

HARLOW ALLIANCE PARTY

Harlow Local Plan

I write in response to your letter dated 17 September which indicated that respondents could make a further submission following the publication of new documents.

The publication of these documents at this stage goes to the heart of the issue which the Harlow Alliance Party have raised with you, that is, that the Local Plan is not sound because of a lack of consultation with residents in Harlow, those who are fact most affected by these Plans.

A key element of the Plans of Epping Forest DC and those of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town is the need for a whole series of transport corridors criss crossing Harlow. The population of the extended Harlow (although much of the new developments are of course not actually within Harlow's borders) will see a 50% increase in the next 13 years or so. These corridors are needed to try and mitigate the effect such a huge increase will have on congestion on Harlow's roads. They will require the removal of large swathes of open space to allow for the construction of roundabouts, road widening and a tramway running North to South. To date, Harlow DC, despite an assurance earlier this year, has still failed to consult with residents. You have been presented with many new documents and pieces of information since your examination began, the Inspector of the Epping Forest Local Plan even more so. We the Harlow Alliance Party, supported by hundreds of residents, feel that all this information should have been included in the Plans at a much earlier stage and as a result residents could have had their say on these matters before the Council's final submission to you.

It has also been brought to our attention that the National Planning Policy Framework of July 2019 contains specific relevance to protecting Green Belt land, requiring Local Authorities to consult with residents before any changes are made. The Green Belt around Harlow forms an important constraint which has effectively stopped any expansion of the town. Changes in the status of this land has been part of Epping Forest DC's Local Plan and residents across **their** District have had the chance to comment, but in reality the only people affected are those living in Harlow because much of the new developments are on fields immediately adjacent to their homes and in the case of the Sumners West area access to the new homes will only be via a road through a Harlow housing estate. As a result we believe that the residents of Harlow should have been consulted about this loss of green belt around our town.

To conclude

1) Epping Forest DC have not carried out any consultation with residents in Harlow despite the material changes that will be needed in Harlow as part of their Plan. We believe Harlow DC should have done so as part of their consultation with residents.

2) Harlow DC's consultation has been lamentable as explained before. At your examination it was said by Council Officers that the Council had used consultants to talk to residents living near the proposed HS2 sites. Since then we have spoken to many residents and we have not found anyone who was spoken to and we reiterate that the Council have not consulted with residents about the inclusion of these sites. The documents produced for each of the sites, includes a scoring system using "officer judgement" and the one in respect of HS2-3 is wrongly named and the pictures are of other sites, throwing doubt in our minds about their accuracy.

3) The consultation undertaken by the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town developers has not been widely publicised. As I write they are holding an exhibition in Harlow Council's Civic Offices but information advertising this event has not even been placed on Harlow DC's website. The information on show at the exhibitions gives little if any information about the effect this Plan will have on Harlow's open spaces and other infrastructure.

Harlow Council's Local Plan must surely be considered unsound as a result of the lack of a co-ordinated consultation plan across the four Council's involved in the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town, where there are in effect four pieces of a jigsaw puzzle to make the whole.

Nicholas Taylor
Leader of the harlow Alliance Party.