

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT FORUM HELD ON THURSDAY, 10TH DECEMBER, 2020

MEMBERS: Councillors Mahmut Aksanoglu and Lindsay Rawlings

Dennis Stacey (Bush Hill Park Study Group)
Andrew Newman (Clay Hill Study Group)
John West (Enfield Society)
Ann Bishop Laggett (The Federation of Enfield Residents and Allied Associations)
Juliet Barnett (Trent Park Conservation Area Study Group)
Robert Wilson (Hadley Wood Conservation Area Study Group)
Chris Horner (Southgate District Civic Trust)
Paul Hutchinson (Grange Park Conservation Area Study Group)
Rex Bourne (Edmonton One Hundred Society)

Officers: Sarah Cary (Executive Director Place) and Penelope Williams (Governance and Scrutiny)

Also Attending: Nick Dines – Community Engagement (Consilio), Dan Clark – Managing Director (Evys Property Development), Jason Balls – Lead Architect (EPR Architects), David Taylor – Montagu Evans, Sue Grayson Ford (Enfield Town Conservation Area Study Group), Janice Lillis (Enfield Town Residents Association) Lydia Somuali

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Katherine Chibah and Councillor Anne Brown and Carol Cragoe.

Councillor Mahmut Aksanoglu, as Vice Chair, chaired the meeting in Councillor Chibah's absence.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

3. DISCUSSION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS AND OTHER PLANNING POLICIES

1. Planning Applications

Members noted the procedure for referring items for discussion at the forum, as attached to the agenda.

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2. Edmonton Green Shopping Centre

The planning application for the Edmonton Green Shopping Centre would be discussed at the next meeting. The applicants had been invited to make a presentation on their proposals.

4. PALACE GARDENS SHOPPING CENTRE PROPOSALS

The forum received a presentation on proposals for the Palace Gardens Shopping Centre.

1. Presentation

The following representatives from the applicants contributed to the presentation and discussion:

Nick Dines – Community Engagement (Consilio)
Dan Clark – Managing Director (Evys Property Development)
Jason Balls – Lead Architect (EPR Architects)
David Taylor – Montagu Evans

The following points were highlighted during the presentation:

- Dan Clark thanked the forum for inviting the applicants to the meeting to discuss their proposals. He welcomed the opportunity for further consultation.
- The Palace Gardens and Palace Exchange shopping centres had been bought under the same ownership in 2018 by Deutsche Bank. They now owned everything except Pearsons.
- There had been significant changes in the retail world over the past three years and the shopping centres were no longer fit for purpose. There were many empty shops and changes were required.
- The current buildings were physically dated. Existing anchor shops, such as Waitrose, were not trading well and could decide to leave if things were not improved.
- The applicants were looking to broaden use of the town centre. There were too many retail shops. A masterplan had been developed to encourage much wider uses including more food and beverage outlets, and to create an evening economy, to improve the public realm and provide opportunities for families to shop locally and also to work, rest and play.
- Extensive research has been undertaken to come up with proposals that will supply what Enfield needs. There will be changes including increasing densities, taller buildings which it was acknowledged would

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have an impact. The focus however was on the economic and physical benefits.

- Currently the shopping centres were closed in the evening and there were few options for people who wished to visit at that time.
- Improving the offer will also symbiotically improve the viability of the shops in Church Street and around. The applicants have been in liaison with the owners of Pearsons who are well aware of the proposals.
- There was a need to provide better connection between the shopping centres and other key conservation assets including the market, Trinity Church, St Andrew's, the Dugdale Centre, Library Green, Enfield Town Park, the New River. The shopping centre had three entrances and there were several town squares
- There were plans to improve the entrances, removing the heavy roof structures, improving access to natural light. The current entrance by Waitrose is very dark and dingy.
- The plans would open up the site and improve connectivity, improving entrances and through routes, creating a new central square to encourage people to linger with open air cafes.
- There were also plans for a cinema, gym and for new homes for local residents with amenity space.
- The residential properties will be built in tall buildings with 26, 12, 10 and 5 stories. They will be built to rent properties, managed with 24 hour concierges, as well as extra amenities such as meeting rooms for larger gatherings.
- There would be better facilities for existing shops as well as opportunities for more independent retailers. Co working spaces for rent would also be provided.
- A programme of events would be planned to make use of the fountain square and the market square as well. The plan was for family restaurants not pubs and nightclubs. To create a safe pedestrian friendly environment, providing green links across the town from the park to Chase Green and beyond.
- The summary vision was to create a new retail and leisure destination and begin to regenerate the Enfield Town Centre, to improve permeability and create outward looking spaces, with an improved public realm. The tall buildings will provide a legibility marker.

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- The next steps will be to carry on with community engagement and to firm up the planning submission which would be submitted early in the first quarter of 2021. The first phase will include the new cinema and the new square. Building will take place between 2022 and 2025.

2. Questions/Comments from the Members of the Forum

- 2.1 Concern about the impact of a 26 storey building in the middle of the town centre. This was inappropriate in a small market town. It would overshadow the surroundings, block light, create wind tunnels and would be visible from afar. Views showing the impact from Town Park would have been helpful in the presentation.
- 2.2 Support for the new shops, gyms and residential properties.
- 2.3 The affordable housing would be all build to rent. There will be mixture of types, but the details have not yet been finalised.
- 2.4 The impact of the wind had been assessed and the building would be orientated to avoid any negative effects. Extra canopies may be included.
- 2.5 Many engagement activities had been carried out during the summer and before. Mainly online because of the Covid situation. Thousands of people had been spoken to. Over 1000 people had completed surveys. More work would be done in January – face to face if possible.
- 2.6 Acknowledgement that these plans were still at a fairly early stage, but concern about rent levels and whether these would be affordable for local residents.
- 2.7 Concern about the impact on local infrastructure including schools and jobs. Any improvements to local infrastructure would be taken from the Community Infrastructure Levy. This was at the discretion of the local authority. The development would provide millions of pounds for local services.
- 2.8 The shopping centre would remain open during construction and existing businesses would be relocated as necessary. It will be a delicately phased operation.
- 2.9 All comments would be noted and sent to the planning officers dealing with the application.
- 2.10 Acceptance that change is needed, but concern about the proposals in terms of the impact on the historic town centre. It would have been helpful to have seen some examples where a sympathetic modern development has been put in place. Sensitivity had been shown to the

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historic centre. Removing some of the more recent ugly building was part of this.

- 2.11 Consultation should be taking place over a far wider area.
- 2.12 Concern about the loss of car parking space. Recent surveys show that the car parks were underused. The capacity would be reduced by the amount of disuse. Opening up the car parks at night would also increase capacity.
- 2.13 Visuals showing views over a wide area had been produced including taking account of the bare winter tree canopies.
- 2.14 A large amount of consultation had taken place including in the local papers, on social media and in presentations to local amenity groups such as the Enfield Society.
- 2.15 The feeling that the proposals were too generic. There was not enough detail. They should be on display within the shopping centre itself.
- 2.16 The next round of consultation, following work with the Council and planning officers, would include much more design detail and show how the buildings were respecting the conservation area.
- 2.17 Inability to see how the proposals would preserve or enhance the conservation area. They would have a harmful impact which could not be outweighed by any benefits.
- 2.18 Plans to offset the carbon footprint included the client's own carbon and sustainability policies, making sure that plans were net zero carbon. Consideration of photovoltaic panels, bio heat pumps and reducing the amount of concrete were part of this. They were asked if they were going for green excellence.
- 2.19 The client's plans were for the long term. They were committed to the development and had a strong sense of corporate responsibility.
- 2.20 Dialogue had taken place with the vicar of St Andrews and the Old Enfield Charitable Trust who owned the market. It was intended that the proposals would enhance the setting of the church and the market square.
- 2.21 Key retailers would remain but might be relocated to other positions. Existing frontages would be improved.
- 2.22 Concern about placing people in high rise properties and that Enfield was too concerned with fulfilling its housing quota but not looking at the actual needs of the people already living in the borough. Also that renters with no equity would create transitory populations with no commitment to the borough.

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- 2.23 Officers would come back to a future meeting of the forum to continue discussion on housing need and typologies. Sarah Cary advised that providing rental properties had to be part of the solution to the housing problem. Not everyone could afford to buy their own properties.
- 2.24 The influence of council officers was less than was supposed. They could only influence planning policy but developers were free to put forward their proposals.
- 2.25 There was a lot of concern about the decline of business in the town centre and the need for a transition to a lively mixed use place.
- 2.26 The rental model with residential above the retail was widely accepted. It would be high quality, highly managed with a concierge service. Selling the properties would mean that the owners would lose control. This was a thriving sector.
- 2.27 There would be 350 new homes in the first phase and a reduction of A1 retail space.
- 2.28 Deutsche Bank were a responsible investor with a long term interest in their development. It was their fiduciary duty to look after their investors but this would be achieved by improving the town centre for Enfield residents.
- 2.29 Recent research had found that residents in these types of development are not necessarily transitory and do stay for a long time. They are not only young professionals but also older people and those with families. Play areas will be provided.
- 2.30 In response to concern about lack of car parking, not all individuals would want a car. There is good public transport access. There will be electric charging points and car sharing schemes.
- 2.31 The Chair thanked the applicants' representatives for attending the meeting and presenting their proposals.

3. Summing Up

The Chair summed up the concerns of the forum as follows:

- Concerns about the height, bulk and mass of the proposed buildings and the impact on the conservation and surrounding areas.
- Concerns about the affordability of the rental properties and the build to rent model.
- Concerns that the viability of the scheme had not been discussed.
- The approach was felt to be economic rather than one which prioritised social infrastructure.

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- Concern about the engagement that had taken place and the lack of wider consultation with users of the town centre and those living nearby.
- Concerns about sustainability and the scheme's carbon footprint.
- The lack of car parking spaces for the new residents and the removal of the shopping centre car parking spaces.
- Concern about the generic nature of the proposals and the quality of the design.
- Concern about the shortness of the time scale for approving the scheme.
- Concerns about how the proposals would help the borough meet its housing needs.
- Concern that some of the plans were outdated – the views shown were pre the new Microsoft development in Genotin Road.

All comments would be sent to planning officers for consideration as part of their report on the planning application. The Chair added that he was pleased that the discussion had taken place at an early stage so the development team could take the forum's views into consideration.

The overall view of the majority of members of the forum was that they objected to the application. Allowing high rise development, would they felt be repeating the mistakes of the 1960s. They agreed that the forum should not allow themselves to be associated with another deprivation on the character and heritage of Enfield Town.

5. MINUTES FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2020 were received and agreed as a correct record.

6. REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

The Forum noted the following changes to the work programme;

- The items on retrofit in schools and community initiatives promoting environmental sustainability which were to have been discussed at this meeting would now be considered at the meeting to be held in February 2021.
- An item on housing need policy and housing typologies would be added to the work programme to enable the forum to continue the discussion held in October.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

1. **Heritage Lottery Funding for Heritage Projects** – the scheme has been paused due to the Covid situation. The Council has however received some additional funding to help support cultural venues including the Dugdale Centre and Forty Hall.

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2. **S106 Expenditure** - queries should be addressed to Sarah Cary or Vincent Lacovara.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The forum noted the dates agreed for future meetings:

- Wednesday 13 January 2021
- Tuesday 16 February 2021
- Tuesday 30 March 2021
- Wednesday 28 April 2021