

APPENDIX 4 – DRAFT LETTER TO BROXBOURNE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Councillor Keith Brown
Cabinet Member for Planning & Regeneration
Borough of Broxbourne

Cc Natural England

Dear Cllr Brown,

Epping Forest SAC Mitigation Strategy governance and costs

Thank you for your response of 18th December to my letter of 28th November 2019 on governance and costs for the SAC Mitigation Strategy. Apologies for the delay in replying but I wished to seek our Trustees' views on these issues ahead of my response to you.

I have written, in a similar vein, to other local authorities in London and Harlow with competent authority responsibilities towards Epping Forest SAC. I am also writing to Epping Forest District Council separately because of the need to address a number of more detailed issues relating to their current Local Plan examination stage.

SAC Mitigation Strategy governance

Firstly, thank you for confirming that Martin Paine would be able and willing to attend the SAC Mitigation governance meetings. Indeed, having made the offer on behalf of the Conservators to provide governance, it is gratifying to see re-engagement by most parties since then. In particular, I am grateful to the London Borough of Waltham Forest (LBWF) for bringing together a number of London boroughs and, importantly, the Greater London Authority (GLA) on 18th February 2020 to discuss the mitigation work and how to progress it in London. It is also very welcome that a second meeting of the SAC Mitigation Strategy Oversight Group was held on 24th February chaired by Epping Forest District Council. I am pleased that Martin Paine was able to participate in that meeting. There is now the promise of regular meetings of this latter group and I hope that this will now lead to progress with the essential avoidance and mitigation measures.

However, there are two issues of continuing concern to the Conservators. Firstly, there remains the need for coordination between London, Essex and Hertfordshire as regional entities in this endeavour. I hope that between all of us we can ensure proportionate, active and coordinated participation by each authority and I look forward to your support in achieving this result.

Secondly, not all parties are engaging with the same, or at least proportionate, level of commitment at present. This is partly influenced by the various stages of local plans but this presents a significant problem for achieving a comprehensive and full Mitigation Strategy.

I look forward to working with your Council on the above issues over the coming months and to hearing more from the other competent authorities about the governance structure and terms of engagement for a coordinated approach. **The Conservators' offer to convene meetings remains should this be seen by other parties as a helpful option in ensuring coordination and consensus across borders.**

Epping Forest Visitor Survey and future costs-undertakings for developing a robust Strategy

The additional data yielded by the Epping Forest Visitor Survey 2019, presented to the Oversight Group on 24th February, are important and provide further evidence of the widespread pressures on

the Forest. This new Visitor Survey also revealed the need for, and the importance of, high quality alternative outdoor recreational destinations in the enlarged Zol. It makes clear the kind of characteristics that would be required for these additional sites to be effective.

Although the survey suggests that visitors from Broxbourne are relatively limited in number at present, nonetheless I consider that the second Epping Forest Visitor Survey's extension to the Zone of Influence demonstrates the need to address the impact of increased housing and the limited alternative greenspaces across at least 6.36km around Epping Forest's SAC boundaries. Working together there is the opportunity to achieve an outcome much better designed than the sum of individual parts by providing new greenspace options that are large and attractive enough to protect Epping Forest and meet the health and well-being needs of the larger resident population.

However, whilst welcoming this Visitor Survey, the fact that the timing and better weather of the September 2019 survey, compared with the 2017 survey, increased the Zone of Influence (Zol) indicates to me that a follow-up summer survey (May/June) would be important to consolidate the Zol evidence. As part of the costs-undertakings for the evidence-gathering for the Strategy, to which I referred in my previous letter, we hope that your Council would be willing to contribute to or participate in, alongside us and other parties, this further survey which seems likely in our view to show a further increase in the Zol.

Also, we would like this further work to include an overarching analysis that would bring together all the data from the three visitor surveys and examine the predicted "uplift" in visitor pressure from different locations in more detail.

In relation to the avoidance of increasing visitor impacts, we would welcome a dialogue with your Council, EFDC and the Lee Valley Park Authority, in the near future, about broadening and deepening this work to inform a more comprehensive access strategy and the supply of SANGs in and around the Lea Valley and the western flank of the Forest. We think that it is vital for this access strategy to be developed alongside the emerging Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategies of the London Plan and other Local Plans and a reinvigorated Green Arc Project. I look forward to ways in which we can work together on GI to achieve such coordination in our recreational access work and the protection of Epping Forest SAC.

Yours sincerely,

Graeme M. Doshi-Smith BSc (Hons), CISSP, CISM, CRISC, CAPM, CC

Chairman, Epping Forest and Commons Committee