

ENFIELD COUNCIL

The London Borough of Enfield (Meridian
Water Strategic Infrastructure Works)
Compulsory Purchase Order 2020

Summary Proof of Evidence

Peter George

25 March 2021

Ref: PCU/CPOP/Q5300/3258664

1. Experience

- 1.1. I am the Programme Director for Meridian Water, which means I am the senior officer at the Council responsible for the delivery of the Meridian Water programme.
- 1.2. I have worked at the Council for eleven years and have led the Meridian Water programme for six years. Over this period I have developed an in-depth knowledge of the London Borough of Enfield and Edmonton in particular, its needs, challenges as well as strengths and opportunities.
- 1.3. My qualifications and experiences are set out at Section 1 of my evidence.
- 1.4. I confirm that I have made clear which facts and matters referred to in my proof of evidence are within my own knowledge and which are not. Those that are within my own knowledge I confirm to be true. The opinions I have expressed represent my true and complete professional opinions on the matters to which they refer.

2. Summary

- 2.1. My evidence describes the Meridian Water Scheme in detail, and addresses matters including the background and need for the Scheme, the funding and anticipated delivery of the Scheme, the purpose and justification for the Order, how the Council has had regard to equalities and human rights matters when making the Scheme and finally the Open Space Application.
- 2.2. The purpose of the Order is to assemble the land in order to build the Strategic Infrastructure Works that are required to unlock development of Meridian Water and allow delivery of the Scheme. My evidence demonstrates that there is an overriding case in the public interest to confirm the Order because the land is required to deliver the essential civil engineering and highway works that are necessary to unlock what is

currently a vast, brownfield and underused 202 acre site, and provide accessible, remediated, well-connected development site to deliver urgently-needed homes and jobs.

- 2.3. I have provided a Proof of Evidence, and now summarise the main points in each section of that Proof.
- 2.4. Section Two of my evidence describes Meridian Water, detailing its current state and uses. The total site comprises some 202 acres consisting mainly of brownfield land, underused industrial land, scrub land and open car park. Section Two also identifies the Order Land, which is that part of Meridian Water required for the Strategic Infrastructure Works.
- 2.5. The initial part of Section Three of my Proof introduces the vision and objectives for the Scheme. These include its delivery of 5,000 homes and 1,500 jobs, together with associated educational, social and leisure uses, and extensive green open space – 9 hectares of park will be delivered in the next four years alone.
- 2.6. The next part of Section Three identifies the need for the Scheme. This is achieved by reference to five sub-sections, which deal with the following:
 - i. The planning policy and strategies that constitute the policy framework and strategic justification for the Scheme;
 - ii. The data relating to deprivation that illustrates the need for public investment and intervention to redress inequality and level up this part of the borough;
 - iii. The need for housing in the Borough, which is illustrated by the failure to deliver homes against the Mayoral targets, the strategic housing need assessment which demonstrates through actual and projected population growth the scale of current and future housing demand, and the housing land availability assessment which demonstrates a critical shortfall of land supply for house building (thereby highlighting the overriding importance of large-scale schemes such as Meridian Water);

- iv. The fundamental need to improve environment, quality of place and accessibility of this part of the borough, thereby bringing contaminated, isolated, derelict and unused land back into productive and ecologically sustainable use; and
 - v. The need for a coordinated collection of infrastructure works to unlock the land for development, so that the range of benefits of the Scheme can be delivered.
- 2.7 Section Four of my evidence describes the purpose of the Order and the process undertaken for making the Order (including procedural steps taken in the light of the Coronavirus Pandemic).
- 2.8 Section Five summarises the justification for the Order having regard to the tests identified in Section 226 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (though these are considered in greater detail in the evidence of Paul Jarvis).
- 2.9 Section Six explains how the Scheme and the SIW will be funded, through the budgetary provision of the Council's ten year capital programme, and on the basis of a £170m grant from the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF Funding).
- 2.10 In Section Seven I set out how the Scheme will be delivered. In this regard some elements of the Scheme have already been progressed, including the construction of a new train station (Meridian Water), which is open and operational. Other parts of the Scheme are also already under construction, or on the verge of commencement. These include the first phases of residential development, Meridian One, and early employment projects (in the form of Building Bloqs and Meridian Water Film Studios). The SIW themselves will be delivered over the next few years. The various prerequisites for delivery: planning consent, governance approval, funding agreement, contractor appointment are all in place. It is only the issue of land, which requires the confirmation of the Order, that is needed as the last piece of the jigsaw.

- 2.11 The next phases of both the residential and employment development elements of the Scheme are programmed to commence once the relevant SIW works are complete. The Council's planning committee has resolved to grant permission for the second phase of residential development up to 2,300 homes and 26,500 sq m of employment space (Phase Two of the Scheme). Design work and developer partner procurement workstreams are underway for early residential delivery of part of Phase Two ('Meridian Two' where a development partner, Vistry, has already been selected), as well as the next housing projects of Meridian Three and Four. Contractual agreements have been signed with Vistry, Troubadour and Building Bloqs to deliver major employment and training interventions, specifically: two skills academies, open access workshops, and 130,000 sq ft of film studios. The pace of delivery is accelerating and the early delivery of the SIW will catalyse further beneficial development and regeneration in other parts of Meridian Water and in the Edmonton area at large.
- 2.12 In Section Eight I describe how the Order has been made with due regard for human rights and the PSED and how the recommendations of the EQIA are being put into action, further strengthening the beneficial outputs of the scheme (or example, by the demarcation of Meridian Water as a London Living Wage Zone) and the meticulous monitoring of employment outputs with respect to protected characteristics.
- 2.13 Finally, in Section Nine, I identify the open space land affected by the Order, describe the application made to the Secretary of State for a Certificate, and explain why the Council believes this should be granted. The Canal and Towpath which is the sole area of 'open space' land to be affected by this Certificate will not be closed or stopped up by the Order or the works. The works on these plots will not adversely affect the functioning or use of this land. Indeed, taken together with the improved access and landscape improvements delivered through the SIW the amenity, accessibility and aesthetic of the canal towpath will be markedly improved following the completion of SIW.

- 2.14 The Council recognises that there are a number of landowners and other parties with interests that are affected by the Order, in particular: the British Steel Pension Fund, Tesco, IKEA, the Environment Agency, Cadent, the Canals and Rivers Trust, TfL, the North London Waste Authority, Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, Thames Water, A & A Skips, National Grid and Hastingwood Estate. My team and I have sought to build positive relationships with these parties. Throughout the development of Meridian Water, we have continually engaged with them and will continue to work with them in the delivery of the Scheme. The fact that the Council has reached agreement with so many of those with interests in Meridian Water is testimony to the Council's genuine intent to negotiate effectively and agree mutually reasonable terms. The evidence of Matt Bodley sets out in full detail the history of communication and the specificities and status of the agreements negotiated.
- 2.15 At the time of writing this summary proof of evidence, it is my understanding that agreement has been reached with eight of the nine parties who objected to the Order, and solicitors have been instructed to document those agreements. No acquisition contracts have yet been exchanged and as such the objections remain outstanding. However, I am confident that voluntary agreement will be reached for the acquisition of all required land interests. Nevertheless it will still be necessary to proceed with the confirmation of the Order so as to ensure assembly all the land required for the works and delivery of the Scheme.
- 2.16 Confirmation of the Order will enable delivery of the SIW, which in turn will allow enable the regeneration of Meridian Water. The benefits of this regeneration are such that there is unquestionably a compelling case in the public interest in favour of confirmation of the Order.