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To: Planning Policy Team, Brentwood Borough Council
Subject: Brentwood Draft Local Plan

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Proposed Honeypot Lane Development.

Along with many residents of the Honeypot Lane/ Homesteads area, I would like to express my concern and strong objections to the proposed development.

I am amazed that this area should have been considered for such a development for many reasons, not least the fact that these fields form part of the green belt and need protecting to prevent any further encroachment on what makes Brentwood a desirable environment. Should permission for this development be granted, it will without any doubt be used in the future as a precedent and lead to more building and more destruction of green belt land, which in turn would damage the “distinctive character” of Brentwood, which the Barwood Land and Estates report claim to committed to protect whilst building on the Honeypot Lane site.

This however is only one of the reasons why these fields should not form part of the development; the area is severely waterlogged and identified as a high flood risk area relating to surface water in The Environment Agency website. Indeed anyone who has walked through the BT fields opposite the site can confirm that the ground is sodden and impracticable as soon as there is a period of wet weather; moreover, the fields considered for the building development are actually situated at a lower level than the BT fields. Honeypot Lane itself is, at its lowest and narrowest point regularly flooded.

In fact trees were planted on one of the fields to minimise the problem of flooding and I suspect that their sudden disappearance, all of them cut down and removed last summer was a move by the owners of the land to ensure that it could not be deemed protected woodland! The fact that the Honeypot site was not originally on the plan and yet has suddenly appeared on the subsequent one would therefore suggest that the owners – or agents acting on behalf of the owners, have put considerable pressure on the council for this to be the case and that the only reason behind this choice is financial gain to the detriment of any other consideration.

Beyond the above, the one overwhelming objection to this site has to be accessibility: Honeypot Lane is a country lane which at its narrowest point cannot accommodate two cars passing each other, which often leads to one car driving onto the pavement, endangering anyone foolish enough to use it, particularly so in the darker evenings in Autumn and Winter. The lane is already overused due to increased traffic following the development of the St Charles Road site, it is used as a cut through to London Road causing an increased flow of fast moving traffic, with in some places along the lane, very little visibility (junction with Hill Road) as there are also cars parked along the lane. Speed restrictions are not enforced and it is extremely difficult to cross the road at peak times in particular.

The Barwood Land and estates report also states that this site is “capable of being accessed by public transport, on foot or on cycle”: whilst there are some footpaths in a very bad state of repair along parts of Honeypot Lane, as stated before, it is not a safe or practical option and the likelihood is that people, particularly people with children will drive rather than walk along such hazardous paths, not to mention the distance aspect which again, will make it impractical if not impossible to retain as an option. There is no public transport provision along Honeypot Lane, Weald Road or Sandpit Lane, no doubt for the very reason that these roads are too narrow to accommodate that type of vehicle and there is clearly no space for potential cycle lanes!!

Honeypot Lane is clearly NOT suitable as a potential access road for such a huge building programme, all the more so as there are also restrictions on all the access roads (Weald Road, Sandpit Lane, Wigley Bush

Lane). An increased volume of traffic along any of these roads- and this would inevitably be the case can but result in regular congestion in all directions and many more accidents and incidents than is currently the case.

If the council has a duty to provide housing, there is also a responsibility to provide educational and healthcare facilities to go with it, for the benefit of new residents and to ensure that provision for current residents is not damaged or curtailed.

Thus, apart from accessibility, it is clear the educational aspect has not been considered: the nearest primary school is oversubscribed, has had expansion plans recently refused and is beyond the distance suggested by the Department of Transport guidance as a walkable distance. Besides, there is no pedestrian access all the way to the school and walking along the road is not really an option due to the lack of footpaths. Where are the children going to go to school? Driven further afield thus increasing traffic congestion even more? More traffic along Sandpit Lane generated by parents taking their children to other schools?

The local surgeries - where it is even now difficult to obtain an appointment- cannot cope with a further influx of patients and it is ridiculous to even think about increasing demand for care when it is clear that they are already stretched to the limit. Incidentally these surgeries, along with nearest shopping facilities, station and bus stops are also beyond the distance suggested by the Department of Transport guidance as a walkable distance.

The proximity of the A 12 along one length of these fields can but be a deterrent to any building programme with its accompanying traffic noise and pollution, hardly the kind of environment which is sought after by residents and an additional hazard for those living along that side.

For all these reasons, I believe this site to be totally inadequate for further development and I would also add that great damage would be done to the wildlife currently living in those fields with the inclusion of a number of badgers often to be seen in our garden. Financial considerations should not be the reason for agreeing to a programme of construction which will be detrimental to the area and destroy what makes the town of Brentwood an attractive place to live; it will open the door to further destruction of the green belt and future generations will not enjoy what they deserve to see protected. If the Council is serious about protecting what make Brentwood a place where quality of life and environmental considerations matter more than financial gain for a few, it cannot allow for this development to be agreed.

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