



North Weald Bassett PARISH COUNCIL

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FAO: NWB Masterplan Team

RESPONSE TO NORTH WEALD BASSETT STRATEGIC MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK (SMF) CONSULTATION

Please accept this letter as the formal response from North Weald Bassett Parish Council to the North Weald Bassett Strategic Masterplan Framework consultation which runs until 16th January 2024

Before commenting on the document itself, the Parish Council would like to draw the attention of the District Council, Developers, Site Promoters, and Residents of North Weald Bassett Parish, to the Position Statement Published by the Parish Council in January 2024 (a copy of which is appended to this response). First and foremost, the Position Statement should be taken as being the primary position of the Parish Council. It should also be noted that the Parish Council and Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group feels that the approach taken by the developer of the largest site in this SMF area (Countryside / Vistry) has been constructive and positive, with the majority of issues raised being taken on board by the developer and incorporated into the SMF.

This response deals with some very specific matters concerning the Strategic Masterplan Framework as well as some more general and generic matters relevant to the residents in the Parish of North Weald Bassett. They are grouped under specific headings, and in some cases pose specific questions to which the Parish Council would like a response.

Specific Points regarding the Strategic Masterplan Framework

- Various pages – Please ensure the correcting wording is used when referring to Vicarage Lane, by adding 'West' to the end where relevant. There are two Vicarage Lanes in the Parish – Vicarage Lane West and Vicarage Lane East.
- It is suggested that wording should be included to clarify that North Weald Bassett is a civil Parish, however for the purposes of the Strategic Masterplan Framework document, North Weald Bassett refers to the village of North Weald.
- Page 16 – final paragraph – Please add North Weald Village Hall as this is missing.
- Page 19 – Figure 3.8 – remove reference to the religious part in the Village Centre Hub, as the Methodist Church has now closed. Reference to this should also be removed from the second bullet point on the same page.
- Page 19 – Figure 3.9 – can you add a section of Woodland on Weald Common following the planting of over 2,000 trees.

- Suggest removing comment on page 22 (last paragraph) that Epping Underground Station is around a 10 minute drive/bus ride from North Weald Bassett. This would not be correct if travelling during Peak times, specifically school drop off and collection times. Suggest this is changed to a 'distance' and not a time.
- The Lower Forest SSSI is within a 2km distance from the SMF area, and as such this should be included in the first paragraph on page 24 regarding ecology.
- The Parish Council is pleased to see the four character references on pages 26 and 41 of the SMF document, namely discrete village-like feel, the Airfield, connections to the countryside, and a rich local history.
- Suggest removing the methodist Church on page 27, albeit the building still exists at this time but is now permanently closed.
- The picture of the High Road on page 27 is actually a picture of Church Lane – this should be changed.
- Weald Common – a large open expanse of green space, including a play park, and football pitch, and a large area of tree planting – is a well-recognised and used area of green space, within which a new Sensory Garden is currently being created, however this is not mentioned anywhere on page 30 under the 'Communal Green Space' heading. This should be included.
- On page 31, figure 3.25 shows four areas within the village across four timescales. The image and text relating to the 1970 to circa 2000 is incorrect. The image is from within the Blenheim Development itself, which was not created until after 2005, and the block map also shows the Blenheim development. This therefore giving an incorrect picture of development between 1970 and 2000 and should be amended accordingly.
- The Parish Council is pleased to see that the sensitive edges along Queens Road and Oak Piece have been recognised on page 35.
- The Parish Council supports the statement on page 36 which states that the SMF should not result in a loss of privacy or light for existing residents.
- The Parish Council is pleased to see that the Design Guidelines, funded and created by the Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, has been referred to and recognised at various times throughout the SMF document.
- The Parish Council is pleased to see that the hedgerow / tree belt along the boundary of the site and Blackhorse Lane should be retained (page 37). This is to protect current residents of Blackhorse Lane. It should also be pointed out at this stage that the Parish Council would not support vehicular access to the site from Blackhorse Lane.
- It is unclear why a section of Beamish Close has been included as a primary street loop / public transport link on figure 3.37 on page 42. This figure is headed up 'Combined Opportunities', however the continuation of this vehicular access to St Andrews School should not be classed as an opportunity, but an existing problem. It should also be noted that there is no key for the purple zig zag line identified on figure 3.37.
- The first paragraph on page 48 should be amended, as although the Local Plan was for a 15 year period, we are already 6 years into this time frame, thus the wording stating 'over the next 15 years' is incorrect and should be amended.
- The Parish Council is pleased to see references to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group work in the General Themes for the Masterplan area on page 53.
- As a general principle (taking into account the Position Statement published by the Parish Council in January 2024 and as referenced earlier in this response) the Parish council supports the general design and principles of the Masterplan Area, specifically in terms of access and its relationship with the current village of North Weald Bassett.
- Page 59 references the sports pitches that are proposed. Consideration should be given to how and where sports clubs and groups would park when using these facilities. This would also be extended to the MUGA. Improvements in sports pitches will often mean more games played, and the potential for league matches with visiting teams and associated spectators needing to have

a place to park. The SMF does not adequately explain how this would be accommodated, or state that applications will need to show how this will be accommodated. Without this, vehicles would park on local streets, which would be unacceptable. It would be short sighted to assume that all visitors to the Sport Pitches and MUGA will be local only. This needs to be considered.

- The Parish Council supports the proposed modified and stopped-up footpaths as detailed on page 61.
- The Parish Council supports the proposed restrictions to Byway access for Byways 78 and 83 as proposed on page 67.
- Page 69 briefly addresses the matter of Car Parking, suggesting that consideration should be given to lower level of car parking provision. So far there is insufficient evidence that a sufficient improvement to the public transport network (buses) will be made to warrant a lower level of car parking across the new development. Real consideration should be given to the village's proximity to Epping Underground Station, and the times at which commuters who travel into London to work will want/need to travel. Without a reliable, frequent, bus service catering for said users, they will want to drive, and this should be taken into account.
- With regard to the provision of a Traveller site, evidence suggests that both the settled community and the gypsy and traveller community, prefer a degree of separation¹¹. As such, should it be deemed necessary that a traveller site is required within the development, both community groups should be respected. This is addressed on page 76, however the proposed illustrative layout in figure 5.21 should be altered to show access directly to the right as you enter from the A414.
- The Parish Council supports the proposed location of the new retail centre, and the community elements.
- The Parish Council is pleased to see on page 73 that land has been reserves for new health care facilities. However, the Planning System is such that whilst a developer is required to provide a building, they are not required to provide the service itself. This is not the fault of the developer, but the planning system as a whole. The Parish Council will expect to see sufficient provision of actual healthcare facilities as part of this development, and EFDCs engagement with the Integrated Care System to confirm they will provide suitable and adequate healthcare facilities.
- In terms of the local centre community element, the Parish Council feels that any community facility should be owned and managed by the Parish Council as a neutral, non-faith based body, to ensure inclusion with all faiths in the community.
- Reference to the Methodist Church should be removed from Figure 5.17.
- In terms of heights as detailed on pages 84-85, the Parish Council supports to provision of maximum 2 storey dwellings on the periphery and sensitive edges of the masterplan area, however is slightly concerned that the higher 2-3 storey dwellings would be located on the higher parts of the development site, and the visual impact this would have.
- In terms of the design of buildings, reference should be made to the Design Guidelines as created by the Parish Council for design influences, to ensure that the built form is representative of the 'village feel' so treasured by current local residents, and accepted throughout the document as being a characteristic of the village. House design should be traditional in nature, with some modern sustainability elements included, however not so much so that the new development is clearly distinguishable from the current village, created a degree of separation.
- Page 113, under 'Community Facilities / hub', has the Parish Council listed as being the body responsible for the delivery, however this is not correct. The Parish Council fully supports the one-year option for the Parish Council to consider if it wishes to have the freehold interest in the site (and building), however the Parish Council is not responsible for its delivery.
- Page 114, under 'Upgrading of Memorial Playing Field', has the Parish Council listed as being responsible for the delivery. This is incorrect. The Parish Council does not own this land, which

¹¹ [Gypsies' and Travellers' lived experiences, culture and identities, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

is in fact the responsibility of the Queens Hall Charity. Whilst the Parish Council may choose to assist the Queens Hall Charity with elements of work, it is not the responsible body, and the Parish Council should be removed.

Church Lane

The Parish Council is pleased to see that the issue of Church Lane being used as a rat run is recognised, specifically on pages 21 and 68. This is a concern for the Parish Council. The Parish Council feels that the proposal as suggested on page 70 in terms of linking up Merlin Way with Epping Road should be further explored, as this would provide a possible solution to the rat run issues along Church Lane and Wellington Road.

Flooding

Councillors are concerned that the surface water run off will be directed into Cripsey Brook. Wording on page 25 of the SMF document (under the Pluvial flood risk heading) states that surface water run-off will be restricted to the pre-development greenfield rate for the 1 in 1 year rainfall event with the drainage system and attenuation features sized to accommodate all storms up to and including the 1 in 100 year event plus a climate change allowance. It also states that this means that in larger storms, the future rate of run-off will be reduced, resulting in a betterment to the receiving downstream infrastructure. Whilst not experts in drainage matters, this wording seems to suggest that generally there will be no change to the average day to day run off rate from the masterplan area as is currently the case with the site being agricultural fields. The Parish Council is very concerned about this, as currently the flooding associated with various sections of Crispey Brook (most notably along the A414 near the Vojan Restaurant situated in the Ongar Parish) is already a regular problem, and the Parish Council feels there is an opportunity to make improvements to the day to day run off rate from this area as part of the development proposals. It is suggested that wording should be included to state the Council will expect to see evidence of an improvement in the day-to-day run-off rate. This is also relevant to pages 60 and 61 of the document. The Parish Council feels it is not acceptable to say that the run-off rate should be 'no greater than the existing run off rate', as this is already causing a problem further along the line.

St Andrew School

As a direct result of discussions between the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, the Parish Council, and the developer of the largest parcel of land within the masterplan area, consideration was given to expanding St Andrews School rather than the creation of a new school. However, this was on the proviso that a vehicular entrance with drop off points to the school was created to the north of the School (in parcel number 7 as referred to in figure 3.26). The rationale for this was that the current parking issues experienced by residents in School Green Lane, Beamish Close and Blackhorse Lane on a day-to-day basis at school drop off and pick up times should not be exacerbated. The text on pages 32 and 67 suggests that the only northern access to the School is the potential for a bus/coach drop off. If this is the case, the Parish Council would not support the expansion of St Andrews School. It is understood that there is a push for people to walk their children to school, and it may be that some of the residents in the new development will do this, however if St Andrews School was expanded without the option for vehicular access from the north, the current problems would undoubtedly become even worse than they are now. The Parish Council feels that in this case, the best solution may in fact be to have two schools - the new school located on the site reserved within parcel 6 on Figure 3.26. This could then be multifaith. However, there should be consideration given that the same parking issues would not occur on Queens Road if this new school was built. This matter is further addressed on pages 75.

Cycle access – Applications should be required to demonstrate that provision is in place to stop motorised bikes and quad bikes from using the new Cycle Routes proposed throughout the development, especially to and from their access points. This is already an issue in the village at numerous locations (including the Memorial Playing Fields) and must be addressed as part of the SMF. In addition, the proposals on page 65 talk about cycle integration with the existing village, with figure 5.11 identifying blue arrows showing these routes. The reality of the situation is that most the current roads in North Weald village are not designed, nor are they suitable, for cycling. As such, what we will be left with is a great cycle provision within the new development itself, without any improvements to cycling provision outside the development. This is a matter that must be addressed by both EFDC and ECC, as without

these external improvements, the cycling strategy as identified will not work to areas outside the new development.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Buckley', written in a cursive style.

Cllr Alan Buckley
Chairman

cc. North Weald Bassett Parish Councillors
Cllr Chris Whitbread
Cllr Holly Whitbread
Cllr Les Burrows
Cllr Jaymey McIvor
Cllr Richard Morgan
Cllr Peter Bolton

POSITION STATEMENT - DEVELOPMENT OF NEW HOMES IN THE PARISH OF NORTH WEALD BASSETT

The Epping Forest District Local Plan was formally adopted in March 2023. Included within it are the allocation of a number of sites in the Parish of North Weald Bassett for new housing development, set to take place between now and 2033. These sites are detailed on the following page. In total, the villages of North Weald, Thornwood and Hastingwood, are set to see **at least 2,286 new homes**, along with redevelopment of North Weald Airfield providing an additional 40 hectares of employment space along with a site from which EFDCs waste operation fleet (bin lorries and other associated vehicles) will operate. There will also be further development around Ongar, Epping and Harlow.

For over 6 years now the Parish Council, along with the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, have tried to raise public awareness of this development, including posting leaflets through doors, articles in village life, and regular updates on social media. We have been involved in the Local Plan process from the start (2011), and have been working with developers using the feedback received from you following the Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire, in the hope of trying to influence the development which is coming our way in terms of how its designed, heritage, open space, traffic and transport, respecting the village feel of our areas and respecting our current population.

We have been through tens of thousands of pages of documents and proposals, looked at all the available evidence, represented our residents at every opportunity we can, expressing both concerns and in some cases support, sat through the Local Plan process, and tried as much as possible to ensure we influence all development proposals.

HOWEVER... The Parish Council is now at the stage where it has become unbelievably frustrated with what are clear gaping flaws in the Planning System. These flaws allow for each development site to progress entirely separately to others in the local area, meaning developers are not required to talk to each other. Whilst they state that they are required to consider the impact of other development in the area, we are yet to see any tangible evidence of this. The Parish Council is also not confident that the approach taken by both Epping Forest District Council and Essex County Council is a collaborative one. This is especially relevant when it comes to the highly probable traffic impact to our Parish as a result of all this new development.

The Transport Assessment Report dated January 2019 submitted as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan (EB503¹) states that *'The analysis demonstrates that the combination of more ambitious sustainable modal shift, changes in travel behaviour and a package of physical highway improvements **could potentially mitigate** the most significant impacts of the Local Plan'*.

The Parish Council understands the need for new homes, and will continue to strive to work with both developers and the relevant local authorities, however the **current position** of the Parish Council is as follows:

"North Weald Bassett Parish Council is NOT CONFIDENT that the resultant traffic as a consequence of the proposed development both within and outside the parish has been considered as a whole, and no evidence has been provided to show that residents WILL NOT suffer because of them. As such, it is our intention to hold the relevant authorities to account, to facilitate a joint forum where developers, the local authorities and the Parish Council can get together, so that evidence can be presented to Parish Council showing the traffic impact of this development, and what it means for our residents. Our Parishioners should not suffer any detriment due to this growth, and but should in fact benefit from these developments."

January 2024

Statement of North Weald Bassett Parish Council

¹ [EB503-Transport-Assessment-Report-Essex-Highways-January-2019.pdf \(efdclocalplan.org\)](#)