

On 14 Nov 2017, at 17:05, Cllr Terry Neville <Cllr.Terry.Neville@Enfield.gov.uk> wrote:

Dear Doug,
I'm writing in my ward member capacity.

Largely for reasons of timing I was very surprised to see the above item on the Cabinet agenda for Wednesday. Unfortunately, I'm unable to be at the meeting, but the issue is of significant importance to Grange ward, and I'd be obliged if you would kindly read out my concerns below and have them noted in the minutes.

While sentiment has no part in strategic planning decisions, can I say at the outset that I much admire Metaswitch as a company, and certainly want to retain them in Enfield. That said, my concerns are as much about process as they are about substance.

The report argues, quite rightly that we would not want to lose Metaswitch as an Enfield company. Several points however concern me:

1. **Timing**

Why is Cabinet being asked to make this decision before the completion of the consideration of representations on the The Town Master Plan, as the decision would seem to prejudice proper consideration of the Master Plan (Breach of Sedley principles - Supreme Court decision against Haringey).

2. **Compatibility with Draft Framework Master Plan.**

The proposal appears to be at odds with the Draft Framework Masterplan for the Town, (which was only published in July 2017) inasmuch as para 5.4 of the Framework states:

"The Genotin Road Car Park site presents a short term development opportunity for mixed use development to strengthen the economy of the Town..... including offices, residential, commercial ground floor uses and car parking.... with new buildings capable of being taller than those around them".

The Framework also makes clear that **"Redevelopment of the car park should only proceed following the review of public parking provision across the Town Centre".**

This is what the council consulted on, with the consultation ending only six weeks ago!, and as yet no formal consideration of the public response, yet Cabinet is not in effect being asked to disregard all of that as though it hadn't taken place! There isn't even any serious mention of that consultation in the cabinet report!

The cabinet report at paras 1.7 and 3.7 says that **"the proposal conforms with the Master Plan"**, but plainly it doesn't. The proposal is for a building for sole use by Metaswitch to house 348 employees, with possibly a few more. We are not told whether the building would, with car parking occupy the whole of the footprint of Genotin, but plainly there wouldn't be much capacity for the **residential, and**

commercial ground floor uses declared in the Master Plan as the preferred combination of uses for this site.

There is nothing in the cabinet report about the additional uses specified for the site, and nothing about the proposal being subject to the outcome of review of public parking provision.

You will readily see that proceeding with this proposal makes a mockery of the consultation, and more importantly, strategic planning in this borough. If we can't be consistent in our strategic objectives for two months, what chance have we, and more importantly those who might want to invest in Enfield, of any real long term strategic planning?

3. The Economic Argument.

The economic arguments advanced in the report - additional jobs etc - only stand up of course if the vacated offices remain as offices! But paragraph 3.16 makes plain that as likely as not the vacated offices will be converted to residential in which case the additional jobs created by this proposal, such as they are, would be minimal and in net terms the Town would be no better off. That being the case the economic argument can only then rest on the loss of the 348 current jobs provided by Metaswitch. I concede that is a significant consideration. But, it is plain from both the report and the Draft Framework that Metaswitch's aspirations in that regard were, and have been well known to the Council long before the Draft Framework was published, and arguably the latter should have taken full account of that fact. Not to have done so is hardly transparent.

4. I simply don't follow some of the arguments advanced in the report in support of the proposal, which are at best overly optimistic, and at worst somewhat spurious. For example, para 3.7 - says the proposal supports the policy of attracting inward investment. - Metaswitch are already in the borough! Para 3.8, likewise!

5. Car parking.

The proposal means the loss of 129 car parking spaces! And at a time when the Town is almost literally falling apart at the seams and needs more, not less support. While we know that there is capacity in the multi storey, we also know that multi storey car parks are not the first choice of motorists - hence Genotin is regularly full much of the day. With the A10 offering surface car parking and a retail offer that many would consider better than that of the Town, to say nothing of Brent Cross (even before redevelopment) and Brookfield Farm, we have to be careful not to "kill the goose", albeit that it's sometime since this particular goose laid any golden eggs!

The report says that Metaswitch have offered to allow weekend parking by the public, but interestingly there is no suggestion that that is made a condition of the sale. While Metaswitch may agree now, there is no certainty that they would continue to do so, nor indeed that they will always be there - businesses change hands from time to time, particularly those in the IT industry.

Appendix – Minute No.9

These are my thoughts. I do hope Cabinet will give them proper consideration.

Kind Regards,

Terry

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