

London's Green Belt was developed from the mid-1930s to prevent the anticipated and perhaps the inevitable spread of business, industry and housing into the surrounding countryside. While the original proposal has been modified over the intervening years, I believe most would agree it has been largely successful in its primary purpose to limit urban sprawl and to protect the environment, wildlife and the character of historic towns like Enfield. It has served Enfield residents well, providing ready access to both open land and "real countryside" and the opportunity to enjoy the associated leisure activities. The recreational value of Green Belt land should not be underestimated.

I am familiar with the argument and objections to Enfield's Draft Local Plan made by the Enfield Society and Enfield RoadWatch and consider it unnecessary to repeat many of them here. However, I confirm general agreement with their views on high-rise development and the protection of the Green Belt as neither are likely to have a significant impact on Enfield's chronic shortage of affordable housing.

The sympathetic development of Green Belt land will only attract those who can afford a bright new home in a "countryside setting" with their existing properties perhaps slipping into the private rental market as individual dwellings or HMOs. Is there a better way to get an acceptable return on capital in the current economy? House building on Green Belt land certainly won't help those in need of a safe and affordable home.

New, quality high-rise is usually focussed on the young and upwardly mobile. You might even argue Enfield Council/Deutsche Bank have already begun to attract this group of buyers by emphasising the burgeoning "night-time economy" of the proposed Palace Gardens development, an economy the less fortunate will be unable to enjoy except as minimum wage staff in the hospitality sector and never with an affordable apartment "upstairs".

The Covid pandemic, climate change, Zoom [other video-conference platforms are available], home working and the wider adoption of the internet in all its forms will change the business and retail landscape for ever. By working closely with local community groups and other interested parties, it is Enfield Council's elected duty to meet these challenges and find ways to satisfy the genuine local demand for affordable homes without destroying the landscape or the character of Enfield and its historic town centre.

We don't own the Green Belt; we only hold it in trust for future generations.