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Mrs J Shingler
Epping Forest District Council
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6th August 2013

Dear Mrs Shingler

APPLICATION No.EPF/2343/12 MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT AT STONEHALL BUSINESS PARK

I refer to our application to the District Council for what we regard as the essential redevelopment of Stonehall Business Park, which I understand has been referred to the main Development Control Committee by the Area Planning Committee with a recommendation of refusal.

As you will appreciate we are most disappointed with the Area Committee's recommendation, and we would like to further support our case with additional financial information (previously emailed to you on 01/08/13) and a re-affirmation of our case (set out below) which we believe has already been set out in the Planning Design and Access Statement submitted with the original application.

Planning Policy – National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The NPPF document contains a number of policy elements that we strongly believe supports the application that we have submitted to the Council. There are two key policy areas to which we would ask members' attention to be drawn.

Supporting a prosperous rural economy. This section of the NPPF states that Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. It goes on to say that local authorities should go on to promote a strong rural economy, and that local and neighbourhood plans should support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings.

The proposal we have set out ticks those boxes. The existing business park buildings and facilities are neither viable or sustainable, and we believe that the case we have set out within the application and its supporting documents is quite clear. If the replacement of the existing buildings is not undertaken, then the site cannot be sustained in employment use, and this will adversely affect the local economy.

Should this be the case, and the business park is no longer able to operate viably, then we would need to look at alternative options, and in this respect we would refer you to paragraph 22 of the NPPF document, which states that:-

Planning policies should avoid the long-term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose. Land allocations should be regularly reviewed. Where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for the allocated employment use, applications for alternative uses of land or buildings should be treated on their merits having regard to market signals and the relative need for different land uses to support sustainable local communities.

This indicates that unless the business park is put on a viable footing, the site would be lost to the local economy. However, we also believe that this NPPF statement further supports our case for the inclusion of a residential element as a part of the overall scheme.

Protecting Green Belt Land. The NPPF points to five main purposes for protecting Green Belt land. These are:-

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

We would contend that the application that is now to be considered by the Council's main Development Committee is not contrary to any of these purposes. Furthermore, paragraph 89 of the NPPF document states that:-

An LPA should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in a Green Belt except for limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (Brownfield land) whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings) which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development.


Our contention is, and always has been, that the proposed new industrial buildings will not have a greater impact on the openness of the surrounding Green Belt, and the application should therefore receive Council support.

Finally, Paragraph 51 of the NPPF states that Local Planning Authorities should normally approve planning applications for the change to residential use and any associated development from commercial buildings (currently in the B use classes) where there is an identified need for additional housing in that area, provided that there are not strong economic reasons why such development would be inappropriate.

Following discussions with the Councils Director of Housing, we have of course agreed that three of the proposed houses should be allocated as affordable housing units, and these will meet a need identified by the Council for such housing provision, and in full compliance with the Councils current policy.

We would ask that the supporting statements set out above are added to the arguments for approving this application already clearly articulated within the Planning, Design and Access Statement, and put forward in our case to the Council's Development Committee.

Yours sincerely



P Roberts