

Opening statement on behalf of Ealing Council

Introduction:

I would like to welcome everyone to this Examination in Public into the Ealing's New Local Plan.

The submitted plan is the culmination of over four years' work and has involved extensive stakeholder engagement, four rounds of public consultation and production of a comprehensive evidence base.

Developing a local plan will always involve a balancing of different priorities and this is reflected in the sometimes-conflicting feedback we received. But can I thank everyone who has taken an interest in the future of Ealing, taken the time to read the plan and to make comments on matters that they feel strongly about. We look forward to discussing the various issues raised in those representations over the coming days and months.

Ealing's New Local Plan:

Ealing Council approved the submitted Local Plan for Regulation 19 consultation at a Full Council meeting held on 21st February 2024. It is intended to provide a new, fit for purpose planning framework that will replace a suite of existing development plan documents adopted between 2012 and 2016 which will all be superseded and replaced.

Ealing's Local Plan seeks:

- to explain how the borough will grow and change;
- to guide future planning and investment decisions; and,
- to ensure we get the right development in the right places and at the right time

Ealing's Local Plan is closely aligned to the strategic vision and key priorities that are outlined in Ealing Council's Council Plan 2022- 26. The Council Plan identified three cross cutting strategic objectives. These are tackling the climate crisis, fighting inequality, and creating good jobs and growth, and each is informed by the social, economic and environmental challenges and trends that the borough will encounter over the next fifteen years.

To deliver on these strategic objectives, a series of nine priorities have also been identified. The three strategic objectives and nine priorities together inform the development of the 15-Year Vision and Spatial Strategy set out in Chapter 3 of the plan.

In order to deliver the spatial strategy, it is crucial that development and investment positively contribute to the unique qualities of Ealing and in so doing realise our place making ambitions. It is critical that the borough does not become a dormitory suburb, where residents only travel beyond its boundaries to work. This spatial strategy aims to make Ealing a destination for growth in new businesses and jobs that Ealing residents can also access.

Chapter 4 sets out seven Town Plans. Each town has a strong local identity, unique character, and set of priorities and opportunities. The Local Plan aims to maximise the role and responsibility of each of the seven towns, ensuring they all contribute to the future prosperity of the borough and are integrated within the borough-wide spatial strategy.

The Local Plan seeks to ensure that growth and development is better balanced across Ealing. Over the last decade Ealing has seen significant growth and investment concentrated in parts of Acton, Ealing, and Southall, while comparatively modest or no investment within Greenford, Hanwell, Northolt, and Perivale. The Local Plan adopts a more inclusive approach so that each of the seven towns will play a role in the borough's delivery of new homes and jobs. This will enable overlooked parts of the borough to benefit from greater levels of investment.

The Wider Planning Framework:

The preparation of this Local Plan is set within a wider planning framework that includes the NPPF at the national scale and the Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London at a regional scale.

For the avoidance of any doubt, this plan is being tested with regards conformity with the NPPF published in December 2023 and not the most recent iteration but, in any case, planning policies are required to be flexible in approach.

The London Plan published in 2021 is an integral part of the statutory development plan for the local planning authority and the approach taken by Ealing is not to repeat London Plan policies because they already form an essential part of the statutory development plan for the area. This is complemented by a comprehensive array of supplementary planning guidance documents. Ealing's local plan is required to be in 'general conformity' with the London Plan but this does not mean all policies have to be exactly the same - if the local approach seeks to deliver the same outcome.

Part of Ealing falls within the local authority area of the Old Oak and Park Royal Corporation, and this can create confusion because Ealing Council and the OPDC have different responsibilities for different matters. But the responsibility for plan making in that area is the responsibility of the OPDC not Ealing. So, when we are referring to Ealing's Local Plan it must be borne

in mind that it is referring to the Local Planning Authority area only and not the whole borough.

It should also be noted that Ealing has successfully worked with both the Greater London Authority and its neighbours (particularly through the West London Alliance) to develop a shared evidence base. We have also produced a Joint West London Waste Plan DPD (2015) which is currently in the process of being revised.

In addition, we have worked in tandem with the Heathrow Strategic Planning Group to develop a coordinated approach to planning matters. Of particular relevance is the Joint Spatial Planning Framework (2020) which is also in the process of being refreshed.

Looking to the Future:

It is important to recognise that there are major changes in the way that the planning system in England will work in the pipeline including:

- a new plan making system
- a new standard method to determine future housing need
- the introduction of new National Development Management Policies that may render obsolete many thematic development management policies
- a new Spatial Development Strategy for London which will set new housing supply targets and other development metrics for the boroughs
- a review of Green Belt and the potential release of land for new towns, urban extensions and building on so called grey belt land

These are all likely to have a profound impact on Ealing although it is too early to understand what the full implications of these changes will be. However, it is very likely that the pressure to deliver more housing will be even greater than now.

It is therefore should be no surprise that Ealing Council will need to start to review its Local Plan once this plan is adopted almost immediately. Indeed, we are already working closely with colleagues at the Greater London Authority, across West London and the Heathrow Sub Region on developing a new evidence base and examining policy options for the future.

Concluding Remarks:

It is therefore imperative that we get this New Local Plan adopted in the meantime as it will provide good foundations for the necessary work that will follow.

The Council has prepared what it regards as a legally compliant and sound plan. We will constructively consider any recommended modifications found to be necessary by the Inspectors to make the plan sound. I respectfully commend this Plan to the Inspectors for their consideration.

Steve Barton,
Strategic Planning Manager