By email: Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel Members

Mahmut Aksanoglu (Chair), Kate Anolue (Vice Chair), Lee Chamberlain, Margaret Greer, Tom O'Halloran, Edward Smith and Doug Taylor.

Date: 24th March 2025

Dear Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel Members,

Re: 'Update on Meridian Water' report (Item 4).

'Action For Enfield's Future' is a non-political community group with members from across Enfield including representatives from The Enfield Society, Better Homes Enfield, Enfield Climate Action Forum (EnCaf), Enfield Over 50s Forum and Enfield RoadWatch.

We are pleased to see the 'Update on Meridian Water' report on the agenda of this month's Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel. This report provides valuable insights into the ongoing management of the project. However, we believe that addressing some key questions will further enhance the successful delivery of the scheme and help the public and panel to assess its impacts and risks.

We have set out these questions below and respectfully request the Panel Members ask officers to address them.

Introduction

The successful regeneration of Meridian Water, including the delivery of 10,000 new homes and 6,000 jobs over 20-25 years, is of vital importance for Enfield. This ambitious project represents a significant investment of public funds and carries substantial potential benefits for the community, as well as risks.

While there have been delays in the delivery of homes and jobs, we recognise the progress made in overcoming some of these challenges.

Unfortunately, because of delays, thousands of Enfield's families have had to spend longer in unsuitable Temporary Accommodation than would otherwise have been necessary, with the Council bearing the burden of the additional costs associated with this. Delays have also impacted the repayment of debts.

1. Housing Delivery

On Page 1 of the report, under '**Main Considerations for the Panel**' it says *'Meridian Water is an major regeneration in Edmonton, that aims deliver up to 10,000 homes, 6,000 jobs',* however, the report does not fully address how or when these aims will be realised.

The report provides information for some land 'parcels' with existing planning permission i.e. Meridian Water 1a, 1b and Meridian Two, as well as for Meridian 13 (the Teardrop), but does not address the status of approximately 8,500 of the 10,000 homes target.

In terms of new homes:

- **Q1.1** - Other than Meridian Two, what is the status of the 2,000+ homes within Phase 2 which already have planning permission, including parcels 3-10? Outline planning approval for these parcels was granted 5-years ago. When will detailed plans be submitted for each of them and when are these estimated to start and be completed?

- **Q1.2** - The Tesco and Ikea sites are key to achieving the 10,000 homes target, given this, what is the status of these sites? Has the sale of the Ikea site completed? When are planning applications for these sites expected to come forward?

- **Q1.3** - As far as we understand, de-designating the SIL to the east of the River Lee Navigation is essential to achieving the 10,000 homes target. Given this, what is happening regarding the de-designation of SIL, and negotiations with GLA? Can 10,000 homes be delivered without 100% de-designation of the SIL e.g. can the target be achieved with the level the de-designation set-out in the draft Local Plan?

- **Q1.4** - What are the implications of the remaining SIL not being de-designated? For example, on housing numbers, jobs, and the Council's financial modelling, including the repayment of debt?

- **Q1.5** - In May 2023, it was reported that Haworth Tomkins were working on the SIL Masterplan for Meridian Water, which sounds like a positive step. When will the output of this work be shared with Members and the public?

- **Q1.6** - How many MW1a 'private sale' and 'shared ownership' homes have been sold? How many have been sold to people from the Edmonton wards or Enfield borough? What controls are in place to ensure local residents benefit from the shared ownership and private sale homes?

- **Q1.7** - How many of the 113 London Affordable Rent tenants at 'MW1a' come from the decommissioned Walbrook House (126 units lost), Cheshire/Shropshire House (204 units lost)?

- **Q1.8** - The Phasing Plan underpinning the adopted April 2023 financial model allocated approximately 760 homes to meanwhile parcels within the Meridian One red line boundary, referred to as Parcels 11 and 12 in the Phasing Plan. These sites are currently council owned and occupied by the community garden and skills academy sites. When will plans for these parcels come forward?

- **Q1.9** - Will a delay in bringing forward plans for Parcels 11 and 12 put off potential buyers and impact sales prices? For example, will it put buyers off purchasing property at Phase 1b knowing they will need to live near major building work for several years during the delivery of Parcels 11 and 12? Is it therefore beneficial to bring these parcels forward sooner rather than later?

- **Q1.10** - The report expects revised plans for Phase 1b to deliver an additional 150 homes. Will this be as the result of increased building heights, or are meanwhile Parcels 11 and/or 12 included in the revised application?

2. Meridian 13 (the Teardrop)

The report informs members that, '*51. On 19 April 2024 the M13 parcel was launched to the market. Unfortunately due to challenging market conditions we received no viable bid; this has in part led to the aforementioned Savills review and reset work.*'

We feel that members and the public need more information to understand this properly, given the amount of public money spent procuring the site (£2.5m in 2015) and on remediation (conducted 2016-2019), and more recently on soft market testing, legal advice and initial designs (e.g. expenditure with Browne Jacobson, Newbridge Advisors and Weston Williamson + Partners).

- **Q2.1** - Were any expressions/bids received? If so, how many? What were the issues with these specifically? Why were they unacceptable?

Challenging market conditions were known prior to the launch to market and formed part of the M13 soft launch considerations and analysis, when multiple positive responses were received.

- **Q2.2** - Why is the outcome of the formal launch different to the soft launch – what has changed, because market conditions for both were similar? For example, were the Council's proposed deal structure and procurement arrangements for M13 an issue? What has been learnt that could be used to improve future launches to market?

- **Q2.3** – What is the impact of not selling this land on the Council's adopted financial model? Does it prevent a risk in terms of debt repayment?

3. The Meridian Water Masterplan

The report does not mention the Meridian Water Masterplan or the Masterplan Vision.

- **Q3.1** - Without these, exactly what plans are the MW Team and their consultants, including Savills, working to when assessing the delivery of housing and jobs?

- **Q3.2** - When will the Masterplan be published for consultation?

4. Employment

The update provides information about employment but does not update Members about the performance against the schemes adopted KPIs. The Meridian Water Employment Strategy (adopted 2020) makes the following commitments over 25-years:

<u>Outcome 1:</u> Create 6,000 permanent, high quality jobs paying London Living Wage or above, of which no less than 25% will be from local labour.

- **Q4.1** - How many of these 6,000 permanent jobs have been delivered and when are the remaining jobs forecast to be delivered?
- **Q4.2** - To date, how many jobs have been lost because of the scheme, including at Ikea and jobs lost due to site clearances?
- **Q4.3** - Given changes to the demand for office space since Covid, is the 6,000 jobs target still deliverable? If so, what would be the breakdown by types of employment?

<u>Outcome 4</u>: Deliver 1,000 construction jobs, sustained over 25 years, of which no less than 25% will be from local labour.

The adopted Employment Strategy says "*The jobs created will be at a range of salary bands, including well paid and accessible entry level positions to higher paid and highly skilled professional roles. 25% or 250 local jobs are expected to benefit Enfield residents, or residents of adjacent boroughs, sustained over 25 years*."

- **Q4.3** - How many construction jobs have been delivered each year since the Employment Strategy was adopted, at which salary bands and how many have been from local labour?

<u>Outcome 2</u>: Deliver 1,000 new high-quality jobs through Meanwhile Employment Uses on land intended for redevelopment, where possible rehoming these businesses within the new development

The Employment Strategy says "*We will engage with our existing and potential future tenants to record and regularly report on the jobs and skills development activities of our commercial occupiers, …*"

- **Q4.4** - How many high-quality meanwhile jobs have been delivered since the strategy was adopted?

5. Community Chest

The update regarding the Meridian Water Community Chest is welcome and appears to have been a response to Better Homes Enfield article. https://betterhomes-enfield.org/2025/03/09/where-has-650000-of-meridian-water-community-chest-money-gone/

- **Q5.1** - How much money is currently in the fund?
- **Q5.2** - What has happened to the annual reports committed to regarding how the money has been spent?

- **Q5.3** - It was agreed that fund applications would be opened twice per year; why has there been a considerable time lapse between grant funding rounds?
- **Q5.4** - Given the time lapse, and that the Council has had the funds, has the Community Chest fund money grown through accrued interest?

6. Strategic Infrastructure Works

A large section of the update report is given over to outlining the SIW, which received planning permission 5-years ago. This followed the submission of the HIF application in 2017 and approval in 2019 and signed legal agreement in November 2020 for £170 m.

The initial application was based on the SIW being completed by 2023. However, most work did not commence until 2024.

The current programme shows a Planned Completion Date for November 2026.

- **Q6.1** - How confident is the Council in this completion date?
- **Q6.2** - What are the implications if the SIW are delayed? How has this been accounted for e.g. in financial planning?
- **Q6.3 -** What risks are associated with the HIF grant? For example, what are the clawback terms regarding completion dates?
- **Q6.4** - The report does not refer to the delivery of the 'Green Loop', does this still form part of the plans/vision?

7. Car parking

Double parked cars and cars parked on the pavement have been observed on site visits to MW1a.

- **Q7.1** - What is happening to address this, to ensure the estate remains child/pedestrian/cycle friendly and safe, and so that active travel is encouraged?

8. Skate Park

- **Q8.1** - Who is responsible for paying for the upkeep of the new park? Will this be paid for by new residents as part of their estate management fee? If so, how much will residents be charged in their estate management fees and how much of this is allocated to the maintenance of the park(s)? Is the estate management fee a barrier to purchase?

9. Energy use

- **Q9.1** - How are the completed homes currently heated and receiving hot water? What is the heat source <u>currently</u> – is it gas or energy from waste or something else?

10. Banbury Reservoir Park

Local community groups and CPRE London have proposed using fenced off and underutilised green belt land adjacent to Meridian Water, located within Enfield and Waltham Forest to increase the availability of green space at Meridian Water.

This is particularly important to the successful delivery of Meridian Water, as the Blue and Green Strategy Audit identifies the local area as having a significant deficit of accessible green open space.

We note that Lee Valley Regional Park Authority have also put forward similar proposals for an enlarged park.

Engagement activity conducted by EnCaf showed a very high degree of support for the proposed park and a wealth of ideas put forward by the local community.

Furthermore, Waltham Forest have allocated the land needed within their borough for the delivery of sections of the park that fall within LBWF and have published the Banbury Area Vision.

- **Q10.1** - Given this, what are officers doing to engage with the local community groups regarding the proposed Banbury Reservoir Park? What action are officers taking to support the delivery of the proposed park?

11. Arriva Edmonton Bus Garage

The Arriva Edmonton Bus Garage provides a source of employment and training for local people. Arriva state the capacity of the bus depot is 200 buses, each bus generates 3.2 jobs, and that the potential employment associated with the bus depot is around 640 jobs.

The Council previously said it intends to acquire this site, by CPO if necessary, as it is needed to deliver the Masterplan vision.

In 2017 the Council committed to finding a viable alternative site for the Arriva bus depot at Harbet Road at the earliest stage practicable, recognising this would reduce uncertainty and be the best way to safeguard jobs.

- **Q11.1** - What progress has been made in locating an alternative site?
- **Q11.2** - Does the Council still intend to acquire this site, if so, when?
- **Q11.3** - What will be the impact on the delivery of the 10,000 homes / 6,000 jobs target if this site is not developed as intended?

12. Council Land Acquisitions

In 2021, the Council owned 87% of the developable land it needed to acquire in Meridian Water (excluding the Ikea, Tesco and Prologis sites) and said it needed to purchase the remaining 13% of land.

This was understood to include the remaining interests on Anthony Way and Stonehill Estate, Arriva site and leasehold interests on Phoenix Wharf, land interests on Rivermead Road and acquisition of long leasehold interest and occupational tenant interests in Hastingwood Estate.

- **Q12.1** - What progress has been made in acquiring this land?
- **Q12.2** - Does the Council still intend to acquire this land? If not, what are the implications?

13. Community Infrastructure

We are concerned about the lack of other supporting infrastructure at Meridian One such as shops, and the delivery of a new health centre and gym.

- **Q13.1** - The Council said the healthcare centre would open in 2025 and the gym by 2027. Is this still on track? If not, how are the needs of the new residents being addressed?

14. Troubadour Meridian Water Studios (TMWS)

<u>Marketing aims TMWS</u>

In addition to the costs of acquiring the land the Council invested around £2.89m into the film studios projects to enable the construction and purchase of film studios.

When this investment was approved, one of the key drivers was that '*the vastly improved environment and economic and cultural activity will imbue confidence in the housing sector*' and that '*It is a positive news story, that by its nature can create a strong pipeline of headline-catching announcements in delivery of the communication and marketing Strategy*.'

- **Q14.1** - Do officers think it has achieved these aims?

<u>TMWS Films Skills Academy</u>

The agreement included the delivery of a skills academy for the film industry, which was due to be delivered in 2023, and within the first 12-24 months of occupation/phase 1 completion.

The investment report noted '*The provision of a Skills Academy specialising in film, theatre and media skills will be an early win for helping to achieve an uplift in the skills and aspiration of the local community.*'

The outline of the agreement noted '*The Training Academy will provide accredited industry courses, with the course curriculum and certification following recognised industry standards and be externally accredited by a Higher Education or Further Education institution associated with Film and Media. Evidence associated with the outputs from the Training Academy will be reported to LBE on a quarterly basis*.'

- **Q14.2** – Please can officers provide an update about the film training academy? How many students have been trained so far? Is the external accreditation in place? Is evidence being reported on a quarterly basis? Where are the training opportunities being advertised?

TMWS Footfall and Employment

The council expected that during the first phase of operation footfall could reach 350/day or 110,000/year through workers, contractors and visitors to the site. In the second phase (after 2023), this was expected to increase to 600/day or 190,000/annually.

The first phase (now complete) was due to deliver 50 jobs on site, rising to 450 in the second phase.

Meridian Water Studios was required to commit to paying a London Living Wage to all its staff.

- **Q14.3** - What has been the footfall at the site since Phase 1 was completed?
- **Q14.4** - How many full-time jobs have been created? (we note that TMWS accounts report 15 full time employees).
- **Q14.5** - Are all staff being paid at least the LLW?

Theatre and Performing Arts Space

The investment case for the studios said an 800-seater theatre and performance space would be delivered by the mid 2020's.

- **Q14.6** - When will this theatre and performance space be delivered?

Yours faithfully,

Vicki Pite

On behalf **of Action For Enfield's Future**