

# Theydon Bois Action Group

PROTECTING THE VILLAGE OF THEYDON BOIS

Theydon Bois Action Group

16 January 2009

Civic Offices  
High Street  
Epping  
Essex  
CM16 4BZ

Reference EPF/2439/08

Dear Mr Preston

Please note that Theydon Bois Action Group and its members wish to object most strongly to the above planning application.

This application for a large-scale commuter car park is inappropriate development in the Metropolitan Green Belt and would hard openness.

The development team, Parkeng Limited, have many of the same directors as Blunts Farm Estates Limited, who have caused the people of Abridge and Theydon Bois untold harm, they have total disregard for our local environment. They have been labelled as 'unscrupulous' by the chairman of the Environment Agency Sir John Harman who also said *"It's an example of an unscrupulous operator looking to run a landfill site while avoiding the appropriate planning and environmental controls by claiming the so-called 'golf-course' exemption. By flouting the conditions of the exemption for landscaping, this unscrupulous operator has been able to bring tens of thousands of tons of waste onto the site and may have made up to £20m by doing so. I wouldn't want to see the operator get away with this abuse without suffering substantial financial loss."* Two Enforcement Notices, that have yet to be complied with, have been issued against Blunts Farm Estates Limited. Another has been issued for an unlawful motorway maintenance depot adjacent to this site. And two Enforcement Notices have recently been issued for this site: *'Without planning permission: the stationing of a portable building approximately 21m x 9 m in size and a caravan on the land'* and *'without planning permission: the construction of a new building measuring approximately 1.6m x 2.1m x 2.3m.'* The current occupier of this site,

who has allegedly purchased the land subject to planning permission, although he has yet to apply for any permission, has also demolished the building on the site plans for this application. The occupier has been told that it is unlikely that he be granted permission for a new build in the Metropolitan Green Belt having demolished the original building, he does however continue to occupy the site unlawfully. The developers have also done nothing to restore the land subsequent to the development of a motocross track, neither have they done anything to stop its use as a motocross venue.

Although the applicant states in the application that any footpaths do not effect the proposals, a footpath does in fact run directly through the location. The applicant has sought to mislead and misinform.

Parkeng attempted to associate them selves with Transport for London with a flyer that they widely distributed in the village in August 2008 and at a presentation at the Village Hall. TfL confirmed in an email to TBPC dated 27<sup>th</sup> August that '*The flyer proposing a new car park in Theydon Bois has not been produced by TfL, this is not a TfL initiative and the proposed site is not TfL land.*' This application is nothing to do with them. They have also confirmed that they have no intention of opening the westbound side of the tracks making the disabled parking bays ineffective, unless disabled drivers are able to navigate the Railway Bridge. Again the applicant is misleading and misinforming.

Eric Pickles MP has also confirmed, when the developer used his comments for an increase to commuter parking in Theydon Bois, that it was 'certainly not my intention' to endorse in any way the development of a large scale commuter car park on Metropolitan Green Belt. The applicant is misleading and misinforming.

We understand that each application has to be viewed in its own merits. However with this site and the adjoining land totalling 104 hectares, on the 'Call for Sites' list then we would resist any inappropriate development of the Green Belt that may set a precedent that could see inappropriate development of the Metropolitan Green Belt.

This site is on the 'Call for Sites' list. If it was decided that the development of a large scale commuter car park on Metropolitan Green Belt was a very special circumstance, then it would set a very dangerous precedent for development into housing for the remainder of the site, which is not acceptable. The development of a commuter car park in Green Belt is not a very special circumstance.

The development of this large-scale car park is also not a viable sustainable business opportunity without the attraction of further development for housing. The site has no access directly onto the Abridge Road parallel to the railway line, Parkeng does not own this land and access is restricted to sports and recreational use. The construction of a roadway from much further to the East onto the Abridge Road will cause even greater loss of openness, as the roadway is up hill and can be viewed from most of the rest of the village. We understand that a covenant also exists on this access limiting it to golf course use only.

A development of this nature should have a sustainable business plan, intrusion of this scale onto the Green Belt should be measured and of a sustainable nature.

For the Applicant to achieve the recognized national standard for a Car Park would require high levels of illumination typically > 15 -20 Lux which is alien to the local environment and would clearly result in a loss of Visual Amenity. Theydon Bois has a 'Dark Sky' policy as accepted by the Planning Inspectorate in case reference APP/J1535/05/1172217

A Traffic Regulation Order by Essex County Council (Abridge Road, Theydon Bois)(Prohibition of Right Hand Turn and No Entry) Order 200\* has not been passed. The TRO's for the prohibition of right turn and no entry into Abridge Road were requested following comments from the safety audit, which was undertaken by the County Council's Consultant. The recommendations of this safety audit and the detailed design was that the above prohibitions be undertaken. It would seem that in order for the access road for the proposed golf course to be safe then a prohibition of right hand lane should be implemented. The TRO was not and it would seem likely that 350 cars entering and leaving the site at similar times of the day could cause more traffic than was envisaged for the golf course. A prohibition of right hand turn from the proposed car park would mean any cars leaving the site would have to turn left then travel to the mini roundabout in Abridge before being able to travel in a Westerly direction. This would increase traffic in a known bottleneck of Abridge and may lead to cars using private drives on the Abridge Road in which to turn round. The Abridge Road has an unrestricted speed limit of 60mph. Again the applicant is misinforming and misleading.

The publication of the Transport White Paper 'A New Deal For Transport: Better For Everyone' in 1988 represented a significant point of change for transport policy and planning. Local authorities are expected to promote sustainability through encouraging modal shift and the use of alternative forms of travel to the car, mainly public transport, walking and cycling. Clearly there is a conflict between the objective of this Application and guidance contained within the above document.

Essex County Council have confirmed the following: *It is not ECC policy to provide parking for commuters at 'interchange' points i.e. train, tube, and / or bus stations. ECC's policy is to advocate the use of Public Transportation by commuters for the whole route that includes the journey to the 'interchange'. This is in line with the objective of reducing congestion. Neither Essex County Council nor the District Councils have a 'duty' to provide parking for commuters. ECC would encourage commuters to look at the entire journey they make and consider how this may be made most efficiently from all aspects, which includes the impact of a vehicle being parked for an extended period around a workplace or town centre or at an interchange point. The County spends significant sums supporting public transport operation in outlying areas, where commercial services may not be viable, so that more areas do have access to appropriate*

*public transport. It is accepted however, that this support cannot ensure every property in the County has reasonable access to public transport.*

It can therefore be assumed that Essex County Council would not support this application as it is against their Public Transport Policy.

The application also seeks a change of use from Agriculture to Assembly / Leisure. Assembly / Leisure use, Class D2, includes use as: cinemas, concert halls, bingo halls, dance hall, swimming bath, skating rink, gymnasium or other area for indoor or outdoor sports or recreations, not involving motorised vehicles or firearms. Is this really an application for a commuter car park or an application for what could potentially become a bingo hall? Is the applicant misinforming and misleading?

This application is against Green Belt policy, the Theydon Bois Dark Sky Policy, Transport White Paper 'A New Deal For Transport: Better For Everyone' , Essex County Councils Public Transport Policy, it will increase traffic in the locality and will be of no benefit to local residents or businesses. Commuters that are able to park for free in residential roads will continue to do so. It will benefit Railway commuters that choose to travel longer distances in their cars to obtain a cheaper fare. This is not environmentally sound and will increase car usage and cause an increase in associated inherent pollution and congestion problems.

Theydon Bois has been badly served by the Planning Authority in terms of it's duty of diligence in the processing of Planning Applications, Blunts Farm / Parsonage Golf being a prime example. Therefore it is essential that this Application is the subject of close scrutiny relative to the points made in this objection.

This application should be refused.

Yours sincerely