

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

Matter 15 Places and Sites (Policies P1 – P15)

Matter Statement on behalf of North Weald Bassett Parish Council

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1. Matter 15: Issue 1 – Are Policies P1 – P15 justified, effective and consistent with national policy

- 1.1 Issue 1 Q1 asks whether appendix 6, sites specific requirements constitute policy or supporting text? If Policy is this clear? Is the wording within part A of each policy P1 – P15 sufficient to ensure that the sites specific requirements contained in appendix 6 can be enforced or should appendix 6 itself contain a policy?
- 1.2 The Parish Council believes that appendix 6 must be clearly identified as policy. Without that there would be no policy imperative to achieve the requirements set out in appendix 6. The real problem is that there is no explanation in the plan why some site allocation infrastructure requirements are set out in policies P1 – P15 and others are only set out in appendix 6. This is extremely confusing. Each of the policies P1 – P15 sets out that *“proposals for development on allocated sites should accord with the sites specific requirements set out in appendix 6.”* There needs to be a clearer statement that the appendix 6 sites specific requirements are to be regarded as Plan Policy. Preferably appendix 6 should have a policy number and appear in the Plan as a Policy itself.
- 1.3 Issue 1 Q2 asks whether all of the infrastructure requirements included within Policies P1 – P15 are intended to apply to every allocated site within each policy and whether this is justified with reference to the tests in para. 204 of the NPPF.
- 1.4 There are two main problems with the infrastructure requirements set out in Policies P1 – P15. The first is that they appear to apply to all allocated sites within a particular settlement. Thus P6 North Weald Bassett allocates five sites. P6F sets out six categories of infrastructure requirements but without indicating how each of those infrastructure requirements relates to each allocation. Given that sites will be brought forward separately at separate times, it raises great difficulties about what each allocation is going to have to bring forward by way of infrastructure. Are allocations which come

forward later expected to make up any deficiencies in provision contributions from sites which came forward earlier (where, for example viability issues precluded earlier sites from producing part of the requisite infrastructure requirement)?

- 1.5 The second problem relates to the fact that the infrastructure requirements listed at P6 F are general in nature. An example is F(iii) which simply says: “highways and junction upgrades”. We raised this issue in our matter 14 statement, but the plan reader is simply unable to tell from P6F (and the same applies to all other policies P1 – P15) what the infrastructure demands on his particular site are. This is essentially because the work has not been done to identify the necessary infrastructure requirements which should be contained within the Local Plan. As they are not identified, it is simply not possible to ensure that adequate infrastructure is secured via the Local Plan. Planning Practice Guidance at paragraph 018 reference ID:12-018-20140306 provides that “the key infrastructure requirements on which delivery of the Plan depends should be contained in the Local Plan itself. This is simply not achieved in the Epping Forest District Local Plan and the Plan is thus unsound in that regard.

2. Issue 2 Policy P6 North Weald Bassett

- 2.1 Issue 2 Policy P6 Q1 asks about the impact upon junction 7 of the M11 and whether that is proposed to be mitigated by the junction 7A. Adequate mitigation will only be provided by a combination of improvement to junction 7 and the provision of junction 7A. Both are necessary. This also impinges on Matter 4, issue 1, Q’s 1 and 2 about the amount of housing which can be accommodated in the 3 Garden Town Sites allocated in Policy SP5.
- 2.2 Q2 asks whether improved/increased public transport provision is necessary to accommodate the scale of development as proposed in North Weald Bassett and in

Thornwood. Whilst the proposed changes to policy P6 set out in the revised Statement of Common Ground now include the requirements for improved/increased public transport provision in North Weald Bassett, they do not do so in relation to policy P11 Thornwood. This error of omission needs to be rectified.

2.3 Q4 asks, in relation to both Master Plan areas whether part L(vi) require the conservation or enhancement of the relevant heritage assets in order to accurately reflect the requirements of legislation and national policy and whether a criterion should be added to part O to ensure that the historic environment and individual heritage assets are considered through the preparation of the North Weald Master Plan. The Parish Council believes that that is essential and would support main modifications which secured those objectives.

2.4 Q6 asks about traveller site allocations within NWB.R1 and NWB.T1. The Parish Council firmly believes that the ultimate choice of site needs to take into account the views of both the travelling community and the settled community in relation to the appropriate criteria for site location.

3. Issue 2 P11 – Thornwood

3.1 Q1 indicates that the Plan makes three residential allocations but only two are included in the policy. The Parish Council understands that there are only two allocations for Thornwood. Site THOR.R2 Land East of High Road was only added to the Plan at regulation 19 stage and did not form part of the earlier consultation exercise which would have enabled the local community to make its views known on the appropriateness of the allocation. This issue was raised by the Inspector at Matter 1, issue 2 at point 2(a) and 3(l) and is a matter of considerable concern to the Parish Council. The Parish Council is also concerned that the addition of THOR.R2, without

proper consultation, now proposes 172 new homes in what is essentially a small village neighbourhood with minimal infrastructure. It believes that due to the small size of Thornwood Common it will be difficult for this level of homes to be incorporated in to the village without unacceptably impacting on the existing settlement and community particularly without additional infrastructure provisions. This matter essentially fell to be considered under matter 4 Issue 2 (“beyond the Harlow area, is the distribution of development in the plan justified having regard to the defined settlement hierarchy”). The Parish Council believes that the amount of development now proposed for Thornwood is excessive in relation to the defined settlement hierarchy and the fact that Thornwood is in fact nothing more than a small village with limited infrastructure.

Matter 4, issue 2 Q’s 4 and 5 ask whether it is justified for North Weald Bassett (a large village) to be allocated more development than the towns of Loughton, Waltham Abbey and Ongar - and would the growth of North Weald Bassett be disproportionate, particularly when development at nearby Thornwood and Hastingwood is taken into account. It also compares the relatively limited growth at Buckhurst Hill and Theydon Bois (large villages) with the growth at Nazeing and Thornwood (small Villages).

- 3.2 Whilst it is accepted that growth does not follow Parish or District Boundaries, it should be formally noted that the Parish of North Weald Bassett (encompassing North Weald, Hastingwood and Thornwood), one of 24 parishes in the district, is being allocated just under 25% of the Districts Housing Allocation. None of three of the villages in the Parish have direct access to a train station, unlike other areas in the District. This 25%, equating to 2,274 homes, is a significant amount which will change the dynamic and makeup of the Parish and its individual villages. The Parish Council has concerns that this is indeed disproportionate compared to the level of development elsewhere in the

District, especially considering that the Parish is subject to the biggest constraint of all – green belt – and proportionately this parish will be losing more of its green belt allocation than any other parish in the district. However, it is also accepted that both Hastingwood and North Weald have good provision of open space even after this allocation is made. Whilst in terms of North Weald Bassett (as a Parish) there is a clear argument as to the ‘fairness’ of this allocation on our local residents, and that it is without doubt ‘disproportionate’, the Parish Council is understanding of the reasoning behind its allocation (with the exception of Thornwood). What this Parish Council and its residents will not accept is a failure of the relevant bodies and statutory bodies to adequately plan for the essential and appropriate infrastructure required in order to ensure these allocations become successful and sustainable places.

With regard to Thornwood, the allocation represents roughly 50% addition to the current small village. EFDCs matter 4 statement refers to Thornwood having good links to North Weald, and that it will be able to benefit from the new Village Centre. In order to get by bus from Thornwood to North Weald, you have to go into Epping first which by default means those from Thornwood will shop in Epping rather than North Weald, so the reasoning behind this statement is unfounded. The only way to get to North Weald from Thornwood is by car, as the two areas are split by the M11. In addition, the Vision for Thornwood (page 160 of the SVLP) states that Thornwood will become a more self-sustaining village with improved provision of services, transport infrastructure and amenities. Even with the addition of the newly Reg 19 allocated site of 48 homes, there are no planned highway or public transport infrastructure interventions for Thornwood, there are no planned additional amenities for Thornwood, nor are there any planned additional services for Thornwood. The only planned changes for Thornwood

are the introduction of 172 homes. There is no masterplan proposed for Thornwood, so it is unclear how these 172 homes will make the village more self sustaining and what is required of developers to do this.

- 3.3 Allied to this, MIQs, Matter 4, Issue 4, Q3 asks – Is the scale of Green Belt release proposed at NWB, Thornwood and Waltham Abbey justified and proportionate to the size of the existing built up areas?

As mentioned previously, there is concern as the scale of loss of green belt for the Parish of North Weald Bassett, and it is felt that a more proportionate approach to distribution could have been achieved across the district as a whole. However, what is essential for this Parish is that what development does come this way is well designed taking into account the historic growth patterns and development styles within each of the villages, ensuring that each homes has sufficient space, is low rise, fits in well with each current village settlement, and is not a development of high rise, cramped, properties without adequate open space.

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