

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 10TH FEBRUARY, 2021

MEMBERS: Councillors Margaret Greer (Chair) Mahmut Aksanoglu, Maria Alexandrou, Susan Erbil, Margaret Greer, Tim Leaver, Edward Smith and Claire Stewart (Vice Chair)

Officers: Joanne Drew (Director of Housing and Regeneration), Ed Richards (Regeneration Project Director) Metin Halil (Governance and Scrutiny) and Penelope Williams (Secretary)

Also Attending: Councillor Nesil Caliskan (Leader of the Council) and 6 members of the public.

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Akpinar.

Each member introduced themselves.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

3. UPDATE ON LOCAL PLAN POLICIES

The scrutiny panel received a presentation and timetable from Helen Murch (Head of Strategic Planning and Design) updating members on the work being done on emerging local plan policies.

1. Presentation

During the presentation Helen Murch highlighted the following:

- The proposed forward programme for preparation of the final local plan was set out with key dates. A draft of the full plan was due to go to be approved at an Extraordinary Council meeting on 9 June 2021. This will be followed by extensive consultation during June and July.
- Following this work will be done to enable the plan to be submitted to the secretary of state as part of regulation 19 in 2022 with a view to final adoption in 2023/4.
- Over the next 6 weeks work is being done to update the vision with member workshops during February and March as well as focussed community engagement.

REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY PANEL - 10.2.2021

- Everyone was encouraged to complete the vision questionnaire on the Council website.
- Key pieces of evidence were being prepared to enable the Council to understand housing and employment needs, land supply pipelines and scale of unmet need. Some external consultants had been bought in to speed up this process.
- The Local Development Scheme has been revised and published.
- Work was also taking place to develop an updated spatial vision for the borough to underpin the plan.
- The Council would be co-operating with neighbouring boroughs on unmet needs.
- Over the next 4 months officers would be working with members on spatial visioning and selecting sites suitable for development. In April this work will be tested, consultation will take place and evidence and policy finalised as the draft plan is put together for Council in June.
- The evidence base covered housing (assessing housing need), employment including possible intensification of industrial areas, Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land, retail needs, sustainability assessments, infrastructure including transport, character design and placemaking and viability testing.
- The next steps included completion of the spatial vision questionnaire, spatial vision workshops, publication of the evidence base and the spatial options and site selection workshops. The workshops would give members the opportunity to feed into to the development process.

2. Questions/Comments

- 2.1 The possibility of using strategic industrial land for development was something that would be considered.
- 2.2 The view that it was important that not all development should take place in Edmonton or in the East of the Borough.
- 2.3 Concern about the short end of month deadline for completion of the spatial vision questionnaire. A link to the questionnaire had been circulated with the Members Newsletter and an individual invitation should have been emailed to all councillors.
- 2.4 The questionnaire included questions about the type of place people want to live in and gives choices about the type and level of growth people would like to see as well as what the role and character of Enfield should be within London by 2039.
- 2.4 The questionnaire was not highly technical and aimed to seek views on the type of place that people wanted Enfield to be.
- 2.5 There would be a full public consultation, after the draft plan had been considered by Council in June 2021.

REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY PANEL - 10.2.2021

2.6 The Leader explained that Enfield had a statutory obligation to produce a local plan. It was a technical piece of work. There were choices to be made on where development should take place and where it should not. The whole process was very long. Some consultation had already been carried out. The approval in June was an important step in the overall process.

3. Chair's Summing up

The Chair summed up the information provided. The spatial survey was available now, the spatial vision would be developed in March, in April site testing would take place and in May the draft plan would be finalised for consideration at full Council in June.

It had been suggested that the panel hold an extra private session (workshop) in April or May to facilitate cross party policy development which would feed into the emerging draft plan.

Some concern was expressed about holding a session in private. It was agreed that further information would be provided and circulated to members before this was agreed.

4. HOUSING DELIVERY TEST 2020 AND DRAFT HOUSING ACTION PLAN

The scrutiny panel received a presentation on the Government's Housing Delivery Test from Joanne Drew (Director of Housing and Housing Regeneration). A briefing paper on the delivery test had been circulated with the agenda.

To note that the draft housing action plan was not available for this meeting as it was still in the process of being finalised.

1. Presentation

- The Local Plan will set out the long-term vision for good quality housing growth, delivery and supply in the borough.
- The briefing note circulated with the agenda contains information on the Government's Housing Delivery Test and how Enfield as a place has performed against this test.
- Enfield has delivered an average 56% of the housing against the target over the last 3 years. As Enfield has failed to meet 75% of their housing targets it has been placed in a category of "presumption in favour of sustainable development". Enfield is not alone, eight other boroughs are also in this situation.
- Many factors influence housing supply and many are outside the direct control of a local authority.
- One way to address the need is to directly deliver housing, which the Council is doing through projects such as Meridian Water.

REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY PANEL - 10.2.2021

- Enfield needs to improve the planning process to make sure that it is as efficient and effective as possible. They also need to play an enabling role, encouraging good quality proposals.
- The housing targets have recently been increased by 500 which means that housing delivery will have to be stepped up significantly.
- A new housing action plan is being developed in recognition of the actions that the Council will need to take to increase delivery.
- There are seven key themes: ensuring an effective development management process; continuing to embed housing growth and delivery as a key priority of the Council; an intelligence led approach to driving the right solutions; efficient local plan making and driving local supply through infrastructure; continuing to strengthen council led market interventions; proactively pursuing housing development through a range of providers; lobbying government to create the right conditions for development.
- Twenty three percent of the supply delivered to date has been as a result of council interventions. The Council role is increasingly important. Current market conditions are very challenging. It is also essential to work collaboratively with other sectors including housing associations.
- The Council needed to lobby government to create the right conditions for housing supply and provide viable substitutes to home ownership. Affordable homes are not affordable to Enfield residents without huge discounts.
- The Council was also looking to bring empty homes back into use, and was working closely with the GLA on a recovery strategy following the pandemic.

2. Questions/Comments

- 2.1** There are currently 3,000 empty homes in Enfield. The current target is to bring 60 back into use every year, through an empty homes strategy. This can involve grants for capital investment which can be recouped through lettings. Efforts need to be redoubled by applying enforcement techniques and through providing incentives.
- 2.2** The planning process is under constant review. There are currently two planning committees scheduled every month. More work needed to be done to shape applications at an earlier stage, to ensure an efficient approval process and to monitor the pipeline more strategically. More could also be done to monitor the number of applications which have lapsed. More resources were needed, particularly to provide advice and guidance at the beginning of the process.
- 2.3** The consequences for the Council of the presumption in favour of sustainable development have not yet been established. Currently the Council has only been required to produce quarterly updates to Government.

REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY PANEL - 10.2.2021

- 2.4 The Leader explained the consequences in terms of the broader context. The Council would lose control if they did not have the new local plan in place. Just allowing development would create huge risks.
- 2.5 The Meridian Water project had progressed significantly over the last 18 months. Houses on the first site were under construction and will be ready by 2022. The infrastructure funding would unlock more housing sites. A contract to set up a film studio with skills academy had been agreed.
- 2.6 The housing targets would still be a huge challenge even if Meridian Water was complete and all the available small sites developed.
- 2.7 Concern about the empty homes that were empty for legitimate reasons such as refurbishment and were subject to double council tax bills. Council tax was one of the tools used to encourage owners to bring property back into use. The process could be reviewed.
- 2.8 There was a perception that it was more difficult and took longer to obtain planning permission in Enfield than in other boroughs and that this could put off prospective developers. It was acknowledged that there were issues with resourcing in the planning department, although measures were being put in place to improve the situation. The Council's funding had been reduced by a quarter and this did have an impact on the ability to respond. It was looking to grant funding and planning fees to fill the gap.
- 2.9 The current local plan was now out of date and needed revising. This was taking place.

3. Summing up by the Chair

The chair thanked Joanne Drew for her presentation and noted the comments made on the council tax increases for empty homes and the improvements needed to the planning process. The issue of housing delivery was something that the panel would keep under review.

It was agreed to ask officers to bring a report back to the next meeting on the work being done to improve planning processes.

5. ESTATE REGENERATION - ALMA, LADDERSWOOD AND NEW AVENUE ESTATES

The scrutiny panel received a presentation from Joanne Drew (Director of Housing and Housing Regeneration) on estate regeneration.

1. Presentation

The following points were highlighted in the presentation:

REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY PANEL - 10.2.2021

- Estate regeneration was a long-term process. 10 years was a realistic delivery timeframe.
- Enfield had been successful in enabling the redevelopment of the age expired council estates of Ladderswood, Alma and New Avenue and in creating extra properties on those estates.
- It was only since 2018 the debt cap on local authorities has been lifted, so in the past the Council had been reliant on bringing in partners to progress development schemes.
- At the Alma Estate in Ponders End the Council had entered into a development agreement with Countryside Properties to deliver nearly 1,000 high quality new homes. Phase 1 was now complete. Work was progressing on the next phase.
- A separate agreement had been made with Countryside Properties for the New Avenue Estate in Southgate to deliver 408 homes. There was also an opportunity to develop more homes and an application is due to be bought forward. The Council is keen to increase the provision of family homes but it has to strike a balance to ensure financial returns.
- The onset of the pandemic has made the situation more volatile.
- The Council had entered into a partnership with One Housing Group and Sherrygreen Homes to deliver 517 homes on the Ladderswood Estate. The project finances and business plan were being closely monitored.
- Work had started on redevelopment plans for the Joyce and Snells Estate in Edmonton.
- However, all these projects could not meet the scale of need.
- To address the quality of housing management, Cabinet, in December 2020, approved a proposal to establish a framework of affordable housing providers which the Council could call on to develop, acquire and facilitate the delivery of new homes on Council owned land. Up to ten organisations would achieve preferred partner status. They would have to commit to meet high standards and to have the capacity to fund develop and deliver the next generation of schemes.

2. Questions/Comments

- 2.1 Panel members welcomed the information provided and thanked Joanne Drew for her presentation.
- 2.2 Properties for families were being provided, but one bedroom properties were also needed. These could be used not only as homes for young people but also to support downsizers, freeing up family homes elsewhere.
- 2.3 The request for before and after statistics on the number of properties on the estates.
- 2.4 Support for the policy of working in partnership with other organisations and the view that the Council should not try and carry out all work on their own. A desire that the process be speeded up.

- 2.4 The Leader's view that in delivering housing that there had to be a partnership approach. The Council was just one piece of the jigsaw which also included the private sector and housing associations but a local authority had to drive things forward. Enfield's land values were less than boroughs in Central London which meant that the local authority had to play a greater role. The Council would lose control on issues like the height of buildings and heritage features if it stepped back. Housing development would generate economic benefits in the creation of jobs and the improvement of places where local people live and work.
- 2.5 Working in partnerships Enfield had benefitted as a client in being able to use the skills and expertise acquired from their direct delivery work and experience.
- 2.6 Enfield was working closely with developers of the New Avenue estate to increase the number of three bedroom family sized homes.

3. Summing up by the Chair

The Chair thanked officers for their report.

6. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 DECEMBER 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2020 were received and agreed as a correct record.

7. WORKPROGRAMME 2020/21

The panel noted

1. The agreed work programme for 2020/21.
2. That a report on planning processes would be considered at the meeting on 17 March 2021.
3. That an additional private meeting (workshop) could be organised in April 2021, subject to further information.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

NOTED the dates scheduled for future meetings:

- Wednesday 17 March 2021

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- Joyce and Snells – review of regeneration project structure and outcomes
- Meridian Water – discussion on how the project is addressing local needs and supporting resident health and wellbeing

REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY PANEL - 10.2.2021

- Improvements to development planning processes