

ESSEX ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

EPHING FOREST BRANCH

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6<sup>th</sup> October 2005

John Scott  
Joint Chief Executive  
Epping Forest District Council  
High Street  
Epping  
CM16 4BZ

Dear

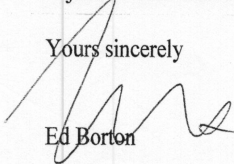
**Liaison Meeting 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2005**

At our usual preparatory meeting last night there was a discussion about the items to be included in the agenda for the forthcoming liaison meeting. It was agreed that the time could best be spent on planning matters. This decision was prompted by the differences over the St. John School application, unsuccessful suggestions from Loughton Town Council about the content of planning notices, recognition of the backlog in enforcement cases and a recent letter from Barry Land about local council objections.

There is no great wish to churn through past arguments but there is a strong feeling that best results are not being achieved at the moment and a fresh approach is needed. From the local council standpoint there are perceptions that their representations of residents' views are not always understood by District officers and councillors. Whilst most imposed planning conditions are sensible it is believed that there can be an over reliance that others will successfully control questionable applications when enforcement is known to be under stress. This is particularly the case over times and days of commercial operations. There are District councillors who think that local councils raise too many objections.

What is needed is a genuine debate about these issues backed up with some relevant statistics. For example, we hear a lot about Government targets for an 8 week turnaround and we see regular reports on the success or otherwise at appeals. Without seeking the creation of extra work would it be possible to see a report showing the recent numbers of applications, local objections and final decisions broken down by council?

Yours sincerely



Ed Borton

cc Councillor Jason Salter

EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL JT CHIEF EXECUTIVE	
Rec'd:	7 - OCT 2005
Ack:	.....
Referred to:	.....
File:	.....

Date: 23 September 2005

Our ref: PL/BL

Clerks of Parish & Town Councils

Barry Land (01992) 564110  
email: bland@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Dear Sir/Madam

#### **Objections to Planning Applications**

I am prompted to write to all the parish and town councils as a result of comments made to me by a number of district councillors regarding applications for relatively minor matters that have been included on the agendas of district council's Area Plans Sub-committees.

There is a concern that the committee's time is being taken up with some minor issues that only appear on the agenda because of an objection raised by a local council. Individual members have often taken time to visit the sites and then spend time having the case introduced at committee but find that the issue is of minor significance and the objection unfounded.

The approval of delegated powers to the Head of Planning & Economic Development is intended to avoid the need for minor matters to be reported to members so that issues of wider concern and contentious to a number of people can be properly debated with sufficient time devoted to them. Of course, members also have other duties outside of Planning which demand their attention and are anxious that they are only asked to get involved with those cases of real contention.

As you are aware, whenever a planning application attracts an objection from a local council and officers feel the application can be granted, the case is always reported to committee. Therefore, the plea is that objections are only raised after very serious consideration and relate to issues wider than simply, say, loss of light to a neighbour or a preference for a garage rather than a parking space. Neighbours are consulted separately, as you know, and Council policies are all applied in any event.

From my point of view, I must seek to determine all applications in the shortest possible time and applications referred to committee very often exceed the 8 weeks allowed to me simply because they have to wait for a committee meeting in their 4-week cycle. I also fear that long committee agendas could result in cases towards the end not receiving the attention they might warrant.

Of course, I do not wish to dissuade you from raising local issues that you feel we may not be aware of nor from objecting to schemes that deserve your criticism after careful thought and, indeed, most of the time comments raised are entirely valid, but from time to time the problems discussed above occur to everyone's frustration.

If I, or a member of my team, can be of any help to your considerations in the future, please give me a call.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "B. Land". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

B. J. Land  
Asst. Head of Planning Services