was compared against the total for the other options, to assess levels of support and objection (this is reflected in the following percentages). There was a clear preference for the ‘basic’ Spatial Option 1: Proportionate distribution (24%). The next most preferred, which included a significant number of respondents from Chigwell, were Spatial Options 4 (15%) and 5 (14%), these being the two which focus development away from areas with Central Line stations. The other options had significantly less support. One large group response from Waltham Abbey stated that the group did not prefer any of the spatial options and felt that “A more tailored settlement specific approach is more appropriate”. This group response represented over 1,000 people (41% of respondents to this question).

^x Remarkable Engagement report Feb 2017, Q2.

6.4.2 Draft Policy SP 2

79% of respondents to Question 2 in the consultation questionnaire disagreed or strongly disagreed with the Draft Local Plan’s approach to distribution of new homes across the District. From all forms of feedback, which includes the open text comments to the letters, emails and questionnaire, 1,491 classified comments were recorded in total which discussed the approach in Draft Policy SP 2. Within this, 1,055 classified comments disagreed with the approach, 252 agreed, and 184 did not provide a clear position. The main themes within the comments on Draft Policy SP 2, relate to a concern that the Draft Local Plan lacks a longer-term, wider-reaching strategy for Epping Forest District’s growth. Whilst the Draft Vision and Objectives of the Draft Local Plan are positive, Draft Policy SP 2 was considered to focus on short term solutions and not consider other alternatives by locating housing where site promoters suggest and on inappropriate council owned sites. Other major themes of the feedback received is the perception that there is insufficient justification to ‘breach’ the Green Belt boundaries, and concern that settlements such as Waltham Abbey have been overlooked at the expense of sites promoted by developers, Green Belt sites and open spaces in other settlements such as Theydon Bois, Epping, Chigwell and Loughton.

<http://www.efdclocalplan.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Draft-Local-Plan-Consultation-Report-Remarkable-Engagement-EFDC-2017-EB122.pdf>

^{xi} <http://rds.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=296&MIId=9455&Ver=4>

^{xiii} <http://rds.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/documents/b18923/supplement%201%2014th-Dec-2017%2018.00%20Council.pdf?T=9>

^{xiv} 51. The Conservators of Epping Forest (City of London Corporation) were concerned about the effects of increased pollution that development may cause. They preferred Spatial Option 5, keeping development away from the Central Line and thus away from much of the area of the Forest in the south of the district. Thames Water preferred Spatial Option 6, as focusing development towards larger settlements would mean that it could make the most use of its existing infrastructure

<http://rds.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=295&MIId=7392&Ver=4>