

**Hearing Statement for the Examination in Public of the Epping Forest
District Local Plan (2011–2033)**

MATTER 2: Context, Vision & Objectives, and Sustainable Development

Submitted by: Ms Elizabeth Burn

Date: 23rd January 2019

Further to the email forwarded by Mrs Louise St John Howe, on 20th January 2019, please find below a brief Hearing Statement, based on my representation made at the time of the earlier Regulation 19 Consultation on the Submission Version of the Epping Forest District Local Plan (2011–2033).

I note that the Planning Inspector has included me as one of the participants during the consideration of '**Matter 2: Context, Vision & Objectives, and Sustainable Development**' (Day 2: Wednesday 13th February 2019), and am grateful to have the opportunity to speak, should this be considered relevant to the discussion. However, at this time, I have not seen Epping Forest District Council's Response to the Planning Inspector's 'Matters, Issues and Questions', so it may be that some of my comments, and those of other interested parties, have already been taken into account. I would only then request to speak if the Planning Inspector feels it would be helpful for me to do so.

As background to my comments, I am a local resident who, having lived in the District for most of my life, previously participated in the 'Issues and Options Consultation' in 2012, and the 'Draft Local Plan Consultation' in 2016. I'm also involved with a number of community-based groups, but would wish to state that the views expressed below are entirely my own, since this is an individual response, and not one which is intended to reflect the opinion of any other party.

The one aspect that I previously raised, with respect to 'Matter 2', in terms of being both effective, and justified, relates to the section of the Local Plan entitled: 'Vision and Objectives for Epping Forest District to 2033', and the wording of these two sections. I also note that the Planning Inspector has asked a specific (and more detailed) question in this regard:

Matter 2: Issue 1: Question 3: Do the Vision and Objectives adequately reflect the Plan's aims for air quality, green and blue infrastructure, protection of the landscape and biodiversity, and healthy living? Should specific reference be made to the aim of conserving and enhancing the historic environment, including archaeology?

My original observations are detailed below, as follows:

Within the section entitled 'Local Plan Objectives', there appears to be a complete absence of any specific reference to the conservation of the natural environment and the green infrastructure of the District. The landscape character, and its inherent contribution to the setting and historic heritage of many of the settlements, is the most predominant feature of our District, and whilst Epping Forest and the Lee Valley Regional Park are mentioned directly this aspect is not.

The 'Vision' should also, perhaps, be a more aspirational statement, but neither this, nor the 'Objectives', reflect the importance of the policies detailed in the new strategic policy, SP 7: The Natural Environment, Landscape Character and Green, and Blue, Infrastructure.

Whilst protecting the Green Belt (Local Plan Objectives: A (i): Environment and Design) could serve to preserve the 'openness' of those areas within its designation, this is a different aspect of policy to that called out in SP 7, which also recognises the social and economic viability of the countryside, as well as the connectivity between green/blue infrastructure and open spaces within the settlements.

Policy SP 7 is one of the most dynamic policies to be added to the New Local Plan, so I may have anticipated that more of its objectives would be reflected in the wording of both the 'Vision' and the 'Local Plan Objectives', particularly given the assertive statements included in that strategic policy, as briefly quoted below:

Policy SP 7

- A. The Council will protect the natural environment, enhance its quality and extend access to it;
- B. (i) The Council will conserve and enhance the character and appearance of the countryside;
- C. (i) The Council will protect the green and blue infrastructure assets of the towns and smaller settlements;
- D. The District's green and blue infrastructure network will be extended, maintained and enhanced.

I would respectfully suggest, therefore, that consideration is given to making additions to the 'Vision' and 'Objectives', with regard to the above, in order to provide a consistent approach within the structure of the new Local Plan.