

# **MERIDIAN WATER: DON'T BELIEVE THE HYPE**

## **1. Hype does not build homes**

**Enfield Council's advertising and publicity has repeatedly stated that the Meridian Water regeneration scheme will deliver 10,000 homes (including 4,000 affordable homes) and 6,000 jobs, over the next 20-25 years. <sup>[1]</sup> However, the Council knows these statements are misleading and not supported by the evidence. <sup>[2]</sup>**

In 2019, a government planning inspector told the Council that there is no sound basis to show that the figure of 10,000 homes and 6,000 jobs is achievable. The inspector said the site could deliver 5,000 homes and 1,500 jobs. <sup>[3]</sup>

Enfield Council may have an 'aspiration' to build 10,000 homes and create 6,000 jobs at Meridian Water, but it is dishonest to portray these aspirations as objective facts, especially when there is clear evidence to show these aspirations are unlikely to be realised. Hype does not build homes.

In this paper, we unpick the gap between the hype and reality and explain why the Council's publicity statements are deceptive. We also look at the problems this hype creates.

## **2. The gap between the hype and reality**

**There is not enough land to deliver 10,000 homes and 6,000 jobs.**

A large proportion of the land needed to deliver 10,000 homes at Meridian Water is Strategic Industrial Land (SIL). Enfield Council knows that the SIL is protected and cannot be used for house building without the permission of the London Mayor. To date, Sadiq Khan has said he supports the retention of SIL at Meridian Water. <sup>[1]</sup>

The Mayor's support for protecting the SIL is not surprising; the Council's own analysis shows that Enfield needs more land for industrial use and employment, not less. <sup>[2]</sup>

As a result, there is currently only enough land at Meridian Water to build up to 5,000 homes and deliver 1,500 additional jobs; a fact that is accepted by Enfield Council in its formal planning and legal documents but one which is ignored in its publicity. <sup>[3]</sup> <sup>[4]</sup>

**The SIL is at risk of flooding, which will impact how the land can be used.**

Even if the Mayor did allow all of the SIL to be used for housing (which is a big 'if'), building thousands of homes on the SIL would be very challenging because it lies within an area of high flood risk. <sup>[5]</sup>

This was one of the reasons why the government's planning inspector ruled that there was no sound basis for delivering 10,000 homes and 6,000 jobs; the inspector noted that the Council's analysis of the site had not properly considered how much of the land would be

needed for flood storage or the implications that this could have on the utility of the open space (parkland) proposed. <sup>[6]</sup>

### **The scheme may not even deliver 5,000 homes.**

Tesco and Ikea own large areas of the land which isn't classified as SIL at Meridian Water. Council officers have recently confirmed that neither Tesco nor Ikea have committed to redeveloping their sites. <sup>[7]</sup> Ikea and Tesco may develop their land but equally, they may not.

If Tesco and Ikea do not develop their land, and the SIL remains protected, then the Council will struggle to deliver 5,000 homes at Meridian Water, let alone 10,000. The Council knows this, but chooses to ignore this fact in its publicity.

### **The statement that the scheme will deliver 4,000 affordable homes is misleading.**

Delivering 4,000 affordable homes would require all 10,000 homes to be built and the existing evidence shows this is unlikely to happen.

The statement that the scheme will deliver 4,000 affordable homes is therefore misleading.

### **The claims do not account for job losses and displacement.**

Delivering 6,000 jobs would require redeveloping all of the SIL – something which the Council does not have permission for.

Even if the Council did have permission to redevelop the SIL, the 6,000 jobs figure does not account for the jobs lost. The Council's own analysis shows that redeveloping the whole site would result in the loss or displacement of around 1,500 jobs. <sup>[8]</sup> Therefore, the maximum number of additional jobs the scheme could deliver, after accounting for job losses or "displacement" is 4,500, but this is never reflected in the Council's publicity.

Council reports examining the impact of the scheme show that most of the job losses would be employees from ethnic minority backgrounds and those working in the industrial sector. The findings of the Council's research and analysis are seldom discussed publicly, yet they clearly demonstrate that the existing employees and businesses at Meridian Water are extremely concerned about their future. <sup>[9]</sup> <sup>[10]</sup>

*"This could result in the loss of loss of 60 jobs, this will finish the business"*

*– Business Owner located at Meridian Water*

**There may not be enough land to accommodate both 10,000 homes and 6,000 jobs.**

Accommodating 6,000 jobs requires a lot of space, and as a result, most of these jobs would need to be office based because they take-up the least space per head. <sup>[11]</sup> However, the Council's own Employment Strategy shows that there is doubt about whether there is enough space at Meridian Water to accommodate both 10,000 homes AND 6,000 jobs, even with a focus on high density office jobs. <sup>[12]</sup> Despite this, the Council's publicity continues to categorically state that the scheme will deliver both 10,000 homes and 6,000 jobs.

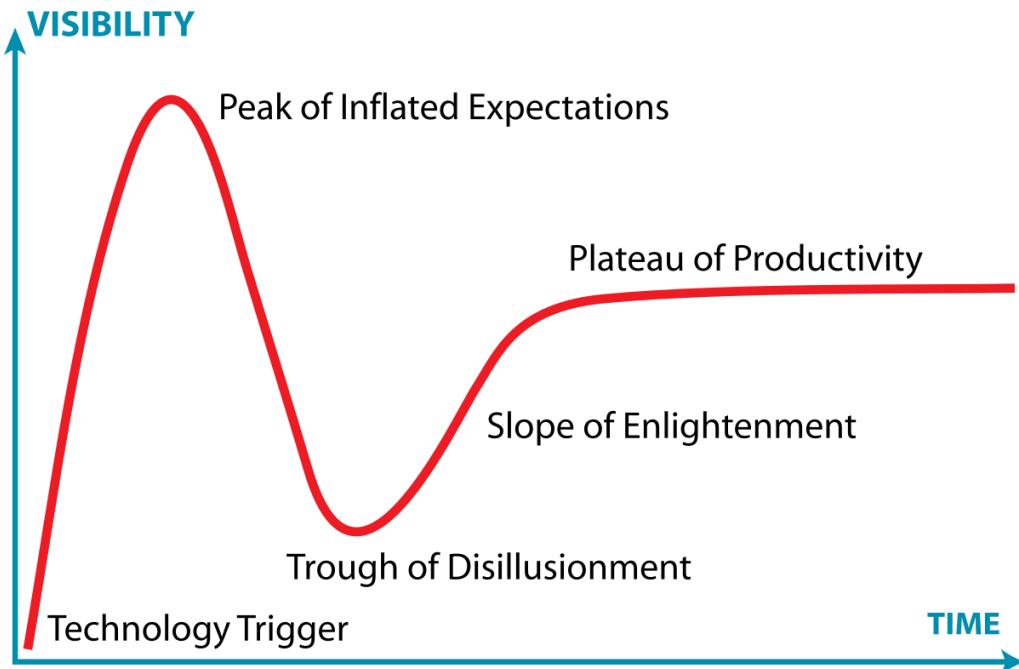
**Delivering the scheme will take longer than 20–25 years.**

The Council's publicity says that the scheme will be delivered within 20 or 25 years, but this is also not supported by the evidence. Indeed, the Council's 2021 draft Local Plan estimated that delivering the scheme would take 30–35 years (if indeed it is ever delivered in full). <sup>[13]</sup> <sup>[14]</sup> However, the Council continue to state the lower figure of 20–25 years even though this is unlikely.

**As it stands, the Meridian Water scheme has planning permission for fewer than 3,300 homes and can only realistically claim to deliver up to 5,000 homes and 1,500 new jobs. However, most people in the general public are unaware of this because of the hype and confusion the Council is creating around the scheme.**

### 3. The Hype Cycle

Hype Cycles are most often used to understand emerging technologies, but the regeneration of Meridian Water appears to be showing similar traits. [1]



At the moment, the Meridian Water project is experiencing something called the '**Peak of Inflated Expectations**', where the publicity surrounding the project, which is based on aspiration and wishful thinking rather than objective facts and reality, has raised expectations to unrealistic levels.

Over the coming years, interest in the project is likely to wane as the reality bites and the project fails to deliver against the inflated expectations. This stage of the Hype Cycle is called the '**Trough of Disillusionment**'. It is at this point that key players currently involved with the scheme may leave the project and use it as a springboard to other jobs.

Project partners and members of the public will then start to understand the limitations of the scheme as well as the genuine potential benefits, and things will then progress on a more realistic basis. This stage of the Hype Cycle is called the '**Slope of Enlightenment**' and '**Plateau of Productivity**'.

## 4. The problem with hype

### Publicising misleading information can have serious consequences.

The misleading information publicised by Enfield Council about Meridian Water are stated as objective facts and are likely to be interpreted as such by the general public, investors, and some Council employees. However, the hype is giving a false impression of the scheme, and this is a problem.

For example, the problems with hype are that:

- Hype does not build homes, and Enfield desperately needs more new homes. <sup>[1]</sup>
- It can negatively impact trust in the Council and generate serious reputational damage. <sup>[2]</sup>
- The deceit starts to grow, and it becomes accepted as fact. This makes it harder for people to admit the scheme will not deliver what has been promised, leading to further misleading claims and poor decision making.
- Journalists are reporting incorrect information, and as a result the reach and impact of this incorrect information has grown significantly. <sup>[3]</sup>
- Businesses and investors in the scheme can be misled. <sup>[4]</sup>
- It has become a distraction and may prevent other homes and employment spaces from being built. <sup>[5]</sup>
- Funding and resources could be diverted to the scheme that may be better invested elsewhere. <sup>[6]</sup>
- It can influence how much money the Council borrows and increase the financial exposure and risk. <sup>[7]</sup>
- It can influence how much money is invested in additional staff and salaries.

Council officers in charge of the project were recently questioned about the consequences of the scheme failing to deliver 10,000 homes and the response was that “there is no Plan B”. <sup>[8]</sup>

If the Council continues to portray and publicise its aspirations as certainties, it will create confusion and lead to serious errors.

## **5. The Overview and Scrutiny process is not working**

Local authorities are held to account via Overview and Scrutiny processes. Scrutiny is an essential part of the democratic process in local government, and the role and powers of scrutiny committees are protected by an Act of Parliament. The main task of scrutiny committees in local government is to hold decision-makers to account.

However, this process may not work as well as intended. There have been several attempts by Enfield Council Scrutiny Committees to raise concerns about the regeneration of Meridian Water and to hold decision makers to account but the Council has repeatedly avoided proper scrutiny and blocked scrutiny reports. <sup>[1]</sup>

Questions asked by councillors about Meridian Water are either not answered or are left unanswered for many months, which obstructs the scrutiny process.

Labour Councillors who have questioned the Meridian Water scheme have subsequently been de-selected or felt they have had no option but to resign from the Labour Group. <sup>[2]</sup>

Given the enormous sums of money involved in this development, the public needs to be provided with accurate information. There needs to be transparency and the public have a right to know why the Council is publicising misleading information about the regeneration of Meridian Water.

The Council's Director of Law and Governance should now instruct independent legal experts from outside the Council to fully investigate this matter.

**In the meantime, don't believe the hype.**

## APPENDIX: REFERENCES AND EXAMPLES

### Chapter ONE: Hype does not build homes

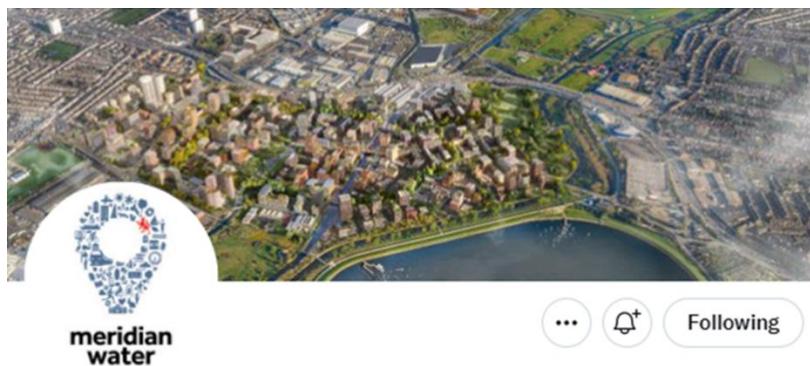
#### 1. Examples of Enfield Council's advertising and publicity:

Below is a small selection of the examples of misleading claims and statements being made (there are many more)

Agreement signed for £170m of grant funding to deliver infrastructure at Meridian Water

<https://new.enfield.gov.uk/news-and-events/agreement-signed-for-170m-of-grant-funding-to-deliv/>





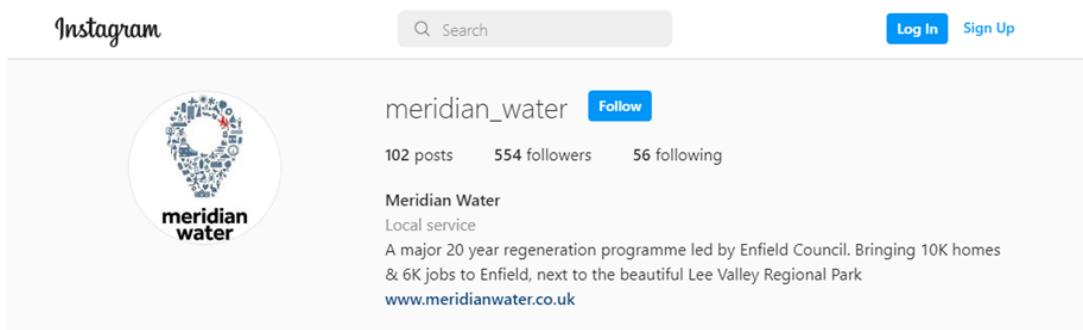
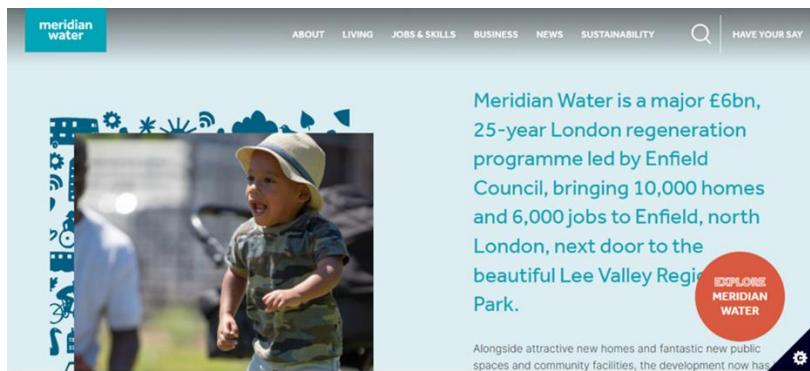
## Meridian Water

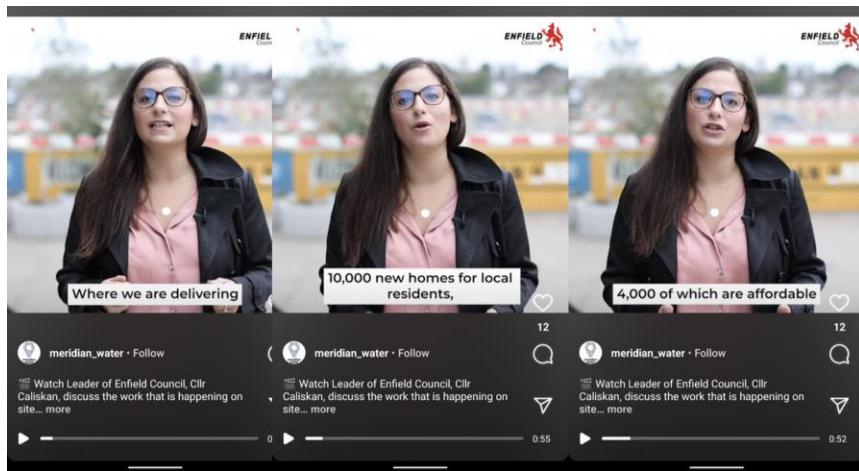
@MeridianWater

A major 20 year regeneration programme led by [@EnfieldCouncil](#). Bringing 10,000 homes & 6,000 jobs to Enfield, next to the beautiful Lee Valley Regional Park.

[meridianwater.co.uk](#) Joined September 2011

467 Following 842 Followers





## 2. Examples of evidence showing the Council knows publicity statements are aspirations not facts

The London Borough of Enfield (Meridian Water Strategic Infrastructure Works) Compulsory Purchase Order 2020. Summary Proof of Evidence Peter George 25 March 2021 e.g. see points 2.5 and 1.4

<https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/improving-enfield/pe-01-peter-george-summary-proof-improving-enfield.pdf>

Report on the Examination of the Edmonton Leeside Area Action Plan (e.g. point 38 of the report)

<https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/planning/edmonton-leeside-inspectors-report-planning.pdf>

Enfield Local Plan – Growth Topic Paper – May 2021 (e.g. Table 6.1 and Points 6.1 – 6.6 and point 9.5)

<https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/planning/growth-topic-paper-lbe-2021-planning.pdf>

Enfield Local Plan – Housing Topic Paper – May 2021 (e.g. Table 5.2. Table 8.1)

[https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/planning/housing-topic-paper\\_all-appendices-2021-planning.pdf](https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/planning/housing-topic-paper_all-appendices-2021-planning.pdf)

Enfield Local Plan – Main issues and preferred approaches – June 2021 (e.g. page 338 – SA19: Meridian Water West Bank)

<https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/planning/elp-2039-reg-18-for-consultation-planning.pdf>

Enfield Independent, Housing numbers cut on part of Enfield regen scheme  
<https://www.enfieldindependent.co.uk/news/17639376.housing-numbers-cut-part-enfield-regen-scheme/>

### 3. **Government Planning Inspector Report:**

Report on the Examination of the Edmonton Leeside Area Action Plan (e.g. point 38 of the report)

<https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/planning/edmonton-leeside-inspectors-report-planning.pdf>

## **Chapter TWO: The gap between the hype and reality**

### 1. **Sadiq Khan supports the retention of SIL at Meridian Water**

Strategic Industrial Land | Mayor's Question Time (london.gov.uk)

<https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2019/4152>

### 2. **More land needed for industrial use and employment, not less.**

Enfield Local Plan – Growth Topic Paper – May 2021 (e.g. point 3.11 and 9.5)

<https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/planning/growth-topic-paper-lbe-2021-planning.pdf>

Enfield Local Plan – Employment Topic Paper – June 2021 (e.g. point 2.19)

<https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/planning/enfield-employment-topic-paper-2021-planning.pdf>

### 3. **Only enough land to build up to 5,000 homes and deliver 1,500 additional jobs**

The London Borough of Enfield (Meridian Water Strategic Infrastructure Works)

Compulsory Purchase Order 2020. Summary Proof of Evidence Peter George

25 March 2021 e.g. see points 2.5 and 1.4

<https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/improving-enfield/pe-01-peter-george-summary-proof-improving-enfield.pdf>

Report on the Examination of the Edmonton Leeside Area Action Plan (e.g. point 38 of the report)

<https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/planning/edmonton-leeside-inspectors-report-planning.pdf>

**4. A fact accepted by Enfield Council in formal planning and legal documents**

Edmonton Leeside Area Action Plan: Evidence Base for Employment Land, Industries and Jobs (see Table 3.2)

<https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/planning/elaap-evidence-for-employment-land-industries-and-jobs-planning.pdf>

The London Borough of Enfield (Meridian Water Strategic Infrastructure Works)

Compulsory Purchase Order 2020. Summary Proof of Evidence Peter George

25 March 2021 e.g. see points 2.5 and 1.4

<https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/improving-enfield/pe-01-peter-george-summary-proof-improving-enfield.pdf>

Enfield Local Plan – Main issues and preferred approaches – June 2021

(e.g. page 338 – SA19: Meridian Water West Bank)

<https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/planning/elp-2039-reg-18-for-consultation-planning.pdf>

**5. Meridian Water SIL within an area of high flood risk.**

Flood map for planning – GOV.UK (flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk)

<https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/confirm-location?easting=535120&northing=191937&placeOrPostcode=Meridian%20Water>

**6. Not properly considered how much of the land would be needed for flood storage**

Report on the Examination of the Edmonton Leeside Area Action Plan (e.g. point 37 of the report)

<https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/planning/edmonton-leeside-inspectors-report-planning.pdf>

**7. Tesco and Ikea have not committed to redeveloping their sites.**

Peter George verbal evidence to Regeneration & Economic Development Scrutiny Panel

<https://governance.enfield.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=834&MId=13805&Ver=4>

**8. Redeveloping site would result in the loss or displacement of around 1,500 jobs**

Edmonton Leeside Area Action Plan: Evidence Base for Employment Land, Industries and Jobs (see Table 3.2)

<https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/planning/elaap-evidence-for-employment-land-industries-and-jobs-planning.pdf>

**9. Job losses – employees from ethnic minority backgrounds and quotes**

Enfield Council – Equality Impact Assessment Meridian Water Strategic Infrastructure Works (e.g. 4.13.4 and Table 18)

<https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/improving-enfield/cd-37-meridian-water-siw-eqia-improving-enfield.pdf>

**10. Job losses – those currently working in the industrial sector.**

Edmonton Leeside Area Action Plan: Evidence Base for Employment Land, Industries and Jobs (see Table 3.2)

<https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/planning/elaap-evidence-for-employment-land-industries-and-jobs-planning.pdf>

**11. Most of the new jobs would need to be office based**

Meridian Water Employment Strategy (e.g. Table 9.1)

<https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/improving-enfield/cd-39-mw-employment-strategy-improving-enfield.pdf>

**12. Doubt about whether there is enough space at Meridian Water to accommodate both 10,000 homes AND 6,000 jobs**

Meridian Water Employment Strategy (e.g. point 9.3)

<https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/improving-enfield/cd-39-mw-employment-strategy-improving-enfield.pdf>

**13. Examples of Council publicity stating scheme delivered within 20 or 25 years**

Meridian Water Twitter Account / @MeridianWater

<https://mobile.twitter.com/MeridianWater>

“A major 20 year regeneration programme led by @EnfieldCouncil. Bringing 10,000 homes & 6,000 jobs to Enfield, next to the beautiful Lee Valley Regional Park.”

Meridian Water website

<https://www.meridianwater.co.uk/>

“Meridian Water is a major £6bn, 25-year London regeneration programme led by Enfield Council, bringing 10,000 homes and 6,000 jobs to Enfield”

**14. Council’s 2021 draft Local Plan said the scheme would take 25–35 years**

Enfield Local Plan – Growth Topic Paper – May 2021 (e.g. points 6.3)

<https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/planning/growth-topic-paper-lbe-2021-planning.pdf>

“Meridian Water is a 25 to 35-year project with a completion date of 2045 to 2055 in the programme currently adopted by the Council’s Cabinet”

## **Chapter THREE: The Hype Cycle**

### **1. Gartner Hype Cycle**

<https://www.gartner.co.uk/en/methodologies/gartner-hype-cycle>

## **Chapter FOUR: The problem with hype**

### **1. Enfield desperately needs more new homes.**

Enfield Council – More and better homes for Enfield

<https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/housing/housing-and-growth-strategy-2020-2030-housing.pdf>

Enfield Council has failed the Housing Delivery Test 2 years running

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-delivery-test-2020-measurement>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-delivery-test-2021-measurement>

### **2. Negatively impact trust and generate reputational damage.**

Audit & Risk Management Committee – 19 June 2019 (e.g. see Appendix A – Corporate Risk Register 2019/20 21/22)

<https://governance.enfield.gov.uk/documents/s75441/190610%20Corporate%20Risk%20Register%20Report%20FINAL%20002.pdf>

“If there is a failure of key schemes (Meridian Water, Electric Quarter etc.) to regenerate the borough this will lead to a reputational damage and financial loss”

General Purposes Committee – 4 August 2021

<https://governance.enfield.gov.uk/documents/s88549/210726%20CE21.01%20Corporate%20Risk%20Register%20FINAL%20-%202027%20JULY%2021.pdf>

Council code of Conduct – Integrity and Honesty

<https://governance.enfield.gov.uk/documents/b20764/Amended%20Constitution%20Appendix%2026th-Feb-2020%2019.00%20Council.pdf?T=9>

“The Council expects and trusts its employees to be honest in their work. The public are entitled to have absolute confidence in the trustworthiness and honesty of Council employees. Any action which breaches that trust or damages or undermines the public’s confidence will constitute an act of gross misconduct and will result in disciplinary action possibly leading to dismissal.”

### **3. Journalists are reporting incorrect information (examples)**

<https://www.constructionenquirer.com/2021/05/24/work-to-start-on-first-of-meridian-waters-10000-homes/>

<https://www.housingtoday.co.uk/news/enfield-seeks-meridian-water-phase-two-housebuilder/5098494.article>

<https://www.constructionnews.co.uk/buildings/enfield-secures-170m-meridian-water-funding-19-11-2020/>

<https://www.local.london/our-members/enfield/>

### **4. Businesses and investors in the scheme are being misled (example).**

<https://vistrypartnerships.co.uk/projects/meridian-water/>

“A regeneration scheme of national significance, Meridian Water has been identified as London’s nationally significant £6bn major regeneration project that will deliver over 10,000 homes and thousands of new jobs in Enfield over the next 20 years”

### **5. Examples of distractions.**

Enfield Local Plan – Main issues and preferred approaches – June 2021

(e.g. page 235- 9.4 Strategic Policy SP E4: Supporting offices shows emphasis on Meridian Water)

<https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/planning/elp-2039-reg-18-for-consultation-planning.pdf>

Land at Brimsdown Industrial Estate – P50 refers to a scheme for 5,000 homes near Meridian Water. Scheme would be taken more seriously without focus on Meridian Water

[https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/planning/housing-topic-paper\\_all-appendices-2021-planning.pdf](https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/planning/housing-topic-paper_all-appendices-2021-planning.pdf)

<https://areli.co.uk/projects/>

Enfield Council – More and better homes for Enfield 2020-2030

Page 25 – Refers to 10,000 homes at Meridian Water.

<https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/housing/housing-and-growth-strategy-2020-2030-housing.pdf>

## **6. Examples of funding issue**

£170m HIF funding awarded on basis of 10,000 homes (23,000 residents)

The London Borough of Enfield (Meridian Water Strategic Infrastructure Works)

Compulsory Purchase Order 2020 Statement of Evidence of John Reid 25 March 2021

<https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/improving-enfield/pe-16-john-reid-proof-of-evidence-improving-enfield.pdf>

<https://new.enfield.gov.uk/news-and-events/agreement-signed-for-170m-of-grant-funding-to-deliv/>

## **7. Examples of borrowing issues / concerns**

Meridian Water Scrutiny Workstream - Report June 2020 (enfield.gov.uk) (e.g. see points 2.2.1 – 2.2.3)

<https://governance.enfield.gov.uk/documents/s83354/Meridian%20Water%20Workstream%20Report.pdf>

<https://governance.enfield.gov.uk/documents/s83820/Meridian%20Water%20Scrutiny%20Report%20-%20Response%20from%20The%20Leader%2015092020%20Overview%20Scrutiny%20Committee.pdf>

Enfield Dispatch | Council budget approved amid political turmoil

<https://enfielddispatch.co.uk/council-budget-approved-amid-political-turmoil/>

Warning Meridian Water deal will raise Enfield Council debt | Enfield Independent

<https://www.enfieldindependent.co.uk/news/17991771.warning-meridian-water-deal-will-raise-enfield-council-debt/>

## **8. No Plan B – Peter George verbal evidence to Regeneration & Economic Development Scrutiny Panel**

<https://governance.enfield.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=834&MId=13805&Ver=4>

## **Chapter FIVE: What should happen now?**

### **1. Attempts by Council Scrutiny Committees thwarted.**

[Enfield Dispatch | Opposition group claims Meridian Water critique suppressed](https://enfielddispatch.co.uk/opposition-group-claims-meridian-water-critique-suppressed/)  
<https://enfielddispatch.co.uk/opposition-group-claims-meridian-water-critique-suppressed/>

<https://enfielddispatch.co.uk/fresh-row-over-meridian-water-environmental-impact/>

Enfield Dispatch | Frustrations aired over Meridian Water masterplan

<https://enfielddispatch.co.uk/frustrations-airied-over-meridian-water-masterplan/>

Meridian Water Scrutiny Workstream - Report June 2020 (enfield.gov.uk)

<https://governance.enfield.gov.uk/documents/s83354/Meridain%20Water%20Workstream%20Report.pdf>

[Enfield Council Meridian Water scrutiny concerns | Enfield Independent](https://www.enfieldindependent.co.uk/news/19760608.enfield-regeneration-scrutiny-concerns/)

<https://www.enfieldindependent.co.uk/news/19760608.enfield-regeneration-scrutiny-concerns/>

[Enfield: Meridian Water scrutiny report dispute continues | Enfield Independent](https://www.enfieldindependent.co.uk/news/18800312.enfield-meridian-water-scrutiny-report-dispute-continues/)

<https://www.enfieldindependent.co.uk/news/18800312.enfield-meridian-water-scrutiny-report-dispute-continues/>

### **2. Labour Councillors de-selected / left**

<https://enfielddispatch.co.uk/labour-councillors-sidelined-in-2022-selection-battles/>  
<https://enfielddispatch.co.uk/councillor-quits-labour-to-join-greens/>