

**RESPONSE TO THE LOCAL PLAN FROM WESTERN ENFIELD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION**10<sup>th</sup> September 2021To whom it may concern

I have the privilege of representing an Association of Residents in Western Enfield; a group of communities formalised just after the Second World War when most of us were not yet born. It centred on the Laing Estate where construction had halted abruptly at the beginning of war and did not resume until the end. Circumstances for our Founders were difficult. 'Make do and mend' was a much repeated homily but is no less relevant to the problems we face today.

Our Association has endured because its 1,200 members have aligned views; they exercise mutual principles of peaceful coexistence and they harbour common goals for the future. What greets us when we look out of our windows and open our doors affects our enjoyment of life profoundly<sup>(1)</sup>. It enables us to 'keep calm and carry on'. We pay our rates and are happy and proud to share the environmental attractions with our families, friends and many visitors.

The Metropolitan Green Belt is, to us therefore, much more than a fortunate coincidence or a temporary privilege: it is a tangible reassurance that our forbears understood what was truly important to the future of our species. The Regulators declared: 'enough is enough'. They saw the wider horizons and the need for space and tranquillity. They knew that relentless expansion and overpopulation, destruction of rural habitat and urban sprawl create ever greater demand for resources and no lasting prosperity. Instead – the consequences are neglect of inner urban areas, degradation of amenities, poor subsistence, social decline, competition and conflict; which, ultimately, will threaten our survival.

The new Local Plan is perceived by our residents as a potentially disastrous strategy for redressing differences in housing supply across the borough. Its proposals deviate from the core principles of conservation and sustainability. Careful regeneration of empty inner urban areas with connections and facilities nearby is of paramount importance to those in greatest need. We believe this is where attention should be focused. We see the Plan as an abdication of responsibility which studiously ignores brown field challenges including, but not limited to, Meridian Water<sup>(2)</sup>.

There is a suspicion that an Academic Study commissioned in 2016 was a tactic to pave the way for unwelcome change with the dissembling notion that Metropolitan Green Belt should not be excluded from the scope of reviews<sup>(3)</sup>. This has encouraged speculation that the eventual allocation, by 1955, of provisions within the **Green Belt Act 1938**, might no longer be sacrosanct. At the same time credence has been given to hypothetical projections of population growth which have been contradicted by subsequent events<sup>(4)</sup>.

The target of the Local Plan has, rather obviously, become Metropolitan Green Belt to the exclusion of other land. But, such planning should be about preservation rather than extinction of resources. There is no coherent programme for how Metropolitan Green Belt might be protected and enhanced. It is characterised merely as unutilised ground, off the beaten track, marked for easy conversion and quick returns.

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There is no assurance whatsoever regarding thousands of potential inhabitants. Who will these be and how are they expected to integrate with each other and with established communities? There is no forethought given to the effect on the newly defined Ridgeway Ward <sup>(5)</sup> which will be established after Local Elections in May 2022. From the outset it could face massive infrastructural and demographic demand. More energy and food consumption, drainage and sewage, vehicles, education, health treatment, enforcement, supervision and public services: all built around two lane highways saturated with controls and restrictions. It must not happen!

The hideous invitation to 'live closer to nature' is directed by developers at local authority planners. There is no guarantee for prospective settlers who will find, too late, that every vestige of nature has been bulldozed away, so they can live where it once was. Moreover, the 'residential park' will be filled with commoditised and scaled down living quarters in which occupants try not to overlook strangers who happen to co-exist a few feet away.

Affordable does not often equate with desirable and if accommodation cost has to be subsidised by the ratepayer it is clear we will be expected to contribute, ironically when our own landscape has been devalued. No inducements will compensate for mess and turmoil, lost air quality, obliterated flora and fauna, extra noise and light at night or how much longer it takes to get around. And it should be acknowledged that we have already acceded to significant house-building at Highlands, Trent Park and Chase Farm where demands for resources have still to be met.

The Local Plan should also be mindful of its wider impact. Nothing good can come from building more housing estates on doomed land especially if many other boroughs are doing the same. Facilitation by Central Government is no excuse for abandoning common sense and due diligence. Levelling up does not mean skyscrapers. Our cities are in no way better when their Green Belt has been obliterated.

This is not the future everyone needs. We reject the Local Plan in this form. It is a travesty of proper process and is accused of distortion and deceit in setting out its proposals. Too many Councillors of the ruling party are showing blind allegiance to the motion for acceptance. Forfeiture of independent judgement should not be allowed to prevail on such a fundamental matter.

We ask those who make vital decisions or with power to influence events to reflect, not just on personal accomplishment, not just on the legacy we leave for our grandchildren, but on whether those grandchildren will have any worth leaving to theirs.

*Stephen Elston*

Chairman

**W.E.R.A**

Western Enfield Residents' Association

Affiliated to the Federation of Enfield Residents and Allied Associations

<http://westernenfieldresidentsassociation.com/>

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1. In particular we refer to Protected Land adjacent to the A110 between Oakwood and Enfield Town. Policy SP PL 10, PAGES 80-87 (Figure 3.11.).

The Merryhills Way footpath north of the A110 and the trail beside Boxers Lake, adjacent to The Glebe Fields: both provide a retreat to places of stillness and silence – which are essential components of wellbeing.

2. Meridian Water is heralded as a '£6bn 25-year London regeneration programme bringing 10,000 homes and thousands of jobs to Enfield'. And this is adjacent to (not in the middle of) the Lee Valley Regional Park. Enfield Borough Council ostensibly took charge in 2019 but has shown no appetite to pursue the project to a fruitful conclusion. Our leader in Cabinet has publicly indicated that nothing is being expedited on this major opportunity.

Other interested organisations, including Enfield Road Watch and the Campaign to Protect Rural England, have identified an abundance of disused resources in Enfield, suitable for renewal, to meet realistic growth in demand.

3. 'A 21ST CENTURY METROPOLITAN GREEN BELT'- REPORT OF THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS (Professor Alan Mace, London School of Economics). Introduced and presented at the GREEN BELT FORUM Civic Centre, Silver Street, Enfield on Thursday, 13 October 2016.

4. Since this report was published the UK has left the European Union and has withdrawn from the 'Shenghen' Agreement which permitted free influx of peoples from 26 territories to live and work the UK.

While some have moved away, the Covid19 pandemic has curtailed growth in trade and population over nearly two years and resulted in many deaths, including some who might have moved into the Borough.

Wholesale reduction in countryside decreases absorption of greenhouse gases and is universally acknowledged as a creeping factor in climate change.

5. Final recommendations of the independent Local Government Boundaries Commission were put forward in March 2020 and were subsequently accepted by Enfield Council. In these the existing Highlands Ward will be subsumed with newly defined Ridgeway Ward to the east and Oakwood Ward to the west. Both Wards include threatened Metropolitan Green Belt.