

Please note that I am not introducing new information.

DOCUMENTS EXAM 11, EXAM 14, EXAM 18

I would like to support the opening statements made by Cllr Barry Rawlings in EXAM 11. He makes the essential points about the difficulty of meeting top-down targets, of the real problems being the lack of truly-affordable housing which is not linked to market rental rates, and having sufficient infrastructure such as healthcare, open spaces, schools and policing.

However, I feel the proposed Barnet Plan does not meet these objectives. The overall impression of the Barnet Plan is that there is no practical concern for sustainability, but only lip-service to the concept. Barnet will become very urbanised and unrecognisable; Theresa Villiers MP makes these points very eloquently in EXAM14.

Housing Targets

The top-down housing targets used in this Barnet Plan are being removed by the government.

<https://eandt.theiet.org/content/articles/2022/12/government-to-remove-mandatory-housebuilding-targets/#:~:text=In%20a%20letter%20to%20MPs,to%20abolish%20mandatory%20housebuilding%20targets.>

This means that the Barnet Plan will need a review at the beginning of the 5-year period mentioned in EXAM 18.

Meeting Housing Needs

The charity Action on Empty Homes <https://www.actiononemptyhomes.org/> makes the case that restricting 'buy to leave' investments (often owned by overseas investors) and short-term lets on Airbnb, and using empty homes for long-term housing could on their own go a long way towards solving the housing crisis. These are much more environmentally sound solutions than the in-filling of much needed public spaces such as green spaces and car parks at transport hubs, with high-density blocks of small flats.

Healthcare and Policing

The levies in S106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy, apportion funds for infrastructure, yet there is no requirement for infrastructure to be built *before* planning permissions are granted. I was disturbed to hear during the Examination sessions, from some of the Barnet Council team, that healthcare and policing were ‘not Barnet Council’s problem’ and were the concerns of the Care Quality Commission and the Police, respectively.

Green Space

The steady erosion and infilling of small green spaces in the Barnet Plan contributes to the loss of biodiversity in the UK. Biodiversity Net Gain strategies may or may not be effective, but when accompanied by steady decreases in areas, will inevitably lead to a reduced habitat for wildlife.

The quote below refers to gardens but applies equally to any urban green spaces.

“Research shows that some cities may have lost as much as 50 per cent of their green garden space over the last two decades, contributing to rising urban temperatures”

“Gardens account for a third of all our urban areas and are vital spaces in terms of keeping our buildings and city environments cool in summer, absorbing rain to avoid flash flooding and providing an important refuge for wildlife.”

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/news/cut-council-tax-green-gardeners-help-cities-tackle-climate-change>

“The UK only has half of its natural biodiversity left. When compared to the G7 countries..... the UK is at the very bottom in terms of how much biodiversity still survives. When compared across all countries in the European Union, only Ireland and Malta come out worse, and the UK is in the bottom 10% of all countries globally.”

<https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/news/2020/september/uk-has-led-the-world-in-destroying-the-natural-environment.html>