

Theydon Bois Action Group

PROTECTING THE VILLAGE OF THEYDON BOIS

Dame Eleanor Laing, MP

By Email: eleanor.laing.mp@parliament.uk

And efca@btinternet.com

28 February 2022

Dear Madam,

Theydon Bois Action Group (TBAG) write to draw your attention to the following speech, delivered in the House of Commons by Gareth Bacon, MP for Orpington, Kent (Conservative) at 16:04 hrs on Wednesday 26 January 2022.

See at column 1067: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2022-01-26/debates/aae5857e-c2bb-44a2-8e4b-343dbd437b4e/CommonsChamber>.

We would urge you to read the whole speech which illustrates perfectly important negative issues being experienced by your constituents in Theydon Bois and the wider district due to abuse of the planning system by sham companies and unscrupulous developers and individuals. In summary, it calls for unauthorised development to become an offence at law and to prohibit the submission of retrospective planning applications. Across our district, and our country, such developers are allowed to waste taxpayers' money by playing the planning and appeal systems for months and years and by playing the planning enforcement system as well which is then obliged to engage in lengthy and costly legal procedures before action is taken to correct blatant and intentional planning contraventions.

Indeed, it was just such a flagrant refusal to follow correct planning procedures at Blunts Farm, Theydon Bois in 2005 that led, out of necessity, to the formation of TBAG. We are sure that, despite your busy workload, you will remember the support that you gave TBAG and Theydon Bois village at that time, following the deliberate destruction of farmland by unscrupulous developers, who used the land as an extensive and unlawful waste disposal site and achieved a financial gain therefrom in the region of £18 million. Since 2005, no improvements have been made to the UK planning or enforcement system specifically to curb such activities by speculative wide-boys and developers who purchase Green Belt agricultural land and then, when they learn they are unable to legitimately develop the land profitably, proceed with attempts to put council officers under pressure and irritate local residents by playing the system, often ignoring enforcement notices and regulations while cashing-in on their nefarious activities. Blunt's Farm is one example locally and the former Old Foresters site is similarly operated but there are others within the District. The developer mentality is that by annoying residents sufficiently they will eventually welcome the housing estate or other development that the operators wish to build or will obtain retrospective planning permission for a scheme that would not have succeeded had it taken the conventional route to legitimacy. These developments are not usually appropriate in the chosen location and the purchase of green belt agricultural land is purely speculative. Methods adopted to cause concern to residents is to break every planning rule they can which is done without fear of cost or consequence due to the shortcomings of our nation's planning, enforcement and legal system.

Often, the landowners are part of an opaque business structure, and this is another shortcoming in our nation's governance. Companies House and the Land Registry currently take no verification action to ensure that those 'names' being registered as directors or landowners actually exist. For example, TBAG are informed that the current registered title holder of the former Old Foresters site cannot be traced to an actual individual, raising many questions as to how this can be possible in these days of fraud awareness and money laundering regulations. The implications of this situation on effective law and order in and beyond the planning system are clear.

TBAG thank you for your kind attention to this issue and would be pleased to hear from you in reply at your earliest convenience to learn what action you are able and willing to take in order to support and escalate the issues raised in Gareth Bacon's recent speech and in this letter in order to close long standing loopholes in the British system of company registration, land ownership and the planning regime that present perfect conditions for money laundering and are leading to corruption, criminal activity and a disproportionate burden on planning and planning enforcement officers and residents of Epping Forest District, as well as nationally.

We should also like to learn why the Economic Crime Bill was recently scrapped for this legislative session since this too would have been a great aid to unmasking the true owners of land and dissuading the use of shelf companies for convoluted and questionable financial arrangements. This has now come very much to the fore with the situation in Ukraine with respect to Russian assets in the UK.

TBAG very much looks forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

Theydon Bois Action Group
Protecting the Village of Theydon Bois
www.theydonbois-actiongroup.co.uk
Follow [@TBActionGroup](https://twitter.com/TBActionGroup) on Twitter