

# Enfield's Missed Housing Opportunities

## Part 1: Brimsdown Industrial Estate

**Opportunities to build thousands of new homes on sustainable urban brownfield sites in Enfield have been missed.**

### Introduction

The Government's commitment to deliver 1.5 million new homes within a 5-year timeframe has sparked significant attention. While discussions often revolve around redeveloping Green Belt land and creating New Towns, it's crucial not to overlook the potential of brownfield sites, particularly in urban areas.

Notably, the Government has recently re-confirmed that **the planning system should prioritise bringing underused brownfield sites into more effective use**, an approach which reflects the planning policies of London Mayors for the last 20-years.

### The Case for Brownfield Redevelopment

There are multiple benefits associated with redeveloping London's brownfield sites.

- They are often located near existing amenities, utilities, and transport infrastructure, which can help accelerate the delivery of new homes and reduce costs.
- Focusing on urban brownfield land helps to curb the spread of car-dependent suburban sprawl and to promote environmentally sustainable urban growth.
- Redeveloping brownfield sites generates income that can be used to improve local amenities such as schools, health services, and public spaces.
- Brownfield redevelopment can help improve a local area, for instance by decontaminating polluted land and by replacing unsightly or dilapidated buildings.

#### **Brownfield Regeneration Example: Hale Village (Figure 1)**

Hale Village transformed underused brownfield land in Haringey, into what has been described as 'one of London's most successful urban settlements in North London'. The scheme is reported to have delivered 1,226 homes, student accommodation, office space, shops, a café, a gym, healthcare facilities including a GP surgery and kidney & diabetes centre, as well as a community centre, nursery and church.



*Figure 1 - Before and after - brownfield land development at Hale Village*

## **A Missed Opportunity: The Brimsdown Industrial Estate**

The London Borough of Enfield needs more homes. Fortunately, the borough has a large number of deliverable brownfield sites, which we estimate could accommodate around 40,000 homes.

For example, the Brimsdown Industrial Estate is reported to be the second largest industrial estate in London, covering an area equivalent to 162 football pitches. Whilst some parts of the estate are used efficiently, large areas are underused, and many buildings need modernising (Figure 2).



*Figure 2 - Examples of underused land at Brimsdown*

A few years ago, a developer approached Enfield Council with plans to regenerate a quarter of the estate. The developer's masterplan showed how a more efficient use of the land could **increase employment space by over 30%** leading to **an additional 1,600 jobs**, as well as deliver **7,500 new homes**, new **parks**, and **waterfront walks**. It would also improve access to the Lee Valley Regional Park and support the construction of **schools** and **healthcare facilities**.

The Brimsdown Industrial Estate is ideally located for redevelopment; it is next to the River Lee Navigation within the Lee Valley Regional Park and in the Lee Valley Opportunity Area, as well situated very close to several train stations – including at least one earmarked as a future Crossrail station.



*Figure 3 - Image from Farrells vision document for Brimsdown*

Despite the advantages of its location and the benefits the redevelopment would bring to the area, Enfield Council have refused to support the plans by not including the site as an allocation in its new ‘local plan’.

### **Why were the Brimsdown plans not supported by the Council?**

The Council’s reasons for not supporting the plans appear to be threefold.

1. They suggested the delivery of new housing would be too slow as it would not be delivered until the 2030s. However, the borough’s new local plan will cover the period up to 2041, so the plans should have been supported and included in the local plan.
2. The Council claimed the economic growth of other businesses on the Brimsdown Estate would be negatively impacted, but they have not provided evidence for this, and it is unclear how they reached this conclusion.
3. The Council said the homes would be too near the businesses on the industrial estate, however this could have been addressed by the scheme’s design.

It is also hard to understand the Council’s reasoning from a policy perspective; the scheme would appear to meet London Plan requirements for redeveloping industrial land.

The redevelopment of Brimsdown would help to alleviate the housing crisis in Enfield. The reasons for not supporting the development do not hold up. Here's our take on it.

Enfield Council wants to sell publicly owned Green Belt land for development, which they estimate could generate £800 million. However, the Green Belt is protected and building homes on Green Belt land can usually only be justified if there is a lack of available brownfield sites. We think the Council are rejecting perfectly good brownfield sites to justify the sale of Green Belt land.

## **Conclusion**

In our view, the Council missed a valuable opportunity by not supporting the regeneration of the Brimsdown Industrial Estate. This underused brownfield land could have been transformed into new homes and additional job opportunities within a sustainable urban context.

We support the redevelopment of sites like Brimsdown, and accordingly we urge the Government to establish more robust measures to ensure that local authorities genuinely prioritise these brownfield sites and put their regeneration ahead of their own commercial interests.