



FRAME PROJECTS

## **Epping Forest District Quality Review Panel**

### **Report of Formal Review Meeting: North Weald Park**

Thursday 27 September 2018  
North Weald Airfield, Merlin Way, CM16 6HR

#### **Panel**

Peter Maxwell (chair)  
Jayne Bird  
Roland Karthaus  
Richard Lavington  
Vivienne Ramsey

#### **Attendees**

Ione Braddick	Epping Forest District Council
Sukhi Dhadwar	Epping Forest District Council
William Marr-Heenan	Epping Forest District Council
Tai Tsui	Epping Forest District Council
Corey Isolda	Epping Forest District Council
Loredana Ciavucco	Epping Forest District Council
Deborah Denner	Frame Projects

#### **Apologies / report copied to**

Alison Blom-Cooper	Epping Forest District Council
Jill Shingler	Epping Forest District Council

## 1. Project name and site address

North Weald Park - Former North Weald Golf Course, Rayley Lane, North Weald Bassett, North Weald CM16 6AR

Planning application reference: EPF/1494/18

## 2. Presenting team

Tim Chilvers	Quinn Estates
Bradley Smith	North Weald Grove Limited
Ricardo Rossetti	Redrow
Simon Beck	BDB Design
David Williams	DWLC
Paul Burley	Montagu Evans

## 3. Planning authority's views

The application site has been through the site selection process for the Local Plan and has failed to meet the requirements of the Council's sequential land preference hierarchy tests. It is therefore considered unsuitable for removal from the green belt for housing. Other sites closer to the settlement of North Weald Bassett have been considered acceptable and are now going through the masterplan process. The Submission Local Plan has now been submitted for examination. The panel's views on the quality of the development are being requested by Epping Forest District Council, because although the scheme has no officer support, and will be recommended for refusal, this may trigger an Inquiry.

## 4. Quality Review Panel's views

### *Summary*

The panel notes the planning policy context in which it has been requested to review the development proposals for North Weald Park – and that assessed against the Submission Local Plan, planning officers will recommend the scheme for refusal. It is unusual for Quality Review Panel comments to be requested by a planning authority in these circumstances, and the panel notes that it is not its role to advise on the principle of development on a greenbelt site. The panel's comments therefore focus on the design quality of the development, to inform assessment of the application by Epping Forest District Council. The discussion focused on strategic design issues including: the scheme's relationship to the wider context; masterplanning; community facilities; landscape; sustainability; and place making quality. It did not consider in detail issues related to flooding or its proximity next to the airfield, both of which will need to be resolved as part of any proposal. Overall the panel thinks the submitted scheme would not achieve a development that would be acceptable in terms of design quality, irrespective of planning policy decisions on the release of greenbelt land. These comments are expanded below.



### *Relationship to the wider context*

- Because the site is not currently connected by development to the village of North Weald, the panel think it would need to be designed as a free standing place, where a community can grow and develop.
- Elements such as shops, village hall, primary school, medical centre, workspace and older people's homes should be at the heart of the development, to create a community centre. In its current form, the scheme has the feel of a housing estate, with some non-residential units at its edges.
- Connections to the surrounding area also need careful thought, given the intention that many of the proposed community facilities will be used by people from the wider area.
- For example, placing the school to the south of the site, close to neighbouring allocated sites, would be preferable to its current location to the north, on the other side of the A414.
- The panel also highlights that the site will not be a sustainable location for development, unless public transport, cycling and walking routes are convincingly resolved.
- The planning process normally provides a framework within which cohesive development of sites in different ownerships can come forward – and because of the planning status of this site, the onus is to be on the scheme promoter to forge these strategic connections.

### *Masterplan*

- The panel thinks there are several aspects of the masterplan that require a fundamental rethink.
- As noted above, it thinks that non-residential uses should be arranged to create a strong community centre at the heart of the development. One possible approach would be to 'anchor' the development around the existing church.
- The panel feel strongly that homes for older people should be central to the new community, not located at the edge of the development. They could, for example, benefit from easy access to the central green space.
- Similarly, placing the primary school on the other side of a busy road is unlikely to support walking and cycling to school, making it more likely that pupils will be dropped off by car. This also applies to the proposed sports facilities.



- In general, the site layout currently appears to be structured around vehicular access, rather than prioritising easy pedestrian or cycle routes.
- The panel also questions the way that affordable housing has been placed on back land sites, which it thinks is not consistent with aspirations to create a mixed community.

### *Community facilities*

- The proposals for North Weald Park include a variety of community facilities, including a sports centre, park and ride, primary school and scout hut. However, there is a lack of clarity about the long term funding and management of these facilities.
- The panel highlight the risk that without a robust strategy for long term stewardship, the community facilities may not be sustainable e.g. if simply handed over to the community.
- If the community facilities are essential to the case for developing on this unallocated site, they should be secured through the planning process. This would mean including elements such as the school and health centre in a detailed application, to give confidence in their quality and long term viability.
- The catchment area that the facilities are intended to serve should also be clearly defined – for example, to give confidence there will be sufficient demand to support a park and ride service.
- The panel notes that inclusion of housing for older people as part of the brief for North Weald Park provides an opportunity for innovation – to create homes that have extra facilities, without feeling institutional.

### *Landscape*

- The application site has many positive landscape features, but the panel does not think that the current development proposals make the most of these.
- Despite part of the site being a disused golf course, which would typically mean poor biodiversity, the site benefits from trees, a stream and appears to be a richer habitat than an arable field. A habitat survey should therefore inform the landscape design.
- The stated ambition of the design team is for a development structured around the landscape, however, the scheme's road layout currently seems to dominate – in part because the site is bisected by the A414.
- In its current form, access and views to the linear green space are undermined by the staggered layout of the development platforms.



- Similarly, the function of the linear space seems poorly defined, when there is a possibility for a village green to be placed at the heart of a community. This would require uses such as pubs, shops and sports facilities to be integral to its design, layout and location.

### *Sustainability*

- The panel think that to make a case for exceptionality in support of development on greenbelt land, there should be a commitment to exceptional standards of environmental sustainability e.g. zero carbon development.
- The scheme should make the most of opportunities to enhance biodiversity, in the design and management of its landscape.
- A strong attitude to sustainable modes of transport would be essential, given the relative isolation of the site. This should include cycle provision within the site, for example to enable children and their parents to cycle to school, as well as connecting to cycle routes towards Epping Station.
- The scale of the site should make it possible to enable walking and cycling between homes and community facilities. However, this will only be achieved if these options are easier than driving e.g. through parking restrictions together with good pedestrian and cycle routes.

### *Place making quality*

- The scheme appears to use of standard Redrow Housing types, which the panel feel would not be successful in giving a development at North Weald Park a distinctive identity, specific to this part of Essex.
- The panel also questions the low density housing typology proposed. Higher density housing, creating a more compact development could allow for an improved relationship between homes, non-residential uses and open space – and with the neighbouring airfield.
- The panel thinks the scheme misses the opportunity to take inspiration from Essex villages, incorporating elements such as a village pond, and with a concentration of facilities around a village green.

### *Next steps*

- The panel is available to provide further comments as design work progresses, if requested to do so by Epping Forest District planning officers.

