
ENFIELD LOCAL PLAN

INNOVATIVE INFILL SUBMISSION

12.09.2021



SPECIFIC POLICY MEASURE: **DM BG6: PROTECTING OPEN SPACE**

Draft Policy DM BG6 states:

3: Development will not be permitted on private or semi-private outdoor amenity space such as residential gardens and communal areas within housing estates and other similar non-designated open spaces (e.g. food growing plots) unless the loss of such space can be compensated and the development has overriding planning benefits...

Policy is not sound:

The Draft Local Plan seeks the 'incremental intensification' of existing residential areas, whose existing character has been deemed capable of accommodating a medium level of change.

However, a blanket ban on development on residential gardens renders this approach inoperable in practice. Even a cursory review of the physical characteristics of Enfield's dominant character typology – classic suburban – will reveal that very little intensification is possible if garden land is taken entirely out of consideration.

Policy DM BG6 completely undermines the intent of DM H4 and runs contrary to Policy H2 of the New London Plan 2021.

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Policy is not sound:

Previously developed or brownfield land is widely acknowledged as the *preferred* location which will be *prioritised* for development, and residential gardens have long been excluded from this definition. Garden land – like the green belt - is therefore not a *preferred* location for development, but it does remain a *potential* location. The borough's failure to deliver adequate numbers of homes in preferred locations in the past means that locations which were previously less preferred must now be brought into play – just as the proposed release of greenbelt land.

Moreover, paragraph 4.1.2 accompanying Policy H2 in the New London Plan is clear in defining 'incremental intensification of existing residential areas' as an approach *complementary to, but distinct from*, small sites already specifically designated as brownfield / previously developed land. This means that open space within the curtilage of existing residential buildings, such as garden land not included in the definition of previously developed land, *is open for consideration*. (This fact is verified by the addition of a new GLA monitoring question on garden land for all new applications). It goes on to state that 'these developments should generally be supported where they provide well-designed additional housing to meet London's needs.'

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Policy is not justified:

The NPPF upholds the principle of resisting ‘inappropriate development of residential gardens, for example where development *would cause harm* to the local area,’

Existing policy DMD 7 which (while not without its own shortcomings) complied with this principle, by setting a measurable benchmark against which to allow proposals to be evaluated for appropriateness or harm *on their own merits*.

No justification has been provided for rescinding this measured policy stance in favour of an outright ban. No evidence has been provided showing that policy DMD 7 gave rise to unacceptable harm in the past, or that the continuation of a similar policy would do so.

If there was a fear that enormous swathes of garden will be covered by development, then the resulting quantum of new housing must be so large that it should have been properly assessed within the spatial options study. If, contrarily, garden land is not seen as making any meaningful contribution to housing targets, then the impacts of modest incremental development are so negligible in the overall context of the Borough that an outright ban is unjustifiable.

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Policy is not justified:

Garden land is broadly held to provide goods in terms of amenity, biodiversity, stormwater management, etc. But it is erroneous to assume that all gardens are of automatically of high amenity and environmental value:

No evidence base exists which gauges the true nature of the borough's gardens, eg:

- what proportion are truly biodiverse, as opposed to seas of mown lawn and sterile leylandii?
- what percentage is already covered by hardstanding and garages?
- what area of garden is actually needed to satisfy existing amenity needs, and what is surplus?
- is it justifiable, or even equitable, to declare that all 500sqm of a garden is needed to meet the amenity needs of an existing resident, when policy seeks only 50sqm for new homes?

There is another angle to amenity which bears consideration. For some residents, especially older residents, a large garden can become a burden, beyond their means or ability to maintain, a source of stress which detracts from their enjoyment of their home. Others wish to downsize to single-storey home on the same plot, better suited to their needs, staying in the community they love while freeing up a large family home for which there is so much demand.

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Policy is not justified:

It is also erroneous to assume that any development of garden land de-facto causes harm, or that the establishment of precedents will lead to wholesale loss of garden land.

No assessment appears to have been carried out of just how much garden land could ever, realistically, be developed. We have: a maximum of 5-6% of the borough's garden land could viably be developed for *new own-door family-sized homes*, of which half would still remain as enhanced open space serving the new homes. These are mostly corner or backland plots served by lanes and already substantially covered by garages and outbuildings.

But no strategic, borough-wide studies are necessary if policy simply allowed proposed developments on garden land to be *assessed on their own merit*, based on an understanding of the various goods provided by the existing site, and by the proposed development.

Part of the solution is already contained in DM BG8: Urban Greening Factor. If the proposed UGF after development equals or betters the status quo, then the development is positively desirable in environmental terms, as well as helping to meet housing targets.

NOTES ON POLICY AND CHARACTER

Previous planning policies limited infill development in the residential suburbs

Character of these areas remains little changed, because it *could not* change

New policies are more open to infill development subject to specific criteria

But if existing character remains sacrosanct, new policies become meaningless in practice

“You cannot build that here

Because nothing like that has been built here before

(Even though you were not allowed build anything at all here before...)”

NOTES ON POLICY AND CHARACTER

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Character of these areas remains little changed, because it *could not* change

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To meet small sites targets, '**different**' approaches must be assessed on merit

And 'character' needs to be understood **beyond** a simple view of '**what is already there**'

NOTES ON POLICY AND CHARACTER

Defining 'local' character

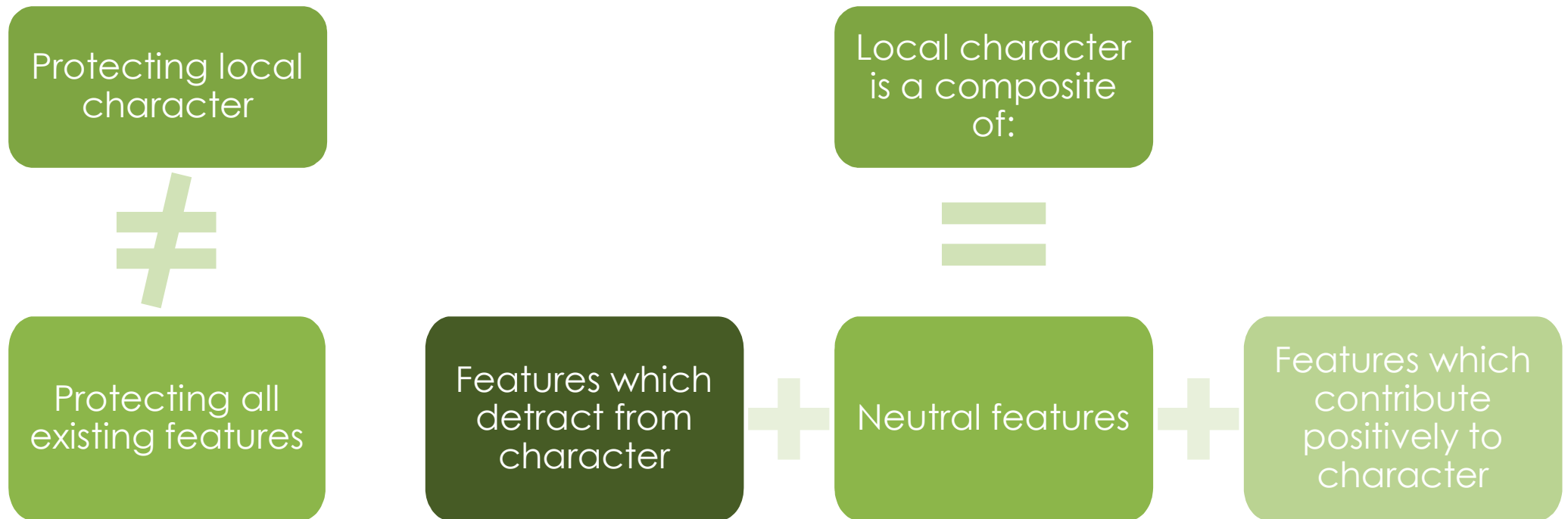
If defined too narrowly / literally only in terms of what already exists in the immediate surroundings:

Arbitrary basis for decision making – policy becomes hostage to **random actions** of previous owners

If defined more broadly as those features which may **reasonably be expected** in a similar setting:

More robust decision making – policy reflects **wider norms** found across similar character areas

NOTES ON POLICY AND CHARACTER



Regardless of whether on this precise site, or a typologically similar setting several streets away

NOTES ON POLICY AND CHARACTER

Protect & *enhance*
character

Features which
detract from
character

Neutral features

Features which
contribute positively
to character

Change:
Opportunity to
enhance

Change:
Open to
consideration

Change:
Protect / respect /
reflect / replicate

NOTES ON POLICY AND CHARACTER

Protect & *enhance*
character

Features which
detract from
character

Neutral features

Features which
contribute positively
to character

Eg: low grade
boundary treatments
and outbuildings,
haphazard parking

Eg: voids / ruptures/
differences in existing
urban grain and
pattern

Eg: consistent spatial
qualities and
architectural features
of housing stock

NOTES ON POLICY AND CHARACTER

Features which contribute positively to character

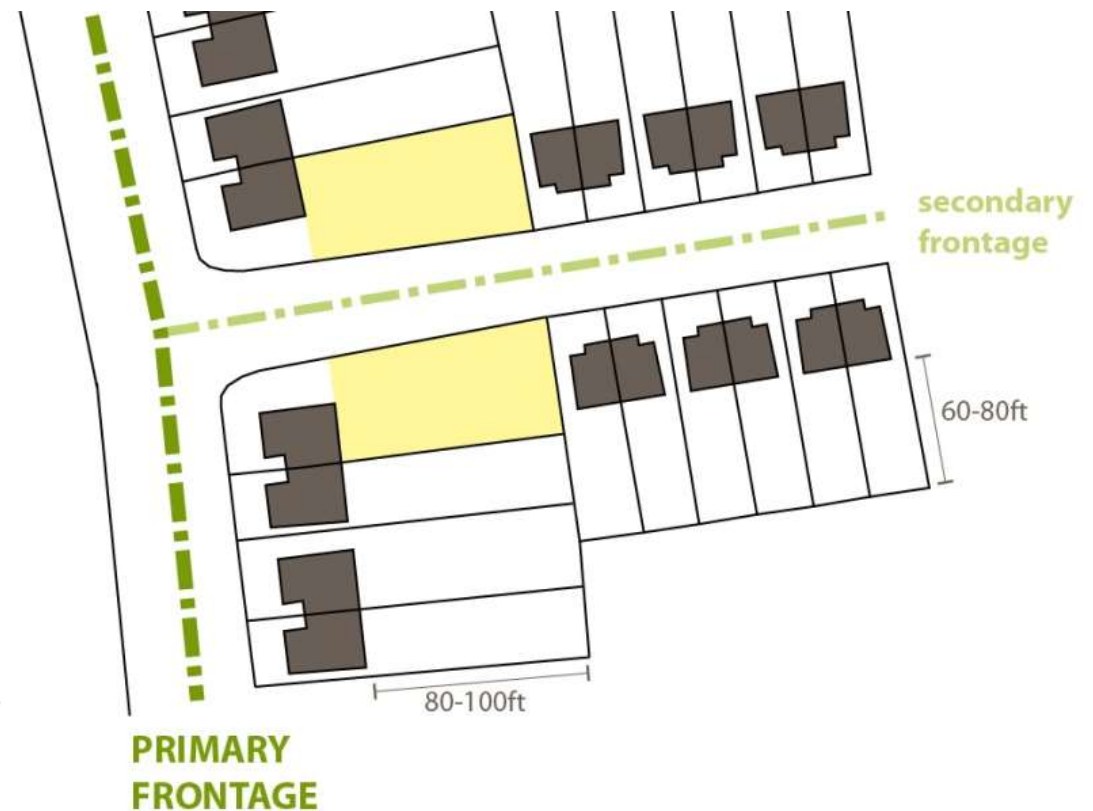
As defined by the Enfield Characterisation Study. But in summary, consistent frontages, spatial patterns and architectural features of repeating house types of generally high build quality.



NOTES ON POLICY AND CHARACTER

Neutral features

Areas where the Characterisation Study is silent, eg, voids and ruptures in the otherwise consistent pattern of the built environment. Never consciously **designed** – these gaps are merely the result of the market demands of 1930s homebuyers. While sometimes cited as offering ‘a welcome sense of openness,’ such weak urban planning would not be permitted in a contemporary development today.



NOTES ON POLICY AND CHARACTER

Features which detract from character

A foreground of timber fences and garages in varying states of repair, enlivened only by the occasional light-absorbing leylandii
*Beyond which, a landscape of rear elevations disfigured by permitted development rights. **An opportunity to enhance...?***

