

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT FORUM HELD ON TUESDAY, 27TH OCTOBER, 2020

MEMBERS: Councillors Mahmut Aksanoglu, Katherine Chibah (Associate Cabinet Member (Enfield West)) and Lindsay Rawlings

Dennis Stacey (Bush Hill Park Study Group)
Andrew Newman (Clay Hill Study Group)
John West (Enfield Society)
Carol Cragoe (Enfield Town Conservation Area Study Group)
Ann Bishop Laggett (The Federation of Enfield Residents and Allied Associations)
Denise Gandhi (Southgate Green Study Group)
Juliett 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)

Officers: Doug Wilkinson (Director of Environment and Operational Services), Helen Murch (Head of Strategic Planning and Design), Richard Eason (Programme Director Healthy Streets), Christine White (Heritage and Urban Design Manager), Metin Halil (Governance and Scrutiny) and Penelope Williams (Secretary)

Also Attending: Mairead Flower (Iceni Projects), Nick Grant (Iceni Projects), Laurie Hancock (Iceni Projects) Gerard Maccreanor (Maccreanor and Lavington Architects)

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Anne Brown.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

3. CHANGE IN THE ORDER OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

It was agreed to change the order in which items were considered at the meeting. Item 6 on the agenda was taken as the next item. The minutes reflect the order of the meeting.

4. DISCUSSION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS AND OTHER PLANNING POLICIES

1. Planning Applications

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

2. 100 Church Street

The forum received a presentation from the applicants on the proposals for 100 Church Street.

2.1 Presentation

The following information was highlighted in the presentation:

- There were significant pressures on land in Enfield to build more housing and it was important to make sensitive, efficient use of sites that were available. To regenerate the High Street, it was necessary to have more people living nearby.
- These proposals had been developed collaboratively, taking account of strategic frameworks and with input from planning and conservation officers.
- What was proposed would replace the not particularly attractive 1980's office building, which had a poor relationship with its surroundings and did not add to the character of the area.
- The site was situated in the middle of a swathe of green running through the middle of a built-up area, from Town Park, along the New River to Chase Green, within the Gentleman's Row Conservation Area. It was close to Enfield Town Centre and next to several landmark buildings, including the two grey stone churches.
- In London, between 1870 and 1912, there had been significant developments of mansion block type housing, which reflected the style of contemporary houses of the time, including bay windows and detailing on elevations, taken from domestic architecture. These buildings had used space more economically. They were able to hide their density with the use of interior courtyards, well planted green areas, that flowed into the public realm, clear front doors, integrated balconies, and crumbly massing.
- The new proposals for the site included two buildings: one of 5 stories another of 7 stories set-back with a roof garden. There were to be two main entrances, in Church Street and off the New River Path behind so that the building could be seen in the round facing both ways.
- Pale grey brick work with a white band around the top had been chosen to blend in with the surroundings and compliment the two stone churches nearby. Traditional red brick had been considered but it had been felt that this would be too overpowering.

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- The green areas would be managed by the block to ensure that they would merge with surroundings. Vehicle access would be through the church car park.
- Views from neighbouring areas, including Gentleman's Row, showed that the building would fit unobtrusively into its setting and would be further masked by existing mature trees, even in winter.

2.2 Questions/Comments

- Members were pleased that the buildings were not as high as some others recently proposed in the area.
- Concern about the environmental impact of flats with two bathrooms. Members were assured that the proposals conformed to current regulations to ensure water usage was kept as low as possible.
- The building was divided up equally between one and two-bedroom flats. Thirty five percent of these would be classed as affordable. This was based on the needs of the area.
- Concern about the number of flats in relation to the number of disabled parking spaces. It was confirmed that 3% of the flats were for disabled people with three parking spaces.
- The buildings were to be mainly car free except for the provision of three disabled car parking spaces in the main courtyard. The flats would be close to Enfield Chase station and so car ownership should not be necessary. The suggestion was made that the Council should consider creating nearby park and ride facilities or strengthen the controlled parking zones to avoid local streets becoming full of parked cars arising from the development.
- Access to waste disposal facilities and deliveries would be at the back of the building through the church carpark. Delivery vehicles would be able to drive into the courtyard. It should not affect traffic flow in Church Street.
- A consultation process had been undertaken over the last 6 months through online events, interactive forums with information on websites, consultation with local resident and conservation groups, the Council's design panel and residents living nearby had been contacted. The formal consultation process had ended on the preceding week. All the responses were still to be considered. Gentleman's Row Residents Association and Enfield Town Conservation Area Study Group had not been consulted on the proposals.
- The planning application was likely to be heard at Planning Committee at the end of November or some time in December.

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- The view that the building was well articulated and blended well with the surroundings, but still had the appearance of a 70's office block. The white detailing was not thought to stand out enough.
- Most of the original old London mansion blocks had been built in red brick. Some thought that a red brick building would fit in better matching the nearby former magistrates court building. Others felt that red brick would be too heavy and imposing. The applicants had thought that paler brick would be lighter, more enjoyable and provide good contrast in tone and texture to fit in better with the grey stone of the nearby churches. This company had won awards for its brick work. The white top was designed to fade into the sky.
- Concern about one of the bay windowed flats, almost touching the boundary of the site, the interior of which would be visible to those walking along the New River Path. This could result in residents putting up heavily shuttered windows and barred doors which were unattractive. Having the green areas within the management of the site would mean that the landscape would be protected and should merge with the public realm areas along the river. The boundary was 5-6 metres from the river.
- The request for more designs showing what the rear of the building with the service areas would look like. The response that the rear of the building would look very similar to the front with the same treatments and materials. Flats at the back would also have balconies and bay windows. The buildings were meant to be seen in the round.
- The ivy on one of the trees in front of the building needed to be removed to protect the tree.
- Preference for the northern block which worked well but concern about the southern block which was felt to be too two stories too tall, too blocky, significantly taller than the building it replaced and too close to the New River. This would tower above the nearby bowling green, churches and appear to be very dominant and overpowering particularly from the southern approach to Enfield Town.
- The view that the Council should do more to provide information about where taller buildings would be acceptable. Development in Enfield was too developer led.
- The need to prevent residents putting up satellite dishes.
- The views had been verified with the Council's conservation officer. The view from Silver Street had been considered, but the buildings could not be seen from there.

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- Stepping back the upper layers of the buildings could be considered but there was a need to avoid the design becoming too fussy. A concern of planning officers. There could be some flexibility in the design at the top of the building, dropping the parapets and giving the buildings a greener edge. This would be considered.
- The architect agreed to relook at the design of the bay window block closest to the New River.

Councillor Chibah thanked the applicants' representatives for their presentation and the members of the forum for their questions.

The applicants' representatives left the meeting at this point.

Councillor Chibah summed up the view of the forum as follows:

Although there was some support for the proposals, which were felt to be better than many others that had been put forward in Enfield recently and a feeling that it was a reasonably designed scheme, there were some concerns.

There concerns were:

- The lack of parking, the impact this would have on surrounding streets and traffic in the area. The need to strengthen local controlled parking zones.
- The lack of affordable family housing (3 and 4 bedrooms)
- The lack of consultation with some conservation and residents' groups.
- The preference of some for red brick rather than grey. Although other members were happy with grey.
- The close proximity of the bay windows, in the rear block, to the boundary of the site and the New River Path.
- That the development was too blocky, the southern block too tall which would impact on the views from the south and the entrance to the town.
- That the detailing on and articulation of the southern and western faces of the block was inferior to that of the northern block.
- The waste disposal proposals and the absence of detailed designs showing the service areas to the rear.
- The environmental impact of the two bathrooms.
- The proximity to the bowling green.

The view of the forum, as summed up above, would be submitted for the attention of the planning officers for use when putting together the report on the planning application for consideration at Planning Committee.

5. ENABLING ACTIVE TRAVEL ACROSS ENFIELD

The forum received a presentation from Richard Eason (Programme Director Healthy Streets) on enabling active travel in Enfield.

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1. Presentation

Richard Eason highlighted the following from his presentation:

- Enfield Council declared a climate emergency in 2019.
- Thirty nine percent of Enfield's carbon dioxide emissions came from transport.
- Car travel was increasing and obesity is an issue. Enfield has one of the highest obesity rates in London. Everyone needs to be more physically active.
- Recent local and national strategies have focussed on enabling people to use more active forms of transport especially walking and cycling. Projects are being put in place across London as well as nationally and in Europe. Paris has had a lot of success recently in introducing car free streets and bringing many more cyclists onto the streets.
- Enfield is slowly adding to its cycling network and putting in place pedestrian improvements. Work had begun creating a pocket park in Little Park Gardens as start of the wider improvements planned for Enfield Town. An online consultation on the proposals is taking place "Lets Talk Enfield Town". Cycle parking facilities are being installed at transport hubs and in residential streets with the aim of improving the whole user journey across different modes better.
- Quieter Neighbourhoods were one aspect of this work, closing off small residential streets to prevent rat running and enable people to access active travel networks more safely.
- Community events had also been held and events such as second-hand bike markets.
- The school streets scheme had created safe spaces for children travelling to school on bike and foot.
- All this work should encourage more people of all ages to participate in active travel.
- Encouraging other sustainable journeys via buses and trains is also fundamental to help encourage people to avoid using cars. There were challenges ahead and schemes would take time to bed in. The impact of all schemes would be continually monitored.
- Members were encouraged to access the "Let's Talk Website", a tool to find out what residents think about schemes, to feed their views into the various consultations.

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2. Questions/Comments

- 2.1 Concern that the Quieter Neighbourhoods Schemes were causing a build-up of traffic on main roads such as Alderman's Hill, and that this would increase carbon dioxide emissions. The response that the situation was being monitored and the Council would shortly be repeating speed and volume counts to judge impact.
- 2.2 The need to acknowledge that it would take time for the schemes to settle in and for traffic volumes to stabilise. The overall aim was to reduce car journeys, not to divert traffic to other roads, but to encourage people to use other more sustainable modes of transport. Traffic jams in themselves were a deterrent. Officers would continue to work with local communities to improve the schemes. Government funding restrictions had meant that these had had to be introduced more quickly and with less advance consultation, than would have been preferred.
- 2.2 Concern about changes to the Highway Code to ensure that pedestrians had priority in shared facilities. The Highway code consultation was continuing. And although Enfield does have some shared facilities, problems were not envisaged.
- 2.3 Currently the Bush Hill Park Cycling Hub was closed. Richard Eason agreed to discuss, with his colleagues, what could be done to enable it to re-open more quickly.
- 2.4 More focus needed to be put on discouraging people from using their cars.
- 2.5 Concern that buses were becoming overcrowded. The Council was continuing to work with Transport for London on possible new routes.
- 2.6 It was felt that more needed to be done to enforce mask wearing. Data on mask adherence was not to hand. Richard Eason agree to ask officers to talk to Transport for London about the concerns. It was suggested that Transport for London Staff themselves should be monitored to make sure that they were wearing masks.
- 2.7 Praise for the 12 school streets schemes which had been felt to be very successful, despite small teething problems. There was however still more to be done to encourage parents not to drive their children to school and to convince them that it was safe to cycle and walk. Most Enfield children lived within walking distance of their schools.
- 2.8 More needed to be done to educate people about the benefits of living more sustainably. Many were reluctant to accept change. Electric cars were not the solution to problems such as increased traffic volumes and narrow streets.

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- 2.9 The Government were keen to avoid a car led Covid recovery and this was the reason that some schemes had been introduced so quickly.
- 2.10 The suggestion was made that more information on road closures should be given to Google Maps to encourage people not to go down certain roads and to encourage people to travel at less busy times. This could also be achieved by offering senior discounts at quieter times of the day. One of the reasons behind the traffic increases in residential streets was the increasing use of google maps, making drivers more aware of alternative routes. Officers would look to inform the sat nav companies of road changes more quickly.

The Chair thanked Richard Eason for his excellent presentation and all the members for their contributions, which were noted above.

6. HOUSING NEEDS - CAPACITY AND DESIGN OF BUILDINGS

The forum received a presentation from Christine White (Heritage and Urban Design Manager) on housing needs: capacity and design of buildings.

1. Presentation

Christine White highlighted the following from her presentation:

- Over the next 10-15 years Enfield's population was due to rise by 50,000 creating a total of 170,000 households.
- Currently we are only delivering 77% of the houses that the London Plan requires. There is a need to close this gap and to create approximately 20,000 new homes over the next ten years.
- In developing new areas of housing, Enfield would need to consider quantum, location, options of density and different typologies.
- Enfield would have to evolve and retrofit suburban places, increase density introduce new typologies, create additional uses, provide connections to public transport and enhance the landscape.
- The Council would be taking a design led approach to balancing growth against the local character and heritage of the borough.
- A characterisation study, undertaken in 2011, had identified most of the housing in the borough as of suburban or quasi suburban typology. Although this varied. There was some high density housing in the East, as well as numbers of Victorian terraces, larger scale

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developments, older lower density suburban housing and flats around metroland centres.

- The GLA had recently produced London Plan Module D: Good Quality Housing for all Londoners. This guidance contained lots of examples of good practice and can be found on the London.Gov.UK website. It referenced 7 different housing design typologies.
- Residential conversions and extensions which could increase housing provision through the sub-division of existing housing and building new units on existing sites. Larger properties and larger commercial buildings could also be converted into flats.
- There were opportunities to build more single houses on infill sites and on underused back land. Typical density 150-200 hrph.
- A cluster of houses was a small selection of housing built in one block, optimising site capacity. Typical density 100-200 hrph
- A terrace was a row of individual houses with private gardens or courtyards suitable for family housing. Typical density 200-250 hrph.
- Linear blocks had a higher density than terraces 400-600 hrph, often with maisonettes on the ground floor as well as above.
- The villa block had a central core with efficient circulation with three to five dwellings per floor and an indicative density of 400-600 hrph.
- Tower blocks, which are defined as buildings with ten or more stories, could have indicative densities of more than 1000 hrph. With a central core, efficient circulation and 4-5 dwellings per floor.
- Tower blocks take up less land and provide more housing. Suburban housing takes up the most land and provides the least housing.
- It was important to take account of policy constraints on land use including conservation areas, green belt and strategic industrial land.
- Enfield would need to allow the building of a mixture of all the different building typologies to meet housing need. This will inevitably change the character of the borough.

2. Questions/Comments

- 2.1** Concern that any new properties would be taken by people coming into the borough, rather than those that currently live here, which could increase the population even more.

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- 2.2** Clarification was sort on how housing needs were being assessed and whether the figures had taken account of the decrease in the numbers of young people coming as a result of Brexit.
- 2.3** It was going to be a challenge to find the space needed for the extra houses in Enfield. Tower blocks used the land available most efficiently. Enfield will not be able to meet the need through low density housing alone. There were fears that the changes would dramatically change the character of the borough.
- 2.4** The Government's new planning legislation would have an impact, but it is not yet clear how this will affect the Local Plan.
- 2.5** The suggestion was made that the Council should fight against these housing targets and suggest that housing was provided instead by building new satellite towns outside London.
- 2.6** Concern was expressed about how the conservation areas would be protected and how the need for more 3-4 bedroom family homes would be accommodated. Tower blocks would not provide suitable housing for families.
- 2.7** The suggestion was made that the Council should refuse to accept the Mayor of London's housing targets.
- 2.8** Concern that it was taking too long to produce and agree the new local plan and that too much development in Enfield was being led by speculative developers, rather than planned by the Council. It was essential that Enfield specify which typologies it wanted where.
- 2.9** The Local Plan had by law to be in conformity with the Mayor of London's plan. The Council had made representations and was now waiting final publication. The Government's new planning white paper had caused a pause and thrown things up in the air.
- 2.10** Anyone with concerns about the Government's planning reforms was urged to feed their views into the public consultation.

The Chair thanked Christine White for her presentation and apologised that the forum had not been able to spend as much time as she would have liked on this issue. She hoped that the forum could come back and discuss it in more detail, later in the year. Officers would take on board the desire of all members to preserve the heritage and character of the borough.

7. MINUTES FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 1 OCTOBER 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2020 were received and agreed as a correct record.

8. REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

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The Forum noted the following changes to the work programme;

- The item on Community initiatives promoting environmental sustainability which was to have been discussed at this meeting would now be considered at the meeting to be held on 10 December 2020.

9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The forum noted the dates agreed for future meetings:

- Wednesday 25 November 2020
- Thursday 10 December 2020
- Wednesday 13 January 2021
- Tuesday 16 February 2021
- Tuesday 30 March 2021
- Wednesday 28 April 2021