

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Epping Forest and Commons	7 July 2014
Subject:	Public
Epping Forest Planning Casework - 2013/14	
Report of:	For Information
Superintendent of Epping Forest SEF 11/14	
Summary	
<p>The land surrounding Epping Forest continues to be subject to intense development pressure. With its crescent form and sinuous 203.5 kilometre boundary, the Forest is particularly susceptible to impacts from poorly conceived development. The successful protection of the Forest relies heavily on the Town and Country Planning System, and particularly the Metropolitan Green Belt designation. The Conservators remain staunch supporters of this widely adopted planning protection.</p> <p>This report provides information on planning applications and pre-planning consultations made on behalf of your Committee, which seek to protect the context, character and setting of Epping Forest from further environmental damage.</p> <p>Some 91 planning applications have been considered on your Committee's behalf. Objections were made to 28 applications. From these applications 28% have been refused or withdrawn, 32% have been granted permission, four applications remain undecided and the remaining three applications were for pre-application advice. The 28% refused or withdrawn level compares with national statistics for 2012/2013 which show a 13% refusal rate.</p>	
Recommendation(s)	
Members are asked to:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive the report. 	

Main Report

Background

1. The Epping Forest Acts of 1878 and 1880 appointed the City of London Corporation to act as the Conservators of Epping Forest with specific duties to keep the Forest "*un-inclosed and unbuilt on*" reflecting the acute development pressures from a growing capital and to "*protect the natural aspect*" which was an early expression of protected landscape designation.
2. The Town and Country Planning Act 1947 introduced mandatory controls on most classes of development. The key protected landscape designations introduced in the subsequent National Parks and Access to the Countryside

Act 1949 accorded specific protection to England's 10 National Parks and 35 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty within the planning system. The early Victorian Conservancies of Ashdown Forest; Epping Forest; Malvern Hills; and Wimbledon and Putney Commons established before this legislation do not directly enjoy similar protection.

3. Beyond ownership by the Conservators, Epping Forest has had to rely on Planning Policy developed by Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) for its further protection, particularly Metropolitan Green Belt designation. Epping Forest coincides with the jurisdictions of four LPAs – Epping Forest District Council; and the London Boroughs of Newham Redbridge and Waltham Forest and Essex County Council, which retains some strategic planning responsibilities.

Green Belt

4. Epping Forest District Council has the third highest proportion of Green Belt land of all local authority areas in England. Recent Government figures show 93.5% of the area has Green Belt status protecting it from development. In its Planning our Future – Issues and Options Consultation Document 2012, the District Council states clearly that *“there will have to be some release of Green Belt land adjoining settlements to meet the needs for housing and employment growth in the period up to 2033.”*
5. Officers have been involved in six pre-planning consultations involving Green Belt land for housing that will impact on the Forest, meeting directly with the developers for three of the sites at Latton Priory, Stonards Hill and North Weald:
 - 5.1. **Latton Priory** - South of Harlow, potential to deliver up to 2,500 homes over the next 20 years.
 - 5.2. **North Weald Bassett** - A Masterplanning study for the village and the airfield.
 - 5.3. **Stonards Hill, Epping** – approximately 150 new homes.
 - 5.4. **Forest Lodge, Epping Road** – 19 homes.
 - 5.5. **Pick Hill, Waltham Abbey** – Pickfield Nurseries, 90 homes + community facility
 - 5.6. **Lippitts Hill** – The Elms Caravan Park, 13 new residential mobile homes in place of existing use of holiday caravan & camping park.
6. The Conservators continue to seek to influence Planning matters by making comments on public consultations for Local and Regional Plans and through scrutiny and comment on planning applications with regard to development.
7. Such development may have a negative impact on the Forest with regard to the intensification of development, traffic generation, changes in local character and environmental impact.
8. The Conservators are not currently a statutory consultee within the planning process, and therefore LPAs are not obliged to consult the Conservators

regarding applications for planning permission that may affect the Forest, its 203.5 kilometre boundary and its immediate environs. However, there are requirements for LPAs to serve notice of certain planning applications on any adjoining owners and occupiers in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2012 as amended. The weekly scrutiny by your officers of the four LPA planning lists provides the basis from which formal responses are made to the relevant LPAs.

Update on Outstanding 2013 Planning Decisions

9. The following applications were outstanding in my previous report to your Committee on 13 May 2013:
 - 9.1. EFDC – 186 Forest Road, Loughton – Appeal lodged for yoga and Pilates studio - **Refused**
 - 9.2. EFDC – Pretloves – Demolition of existing buildings and erection of two dwellings - **Granted**
 - 9.3. LBWF – 130 Bluehouse Road, E4 – Two-storey extension – **still outstanding**
 - 9.4. 22 South Avenue, E4 – Demolition of existing house and erection of six houses - **Withdrawn**.

Current Position

10. Application Numbers: between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014 a total of 91 planning applications have been considered with the breakdown indicated.

Local Authority	Applications considered	Returned Consultation
Epping Forest District Council	68	22
London Borough of Redbridge	11	2
London Borough of Waltham Forest	12	4
London Borough of Newham	0	0

11. Of the 28 applications upon which the City has commented, nine were granted (32%) (Including one on appeal), six refused (21%), two (7%) were withdrawn and eight (28%) remain outstanding. The remaining three were requests for pre-application advice.
12. The latest General Development Control Return statistics up to September 2013 shows that across England, 455,000 planning applications were submitted with 87% of applications granted. The figure of 28% refused or withdrawn compares favourably with the national figure of 13%.
13. 11 of the applications considered are for a range of highly individual proposals. 14 of the applications considered were for either demolition of existing buildings with replacement dwellings or for whole new residential developments.

14. This year only three applications were considered for house extensions. This is a similar trend to last year when also only three applications were considered the “traditional” application consisting of extensions. This in part though, may be due to a relaxation of the planning rules brought in on 9 May 2013 allowing larger loft conversions and extensions on houses without needing to get permission from local planning officers. It doubled the permitted length of extensions to eight meters for detached homes and six meters for others. These relaxed rules are in place until 30 May 2016.
15. A list of all applications which were subject to a response is included at Appendix 1. The eight applications considered to have a tangible detrimental impact on the Forest and its Buffer Lands are summarised below;
 - 15.1. **Woodside, Thornwood** - change of use of land for the stationing of caravans for residential purposes for 1 no. gypsy pitch together with the formation of additional hard-standing, a stable building and a utility/dayroom ancillary to that use – **Refused – Appeal pending** (EFDC).
 - 15.2. **Sainsbury’s Waltham Point Distribution Centre** - Variation of Section 106 Legal Agreement in respect of HGV delivery vehicle movement routing restrictions – **Granted** (EFDC).
 - 15.3. **Knolly’s Nursery, Pick Hill, Waltham Abbey** – 105 residential units, amenity areas and community facility with shop – **Refused** (EFDC).
 - 15.4. **Picks Farm, Sewardstone Road** - school, 308 dwellings and associated infrastructure – **Outstanding** (EFDC).
 - 15.5. **The Elms Caravan Park, Lippitts Hill** – Pre-application enquiry for change of use of the existing holiday caravan park that is currently open for the period 1st March – 31st October, to a mobile home park with an additional 13 new residential mobile homes (EFDC).
 - 15.6. **Pickfield Nurseries, Pick Hill** – Pre-application enquiry for 90 dwellings and community facility (EFDC).
 - 15.7. **Forest Lodge, (nr. Wakes Arms) Epping Road** – Pre-application enquiry for 19 residential units (EFDC).
 - 15.8. **Forest Court, Chingford, E4** - demolition of existing garages and construction of two x 3 bedroom dwelling houses including room in the roof – **Refused** (LBWF).

2013 / 2014 Consultations

16. Epping Forest District Council - The Conservators have taken the opportunity to meet with members of the Forward Planning Team for a general discussion about their forthcoming Local Plan. We were advised that there is a need to identify an evidence based, objectively assessed, housing need figure for the District and we were also advised that it is very likely that some Green Belt

land would need to be developed, but that Green Belt release would need to be considered in a way which avoided fragmentation and a loss of openness, and established long-term defensible boundaries. A draft Plan (preferred options) preparation and sustainability appraisal is due for public consultation from 31 May 2014.

17. London Borough of Waltham Forest – The Local Plan Development Management Policies were adopted in November 2013. This document as well as the Council’s Core Strategy which was adopted in 2012, now has policies specifically recognising the strategic importance, contribution and significance of Epping Forest in the Borough.
18. Liaison has also continued with various organisations over the Northern Access Gateway Package (NGAP) a proposal by London Borough of Enfield, arising from its North East Enfield Area Action Plan (NEEAAP), which is seeking the regeneration of the Enfield Lock/Enfield Highway/Ponders End/Turkey Street/Southbury corridor through improved transport measures. The most controversial element of NGAP is a proposal to link the A1025 Mollison Avenue in Enfield to the A121 Waltham Abbey bypass effectively diverting Enfield’s traffic via J26 adjacent to Epping Forest.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

19. **City Together** – The Epping Forests Division’s responses to the development planning process match the City Together vision of a “World Class City” one theme of which seeks to protect, promote and enhance our environment with a specific objective of “conserving and enhancing biodiversity.”
20. **Open Spaces Department Business Plan** – Specifically it meets the Open Spaces Department’s Business Plan by;
 - 20.1. Promoting knowledge and appreciation of the environment and protecting the Open Spaces for future generations.
 - 20.2. Extending partnership-working and developing closer links with the local authorities.
21. **Epping Forest Management Plan** – Epping Forest seeks greater protection from encircling development which would isolate it from surrounding countryside and increase the penetration of noise and pollution into its open spaces. This report exemplifies the need to remain vigilant and active in responding to development planning and change in order to protect the “natural aspect” of the Forest. This work seeks to encourage the Forest’s LPAs to share the long-term vision set out in the Epping Forest Management Plan.

Implications

22. **Financial** – there are no direct financial implications from commenting on planning applications and strategy documents, apart from officer time allocations met by local risk expenditure. However, in the event of appeals which go to a planning inquiry there will be financial implications if the

Conservators wish to take part and decide to instruct Counsel / appoint consultants. No external planning consultancy advice was commissioned on third party development during the report period.

23. **Legal** – responses to planning consultations have been made on behalf of the City, as Conservators of Epping Forest with the aim of protecting the Forest environment and to preserve its amenity and character for public enjoyment, according to the Epping Forest Acts 1878 and 1880, and where your Committee works in partnership with others including national government agencies.
24. **Property** – Review and comment upon local planning applications, and objecting to them where necessary is an important part of the proper management of the Forest, to protect its amenity and character.

Conclusion

25. Land surrounding Epping Forest continues to be subject to intense development pressure. In order to protect the context and setting of Epping Forest and its overall environmental condition, the Conservators continue to object to planning applications which are considered to pose significant threats to the Forest environment, and to lobby LPAs for the full representation of Forest interests as they revise their Local Plans.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – List of Planning Application responses by site name

Background Papers:

SEF 12/13

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Appendix 1

Planning application Number	Address	Proposal	Decision
EPF/0329/13	Fernhall Farm, Fernhall Lane	Demolition of existing barn and the erection of two detached dwelling houses with two detached double garages	Granted
EPF/0197/13	Three Horseshoe Farm, Lippitts Hill	Demolition of existing barn and the erection of two detached dwelling houses with two detached double garages	Withdrawn
EPF/0447/13	Green View, Bury Road, E4	Conversion of existing dwelling house and pool house into six self-contained flats	Refused / Granted on appeal
EPF/0283/12	Woodside, Thornwood, North Weald	Change of use of land for the stationing of caravans for residential purposes for 1 no. gypsy pitch together with the formation of additional hard-standing, a stable building and a utility/dayroom ancillary to that use	Refused / Appeal outstanding
EPF/0394/13	Netherhouse Farm	Change of use of existing training centre building to a restaurant	Granted
EPF/0901/13	Sainsbury's Waltham Point Distribution Centre	Variation of Section 106 Legal Agreement in respect of HGV delivery vehicle movement	Granted
EPF/1377/13	Birch Hall Farm, Theydon Bois	Single storey outbuilding	Granted
EPF/1644/13	Land at Kings Green, Loughton	CCTV	Subsequently granted when told Kings Green unavailable
EPF/1779/13	Pound Field, Bell Common	Ménage	Granted

EPF/1784/13	Knolly's Nursery, Pick Hill	105 residential units, amenity areas, community facility with shop	Refused
EPF/1981/13	23 Bell Common, Epping	2 storey side extension	Refused on appeal
EPF/1962/13	Golden Row, Mott Street	Approval of conditions	Partially approved
EPF/2036/13	Ripley Grange, Debden Lane	1 dwelling	Refused
EPF/2659/13	Oak Hill Farm, Theydon Bois	Perimeter fence	Refused
EPF/2610/26 11/ 13	Theydon Bois Tennis Club	4 x floodlight columns or 8 x floodlight columns	Outstanding
EPF/2585/13	89 High Road, Loughton	Demolish house - 10 x 1 bedroom flats incorporating a number of dormer windows, two of which overlook the Forest.	Outstanding
EPF/0275/14	Three Horseshoe Farm, Lippitts Hill	Demolition of existing barn and the erection of one detached dwelling houses with one detached garage	Outstanding
EPF/2097/13	Picks Farm, Sewardstone Road	School, 308 dwellings, village hall, health centre and associated infrastructure	Outstanding
EF2013\EN Q\01482	Pickfield Nurseries, Pick Hill	Pre-application enquiry for 90 dwellings and community facility.	N/A
EF2014\EN Q\00098	Forest Lodge Motel, Epping Road (nr. Wakes Arms)	Pre-application enquiry - Demolition of existing warehouse & motel - 19 residential units	N/A
EPF\ 2014\ENQ\0 0025	The Elms Caravan Park, Lippitts Hill	Pre-application enquiry for change of use of the existing holiday caravan park that is currently open for the period 1st March – 31st October, to a mobile home park with an additional 13 new residential mobile homes.	N/A

LBR/1822/13	45 Mornington Road, E18	External alterations to front driveway access	Granted
LBR/3027/13	92 High View Road, E18	2 x bed house at the rear of 91 High View Road, demolition of existing side garage and erection of new garage amenity	Withdrawn
LBWF/2012/1558	130 Bluehouse Road, Chingford	Two storey ,front, side and rear extensions	Outstanding
LBWF/2013/1731	27 Holly Drive, E4	Ground floor side extension, roof extension at side incorporating front dormer window and two rear roof-lights	Refused
LBWF/2013/2035	Garages, Forest Court, E4	Demolition of existing garages and construction of two x 3 bedroom dwelling houses including room in the roof	Refused
LBWF/2014/0268	2 and 4 Morgan Avenue, E17	Erection of 2 x 2 storey three bedroom houses	Outstanding