

General Eisenhower remarked that *Plans are worthless, but planning is essential*, a variation of the traditional military doctrine that no plan survives the first contact with enemy. That is, a plan is logistics, planning is the process of agreeing intentions and means of achieving those objectives: policy, strategy and tactic taking account of logistics. Diagrammatic plans are only seductive two-dimensional slices through a multi-dimensional system; seductive in that they encourage jigsaw playing, moving pieces around the surface rather deriving the layout from the plan, looking at area rather than place, the connections with other activities, and space: location requirements.

The practical problem with local plans is that successive governments have progressively sought to reduce local governments to agents whose role is to execute the policy, strategy and tactics determined by central government. Local government in consequence only has the powers and the money that central government chooses to give it. As Lord Hailsham, formerly Lord Chancellor and chairman of the Conservative Party, argued the UK slipping towards an elected dictatorship.

Hence, central government policies determine the cost, supply and type of housing constructed although actual delivery is large dependent on developers who, as they ought, seek that development which will maximise their profits. Local authorities lack the resources to take action to deliver housing but can only define areas where development might take place. In the end, local provision of housing can be little better than the policy of the government.

Climate change

Whilst the plan is to ban the sale of fossil fuelled cars by 2030, the average life expectancy of cars is currently 13.5 years but this expected to fall as a result of the shorter life of electronic components. Whilst Enfield is lucky in its relatively low rate of car ownership, there is necessarily both a presumption against car usage and the problem of managing the transition to a zero fossil fuelled vehicle future. One of the implications is that new development needs to be focused around public transport routes, specifically the railway lines. So a key datum is access to public transport (<https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/urban-planning-and-construction/planning-with-webcats/webcats>). In consequence, I agree with the housing focus around Crews Hill.

The progressive expansion of ULEZs will presumably promote the switch out of fossil fuel as well as help reduce London's appallingly poor air pollution standards.

Whether the changes in behaviour as a result of COVID will result in permanent shifts in living, shopping, work and travel behaviour is another challenge.

Housing demand

The two drivers for housing are:

1. Increase supply to meet current demand in order to drive down prices to an affordable level
2. Predicted population growth; this always problematic since the most recent predictions were rendered obsolete overnight by Brexit and were based on an increase in female fertility rather than the current drift downwards. As it is below the replacement rate, at some point, the population will start to fall if there is not sufficient inward migration.

In the meantime, the government has set targets for the amount of new housing to be provided in Enfield as elsewhere.

Housing development drivers

Land is available in two forms:

- Previously undeveloped land (greenfield sites)
- Previously developed land (brownfield sites)

In each case there is the issue of competing alternative uses for that land as well as the relative costs of putting land to a specified use. One key issue for development is the cost of land: in Enfield, the land value for land given permission for residential use is £15.5 million/ha.

(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/407155/February_2015_Land_value_publication_FINAL.pdf). Three further issues are firstly the cost of providing the necessary infrastructure to support development; the last Mayor's projection of the capital investment required for an expansion of London's population to ten million was £1,324 billion (<https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/gla-the-cost-of-londons-long-term-infrastructure-by-arup.pdf>) or an average of £132,000 per person for the final population. As these are upfront costs, they have to be borne by the existing population either as consumers or taxpayers. On site infrastructure costs then vary by local site conditions. Secondly, the degree to which there exist economies of scale in development, larger developments resulting in a lower per unit cost (<https://content.knightfrank.com/research/1930/documents/en/building-better-building-beautiful-commission-cost-value-2020-7017.pdf>). The third issue which is relevant to brownfield sites is the cost of decontamination and land remediation

(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/414378/HCA_Remediation_Cost_Guidance_2015.pdf).

Maps showing areas where contamination is likely are not available but the government guide gives a long list of previous occupations where contamination may be suspected but it is not clear that this includes old land fill sites

(https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321104458_Potential_pollution_risks_of_historic_landfills_on_low-lying_coasts_and_estuaries_Potential_pollution_risks_of_historic_landfills).

Another issue with brownfield sites is that industrial sites located on transport links, notably rivers and canals where there is a risk of flooding.

Green Belt

Originally the Green Belt was established to prevent the urban sprawl – which characterises much of the development of Enfield – that occurred the period up to WW2. A further reason was to preserve good quality agricultural land which is in short supply. It was introduced when development planning and control was also only in the process of being introduced; both in 1947. Its location is essentially arbitrary being located along the boundaries of where the sprawl had reached at that point. 'Sprawl' is an emotive term and London has always expanded. The dictionary definition of sprawling is: "spreading out over a large area in an untidy or irregular way". So it could be said to depend what is meant by untidy or irregular way or on views about the density of provision. Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian expansion could be said to have proceeded in a planned way first along the Lea valley and then as railways, and later tube lines pushed out, and were followed by development. In the 1920s and 1930s a far less efficient pattern developed when development followed arterial roads.

The question now is what is the Green Belt for and hence where should it be and what should be its form. It is not an objective in its own right but has to be considered in terms of the overall objective of delivering sustainable development in the face of climate change. Hence, the performance and location of the Green Belt has to be considered in those terms rather than being taken as a fixed datum. Compared to environmental designations such as SPAs, SSSIs etc, green belt designations should be considered as convenient rather than a constraint. The importance of green belt land lies therefore in what it could be rather than what it is.

Two obvious aims following from the overall objective are development of biodiversity and recreation. Like all the outer suburbs of London, Enfield has on average a high proportion of green spaces when domestic gardens are considered and London is one of the cities with the largest proportion of open space in the world. Green space in Enfield needs to be considered in the wider perspective of London, including in the context of the concept of the London National Park City.

The Green Belt obviously does not exist to increase the value of properties adjacent to it, themselves products of earlier sprawl.

Competing land uses

Two land uses in obvious potential competition with housing are recreation and biodiversity, competing both for greenfield and brownfield land. Recreation and biodiversity should in turn be regarded as complementary. Recreation comes in many different forms each requiring a different land form. Team games typically require desolate areas of grassland whilst informal recreation often requires a landscape that gives pleasure: an example being the wetlands constructed in Firs Farm park, and elsewhere by Enfield Council. I found little recent material on what people want from recreational land and where they want it other than: (https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/commonplace-customer-assets/parkpower/ParkPower_E-Book_Final_Press_091120_LoRes-compressed.pdf). But it is clearly not quantity but type and location that is important. Small sites, which are likely be brownfield sites, within areas poorly served for recreation, may well be better uses of those areas than for housing. A heretical notion is that, given government funding restrictions, there could be a case for converting parts of some barren areas of windswept large areas of grassland to housing if the funds raised are used to deliver biodiversity and higher recreational value in smaller areas. Maintaining those areas can be expected to depend upon building on the network of existing community support groups. More widely recreational provision has to be considered within the wider requirement for biodiversity.

<https://www.watefnetwork.co.uk/blog-817>

UN Zaragoza Water Conference 2015

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVwQLmweFcQ&list=PLkbQdUU8STM23O7Qlt6GL5-LVkmMc2FAx&index=14>

<http://waterinthegreeneconomyinpractice.wordpress.com/discussion-forum/>