

I am writing, as someone who has had connections to, or lived in the Borough, since 1967 to express my strongest possible concern about the way in which the Borough appears to wish to use the Local Plan process to further reduce Green Belt land in Enfield.

Very significant developments have taken place over the years which have either actively reduced the amount of open countryside to the North of the Borough or reduced its amenity value. I think of Trent Park Golf Course in the 1970s (and the most recent development of its clubhouse into what is, to an extent, now a standalone restaurant/entertainment/leisure complex), Trent Park itself which has involved substantial new building in the park area around the main building, the current Tottenham Hotspur training ground off Bullsmoor Lane, various small scale housing developments around Crews Hill and the current application to redevelop the former Royal Chase Hotel site (some of which is undeveloped currently, particularly at the back).

The amount of open countryside is one of the special features of all of the Outer London boroughs and the very substantial extent of it in the Enfield Chase area means that it largely retains its outlook as open countryside which makes it relatively rare amongst its sister boroughs. The unenclosed sections are of historic interest as they are potentially remnants of the original Royal Hunting Chase from the 13th and 14th Centuries. The extent of open countryside to the North of the Borough has been a particular help to many, including me personally during the lockdowns over the past 15 months, as a means of exercise and mental stimulation in what otherwise would have been an extremely challenging time. It also the case that the remaining Green Belt land remains a home for a considerable amount of wildlife and further development of it will threaten this.

I would ask both Officers and Councillors to oppose any further development of Green Belt land on the basis that it undermines the attractiveness of the Borough and to be very mindful of the fact that, once land is developed (including covering it over with concrete, tarmac, utility channels and sewers, and altering its drainage, it cannot realistically be reconverted back to countryside by future generations, should they ever wish to reverse such a decision). The countryside landscapes are a source of considerable amenity to the busy city and, in my view, it is important to retain them.

The need for land for housing development can be addressed by other options such as encouraging construction of higher (but not tall) buildings (which is already happening in this road on the Ridgeway as two-story buildings are bought, demolished and replaced by three or four storey buildings), re-use of some of the substantial office and retail sites in Southbury Road and along the A10 which are either underused at present or are derelict, and, across London as a whole, further development of the former docklands areas as far as Tilbury and Thamesmead. In the longer term, it is of course possible that Tilbury and the industrial areas near to it became redundant as a result of the growth of Thamesport, Felixstowe and the further offshoring of industry just as the London docks area did in the 1970s. This would open up very significant further areas of land on the North Bank of the Thames downstream to Thurrock for potential residential development and an initial stage of this has been completed at Barking Riverside. This kind of broader scope to planning provision can only be made at the GLA level and it is not immediately clear from the local documents what account is being of the potential for developing London-wide options for the city's overall housing pressures.

Green Belt

Specifically, I object to following policies:

- SP PL10, pages 80-87, and Figure 3.11. The potential development of the area between Oakwood Station and the Ridgeway is abhorrent. This is the area that I am most familiar with as a means of accessing Trent Park via the Merryhills Way.
- Policy SP PL9, pages 77-80 and Concept Plan Figure 3.10; There has been much piecemeal development at Crews Hill already as the former market gardens and greenhouses have been replaced by housing, warehousing and garden centres. The priority here should surely be to provide proper road capacity and bus services to support a series of high quality garden centres, so that the area feels like a genuine retail hub rather than a largely accretive development of what seem to be random developments in various stages of disrepair, rather than simply building another large housing development. Planning blight created by the idea that land might be de-designated from Green Belt protection has presumably not been helpful here.
- Policy SA45: Land between Camlet Way and Crescent Way, Hadley Wood, page 364. This is a complete loss of Green Belt land which has never been developed, even in part, and I understand may even have been part of the area of the Battle of Barnet during the Wars of the Roses. The Plan gives no justification for so drastic a step beyond the overall objective of increasing housing provision in the Borough.
- Policy SA54, page 374; and
- Policy SA62 page 383 and SP CL4 pages 277-279.

These are all envisaged as de-designation of Green Belt for housing and other purposes. These sites are part of historic Enfield Chase, which (despite much development over the years) is a rare and valuable landscape asset and the loss of these sites would, in my view, would cause permanent harm not only to the Green Belt but also the character of the borough.

Whitewebbs

I also object to Policies SA62 page 383 and SP CL4 pages 277-279 because they seem to be designed to facilitate the transfer part of Whitewebbs Park, a public amenity, into private management. The Park was bought by the Borough, I believe in the 1920s, as green space to be open to all and I am genuinely shocked that the Borough, notwithstanding its financial problems, would consider effectively leasing almost half of it for the apparently exclusive use of just one party, thereby removing all public access from what is now the golf course area and the restaurant. It has provided no detail on what safeguards are being considered for public access beyond the claim that the lease would potentially encourage 'public leisure activity'. This area is part of a larger green space, connecting Gordon Hill to Theobalds via Hilly Fields, effectively creating a long green link and access to the countryside around Goffs Oak and Cheshunt. Even if the former Golf Course was losing money, it should be recognised that its facilities had not been invested in for many years and its standard was unfortunately falling below that of other courses well before Lockdown. The option of revitalising it, either through private or public investment, whilst retaining it as green land open to all should be seriously examined. The lack of any detail of the Borough's evaluation of the various bids for Whitewebbs and information on what public access, if any, the Borough has managed to secure under the proposed lease inevitably creates some suspicion that the bidding process had a predetermined outcome, including loss of 24/7 public access to the Eastern part of the existing park. In addition, it is worth noting that many other London Boroughs and Local Authorities have serious financial difficulties but I am not aware of any taking the drastic step of closing down a

large part of a public park to transfer it to private interests to help address them.

Other

I also object to:

- Policy SA52 page 372, which would remove part of Rammey Marsh, a wildlife area and public amenity, from the Green Belt and residential development at new Cottages and Holly Hill Farm on the Ridgeway. The acceptance that the site next to Holly Hill Farm could be used as a dump for top soil from across London in the area between the Ridgeway and the M25 effectively seems to have been something of a trojan horse for housing development of this area -- as was feared when the application was made.
- the tall building policies on pages 156-160, Figure 7.3, Figure 7.4 and Policy DE6, and SA2 Palace Gardens Shopping Centre page 321 which propose areas for and the acceptable height of tall buildings. These would potentially completely change the character of Enfield Town, Southgate and Cockfosters centres and are out of keeping with the historic trend of promoting generally low-rise developments in these areas.