



Representations on Draft Enfield Local Plan

Policies SP H1, BG4, BG5 and DM H4

[leswestplanning](#) on behalf of D&J
London Property Ltd.

September 2021

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Appendix 1 – Site Location Plan

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 These representations have been prepared by leswestplanning on behalf of D&J London Property Ltd. (D&JLP) in response to the Draft Enfield Local Plan 'Main issues and preferred approaches' Reg. 18 consultation. In particular, these representations are responding to the proposed policies in the draft Plan on Housing, Metropolitan Open Land and Green Belt as they relate to the proposed future use of a vacant brownfield site within the Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) at 144 Firs Lane Enfield (the site).
- 1.2 D&JLP supports Enfield Council's Preferred Option for policy SP H1 to plan to deliver the new housing target set for the borough in the recently adopted London Plan of 1,246 units per year for the whole period of the plan up to 2039. Whilst this is very challenging target in itself, given the recent record of housing completions, it needs to be seen in the context of an estimated 'uncapped need' of 4,397 units per year. Bearing this in mind, small sites like 144 Firs Lane need to be developed for housing, as is acknowledged in policy DM H4 Small sites and small housing development. Any unnecessary obstacles that might frustrate the development of the site should be addressed in the preparation of this local Plan as it proceeds.
- 1.3 D&JLP is pleased to see that London Borough of Enfield has clarified the status of the Firs Lane site in the notation shown on the draft proposals Map accompanying the draft Local Plan. The draft Proposals Map clearly shows the site as not being part of the adjoining open space even though it is still shown as being in the MOL. This change from the current Local Plan Proposals Map acknowledges the status of the site as a brownfield site, i.e., 'previously developed land'. The consequence of this being that development of the site would not be 'inappropriate'.
- 1.4 In Enfield Council's Housing Employment Land Availability Assessment June2021 the site is shown as being 'potentially developable' having been assessed following submissions made by the landowners in response to the Council's Call for Sites. Removal of the site from the MOL designation would recognise its status as a potential development site and this change should be actioned through the Local Plan preparation process.
- 1.5 In addition, the landowners have been approached by Mark Bradbury, Enfield Council's Director of Property and Economy, who has registered an interest in a potential joint development venture involving adjoining land owned by the Council which would result in rebuilding the changing rooms and redeveloping the remainder of the joint sites for housing. This is discussed further in the section of this report dealing with the suitability of the site for residential development.

- 1.6 This report sets out a brief description of the site and its planning history followed by a discussion of relevant housing, MOL and Green Belt policies and then concludes with the case for the site being removed from the MOL and its suitability for housing development.

2. THE SITE

- 2.1 The site, known as The Oak, 144 Firs Lane, Winchmore Hill, Enfield Northchurch is located on the eastern side of Firs Lane adjacent to areas of open space including Firs Farm playing fields with which it was originally associated as residential accommodation for a caretaker. This original residential property on the site was severely damaged by fire in May 2006 making it incapable of human habitation. It is 0.15 hectares in area and has an access off Firs Lane.
- 2.2 The Site Location Plan in Appendix 1, which is taken from a plan used to support the planning application for a Medical centre referred to below, shows The Oak bound by Firs Lane to the west with the Firs Farm playing fields to the north, east and south. Immediately to the east of the site is a building containing changing rooms owned by Enfield Council and to the north a gravelled car park for users of the playing fields. The curtilage of the site is well screened with mature and scrub trees. The site and the adjoining open space are located within an established residential area of terraced and semi-detached properties dating from the 1930s.
- 2.3 The site is previously developed land comprising the derelict shell of the former caretaker's residential accommodation and hardstanding.

Site Connectivity

- 2.4 There is good range of services and amenities in Winchmore Hill and Palmers Green which are both just over 1 km away. The site is fairly well served with good public transport access with bus stops within reasonable walking distance, between 0.5 and 1.0 kilometre, and overground stations at Winchmore Hill (1.4km away) and Palmers Green (2.2km away). Overall, there are schools and local shopping within accessible walking and cycling distances and therefore the site can be considered sustainable

Planning History

- 2.5 There have been a number of planning applications for development over the thirty years plus years. In 1988 planning permission was granted to Enfield Council for 12 two-bedroom factory made dwelling units, however this was not implemented. This however does highlight that a residential scheme has been previously approved at the site. A planning application for 4 detached houses was refused on the grounds of 'inappropriate development' in MOL in 2002. A proposal for 8 two storey training apartments for young people was submitted in 2005 but later withdrawn in 2006. In 2008 a planning application for a single storey care home for 4 people was submitted but was subsequently withdrawn before a decision was made.

- 2.6 Planning permission was granted for a Medical Centre on the site in 2016 but this was not implemented. Currently a further planning application for a Medical Centre, to replace the time expired earlier permission, is awaiting finalisation of a Section 106 Agreement.

3. HOUSING POLICIES

- 3.1 In this section of this report, we set out comments on two relevant housing policies, Policy SP H1 which proposes a significant increase in annual housing delivery and policy DM H4 which proposes support for housing development on small sites up to 0.25hectares.

Policy SP H1

- 3.2 D&JLP supports Enfield Council's proposed Policy SP H1, which seeks to raise the annual housing target from 395 in the current 2010 Core Strategy to 1,246 homes per annum. This raised annual target recognises a strategic target included in the recently adopted London Plan.
- 3.3 Although 1,246 is a very ambitious annual target compared to the current Core Strategy target of only 395 per annum, it falls well short of a figure of 4,397 per year resulting from an assessment of uncapped housing need based on the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) standard methodology. Therefore, the figure of 1,246 per annum should be seen as a minimum. It is in this context that any site capable of delivering additional housing which does not because harm should be considered positively.
- 3.4 D&JLP would like to acknowledge the work that the Council has undertaken in its land availability assessments following on from the Call for Sites exercise in 2019. It can be seen that this has resulted in the site being through a process of assessment which is recorded in the Housing Employment Land Availability Assessment June 2021 where the site, BUC2, is identified as being 'potentially developable' subject to a review of the MOL designation.

Policy DM H4

- 3.5 D&JLP supports Enfield Council's proposed policy to encourage residential development to come forward on small sites. Given the planning constraints on development in an Outer London borough like Enfield which is already built up apart from protected green space, the Council needs to be pragmatic in finding land for new development wherever it can. 144 Firs Lane is a site which would meet the criteria of this policy particularly as it is located close by to an existing mature residential area with access to a good range of local services and amenities.

4. GREEN BELT AND MOL POLICIES

- 4.1 This section of the report comments on the draft policies in the draft local Plan which are concerned with Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land.

Policies SP BG4 and BG5

- 4.2 These policies are being considered together in respect of the future of the site at 144 Firs Lane. Policy BG4 sets out the overall policy of protecting Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land from inappropriate development. Policy BG5 then clarifies how proposed development in the Green Belt should be considered. As there is no equivalent policy for development in the MOL, it is relevant to look at this policy and how the principles should be applied to the site at Firs Lane given that MOL is given the same status and level of protection as Green Belt in accordance with the London Plan, see para. 6.4.5 in the draft Enfield Local Plan.
- 4.3 The guidance for proposed development in the Green Belt in policy BG5 is taken from the National Planning Policy Framework. In the draft Local Plan there is no equivalent guidance or policy for 'previously developed sites' in MOL. Whilst it can be inferred that the same principles should be applied to these sites, it would be helpful for this to be made more explicit in policy BG5 or for there to be a separate new policy for previously developed land in MOL.
- 4.4 The most important point to note is the guidance for the future use of 'previously developed land' in paragraph 6.5.3 in the 'Explanation' supporting policy BG5. This states that '*Limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land and temporary accommodation will not be inappropriate subject to meeting the criteria set out in parts 2 and 3 of the policy.*' Such guidance should apply equally to land in the MOL that has been previously developed such as the site at 144 Firs Lane.

Removal of Open Space Designation

- 4.5 The removal of the site from open space designation on the Proposals Map is supported. This is a welcome change which acknowledges the status of the site as previously developed land and separating it from consideration as part of the adjoining open space.

Proposed removal of the Site from MOL

- 4.6 As a further step in recognition of the fact that the site is previously developed land which no longer has functional relationship to the adjoining open space, and also is heavily screened, the site should also be removed from the Metropolitan Open Land designation. This would not cause any harm as any development of the site would have to demonstrate that it would not cause harm to the MOL in

any event. The inclusion of the site in the MOL is an historic anomaly as it reflects the former functional association between the caretaker's residential unit and the adjoining playing fields when they were all in Council ownership.

5. SUITABILITY OF THE SITE FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

- 5.1 The case for the residential development of the site at 144 Firs Lane was made as part of the Call for Sites exercise in 2019. The main points are that the site is previously developed land and that it was used for residential accommodation, the site is well screened by vegetation and consequently its development would not harm the MOL, the site is in a sustainable location and there is reasonable access to services and facilities in the surrounding area.
- 5.2 The site, referred to as 'BUC 2' in the Council's HELAA June 2021, has been identified as being 'potentially developable' but subject to change in the MOL designation. Whilst we believe that a very good case could be made to support redevelopment of the site for housing as not being 'inappropriate development', the removal of the MOL designation through the preparation this new development plan for Enfield should be used to ensure that the policy framework enables this potential to be fulfilled. The identification of the site in this designation confirms its suitability for housing development.
- 5.3 Further support for the residential development of the site has been forthcoming from the Council's Director of Property and Economy alongside the local plan process. As long ago as October 2019, the Council's Property Director Mark Bradbury has been in contact with the landowners about a potential property deal involving the Council's own land which includes the adjoining changing rooms and the site at 144 Firs Lane. As recently as this month, contact has focussed on a potential redevelopment scheme on the combined sites which includes a new changing room block with toilet facilities for the Council, with the rest of the sites to be utilised for housing. Discussions between the landowners and the Council's Director of Property are planned to continue.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 These representations support the 'direction of travel' of the draft Enfield Local Plan Main issues and preferred approaches in embracing the substantial increase in the housing target for the borough in policy SP H1. It will be challenging to deliver this significant increase in annual housing delivery and therefore a pragmatic approach such as allowing previously developed sites in Green Belt and MOL to be developed must be adopted.
- 6.2 The representations seek further clarification of the approach to the future development of 'previously developed land' in MOL. It should be made explicit that this will no longer be seen as 'inappropriate development' in line with the guidance for Green Belt sites in para. 6.5.3 in the draft Local Plan.
- 6.3 The representations acknowledge and support the removal of the site from local open space designation. It is important in recognising that 144 Firs Lane is not and never has been part of the adjoining open land.
- 6.4 Also, in recognition of the status of the site, it is requested that 144 Firs Lane is also removed from the MOL designation as it is neither functionally nor visually 'open land'. This current review is the right time to make the change in status particularly given the step change proposed in housing delivery.
- 6.5 The recognition of the merits of the site being suitable for residential development in the HELAA June 2021 is also welcomed and supported. D&JLP are keen to work with officers at Enfield in both the planning and property departments to make sure that the site can make a positive contribution to the housing delivery early on the Local Plan period.

A1. SITE LOCATION PLAN



Project:		Client:		Drawing:		JTP	
Firs Lane Medical Centre		Wood Grove Care Ltd		Site location plan			
Date:	Scale (M/A):	Drawn:	Checked:	Status:	Project No:	Drawing No:	ARCHITECTS
19.07.12	1 : 500	DL		FOR PLANNING	15 / 933	12	
JAMES TOTTY PARTNERSHIP CHARTERED ARCHITECTS 38 WILKINSON STREET SHEFFIELD S10 2G							