

Dear Leader and all Enfield Councillors,

I am writing to give you my thoughts on the Enfield Draft Local Plan.

Whilst I fully understand the needs of Enfield Council to provide housing for its residents, both present and future, and the intense pressure the Council is under, I have grave qualms about some of the proposals made in the Draft Local Plan.

The Council's preferred option in the Strategic Policy SP SS1 Spatial Strategy is Option 2. Table 2.2, which gives clearer detail of each option suggests two options for medium growth, both of which would provide 25,000 homes. Medium growth 1 suggests the release of Green Belt land for development, to which I object, but medium growth 2 does not, so this is clearly the option I would support. I do not understand why this option would fail to meet housing requirements, yet option 1 would.

The greatest need is for affordable housing. Many of the recent housing developments in Enfield, whilst purporting to be offering affordable housing, in fact state that they are "luxury 2, 3 and 4 bedroom homes on a shared ownership basis". This is not genuinely affordable housing. People on low incomes could not afford to buy, even using shared ownership. Similarly affordable homes to rent must only be on a social rent, not a private rental at a market rent. The Draft Local Plan fails to explain exactly what it means by "genuinely affordable housing." The Borough of Enfield has lost more accommodation at a social rent than it has built and, as a result of the sale of council homes, which have not been replaced, Enfield has been left with a housing crisis for the disadvantaged which now means housing people in expensive temporary accommodation. Homes offered at a social rent should be the top priority and these are unlikely to be in the Green Belt with its more limited transport options and where the developments will undoubtedly be more expensive.

Developments like that taking place at Trent Park on the former Middlesex University site are exactly what Enfield does not need and what should not be happening. This development of exclusive, very expensive houses and flats for those who aspire to live “in the countryside” in a country park is an appalling use of Enfield’s green spaces and the felling of a large swathe of mature oak woodland for no apparent reason is criminal and must not be repeated elsewhere. The developers claim, on their hoardings, about enhancing biodiversity and caring for the environment and wildlife, but there is very little evidence of that to date.

I am in favour of maximising the use of brownfield sites for development and regenerating the Boroughs deprived areas, providing homes for people at an affordable rent, instead of proposing developments which will benefit the better off on our open spaces, extending urban sprawl and swallowing up precious wildlife habitats and farmland, which has been {and will continue to be} essential for people’s mental health and well-being as well as providing food for the nation. Once these are paved over they are gone forever and can never be replaced, yet they are vital in so many ways. Releasing Green Belt land will set a precedent, which once initiated will make it easier and more acceptable to develop our green spaces, until ultimately, we may end up with very little left.

There is a plethora of alternative places to create homes and help to make the Borough of Enfield a vibrant and happy place to live, whilst retaining our Green Belt. The headlines are constantly telling us about the problems with our High Streets, how retail is struggling and about the need to find new ways to revitalise areas like this. There are many vacant shops in most of our shopping areas, some which have gone out of business and others which have relocated. I live near Palmers Green and the building which used to be Store 21 (a sizeable unit) has been empty now for a considerable length of time. Sites like these could be used for housing developments, bringing mixed use into our high streets and breathing new life into them. These areas already have good transport links, thus eliminating the need for car use, something which I know Enfield Council feels strongly about. However, development in the Green Belt is very likely to increase the use of private vehicles as well as being too expensive for those on a low income.

In addition to the use of brownfield sites for development, the over 3000 empty homes in Enfield also need to be brought back into use to provide for Enfield’s housing needs.

If Enfield decides to go ahead with its preferred option of medium

growth (mentioned earlier in my letter) I strongly object in particular, to the proposals to develop the area between Oakwood and Enfield {Vicarage Farm} Policy SP PL10 pages 80-87 Fig3.11. This area is stunning countryside, containing many mature trees, hedgerows, bushes and shrubs, all essential habitat for wildlife. At a time when our biodiversity is declining rapidly and we are losing not only many of our farmland birds, mammals such as hedgehogs, but also insects which are the key to the food chain, it is unforgivable to be even considering habitat destruction such as this, when there are alternatives. This area should be retained as open land, which could contribute to food production.

It is essential at this time of climate crisis that no trees, hedgerows or scrub {a very important habitat} or even grassland should be removed. They are needed for carbon capture and to provide homes for our diminishing species. If anything is to be done to open land, it should be enhanced, not destroyed. It is also unacceptable to believe that it is justifiable to destroy one area and offset this with a biodiversity gain in another. Removing a mature oak tree and planting 20 saplings in another area, may be counted as a net biodiversity gain, when in reality it will take many decades to get back what has been lost. A mature oak tree is a complete ecosystem in its own right. It takes a few minutes to fell and it is gone forever.

For the same reasons I object to the proposed developments at Crews Hill Policy SP PL9 pages 77-80 Fig 3.10. I understand that the transport links into London make this a good site for development and the proposal suggests building on two golf courses as well as some farmland. Whilst the grassy open areas of golf courses are often seen as being low in biodiversity, golf courses often include stands of mature trees and shrub layers which are important habitats and should be retained at all costs. Any development should work around these and they should be kept as wildlife corridors linking with the wider countryside. A much better use of former golf courses if they are unprofitable would be to return them to a more natural state with wildflower meadows, thus enhancing their contribution to biodiversity. Crews Hill is a thriving, successful area with many well-established businesses that provide jobs. The area gives pleasure to many people, who visit the garden centres. Gardening is seen as an activity which ultimately reduces the strain on our health service, as it promotes well-being and is increasingly used as a therapy for mental health. It does not make any sense to destroy this area and replace it with a housing estate, when there are alternatives.

With reference to the use of Whitewebbs golf course for recreation (SA62 page383 and SP CL4 pages 277-279) I am saddened by the proposal to cover a large part of it with "plastic grass" for football

training by Tottenham Hotspurs Football Club and strongly oppose this idea. Recreation and sport are very important and we have all derived a great deal of pleasure from being able play sport or walk in Trent Park, Hilly Fields or Whitewebbs, amongst others during lockdown. However, I feel very strongly that the use of plastic surfaces for football is not a good use of open land. We should be reducing our use of plastic. These surfaces biodegrade over time allowing micro plastics to infiltrate into the soil. Whitewebbs is a fantastic open space and over the summer it has been alive with butterflies and other insects and its grassland has been the hunting ground for a pair of buzzards and kestrels. It should be retained in all its splendour, along with its mature trees, scrubby areas and its overgrown grassland as a biodiverse rich habitat, not destroyed to be replaced by a plastic football pitch.

I hope you will give my opinions careful consideration and before going ahead with plans which will change our Borough forever, you will look at every other possible option to resolve the housing shortage.