

Redbridge Local Plan Examination Hearing

Council's Opening Statement

Firstly, on behalf of Redbridge Council I would like to welcome the Inspector, David Smith, and all those attending this public examination.

I would also like to thank Andrea Copsey, the Programme Officer, for her management of the examination process so far.

The Redbridge Local Plan is a positive strategy that will secure the successful delivery of sustainable communities, facilitate economic growth and reduce inequalities, making Redbridge a place where people wish to live, work, stay and visit.

Since the adoption of the Core Strategy and Borough Wide Primary Policies in 2008, a number of significant changes and challenges have taken place in planning policy and legislation at a national and local level. The Local Plan has been prepared in response to these changes and challenges that are taking place in Redbridge and more widely in London, in particular:

- A rapidly growing, aging and changing population;
- A London Plan requirement to deliver a minimum annual housing target of 1,123 new homes coupled with the need to meet the borough's significant housing need – 2,287 homes per year;
- The need to balance this growth with providing school places, health care and other key community facilities to support a growing and changing population;
- The need to address increasing health inequalities and the wider determinants of health and well-being;
- The need to consider the release of Green Belt to meet development needs;
- The need to create the right conditions to attract investors to the borough; and
- Maximising the benefits of Crossrail.

The Local Plan responds to this by positively seeking opportunities to meet the development needs of the borough and planning to meet objectively assessed needs for homes in a way compatible with the specific context, constraints and opportunities of Redbridge.

Given Redbridge's character, local circumstances and development needs, we have developed an approach – supported by evidence – that would be effective in meeting Redbridge's needs in the context of the borough. This has resulted in the need to consider sensitive issues like releasing some sites within the green belt; to enable the Council to achieve its commitments to deliver much needed housing and new schools.

The Local Plan has been shaped by ongoing consultation and engagement involving local people, businesses, community groups and external stakeholders. Public consultations in 2011, 2013 and

2014 have informed the approach to key issues and evolution of policies which underpin the Redbridge Local Plan. Together with a robust and proportionate evidence base - on housing, employment, infrastructure and viability to name but a few, we consider we have put together a sound Local Plan that tells Redbridge's story.

The Local Plan has also undergone a sustainability appraisal to assess reasonable alternatives and consider the Plan's overall environmental, social and economic impacts.

The Plan identifies many opportunities for exciting regeneration schemes, including new neighbourhoods on four key strategic sites, the ability to maximise benefits arising from investment in community infrastructure, and the opportunities enhanced accessibility Crossrail will bring to an already connected borough.

The Local Plan directs development to meet the borough's growth potential to five Investment and Growth Areas of Ilford, Crossrail Corridor, Gants Hill, South Woodford and Barkingside and other to other town centres outside of these locations. These areas are the most accessible locations in the borough with excellent transport links.

Ilford's strong growth potential is specifically recognised through its designation as an Opportunity Area and the Metropolitan Centre in the London Plan. The town centre received Housing Zone status in 2015 which will bring accelerated housing delivery to the area. The Council's ambition for Ilford is to enhance its profile and performance to ensure it remains one of London's leading town centres, deliver much needed housing and essential community infrastructure to support growth. The Council has a major role to play in delivering this change and is committed to effective partnership working with a range of public, private and voluntary sector organisations.

While facilitating major change, the Local Plan will also safeguard and enhance what is good and special about Redbridge – its extensive open spaces, quality parks and gardens, excellent schools, heritage and the borough's established residential neighbourhoods.

The Local Plan cannot address everyone's issues. This means the Council will often be in the middle between those who think we are going too far and those who think we are not going far enough. As such, the Council considers that the Plan takes a balanced approach to promoting sustainable growth, recognising what is valued in the borough, as well as striking the right balance to create flexibility and certainty.

The Council is keen to adopt the Local Plan and to begin implementing its policies so that it benefits from an up-to-date planning framework against which the aspirations of the Council can be delivered - to tackle the problems the borough faces, accelerate and deliver sustainable growth, the creation of sustainable communities, whilst protecting the character of established residential neighbourhoods and take opportunities to make them even better.

To conclude, the Council considers that the Local Plan provides a sound and positive strategy for achieving sustainable development and meeting Redbridge's identified needs. We therefore welcome this public examination.