



Theydon Bois Parish Council

Parish Office, Village Hall, Coppice Row, Theydon Bois, Essex CM16 7ER

Hearing Statement in relation to Matter 15: Places: Issue 2:

Policy P8: Theydon Bois (Thursday 16th May 2019)

24th April 2019

Dear Mrs Louise St John Howe,

Thank you for your emails of 5th and 22nd April 2019, explaining the procedures set out for the continuation of the Hearing Sessions of the Examination in Public for the 'Epping Forest District Local Plan, 2011-2033'. In our representation made at the time of the Regulation 19 Consultation, the Parish Council made reference to a number of aspects which we hoped would be considered further during the time of the Hearings.

Under the topic of 'Appendix 6: Site Specific Requirements for Site Allocations', we raised a number of concerns and understand that we have been given the opportunity to attend, and speak at, the Hearing Session on Thursday 16th May 2019.

Having read the questions raised by the Planning Inspector in the 'Matters, Issues and Questions', please find below our Hearing Statement, in which we have explained further our interest with respect to Matter 15: Issue 2: Policy P8: Theydon Bois.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Caroline Carroll, Clerk to the Council

HEARING STATEMENT - MATTER 15: Places: Issue 2:

Policy P8: Theydon Bois

We note the Planning Inspector's reference to Policy P8, Question 1 (a) and (b) :

THYB.R1 (Land at Forest Drive):

- a) Will the density of development be in keeping with that on Forest Drive and Dukes Avenue?**
- b) Should the Development Requirements in Appendix 6 refer to the need to enable access to the railway ?**

Whilst the Parish Council notes that the proposed housing density for the allocated site is higher than that in the locality, the successful implementation of such development would be likely to depend on the appropriate design, and layout, of residential development within this site. If access is required to the railway embankment it may be possible to integrate this within the final design.

- c) Should they recognise the importance of existing trees and hedgerows to the north and west of the site, and of the brook along the northern boundary ?**

The allocated site is presently an agricultural field which lies within the Green Belt. However, as mentioned in our earlier Response to the Regulation 19 Consultation, if consideration is given to the retention of the natural features on the outer boundaries, particularly to the north and west, then it should be possible to integrate new development without adversely affecting the local environment. We suggested two modifications to be added to the Development Guidance, the text of which was drawn from that utilised with regard to other allocated sites, and consistent with the wording chosen by Epping Forest District Council ('EFDC'), as follows:

Trees

Development should take into consideration the amenity provided by the existing trees and hedgerow to the west, and north, of the site. Development proposals should seek to minimise their loss through sensitive layout.

Landscape Character

Development proposals should be carefully designed to minimise harm to the wider landscape taking into account the development's setting and the local landscape character. The design should minimise the impact on the landscape character by considering factors including layout, materials and external finishes.

Both of these considerations seem reasonable given that, to the western boundary of the site, there are a number of mature Oak trees that feature along the 'Oak Trail', promoted by the City of London Corporation, whose forest buffer lands lie further north, ascending Great Gregories Hill. The Parish Council is also aware of the sensitivity of the immediate environs, and the public and permissive footpaths which constitute a strong component in the green infrastructure of the locality.

Along the northern boundary of the allocated site is an open watercourse, known locally as the Crystal Brook, which plays an important part in the surface water management of the area. It is clearly delineated in early field maps of 1915, and is thought to pre-date that period. As such it is a permanent landscape feature and, as referenced in the Development Guidance, will form the northern part of the new defensible boundary with the Green Belt.

It is also presently defined by native hedgerow on either side of its banks and retaining some element of this hedgerow (which includes two Elm trees within it, as mentioned in EFDC's '50 Favourite Trees': EB702), would help to strengthen this boundary, whilst also serving to blend any newer development into the wider landscape setting.

We, therefore, believe that it would be both helpful, and justified, to include reference to the landscape character within the Development Guidance.

d) Is the requirement in Appendix 6 to integrate the “permissive path” within the development unduly prescriptive ? Would it be sufficient to require a pedestrian route to be provided through the site ?

The Development Guidance issued by EFDC includes reference to the permissive path, which has been in existence for many years, and the Parish Council is in agreement that access to this should be retained and integrated within the development layout, in order to maintain connectivity to the wider Public Rights of Way network. However, the exact positioning of the path, which currently runs from the south-west corner to the northern boundary, could be subject to further consideration once the layout and design of the new development are determined. The access, which is currently via a pedestrian route, need not adversely affect the layout nor the provision of some form of access.

The permissive path leads from the allocated site through the field to the north, which rises progressively forming a substantial hill. This land plays an integral part in the local landscape character and provides an area of natural greenspace which is highly valued by local residents.

e) What is the justification for requiring contributions to Controlled Parking Zones in the vicinity of the site ?

It is felt that this is a question for EFDC and the site promoter to answer. However, the type of accommodation proposed could have a bearing on the parking provision required, with the possibility that less provision would be required for smaller units.

2. THYB: R3 (Coppice Row): Should the Development Requirements in Appendix 6 reflect the need to conserve or enhance the Grade II Listed 'Baldocks' ? Should they refer to the prominent location at the site overlooking the Village Green, around which numerous heritage assets are dispersed ?

In the Parish Council's Response to the Regulation 19 Consultation we briefly alluded to concerns with respect to the design of future development on the site, and made a suggested amendment (again following text employed elsewhere by EFDC) to the Development Guidance, as follows:

Design

The prominent corner location of this site means that development is likely to impact upon the character of settlement. Development proposals should protect or enhance the character of the area and amenity of nearby existing development. The design should take into consideration aspects including layout and extent, development form, levels, density, height, scale, massing and materials.

We did not specifically refer to the setting of the former 'Baldocks Farmhouse' as the newer development would replace an existing bungalow (itself constructed in the original orchard of that property), together with a further one on the adjacent plot. However, the allocated site is situated in Coppice Row, which is the main access route through the village (B172) and the new development would overlook the Village Green.

At its heart lies the Avenue of Oak Trees, thought to date from the 1830's, and buildings in the vicinity are predominantly of traditional design and detailing. Indeed, many of the Grade II Listed, and locally listed, buildings of architectural and historical merit are also dispersed around the Green which, in the 'Heritage Asset Review': DPP 2012 (EB902/EB902A), was considered suitable for further appraisal as a possible Conservation Area (being one of only two new potential sites within the District referenced in that document).

In order to secure a high standard of design for the apartments now constructed on the opposite corner (known as Pavilion Court), the Parish Council entered into extensive discussion and consultation with the developer.

We are, therefore, of the view that some indication of the importance of the design, scale and detailing of any development proposals would be justified for inclusion in the Development Guidance, and may assist in bringing about a successful outcome on this site.

3. What effect would the development at THYB.R1 have on the purposes of the Green Belt ?

The allocated site presently has a field access from the end of Forest Drive and, being triangular in shape, is contained within the boundaries to the west, east and north, the latter of which is delineated by the natural boundary of the Crystal Brook and the hedgerow on either side of its bank. The land is level and sits slightly below that of the railway embankment, which forms a defensible boundary to the east. As such it is less visible within the wider landscape setting and a cul-de-sac development could contain the new buildings within it.