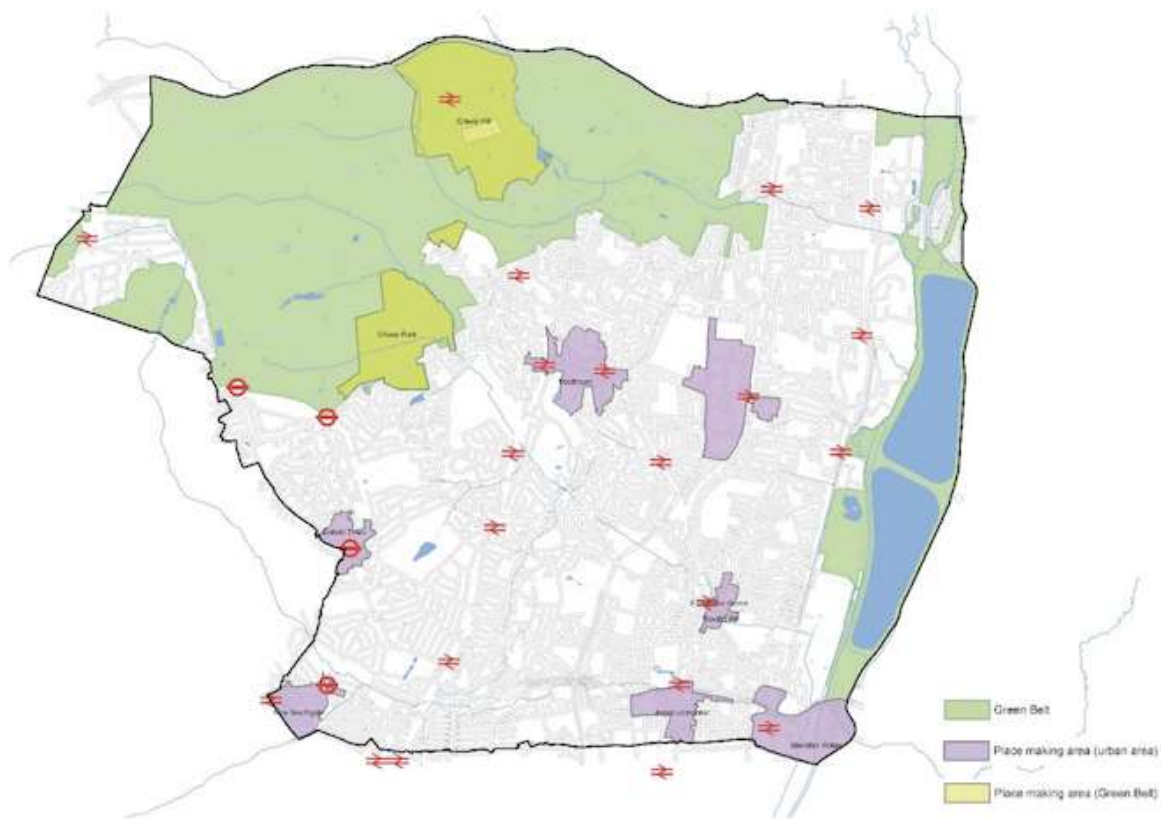




Enfield: Council's Local Plan proposals for Green Belt homes could be in a for a rough ride

9th June 2021

The Labour-run borough is looking at building new homes on Green Belt land amid determined opposition from Conservatives and others

CHARLES WRIGHT

Update, 10 June 2021. A majority of councillors voted in favour of the draft Local Plan complete with an amendment tabled by the council leader to extend the next round of consultation from six weeks to 12. **On London** will continue to follow the Plan's progress.

The capital's Green Belt battle looks set to ignite again – this time in Enfield, with the council's [draft Local Plan](#) identifying sites for some 6,000 new homes in the protected zone.

Councillors will [vote this evening on proposals to begin consultation on the draft Plan](#), which designates Crews Hill and Chase Park in the Green Belt as “growth areas” for new development in a bid to tackle a “serious housing crisis” in the borough.

The council has more than 3,500 families in temporary accommodation – the second highest number in the country – and with its 10,000-home Meridian Water scheme in Edmonton only just [getting underway](#) it is falling behind on new build, generating some 500 new homes a year at present compared with the borough’s London Plan target of 1,246.

Already under pressure from government, and with new national targets that will apply in the capital from 2026 calling for almost 4,400 homes a year, councillors are now looking at a “medium growth” scenario of 25,000 by 2039 – and eyeing up the Green Belt, which makes up a third of Enfield’s land area.

“Enfield is a growing borough and our residents face a housing affordability crisis,” [said](#) council leader Nesil Caliskan. “To support our economy and provide more homes we need to make difficult choices about where growth can be placed.” The Plan would also see improvements to green space in the borough and 50 per cent of new homes in developments in the new “growth areas” would be affordable.

The draft Plan is only at the first stage of preparation. There could be further rounds of consultation and amendment and a public hearing in front of an independent planning inspector. It proposes “limited release” of Green Belt land only, but opposition forces are already gathering.

“Reading Enfield’s draft Local Plan report & it’s biggest hypocritical document Enfield’s Labour Council has ever produced,” [tweeted](#) the council’s opposition Tory leader Joanne Laban. “There is focus apparently on improving the quality of existing green spaces yet it wants to allow development on them. How is that improving green spaces?”

The political risk for Labour plan was highlighted by Andrew Thorp, the new Conservative councillor for Chase ward, which includes potential growth areas. Thorp, who won his seat from Labour at a by-election held on 6 May, has [pledged](#) to “robustly oppose this assault on our green space”.

The Labour group’s majority has also been dented by seven defections to a new “Community First” grouping, which is likely to vote against the draft Plan proposals. [Analysis](#) of the London Mayor and Assembly elections for **On London** shows that Sadiq Khan received fewer first preference votes Enfield than the Conservative candidate Shaun Bailey.

Amenity groups are [organising](#) too, arguing that “destruction” of Green Belt land, including farmland and the horticulture nurseries at Crew Hill, would mean “[less wholesome local food to eat](#)”, as well as wider ecological damage and loss of “health and wellbeing benefits”.

An immediate focus is a recently-unveiled [masterplan](#) from housebuilders Comer Homes for up to 5,000 homes on Vicarage Farm, which is in Green Belt land near Trent Park. The [Enfield Society](#) argues that their proposals will “do nothing for Enfield’s shortage of affordable family homes”.

The opposition groups say the council should focus on brownfield sites. But there are difficulties with that too in Enfield as elsewhere. The council’s planning committee recently rejected recent plans for new homes beside [Arnos Grove](#) and [Southgate](#) stations. Local Labour MPs Bambos Charalambous and Feryal Clark [joined forces](#) to oppose plans for 450 homes in Enfield Town, where a proposed 26-storey tower is “out of character”, they say.

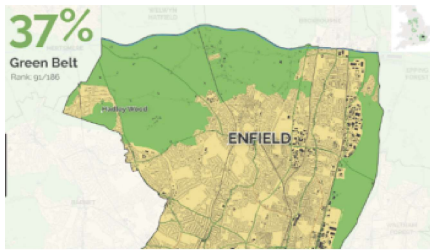
So where to build? As Caliskan suggests, there are no easy choices in Enfield or across London as a whole, which continues to miss its housing targets. Around 35,000 homes a year have been delivered London-wide over the past three years compared to a London Plan target of 52,000, an [assessment](#) that 66,000 a year are actually needed and the government’s “[standard method](#)” target of more than 90,000 a year.

The inspectors who scrutinised the London Plan back in 2019 set out the dilemma: “Supply is based on capacity...it is difficult to see how the number of deliverable housing units could be increased [above 52,000 a year] without consideration being given to a review of the Green Belt or further exploration of potential with local authorities within the wider South East.”

With the Mayor Khan continuing to oppose Green Belt development and the government facing growing suburban and south-eastern opposition to its planning reforms, which are designed to boost housebuilding, there may be a rough ride ahead for the new Enfield Local Plan – and a long wait for those in temporary housing.

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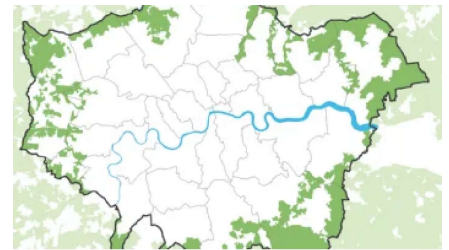
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