

# ENFIELD DISPATCH

N° 89 THE BOROUGH'S FREE COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

FEB 2026

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A SOUTHGATE NOVELIST has installed a miniature library outside her house – to help make up for the loss of the full-scale version last year. Maggie Brookes-Butt campaigned to save Southgate Library after its closure was announced in 2024 by Enfield Council, as part of the sweeping cuts to its library service. Now, Maggie and husband Tim have taken the proactive step of building their own book exchange on their front wall – which just so happens to be a couple of doors down from the now-closed Southgate Library, in High Street. Maggie told the Dispatch: "We are delighted to have the book exchange on the wall and people are very welcome to bring a book and take a book – it is based on trust."

## More cuts and council tax rise planned despite government funding boost

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

A council tax rise of nearly 5% and many millions more in budget cuts are set to be agreed by councillors this month – despite the borough being one of the biggest beneficiaries of a government funding review.

The cuts and tax rise are still needed to balance the books, according to council finance chiefs – with £46million-worth of "budget pressures" forecast for 2026/27, including £23m of extra spending on social care for both adults and children.

These pressures have almost entirely cancelled out the expected financial benefit coming this year from the government's Fair Funding Review, which is due to help boost council coffers by £203m over three years but only £47.5m for 2026/27.

When Secretary of State for

Housing, Communities and Local Government Steve Reed announced the funding review in December, he said it would represent a chance "to turn the page on a decade of cuts, and for local leaders to invest in getting back what has been lost – to bring back libraries, youth services, clean streets, and community hubs".

Enfield Council closed seven libraries last July, a cut which was forecast to save £560,000 per year. But there has been no sign of any closures being reversed since the government funding boost was announced. When council leader Ergin Erbil was challenged on this point at a council meeting last month, he dodged the question (see page 3).

Councillors are set to vote on the 2026/27 civic centre budget on Thursday, 26th February. A report presented to the overview and scrutiny committee last month explained that although the council

will not this year need to apply to the government for exceptional financial support (EFS), a total of £15.4m of savings are still needed – comprising £10.5m in cuts from "service redesign, efficiencies, and demand management" as well as £4.9m from "income generation".

Another 4.99% council tax rise is also proposed, the highest increase permitted.

This time last year the council was forced to ask the government for a total of £30m in EFS, with £20m to cover previous overspending and £10m needed to balance its 2025/26 budget. Even with that extra cash, the council had to use £5m from its own reserves to avoid issuing a Section 114 notice – narrowly avoiding effective bankruptcy.

Explaining why cuts are necessary again this year despite the government funding boost, the report written by head of financial strategy Neil Goddard revealed the

council had again overspent on this year's budget. "The current forecast for 2025/26 is a £7.5m overspend primarily driven by sustained demand in adult social care (£5.3m), children's services (£3.3m) and the provision of temporary accommodation (£1.8m)," Goddard wrote.

He continued: "Demand pressures are continuing to increase. £46m of pressures are forecast for 2026/27 when compared to the 2025/26 budget.

"The most significant pressures for 2026/27 are forecast to be: £16m adult social care from demographic demand, inflation, and bad debt provision; £7m children's social care from demand for external care purchasing; £7m for pay award [salary increases of 3.2%]; £4m for increased demand in temporary accommodation, £3m for capital financing; £2m for NLWA [North London Waste Authority] and concessionary fare levies."



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# Plans submitted for major housing scheme on Southbury cinema site

Cineworld and three restaurants would make way for 1,150 new homes in towers of up to 29 storeys tall, as well as new public spaces and commercial units

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

Plans have been submitted to build 1,150 new homes at Southbury Leisure Park.

Site owner Royal London Asset Management Property, which has partnered with Neat Developments to take the scheme forward, has confirmed that its plans do not include replacing Cineworld Cinema – but do include tower blocks of up to 29 storeys tall.

Aside from the cinema, the 2.95-hectare site currently comprises three restaurant buildings and a large amount of car parking. Southbury Leisure Centre, which lies immediately to the north, does not form part of the plans.

Neat Developments was also previously involved in a scheme to build around 1,800 homes on the Colosseum Retail Park site, on the other side of the A10, but despite receiving planning permission in 2021 this scheme was later ditched by the developer. A former B&Q outlet on the site, now abandoned by the DIY retailer, remains derelict.

Instead of Colosseum, Neat is now focused on developing Southbury Leisure Park, alongside Royal London. The plans submitted last month include an outline plan for the whole site, as well as a detailed plan for the first phase on the western half of the leisure park, suggesting Cineworld will continue to operate until a second detailed planning application for the eastern half is submitted and wins approval.

The overall development is described as “a high-quality, residential-led mixed-use neighbourhood” with “new public open spaces, community and commercial facilities, and significant environmental improvements” planned alongside the new homes.

The detailed part of the application includes 489 “high-quality build-to-rent homes, a new

A proposed view of the scheme from Southbury Road  
Credit Rockhunter



linear park, extensive public realm improvements, and circa 1,100 square meters of flexible community and commercial space supporting local services and employment”. Most of these homes will be provided in two “landmark” residential buildings, of 18 and 16 storeys.

Towers of up to 29 storeys, roughly matching the height of the scheme previously approved at Colosseum Retail Park, are planned to replace the cinema, although the detailed plans for this part of the site have not yet been submitted.

Joe Kane, development director at Royal London Asset Management Property, said: “This application represents a significant opportunity to regenerate Southbury Leisure Park and deliver much-needed new homes, public open space and community facilities in a highly accessible location.

“The proposals will transform an under-used brownfield site into a vibrant, sustainable neighbourhood that benefits both existing and future residents of Enfield.”

The Southbury Leisure Park announcement further reiterates that the scheme will be a “sustainable, low-carbon design, incorporating on-site renewable energy, sustainable drainage, and a provision for connection to Enfield’s Energetik district heat network” as well as delivering “wide-

ranging benefits for Enfield, including new employment during construction and operation”.

Once complete, the developers expect the scheme to support “over a hundred long-term jobs”.

However, this will come at the cost of losing a cinema and three restaurants. A planning statement justifying the loss of Cineworld states that its “out-of-centre location” and reliance on cars, as well as the declining profitability of the cinema industry, meant a replacement was not viable.

The height and density of the plans proposed for Southbury Leisure Park is around double what Enfield Council has itself suggested is suitable there. At the Enfield Local Plan’s public examination last year, council officers argued the site was suitable for 605 homes with a maximum building height of around 14 storeys.

However, Royal London states that it has undertaken “extensive pre-application engagement” with the council as well as the Greater London Authority, Transport for London and Metropolitan Police, “helping to shape a high-quality, policy compliant scheme”.

Subject to securing planning approval, works are expected to start in 2028.

The plans are now open for public comment via the council’s planning portal, using reference number 25/04330/OUT.

## Dame Judi makes Whitewebbs plea

Dame Judi Dench has called on Enfield Council and Tottenham Hotspur to cancel plans to carve up Whitewebbs Park.

The 91-year-old says it is “absolutely essential” to “protect people’s access to nature” and “save Whitewebbs”.

Her comments were made as a new report by the London branch of Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) was published. Dame Judi is backing CPRE London’s campaign to save scores of under-threat green spaces.

Last year Tottenham Hotspur won approval for its women’s football academy at Whitewebbs, due to be built on a 16-hectare area of the park. Dame Judi said: “Staggeringly, 10% of public land in Britain has been lost since 1979. Whitewebbs Park in Enfield is one of the public parks currently under threat.”

She continued: “Spurs’ plans to develop the park involve cutting down 207 trees, including veteran and mature trees, and taking over most of the park for their elite private use.

“It is absolutely essential for us to protect these trees and people’s access to nature [...] it is more important than ever to protect our parks and green spaces, before it’s too late.”

In response to Dame Judi, council leader Ergin Erbil invited her to “see our beautiful borough first-hand” and “to learn more about the work we are doing”.

## 20mph zones

Enfield Council has confirmed it will be introducing 20mph zones in three town centres.

Edmonton, Palmers Green and Southgate have all been chosen for new, lower speed limits, following two public consultations last year.

The council had originally proposed a wider 20mph scheme covering most of the borough, but after 59% of respondents to the first consultation raised concerns, the civic centre decided to go with the three town centres instead.

A report signed off by cabinet member Sabri Ozaydin said: “The proposals are designed to improve safety and support a more pleasant environment for everyone travelling, while recognising some roads serve an important transport function.”

However, opposition Conservative group leader Alessandro Georgiou called it “another war on the driver”.

# 'No confidence' motion in Labour-run council defeated as election battle lines drawn

The opposition Conservatives claim that "Labour's time is up" but council leader Ergin Erbil said he would "take no lectures" from the Tories

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

**A**n opposition motion of 'no confidence' in the Labour administration at Enfield Civic Centre was defeated last month as councillors on both sides launched a series of pre-election attacks.

The Labour Party has been in control of Enfield Council since 2010, winning four successive local elections, but with the next poll now just over three months away – and with the result expected to be the closest in many years – the Conservative group took the chance of their last opposition business debate before 7th May to reel off a long list of what they called "Labour failures" in Enfield.

Among 29 bullet points included in the written Tory motion that councillors debated was the construction of "only 300 of the 10,000 homes promised" at Meridian Water, the Labour-run council's flagship housing project in Edmonton – which will also help bring Enfield Council's total debt up to £1.5 billion by the end of this financial year.

There were also mentions of "ill thought-out projects" including cycle lanes and a controversial new bus lane in Enfield Town; the "sweetheart deal" allowing Tottenham Hotspur to "destroy" part of Whitewebbs Park; the removal of weekly bin collections; low-traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) which the Tories claim have caused "chaos on our roads"; as well as the "environmental catastrophe" of planning to build thousands of homes on the Green Belt at Crews Hill and Chase Park, now also selected as a 'new town' by the Labour government.

Introducing the motion, Conservative councillor Julian Sampson lamented last year's decision to close seven libraries in the borough. He then asked why, given the recent news of a significant government funding boost for the civic centre, the council leader "did not say he would be reversing the closures".



Labour council leader Ergin Erbil  
Credit: Enfield Council

"Maybe in his response to this he will be making a big reveal, but I doubt it," said Cllr Sampson. He went on: "We have now learned there will be between £10m and £15m of cuts [in the 2026/27 budget]. I know there has been overspending and unforeseen expenditure [...] but this is what happens when you run reserves so low that the only way to cope is to make cuts to spending."

He then accused the Labour administration of "behaving like an addict" in the way it was spending many millions on projects such as Meridian Water and Energetik, the council-owned district heating network.

Cllr Sampson also highlighted ways in which the council had "spent money on itself", such as the creation of four associate cabinet members who "serve no purpose" but are each paid an additional £8,000 in allowances each year.

He concluded by reeling off a list of political scandals, such as former Labour councillor Mustafa Cetinkaya's "unsafe" dropped kerb which his then-Labour colleagues on the planning committee approved against the recommendation of officers; ex-mayor Mohammad Islam being found to have brought his office into "disrepute" through the misuse of council resources to assist friends and family with visas; and planning chair Mahym Bedekova not obtaining prior planning permission for her house of multiple occupation.

"This Labour group has lost the moral authority to govern," claimed Cllr Sampson.

In response, council leader Ergin Erbil said he was "sorry for the ink that was wasted" on the opposition paper and then reeled off a list of his own, highlighting some of his

administration's achievements.

Cllr Erbil cited the creation of new family hubs offering free support to local parents and children; free bulky waste collections; the opening of a new household recycling centre; the council's housing services receiving a top rating; improvements to leisure centres; as well as falling crime in Edmonton "which didn't happen by chance – it happened because this Labour council has invested", with extra security patrols on council estates, a new police operation tackling drug lines and antisocial behaviour, and "more job opportunities and council housing".

The council leader said: "Parents tell me they feel safer in our parks and residents tell me they feel safer and more secure on our estates – it is because we chose to invest at every opportunity."

He finished by blaming "14 years of cuts" under successive Conservative governments for local decisions such as the closure of seven Enfield libraries, and accused opposition councillors of "shedding crocodile tears over the cuts" and of being "desperate for us to go bankrupt".

Several other councillors contributed to the debate.

Conservative Emma Supple attacked the council's "mismanaged finances" and the "enormous damage" of library cuts.

Labour cabinet member Ayten Guzel said the Tory opposition paper was a "poor list of bullet points with no substance" that "feels rushed and desperate".

Tory councillor Ruby Sampson claimed there was a "ticking tax time bomb" in Enfield with Labour hoping Keir Starmer "will wave his magic wand".

Labour chief whip Bektas Ozer said the opposition paper was "not about confidence" but "about Conservative amnesia, Conservative hypocrisy and Conservative desperation". He added: "When they had a chance nationally they stripped councils of funding and left residents to pick up the bill."

But Conservative Reece Fox said that Labour's "time is up" after "16 damaging years", accusing the administration of "financial recklessness" and "sacrificing our Green Belt to build Keir Starmer's new town". He added: "When we win control in 106 days time, we will save Whitewebbs Park, stop the new town, bring back weekly bin collections – and save the borough."

Alev Cazimoglu, a Labour cabinet member and mother of ex-leader Nesil Caliskan,

Conservative opposition group leader  
Alessandro Georgiou Credit: GLA



who stepped down after becoming the MP for Barking at the 2024 General Election, said that the Tory opposition paper was "embarrassing and disrespectful to the electorate" and accused Conservative group leader Alessandro Georgiou of being "so entitled he can't be bothered to come up with his own policies" as well as "an attention seeking child" – pointing to his prolific posting on social media.

Cllr Georgiou immediately hit back, saying the Tories would "wipe Labour off the map" and claimed "the moment it started going downhill" for Enfield Labour was "when they got rid of Doug Taylor".

Cllr Taylor led Labour to its best-ever result in Enfield in 2018 but was replaced as leader by Caliskan just a few weeks later – she then subsequently saw her party lose eight seats to the Tories in 2022 despite the election being held at the height of the Boris Johnson 'Partygate' scandal.

"They are the ones who have let down our borough," said Cllr Georgiou. "I have spent twelve years in opposition but I promise you I won't serve another year in opposition – when we are in control we will sort the borough out."

Cllr Erbil then brought the debate to a close and said: "We are addressing the root causes of crime, tackling deprivation and poverty, we are going to build on Crews Hill and we will continue to provide council homes – I will take no lecture from the Conservatives."

The opposition motion was defeated with all councillors voting along party lines aside from independent member Cllr Cetinkaya, who abstained.

How the 2026 election could be won or lost – see page 12

# Bridging the gap to employment in construction

Samuel Asiamah, director of Altar Create CIC, on how the social enterprise is helping people facing barriers to employment gain construction skills



young people not in education or employment, women, people with lived experience of the justice system, neuro-divergent individuals, and local residents who have the motivation to work but lack access to the right pathways.

Our approach is rooted in equity, not just access. We provide tailored pre-employment support, skills awareness, employer engagement, and wellbeing-informed guidance all

free at the point of access. We believe that removing financial and systemic barriers before they exclude people is essential if we want fairer outcomes.

Altar Create CIC works closely with employers, training providers, community organisations, and local partners to create realistic routes into work. This includes helping people understand the construction job market, supporting them

through qualifications and site readiness, and staying alongside them during early employment to improve confidence, retention and wellbeing.

While we are still early in our journey, we are already seeing strong interest from community partners, employers, and individuals who want to be part of a more inclusive construction industry. If you're delivering projects in London and want social value that feels meaningful rather than performative, get in touch; this is the work we care deeply about. We are building programmes carefully and ethically, ensuring safeguarding, lived experience, and dignity remain at the centre of everything we do.

Looking ahead, our ambition is to grow into a community-rooted training and employability hub in Enfield, supporting hundreds and eventually thousands of people each year to access meaningful, sustainable careers, as well as strengthening the local workforce. Not just filling vacancies, but building futures.

Altar Create CIC is about restoring belief in people, in potential, and in the idea that industries can grow without leaving communities behind.

For more information about Altar Create CIC and to get in touch:  
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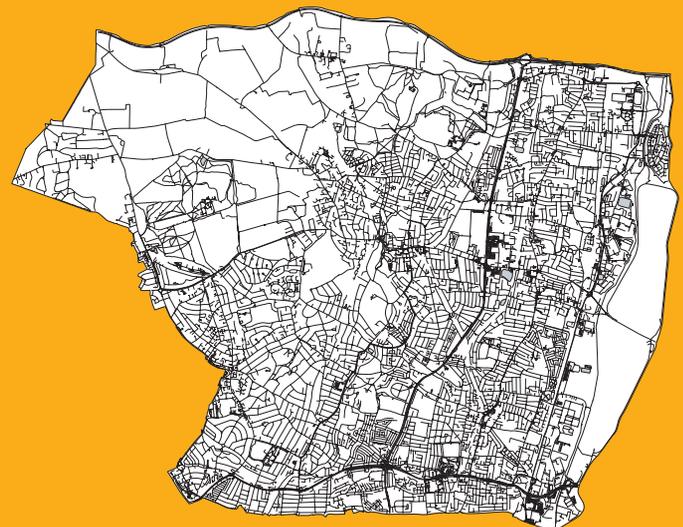
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\*a selection of our regular stockists, but it is not an exhaustive list

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## COME MEK WE LARF

14th February 2026 | 7pm  
Tickets: £31.50



## THE ELVIS YEARS

20th February 2026 | 7:30pm  
Tickets: £30.50



## AN EVENING OF SOUL: JUKEBOX

21st February 2026 | 7pm  
Tickets: £28



## THE THREE DEGREES

6th March 2026 | 7:30pm  
Tickets from £33.50



## WOMEN OF ROCK

20th March 2026 | 7:30pm  
Tickets: £28.50



## A NIGHT TO REMEMBER MOTOWN SHOW

28th March 2026t | 7.30pm  
Tickets: £31.50



## K-POP POWER

10th & 11th April 2026 | 1pm & 5:30pm  
Tickets: £21.50



## SOME GUYS HAVE ALL THE LUCK - THE ROD STEWART STORY

25th April 2026 | 7:30pm  
Tickets £27.50



## THE FUREYS

27th April 2026 | 7:30pm  
Tickets: £31.50



## OH WHAT A NIGHT!

15th May 2026 | 7:30pm  
Tickets : £28.50



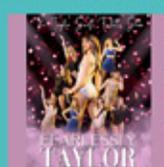
## THE ELO ENCOUNTER

22nd May 2026 | 7:30pm  
Tickets: £27.50



## LEVEL UP LIVE - WITH THE LEWIS SISTERS

23rd May 2026 | 4:30pm  
Tickets: £15



## FEARLESSLY TAYLOR

31st May 2026 | 4pm  
Tickets: £16.50



## AN EVENING OF CLASSIC REGGAE

12th June 2026



## GIVE ME THE NIGHT

20th June 26 | 7:30pm  
Tickets: £28.50



## CELEBRATING CELINE

26th June 2026 | 7.30pm  
Tickets: £31.50



## JIVE TALKIN (BEE GEES)

12th September 2026 | 7:30pm  
Tickets: £29.50



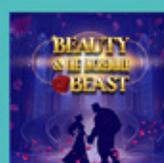
## SUGAR PIE HONEY BUNCH - THE MUSIC OF THE FOUR TOPS

27th September 2026 | 7:30pm  
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**Young People Are Our Future – Let’s Listen**

# New youth and community alliance launches in Edmonton to support Enfield’s future

**H**ere in Enfield, where families work hard despite rising pressures, a renewed partnership is forming to support the life chances of our children and young people.

The Enfield Youth and Community Alliance officially relaunches this month – and for many in the borough, it arrives at exactly the right moment.

Recent data from Trust for London shows the scale of the challenge. Enfield has one of the highest child poverty rates in London, alongside growing inequality and increased financial strain on families.

Many young people face barriers long before they enter adulthood, and support networks across the community are under pressure. It is within this context that the alliance steps forward with a clearer, stronger and more connected vision.

The new alliance builds on work started in 2023 through the Professional Partners Forum, founded by the Edmonton Community Part-



From left to right: Shae Eccleston (Curate Your Genius), Trevor Blackman (Edmonton Community Partnership), Jim Wasswa (LocalMotion Enfield), Chris McCoy (NYCC), Peaches (Enfield Youth & Community Alliance). Credit Kai Images

nership (ECP) and Youth and Community Connexions (NYCC). What began as a way for schools, youth organisations, voluntary groups and local services to share insight and co-ordinate support has grown into a recognised model of collaboration.

Over time, one message became clear: when Enfield’s organisations work together, families are better connected and young people access opportunities they might otherwise miss.

The refreshed alliance now

expands this work further through a full partnership between LocalMotion Enfield, ECP and NYCC.

LocalMotion joins the partnership because it shares the same approach championed by ECP and NYCC – a commitment to long-term,

community-led change and tackling root causes rather than symptoms. Together, the partners are united in one goal: strengthening life chances by addressing the structural issues that affect children, young people and families across the borough.

The alliance’s work is organised around four shared pillars – health and wellbeing; children, youth and education; work, business and training; and language, culture and community.

These pillars reflect a simple truth in Enfield: challenges are interlinked, and no single organisation can address them alone. By aligning efforts, the alliance intends to reduce duplication, strengthen local services and unite partners around a common mission.

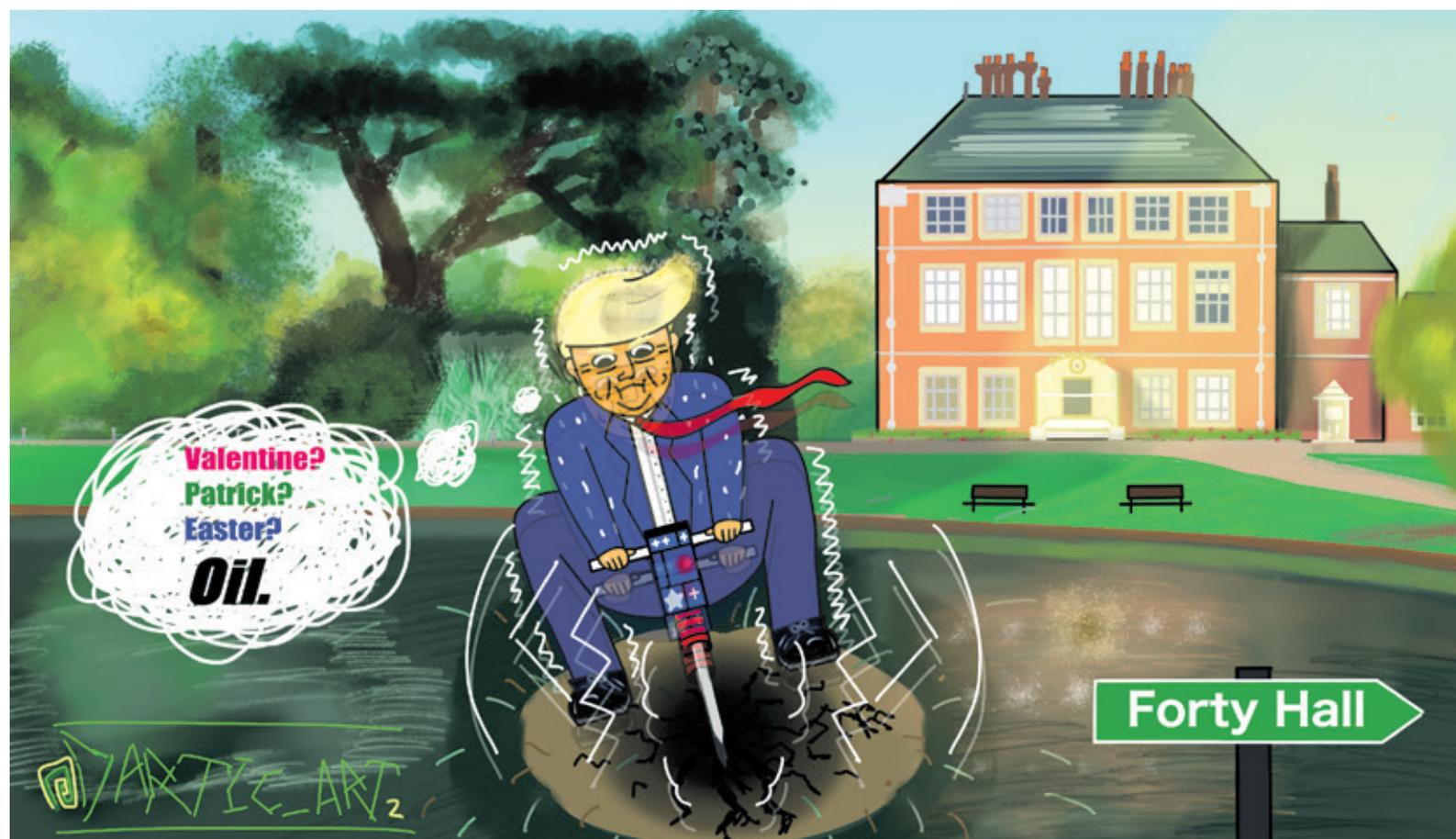
Another core focus is helping groups navigate funding barriers, which many local organisations identify as one of the biggest obstacles to sustained support. Working collectively gives Edmonton a stronger voice and a better chance of securing resources for the communities that need them most.

*“Enfield’s young people deserve dignity, fairness and a hopeful future – and the only way to secure it is by working together”*

The official launch takes place on Tuesday, 10th February, from 6pm–8pm at NYCC in Edmonton

Green Shopping Centre. It is open to residents, parents, schools, youth workers, community groups and anyone who wants to support Enfield’s next generation. The event will outline the alliance’s priorities and invite the community to help shape its future direction.

In a borough facing increasing challenges, the message behind the alliance is clear: Enfield’s young people deserve dignity, fairness and a hopeful future – and the only way to secure it is by working together.



## Local Voice, Local Stories

Warren Campbell and Ebony Bain are the co-founders of jobs fair organisation CareerQuest Credit Kai Images



## Community-led career support

Local residents packed Dugdale Arts Centre last November for UK CareerQuest, a community-driven careers event that is already making waves across Enfield.

From students to jobseekers, attendees came together to access advice, mentorship and real opportunities – all led by local people, for local people.

The timing couldn't be more crucial. Latest government figures show declining opportunities with many young Enfield residents facing steep barriers to work, making community-led solutions essential.

LocalMotion Enfield has been delighted to support founders Warren Campbell and Ebony Bain. Co-ordinator Paul Everitt said: "Warren and Ebony have always put the community at the heart of their work.

"Their leadership is creating real opportunities for local people, helping them build skills, confidence, and futures they can

be proud of."

CareerQuest connected attendees with employers, training providers, and industry professionals, with 37 CVs reviewed and nine job offers made on the day. The event also featured an interview with Enfield mayor Margaret Greer, who spoke about representation, leadership, and pride in serving the borough – echoing LocalMotion Enfield's values of access, visibility, and empowerment.

Events like CareerQuest show that when the community leads, opportunities grow. It's about more than jobs – it's about building confident futures for everyone in our borough.

LocalMotion Enfield will continue championing community-led initiatives that support residents in navigating a challenging employment landscape.

UK CareerQuest returns on Saturday, 27th February, from 5pm-8pm. Register via Eventbrite:  
Visit [careerquest6.eventbrite.co.uk](https://careerquest6.eventbrite.co.uk)

*"Events like CareerQuest show that when the community leads, opportunities grow. It's about more than jobs – it's about building confident futures for everyone in our borough."*

# Breaking down digital barriers in Enfield

Khilna Gudhka, Rose Bramble and Annie Smol from Empowering Disability In Enfield on the group's local efforts to combat digital exclusion

LocalMotion Enfield's lived experience group, Empowering Disability In Enfield (EDIE), is dedicated to removing barriers faced by deaf and disabled people by challenging the systems that create them.

Digital exclusion remains a significant issue for people who are visually impaired, have learning disabilities, are older, illiterate, or dyslexic. These groups often find themselves unable to access essential services such as banks, the NHS, GP surgeries, housing repairs, shopping, and education, because of inaccessible digital platforms.

For example Rose, who is visually impaired and unable to use a computer, has often spent over an hour on the phone trying to book a doctor's appointment, only to be told none are available. When she tried to open a bank account, she was informed

the only way was online, leaving her feeling frustrated and excluded.

Similarly, Khilna's daughter, who has both a learning disability and a visual impairment, finds online forms impossible to complete. The NHS app, which is meant to simplify healthcare access, is completely inaccessible to her without someone physically assisting.

Many digital systems, including those of the NHS, exclude many disabled people through complex language, confusing navigation, and a lack of easy-read or audio-supported options. Improvements such as easy-read forms, audio explanations, clearer

layouts, voice-activated tools, and simpler login options could make a significant difference.

However, even with these changes, some people will still require human support, which is often unavailable.

Accessible apps, simpler online processes, or the help of a real person would give disabled people greater independence, dignity, and control.

No-one should be excluded from essential services.

EDIE is working with Disability Advice Network Enfield to combat digital discrimination. To access support, contact Annie:  
Call 07765 714384  
Email [edie@localmotionenfield.org.uk](mailto:edie@localmotionenfield.org.uk)

*"Many digital systems, including those of the NHS, exclude many disabled people through complex language, confusing navigation, and a lack of easy-read or audio-supported options"*

Confusing digital systems can create a barrier for certain groups of people Credit Jacqui Livingston



## Minister claims Crews Hill new town ‘very promising’

A consultation is due this spring but the Labour minister who’ll make the final decision last month expressed his enthusiasm for building on Enfield’s Green Belt

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

The Labour minister responsible for taking the final decision on which new towns will be going forward has said the “growth potential” of Crews Hill is “clear as day”.

Crews Hill was last year named as one of twelve potential new towns that could deliver thousands of homes, alongside an area of farmland in Enfield dubbed ‘Chase Park’. The new town is slated for at least 21,000 homes, more than double what Enfield Council had previously earmarked for the same Green Belt areas in its new Local Plan.

The government’s New Towns Taskforce stated in its September report that Crews Hill and Chase Park presented “a unique opportunity to create a new, family-centred community” within London, while Housing Secretary Steve Reed suggested it could be among the first three sites to see “spades in the ground” by 2029. A decision from the government on each new town site is expected this spring.

Housing minister Matthew Pennycook, who works under Reed in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, was last month quizzed by a parliamentary committee of MPs during a 90-minute session on new towns.

Regarding Enfield’s new town proposal, Pennycook was enthusiastic, as he told MPs: “On Crews Hill in particular, the growth potential is as clear as day. In terms of an urban extension that will unlock economic growth and productivity in London that will accelerate housing delivery [...] that is a very, very promising location.

“We will build the evidence base

and we will see whether it makes the final cut of adopted sites and that will then come with a bit more detail.”

Broxbourne MP Lewis Cocking, whose constituency borders Enfield to the north, is a member of the housing committee. The Conservative MP asked Sir Michael Lyons – author of the New Towns Taskforce report who appeared alongside Pennycook during the debate on Tuesday, 13th January



Housing minister Matthew Pennycook MP  
Credit parliament.uk

– whether any “impact assessments” had been done on local roads such as the M25 and A10.

Sir Michael responded: “Our judgement was really founded not on trying to find reasons to exclude a location but to reveal what would need to be done to make that an effective location [...] our focus was on being clear what was needed and that it was reasonable to expect that those needs would be met over the life of a new town – 20 or 30 years – and not all having to be satisfied on day one.”

Cocking continued his point and said: “The M25 and the A10 are gridlocked at rush hour. You want to put 22,000 homes right next door to that – and you are not saying you can only do it if you put the infrastructure in first, you have said you have done an assessment and everything seems okay.”

Sir Michael again responded: “We have emphasised that a new generation of new towns absolutely must give priority to public transport solutions. It simply cannot be the car-borne examples that you find on many recent large developments, partly because of the pressures on existing road networks but partly because of the environmental costs and health costs of continued growth in car-borne transport.”

Cocking then claimed that Sir Michael was “on a different planet” if he thought “no-one is going to use a car” but the New Towns Taskforce chair countered: “This [Crews Hill] is an area that has a station and it is possible to envisage the expansion of rail-based transport from that area, which would certainly mitigate the demands on the road network.”

Asked how opposition campaigns might influence the process, Pennycook said: “We have always made clear that in the final analysis we will make decisions on these sites in the national interest.

“I am going to make decisions, as the minister responsible, for what sites we consult on [...] I am then going to listen to feedback from the consultation to make the final decision later in the spring.”

Pennycook also explained that development corporations – such as the one which helped deliver the London 2012 Olympic Games – were “the primary vehicle by which we wish to take forward these sites” but that others were possible.



## Community groups launch campaign against new town

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

A coalition of Enfield community groups has launched a campaign against the ‘new town’ designated by a government taskforce at Crews Hill and its surrounding Green Belt land.

Action for Enfield’s Future lists eleven reasons why the area in north-west Enfield now earmarked for at least 21,000 homes is “sub optimal” for housing development, including that the majority of land is “pristine countryside” rather than the “low value” Green Belt described in the New Towns Taskforce report published last September.

A new campaign website also warns the development will “sweep away” existing businesses and disputes the claim the area is “well connected” because of its railway station, as tens of thousands of homes will “place a substantial level of pressure on local transport and health services”.

It asks Enfield residents to share their views on the new town by writing to their local MP and Mayor of London Sir Sadiq Khan.

Action for Enfield’s Future is a coalition of community groups with shared interests, comprising Enfield Climate Action Forum (EnCaf), The Enfield Society, Better Homes Enfield and Enfield Road Watch.

The same groups previously raised a series of concerns about

Enfield Council’s draft Local Plan, which proposed just under 10,000 homes for the Crews Hill and ‘Chase Park’ Green Belt sites and underwent a public examination last year. Both of these areas are included within the new town proposal, along with several other as-yet unknown sites – covering a total of 884 hectares – that have yet to be revealed.

Emphasising they are not opposed to new homes in general, the Action for Enfield’s Future website states that “some development at Crews Hill is reasonable” but that it is “not the right place” for a proposed new town of such a size.

Vicki Pite, a campaigner with EnCaf who is also a former Labour councillor, told the *Dispatch*: “We are not Nimbys, we understand the need for housing and we don’t want people to be homeless [...] we know there is a huge housing problem, we want something done, but we just don’t think a new town on the Green Belt is the answer.

“We don’t believe developers building on virgin Green Belt land will solve the homelessness problem, because we don’t have confidence it will be affordable with the cost of the infrastructure that will be needed.”

Action for Enfield’s Future is also emphasising the need for strong democratic engagement on the new town.

For more information about the Action for Enfield’s Future campaign:  
Visit [actionforenfieldfuture.org.uk](http://actionforenfieldfuture.org.uk)

## Leading with Heart: Enfield CEO Emily Aklan's Vision for Children in Care



Enfield-born social care innovator Emily Aklan is transforming support for children and young people in care. As Founder and CEO of Serenity Welfare, she has built a trauma-informed network of services – from secure transportation encompassing prestigious vehicles with no handcuffs or grilles, residential care and crisis support to creative therapies and the UK's first purpose-built wellness centre Serene Oasis for looked-after children. Her work has earned national recognition, including Social Change Agent of the Year 2025 and Sunday Times Best Place to Work 2025. Emily also pioneers the Hope Instead of Handcuffs campaign, which aims to end the use of handcuffs on children in care during transport. She has taken the campaign to governments and will continue pushing for change in 2026. Notably, Scotland has become the first UK nation to introduce mandatory legislation protecting children in care from unnecessary restraints, while Wales has issued guidance and England is expected to follow. Emily hopes these steps will set a precedent for wider reform across the UK.

### What inspired you to establish this organisation?

After seeing the realities of the care system firsthand, I founded Serenity Welfare with my heart rather than my head. Many vulnerable children are misunderstood and overlooked. I wanted to create services where they are seen, valued, and supported to heal and thrive.

### What is the core mission of your organisation?

Our mission is to help young people develop self-worth, confidence, and hope. Many feel forgotten, and we want them to know someone genuinely cares, believes in them, and will walk alongside them as they overcome hardship and build brighter futures.

### How does your work aim to change outcomes for vulnerable young people?

We provide safe, trauma-informed environments with therapy, life-skills support and consistent relationships. By addressing wellbeing, education and independence together, we reduce crises and help young people move toward stable, fulfilling futures.

### Can you share one example of progress or impact your organisation has achieved so far?

A young person arrived anxious and disengaged from education. With consistent care, therapy, and life-skills coaching, they rebuilt confidence, re-engaged with learning and transitioned into further education and semi-independent living. They are now thriving – showing what's possible



when young people are given stability and belief.

### Why is giving children a voice in systems that affect them so important?

Decisions are often made about children without hearing them. Giving young people a voice restores dignity, trust and agency, which improves outcomes and strengthens self-belief.

### You are developing international collaborations on children's social care. What do you hope this will achieve?

We want to learn from global best practice through research, system comparisons and idea-sharing. International collaboration allows us to innovate and bring proven approaches back to the UK to better support young people locally.

### What are your key priorities for the next two years?

We aim to shine a light on looked-after children, challenge stigma and change negative narratives. Above all, we will amplify their voices and continue advocating for initiatives like the Hope Instead of Handcuffs campaign.

### Why are awards and public recognition important for advancing your mission?

Recognition validates good practice and builds trust with partners and funders. Our awards show that we are pioneering compassionate, child-centred care that every young person deserves.

### How can local people or organisations in Enfield support your work?

Enfield is our home. Our residential homes are in the borough and we recruit local staff through job fairs and community outreach. We also welcome local businesses to create education, apprenticeship and employment opportunities for young people in care.



# ‘Avoidable mistake’ on Meridian Water bridge design set to cost council £11m

*The council has been forced to submit revised plans for the bridge after the Environment Agency raised concerns around its impact on flood risk*

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

**E**nfield Council is facing an £11million bill after being forced to redesign a new bridge at Meridian Water over flooding concerns.

The ‘B1 Bridge’ spanning the River Lee Navigation is one of the four bridges being constructed as part of the £195million strategic industrial works (SIW) which are essential to make council plans for thousands of new homes across the Edmonton redevelopment zone viable.

The bridge will carry the new central spine road and cycle lane linking the western and eastern parts of Meridian Water, and work is well underway on its construction, but a council report published late last year revealed the bridge has had to be redesigned following objections from the Environment Agency.

The issue relates to the council’s desire to reduce the width of the canal to create more space for the bridge abutments – something which it had not been “explicit” about in its original 2019 planning application.

The report states: “The Environment Agency stated they would not agree to encroachment into the canal as this would create an unnecessary flood risk upstream.

“Following a series of optioneering workshops and additional surveys, the decision was made to increase the bridge span width instead. This adjustment resulted in the Bridge B1 abutment being relocated westward. The earthworks required recontouring. This resulted in reducing the size and levels of the Phase 2 developable area.

“This risk was further complicated because the affected area lies within the site of two overlapping planning permissions.”

The redesign has pushed back the expected completion

of the bridge from March to November this year, with new planning applications needing to be submitted with multiple revised drawings. Even though construction is ongoing, some of the revised plans have yet to win planning approval, having only been submitted in December.

The council decision report – signed off by chief executive Perry Scott – authorises the council to pay an initial £5million-worth of “programme delay fees” to Taylor Woodrow, its SIW developer, as part of conditions included in the contract with the company relating to unexpected “change events”.

But the report also warns: “Although this request is for approval of £5.05m to be paid over to TW as compensation for delays, the overall cost of delays would be close to the £11m projected by [infrastructure consultants] AECOM due to the certainty of payment of £5.1m covering the period July 2026 to November 2026.”

The bridge delay and cost overrun – which follows another recent council admission that an underground water main was preventing

the redevelopment of a Meridian Water bus garage – has been slammed by opposition councillors.

Conservative councillor Lee Chamberlain, the Tory group’s housing spokesperson, said: “The Meridian Water project has been running 16-plus years, cost about half-a-billion pounds, and delivered less than 300 out of the 10,000 homes promised.

“The bridge delay with further multimillion pound costs adds another shameful chapter to the Labour council’s ongoing saga of failure. Never in Enfield has so much been spent to deliver so little.”

Matt Burn from Better Homes Enfield, who has been a frequent critic of the council’s handling of its flagship housing project, said: “This appears to be another very expensive and avoidable mistake. Meridian Water is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for Enfield, yet repeated failures in planning and governance are now costing residents dearly.

“More than 1,000 jobs have been lost, and over 3,000 homes were meant to have been delivered by

now, yet only around 300 have been built. Over the past year alone, the council has made a series of serious errors, including failing to address known infrastructure constraints, overlooking land it owns that could deliver hundreds of homes, and incurring substantial delay costs.

“Despite the scale of public money at risk, there has been no effective external scrutiny of performance, nor any clear mechanism for intervention when things go wrong. The lack of meaningful accountability is deeply concerning and cannot continue.”

A council spokesperson said: “Meridian Water is a major project, and the strategic infrastructure works will bring important long-term improvements to Edmonton. For projects this big, changes and adjustments are normal and expected over time. Extra funds are included in the budget to cover any delays or changes.

“We planned ahead for any obstacles we may face. Construction has faced challenges across the UK with costs skyrocketing due to the economy crashing in 2022, Brexit, international conflicts and other challenges.

“In the past few months, four 40-metre steel beams for Bridge B1 have been installed, and the bridge is on track to be finished this year. Other important infrastructure works are continuing as planned, with most of it expected to be substantially completed by 2027. These improvements will help reduce traffic around Meridian Water and make it easier to reach this exciting new neighbourhood.

“Meridian Water will become home to thousands of people and businesses, which means Edmonton needs major infrastructure upgrades. The strategic infrastructure works will provide new roads, bridges, public spaces, and parks to make this vision a reality and prepare the area for future growth.”

The current incinerator at Edmonton Eco Park (left) was opened in 1969, with its replacement still under construction (right)



## Edmonton incinerator to be used ‘past design life’

*A replacement incinerator was originally due to open in 2027 but North London Waste Authority says it is now preparing to continue using the old one “up to and beyond” 2030*

BY SEBASTIAN MANN, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

**E**dmonton incinerator will stay in use well beyond its lifespan – as progress slows on its replacement.

The facility will now remain operational “up to and beyond 2030” according to North London Waste Authority (NLWA), which runs Edmonton Eco Park where the incinerator is based.

However, this is “significantly past design life” for its mechanical, electrical and civil infrastructure, according to a report published in December.

NLWA is controlled by councillors from Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Islington and Waltham Forest and is responsible for disposing of waste from the seven boroughs.

A replacement ‘energy from waste’ facility was initially slated to begin operation in 2027, and while construction is ongoing, no clear timeline has been established by the authority.

Last August, the project’s overseers said it was being hindered by local and international challenges. They pointed to Brexit, the war in Ukraine, and high interest rates impacting the cost of raw construction materials.

Clyde Loakes, chair of NLWA and deputy leader at Waltham Forest Council, said that month that work “had not stopped” despite rumours and “construction progress continues to be made, with over 200 workers on site”.

The total budget for NLWA’s ongoing North London Heat and Power Project – which includes the incinerator as well as new recycling facilities at Edmonton Eco Park – has also climbed from £1.2billion to £1.5bn.

Bridge B1 at Meridian Water will carry the central spine road



# Specsavers Palmers Green: Winter eye care solutions



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## How the local election could be won

With three months until polling day, the race for control of Enfield Civic Centre has firmly begun

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

The local election this May is likely to be the most closely contested in the borough since 2010 – the last time there was a change of administration at Enfield Civic Centre.

While the battle for political control of the civic centre is still fully expected to be a two-horse race between Labour and the Conservatives, the way the electorate fragments in this election is likely to be a significant factor in determining the overall result.

In many ways, this year's election is without modern precedent. It's been 20 years since any councillor was elected in Enfield without representing either Labour or the Tories, but five parties have now told the *Dispatch* they are aiming to field a full slate of 63 candidates for 2026 – with the Green Party, Reform UK and Liberal Democrats all determined to mount a challenge.

Then there is Your Party, the new Jeremy Corbyn-backed left-wing project which has had a rocky start to its existence but has a relatively strong presence in Enfield and is planning to stand at least one candidate in every ward.

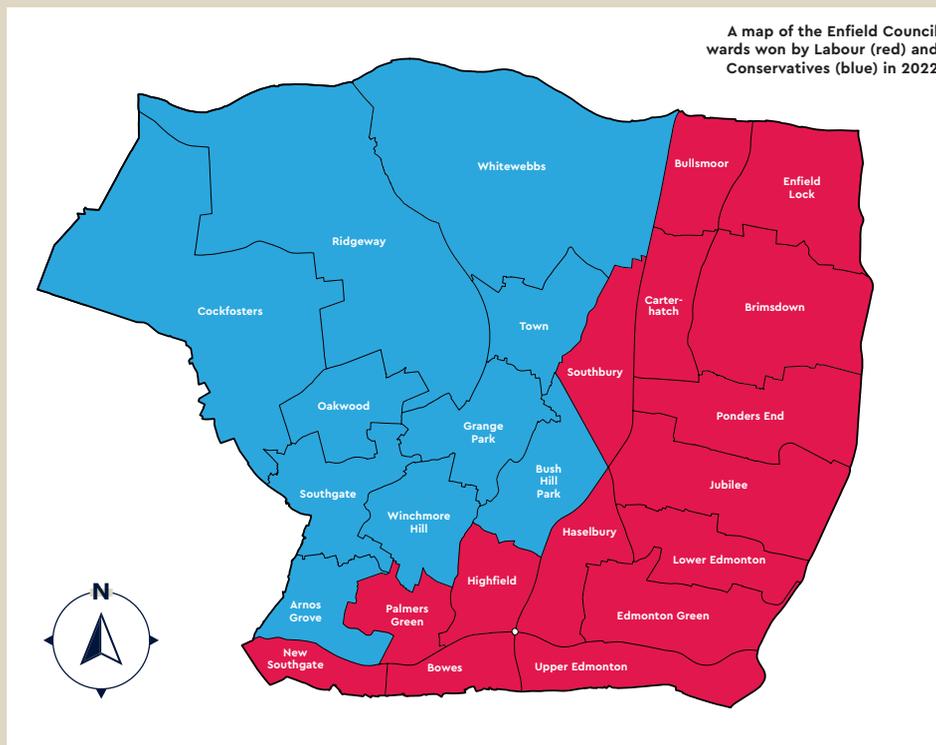
For context, last time in 2022 the Greens fielded 29 candidates in Enfield while Reform UK – which had only recently formed – stood just three candidates.

It's clear the Labour Party is losing a lot of support to the two parties on its left, with the Conservatives facing a similar problem from the Nigel Farage-led Reform to its right, while the Lib Dems now have more MPs nationally than they have ever had and can appeal to voters from either side of the political spectrum.

### What will be the big election issues here in Enfield?

For starters, it's worth a reminder of what happened last time out in 2022. At that election the big local issues (aside from always-relevant topics such as crime and cleanliness) included two new low-traffic neighbourhoods that had proven highly divisive, threats to the Green Belt and Whitewebbs Park, and the future of Edmonton incinerator. Added to these were concerns around the way then-leader Nesil Caliskan had overseen a big split in the Labour group, prompting several defections and resignations over the previous four years.

The 2022 poll was held at the height of the 'Partygate' scandal nationally, which



A map of the Enfield Council wards won by Labour (red) and Conservatives (blue) in 2022

*"In many ways, this year's election is without modern precedent"*

would eventually lead to the downfall of Boris Johnson as prime minister. This background contributed to the Conservatives suffering one of their worst-ever local election results nationally, losing 485 seats across the country. Yet, in Enfield, something very different happened – the Tories won eight seats from Labour.

What the 2022 election showed was that voters in Enfield were looking beyond national issues to cast judgement on the performance of the council – and it was not a favourable verdict from Labour's point of view.

What will deeply worry Labour councillors and local activists now is that the national picture in 2026 is a far different one from 2022. In government since 2024, the Keir Starmer-led party has suffered record-low poll ratings and struggled to fix the problems it promised to solve. An unpopular government is always likely to be punished at local elections.

In terms of local issues, the threats to the Green Belt that were already causing voters to ditch Labour in 2022 have only grown in the years since – Enfield is now set to see 884 hectares of largely greenfield land built on in the north-west of the borough, as one of the first 'new towns' designated by the government.

With at least 21,000 homes now expected to be built at Crews Hill and 'Chase Park', concerns over how the borough will cope with this new urban sprawl appear to be far greater than they were four years ago.

The fierce opposition there had been to two LTNs in Palmers Green and Bowes Park has quietened down since 2022, when they had only recently been made permanent. But there remains a sense that Enfield Council is not alive to the concerns of motorists – who have recently had to suffer the botched installation of a new bus lane in Enfield Town that saw huge tailbacks. A plan to bring in a

borough-wide 20mph scheme, proposed last summer, has also had to be watered down by the council following a backlash, with only three town centres now included.

As for Whitewebbs, the fate of the park and the decision to award Tottenham Hotspur a 25-year lease has not just caused controversy locally – but nationally. Even national treasure Dame Judi Dench is now attacking Enfield Council over the issue (as reported on page 2 of this paper).

As for regular concerns such as crime and the cleanliness of the borough's streets, Enfield Labour will point to a number of schemes and initiatives that it claims have had success, but whether voters from

across the whole borough are convinced remains to be seen.

### State of the parties

The Tories, led by Joanne Laban in 2022, are now led by Alessandro Georgiou, a London Assembly member who has raised his profile through a prolific use of social media. Cllr Georgiou's firmly right-wing brand of politics – which have led some in Labour to accuse him of copying the populist tactics used by Reform UK – aren't the sort that would usually find mass appeal across Enfield. But by focusing on the big local issues and by making big promises – such as bringing back weekly bin collections – it's likely his social media videos are having an impact.

Enfield Labour, under Ergin Erbil, has not suffered from any further defections. However, a number of recent scandals – especially that of ex-mayor Mohammad Islam, found to have "brought his office into disrepute" after using council resources to assist with visa applications for friends and family – have cemented the impression of an ill-disciplined party.

On Facebook one former Labour cabinet member, who stood down prior to the 2018 election, recently declared that he would be backing Cllr Georgiou as "someone we can trust", while also slamming the "disastrous incompetence" of his own party. Alan Sitkin has long been a critic of the current Labour administration, but his comments are stark. How many other voters agree will be pivotal.

### Battleground wards

As for the key borough battlegrounds, the traditional divide has been between east and west, neatly separated by the A10 dual carriageway.

There are 36 council seats available in the west, and 27 up for grabs in the east – all won by Labour in 2022. However, even if the party were to repeat this success in 2026, it would still need to retain at least five of its eleven seats in the west – in New Southgate, Bowes Park, Highfield, Palmers Green and Southbury wards.

Of these, Highfield was the most closely contested in 2022, with just 29 votes separating the lowest Labour candidate in second and the highest Conservative candidate in third.

For the Tories, winning four of the five battleground wards listed above, as well as defending their existing seats, would be enough to return them to power at Enfield Civic Centre for the first time in 16 years.

**Next month: how many of Enfield Labour's 2022 manifesto promises has the party kept?**



Enfield Civic Centre

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# LETTERS

## Send us your letters

Got an opinion on something in Enfield? We accept letters of up to 150 words from people and organisations in the borough. Email [EnfieldDispatch@socialspider.com](mailto:EnfieldDispatch@socialspider.com) before the next deadline on **Monday 16th February**.

### Palmers Green

*Dear Enfield Dispatch*

I read January's comment piece from the ambassador of Green Lanes Business Association [Our high streets need help to thrive, Page 12, Issue 88].

If I didn't live in Palmers Green, I would be having second thoughts about visiting. Fortunately, I do live in Palmers Green, and I would commend it to others.

Is it safe? Certainly in my family's long experience. And is it thriving? Absolutely.

Palmers Green is now rich in cafes and restaurants, most recently joined by [deli bakery] Gail's. Foot-fall is visibly rising; it is a destination, with visitors from Barnet and Haringey; and we're about to get our sixth live music space.

All this is supported by an active resident community who voluntarily deliver a plethora of events, particularly in Devonshire Square and Broomfield Park.

Karl Brown  
Palmers Green

### New town debate

*Dear Enfield Dispatch*

Enfield is in a housing crisis. I watched with interest the recent House of Commons committee session on the government's proposed new towns programme, where Crews Hill was discussed as a potential location for 21,000 additional homes.

While the New Towns Taskforce stressed the urgency of delivering housing, the session raised serious questions about whether the transport implications had been properly considered.

Broxbourne MP Lewis Cocking pointed out that surrounding roads, including the A10 corridor and nearby M25 junctions, are already operating at or near capacity. These concerns were not convincingly addressed. Instead, it was implied the presence of a station would resolve the issue, despite no clear evidence presented.

Cocking highlighted the reality that building a large new town in a semi-rural area without heavy reliance on cars is not credible. He suggested planners were "on a different planet"!

Carol Fisk  
Action for Enfield's Future

### Bus lane chaos

*Dear Enfield Dispatch*

If there is an accident or hold-up on the M25 during rush hour, a large part of that traffic diverts through Enfield Town, causing huge snarl-ups and no traffic movement through the town. With the new bus lane, it will be even worse.

When this was pointed out to the council, the response was that "the police would divert traffic from the M25 to other routes, avoiding Enfield". Really?! Most drivers follow their sat-navs at the first sign of hold-ups and anything approaching junctions 24 or 25 will be heading towards Enfield to reach the North Circular and other routes.

When there is money from the mayor [Sadiq Khan] to 'improve' Enfield, these blue-sky schemes are imagined to use it as quickly as possible, just in case it is taken back again. Whether it is the best use of cash for Enfield is up for debate!

Sue Cannon  
Grange Park

### Great paper

*Dear Enfield Dispatch*

I think the quality of the journalism in *Enfield Dispatch* is a cut above the usual for local newspapers.

My friends and I used to joke how earlier Enfield papers simply jumped on any report of any local who was upset about any topic. We would call these publications collectively 'The Enfield Worrier'.

There are many things going on in Enfield these days that could easily generate any number of rage-bait headlines. Even when there's strong feelings and even when these are expressed loudly, you make the effort not to simply regurgitate these views; you provide context and counterpoint.

You should be very proud of yourselves.

On the downside, I find your website agonisingly blighted with pop-ups!

I wish you continued success for 2026. I think that your coverage of the Crews Hill new town has been excellent.

Damian Browne  
Enfield Town

# Local MP tells parliament current gambling laws ‘indefensible’

**E**nfield North MP Feryal Clark has slammed current laws which allow gambling firms to “cluster” in deprived areas and has called on the Labour government to act to stop it happening.

During a debate in the House of Commons called last month by her Labour colleague, Brent East MP Dawn Butler, Clark said there were now 30 gambling venues in her constituency and that the existing Gambling Act’s “aim to permit” principle was often preventing councils from stopping them spreading.

The Gambling Act was introduced in 2005 under the Labour government of Tony Blair.

Last month the *Dispatch* reported on the concerns raised by a community group in Angel Edmonton – which now has eight gambling venues – that firms were “preying” on people in poor areas specifically. Half of the venues along Fore Street are adult gaming centres (AGCs), which open for 24 hours and use legal loopholes to operate as bingo halls, despite containing large numbers of high-



Enfield North MP Feryal Clark Credit: parliament.uk

stakes slot machines.

Speaking during the parliamentary debate on gambling reform, Clark highlighted the impact on Enfield’s high streets, where residents have repeatedly raised concerns about the growing number of betting shops and AGCs. She argued that the current law “stacks the deck against local communities” by forcing councils to approve new gambling premises even where there is strong local opposition.

Clark told parliament: “Gambling

addiction means missed birthdays, unpaid bills, broken relationships, families torn apart and lives quietly falling to pieces behind closed doors, while communities deal with the consequences.

“At the heart of this debate lies a simple but fundamental question: who should decide what happens on our high streets – local communities and their elected representatives, or gambling companies pursuing huge commercial gain? Right now, the answer is not local communities.

“Under the Gambling Act, councils are legally required to err on the side of approval when considering applications for betting shops and 24-hour slot machine venues, even when there is clear local opposition, an area is already saturated or harm is obvious. That is not localism, it is not prevention and it is certainly not protection.”

Last month Butler also published an open letter to the government on the issue, signed by 280 people, including many London councillors.

Ian Murray, the government’s minister for creative industries, responded to the points made by

Butler, Clark and several other MPs during last month’s debate. He acknowledged that “harmful gambling can wreck the lives of individuals” and explained how the government wanted to devolve more power to local authorities to restrict activities they see as harmful.

He said: “The government want local authorities to feel empowered to make data-driven decisions that are in their communities’ best interests. We want them to feel able to curate healthy and vibrant spaces that reflect the needs of their local communities.

“As part of our ‘Pride in Place’ strategy to strengthen local authority influence over the location and density of outlets, we have confirmed that we will introduce cumulative impact assessments when parliamentary time allows. Cumulative impact assessments will empower local authorities to take data-driven decisions on premises licences, particularly in areas identified as vulnerable to gambling harms. We have heard a lot about where those gambling harms are.”



The 349 bus in Ponders End

## Bus route set to be axed

*The 349 connects Ponders End with Stamford Hill, via Edmonton and Tottenham, and is used for 4.2 million journeys annually*

**A** bus route connecting eastern Enfield with Tottenham looks set to be axed by Transport for London (TfL) amid a raft of changes to routes in North London.

The 349 runs between Ponders End and Stamford Hill via Edmonton, serving passengers along Hertford Road, Fore Street and Tottenham High Road. The latest data show 4.2 million passenger journeys being made on the route annually.

However, TfL argues the 349 is “duplicated” for much of its route by the 259 and 279, with the 259 now proposed to be extended from Edmonton Green to Ponders End to help make up for the loss of the 349, while the 279 which currently follows the 349 route up until Seven Sisters is now proposed to terminate at Stamford Hill instead of Manor House to ensure that bus link still remains.

The axe to the 349 would nonetheless mean a cut to bus frequency for anyone travelling between Tottenham and Ponders End or Edmonton, with TfL admitting in its equality impact assessment that “some passengers may have to wait longer at stops as the proposals result in a lower frequency of service for some journeys”.

TfL ran a public consultation last month on the proposed changes, which also include terminating the 259 at Holloway instead of King’s Cross.

Explaining the decision to axe the 349, TfL stated: “Route 349 overlaps significantly with other services. Withdrawing the route simplifies the network by reducing duplication with other routes and better matches levels of service with passenger demand.”

The move comes after Enfield North MP Feryal Clark recently launched a campaign for a new express bus route to link eastern Enfield with Tottenham Hale.

# New ‘urgent care’ facility planned at North Mid

**T**he NHS trust running North Middlesex University Hospital has won planning approval for a new “urgent care” facility that it hopes will reduce the burden on its accident and emergency (A&E) department.

Urgent care or urgent treatment centres are becoming increasingly common at hospitals and are designed to treat illnesses or injuries needing prompt attention but which are not deemed to be life-threatening.

Explaining the idea behind the new facility at North Mid, a spokesperson for Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust, which took over running of the Edmonton hospital at the start of last year, said: “We are delighted

that Enfield Council has granted planning permission for the redevelopment of the urgent and emergency care centre at North Middlesex University Hospital.

“Once complete, there will be a larger, more modern urgent treatment centre and new ambulance hub that will improve patient flow, reduce waiting times and provide a better environment for patients and staff.”

Permission was granted last month, and will see a modern extension to the existing A&E department constructed at the south-west corner of the North Mid site, on an area currently used for car parking and as an entrance for visitors.

There would be a net loss of 27 parking spaces as a result of the



The plans for the new urgent care centre at North Mid

development, but in its report on the scheme the council’s planning team wrote that “the loss is considered minor”, especially considering a new 452-space multi-storey car park was recently constructed at the north-east entrance to the hospital.

No objections to the scheme were submitted by local residents, according to the council report.

The council report adds: “The proposed new extension would be in addition to and integrate with

the existing A&E services. The provision of the extension would and is therefore strongly supported.”

The Royal Free London spokesperson added: “Work has started to prepare the site in readiness for the first stage of development. While these works are ongoing, a new one-way traffic system has been introduced outside the emergency department, as well as a temporary drop off area and new entrance.

“There will also be fewer parking spaces during this period and we ask our residents to consider how and when they visit the site.

“We appreciate the public’s patience and understanding while these essential improvement works take place. For the latest updates as the project progresses, please visit our website.”

Published 30th January 2026

**Town and County Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015**  
**NOTICE UNDER ARTICLE 13 OF APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION**

**Proposed development at:** 304–322 Ordnance Road, Enfield EN3 6HH

**Take notice that application is being made by:** Metropolitan Housing Trust Ltd

**For planning permission to:** Demolition of the existing building and erection of a part 4 / part 5 / part 6 storey building comprising residential units (Class C3) with associated landscaping, amenity, cycle and car parking, refuse storage and access

**Local Planning Authority to whom the application is being submitted:** Enfield Council

**Local Planning Authority address:** PO Box 53, Civic Centre, Silver Street, Enfield EN1 3XE

Any owner of the land or tenant who wishes to make representations about this application, should write to the Council within 21 days of the date of this notice.

**Signatory:** Metropolitan Housing Trust Ltd  
**Date:** 30th January 2026

**Statement of owners' rights:** The grant of planning permission does not affect owners' rights to retain or dispose of their property, unless there is some provision to the contrary in an agreement or lease.

**Statement of agricultural tenants' rights:** The grant of planning permission for non-agricultural development may affect agricultural tenant's security of tenure.

'Owner' means a person having a freehold interest or a leasehold interest the unexpired term of which is not less than seven years.

'Tenant' means a tenant of an agricultural holding any part of which is comprised in the land.

**LICENSING ACT 2003**  
**Notice Of Application For A New Premises Licence\*/Club Premises Certificate\***

Notice is hereby given that **MR.K.K.GAYAN HARENDRA** has applied to the Licensing Authority of London Borough of Enfield for a Premises Licence/Club Premises Certificate\* to permit:

- **Premises license for a late night refreshment (For a sale of Hot food and soft drinks)**
- **For the premises Morley's situated at 48 Fore Street, London N18 2SS**

The public register where applications are available to be viewed by members of the public can be accessed online by visiting <https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/business-and-licensing/> and following the link to the Licensing Register. Email [licensing@enfield.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@enfield.gov.uk) to request a copy of the application within 28 days from the date of this notice.

Any person wishing to submit relevant representations concerning this application must give notice by emailing [licensing@enfield.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@enfield.gov.uk), giving in detail the grounds of the representation no later than: **23/02/2026**

Representations received by post will not be accepted. Representations must include your full name and address.

**Representations must relate to one or more of the four Licensing Objectives: the prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, the prevention of public nuisance and the protection of children from harm.**

It is an offence, under section 158 of the Licensing Act 2003, to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement in connection with an application for a premises licence. A person guilty of an offence is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level five on the standard scale.

**Dated:** 26/01/2026

**LICENSING ACT 2003**  
**Notice Of Application For A New Premises Licence**

Notice is hereby given that **RESUL DOGAN** has applied to the Licensing Authority of London Borough of Enfield for a Premises Licence to permit:

- **Operation hours for supply of alcohol on/off the premises Sunday to Thursday, 11:00–23:00, Friday and Saturday, 11:00–00:00 midnight and late night refreshment on /off the premises Friday and Saturday 23:00–00:00 midnight**
- **For the premises Meat Et Döner Restaurant situated at 95–97 Chase Side, London N14 5BU**

The public register where applications are available to be viewed by members of the public can be accessed online by visiting <https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/business-and-licensing/> and following the link to the Licensing Register. Email [licensing@enfield.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@enfield.gov.uk) to request a copy of the application within 28 days from the date of this notice.

Any person wishing to submit relevant representations concerning this application must give notice by emailing [licensing@enfield.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@enfield.gov.uk), giving in detail the grounds of the representation no later than: **27/02/2026**

Representations received by post will not be accepted. Representations must include your full name and address.

**Representations must relate to one or more of the four Licensing Objectives: the prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, the prevention of public nuisance and the protection of children from harm.**

It is an offence, under section 158 of the Licensing Act 2003, to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement in connection with an application for a premises licence. A person guilty of an offence is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level five on the standard scale.

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Book your licence advert or notice with Enfield's local community newspaper!

Email [licences@socialspider.com](mailto:licences@socialspider.com) for a quote, or call Klaudia Kiss on 07732 000 430 or Mark Brown 07728 520 116.

Next publication date: 27th February | Booking deadline: 25th February



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A still from *The Orphan*

## Enfield director's new film exposes 'grooming tactics' used by gangs

**A**n Enfield filmmaker and educator's fourth short film has been launched – exposing the “grooming tactics” used by county lines criminal networks to exploit vulnerable young people across the UK.

Leo Powell – a former teacher at St Ignatius College in Turkey Street who continues to run local education workshops on county lines drug gangs – has announced the release of *The Orphan*, his latest powerful short film.

Blending hard-hitting drama with social urgency, the 30-minute film offers an “unflinching look” at how the promise of belonging, protection and loyalty can become a “gateway to manipulation, violence and criminal exploitation”.

When a vulnerable teenager seeking belonging is groomed by a dangerous street figure, he is pulled into the violent world of county lines and forced to confront a past that refuses to stay buried. What begins as protection and guidance quickly becomes control, manipulation and exploitation.

A gripping, raw and emotional drama,

*The Orphan* explores loss, loyalty and the making of a young life on the edge – revealing how grooming often starts long before crime or violence is visible, and why the warning signs are so frequently missed.

County lines exploitation remains one of the most serious safeguarding challenges facing the UK. Thousands of children and young people are identified each year as being at risk, with many more believed to remain hidden.

“County Lines isn’t just about drugs – it’s about control, grooming and exploitation,” Leo explained. “Young people are drawn in through a variety of grooming techniques, including debt bondage, promises of belonging, protection and money, long before they understand the danger.”

“This film is a call to recognise the warning signs earlier and protect young lives before it’s too late.”

Released on YouTube last month, the film was viewed 500,000 times in just its first week.

**The Orphan** is available to watch on YouTube:  
Visit [youtube.com/watch?v=-5VYaTepAQA](https://youtube.com/watch?v=-5VYaTepAQA)

**For more information on Leo's work:**  
Visit [leopowell.co.uk](https://leopowell.co.uk)

*“This film is a call to recognise the warning signs earlier and protect young lives before it’s too late”*

## Supper club launching with star chefs

A former contestant on *The Great British Bake Off* will be the first special guest of ‘Enfield Feasts’ at Dugdale Arts Centre this month

**D**ugdale Arts Centre is inviting Enfield residents to enjoy a series of monthly supper clubs featuring “bespoke menus” prepared by local chefs and food writers.

Urvashi Roe, a former contestant on Channel 4’s *The Great British Bake Off* will kick-off the ‘Enfield Feasts’ series at the Dugdale on Saturday, 7th February with an Indian-inspired colour theme to celebrate the festival of Holi.

This will be followed on Saturday, 7th March by acclaimed Polish food writer Ren Behan, who will prepare a seasonal Polish feast.

The supper clubs will explore stories and reveal “authentic flavours from around the world” using local ingredients from Forty Hall Farm and local allotments.

Guests will enjoy a multi-course dining experience, panel discussions with the chef and other local community representatives,

and an evening of storytelling. Signed copies of the guest chef’s book will be available to purchase on the night.

Chinelo Anyanwu, cabinet member for culture and inclusion, said: “This is one of many ways we are celebrating our wonderful and diverse borough.

“These supper clubs provide so much more than food. They are designed to be enjoyed as a community experience so we can eat, share stories, and proudly celebrate who we are as a borough.”

Chef Urvashi added: “We have a wonderful community of food lovers, creators and growers in our beautiful borough. With this supper club series, we wanted to showcase the diversity of food culture in Enfield and show off our locally grown veg, as well as grow a community of likeminded foodies.”

Tickets for Enfield Feasts cost £46.50 (including the price of the meal):

Visit [dugdaleartscentre.co.uk/whats-on/enfield-eats](https://dugdaleartscentre.co.uk/whats-on/enfield-eats)



Urvashi Roe



Ren Behan Credit Yuki Sigiura

## Variety and value for money at Asian hotspot

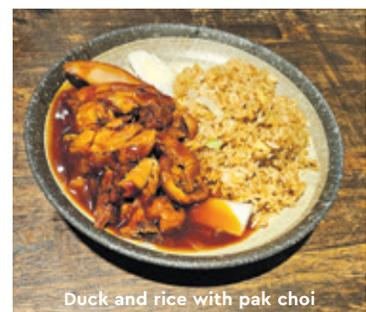
Neil Littman visits HK Noodles in Enfield Town to sample its eclectic and reasonably-priced menu



Pho with thai and basil parsley with chillis

**H**K Noodles in Enfield Town is a hidden gem offering excellent food quality, variety, and value for money.

Although, during several recent visits, the restaurant seemed quiet and to rely heavily on take-out and home delivery, I see no reason why they shouldn't be more successful given their central location.



Duck and rice with pak choi

HK previously described themselves as a Chinese restaurant, but they have since evolved into a pan-Asian destination offering a comprehensive range of Chinese, Japanese, Thai and Vietnamese dishes – and doing them well. They remind me of the eclectic spots in Chinatown, Soho, and invite comparison with the very successful Banana Leaf chain which has expanded across London and been rolled out across the UK.

HK is the only spot I've found locally serving proper dim sum – think bao, char siu, and dumplings. The unfussy café style interior is furnished with wood-topped tables, seating about 70

diners, and decorated with some hanging decorations and a few posters showing Hong Kong at night. The menu is extensive and divided clearly into their four cuisines, providing a good opportunity to mix and match.

The Japanese menu includes teriyaki, donburi and katsu curries, while the Chinese options include all the familiar dishes such as prawn toast, soups, stir fries and shredded duck with pancakes and some Malaysian style satay dishes. There is a shorter Vietnamese menu with pho noodle soups and salads with some Thai ingredients appearing in some of the dishes.

On our first visit, we arrived hungry and ordered generously; a starter of prawn dim-sum



Dim sum and salt and pepper squid

followed by salt and pepper squid (a perfect ten for flavour and just the right kick of red and green chillies), and king prawn fried noodles which were cooked chow-mein style and had that complex umami flavour.

Other starters included vegetarian spring rolls – eight small ones with dipping sauce, roast duck with 'Chinese vegetables' which turned out to be pak choi, and fried rice. Portions are large.

The bill for all that, plus chilli oil and soft drinks, came to £50 for two people. Surprisingly, the restaurant is unlicensed, so no beers included.

On a solo lunchtime visit, I explored the Vietnamese menu. I started with chicken gyoza, then moved on to pho ga – a fragrant soup with chicken, rice noodles, and a DIY garnish kit of



HK Noodles' interior

Thai basil, parsley, bean sprouts, and fiery red chillies (eye-wateringly hot but packed with depth of flavour). It's probably the healthiest dish I've eaten for a year and more than enough for a full meal. I stuck to tap water (essential after those chillies!) and the bill came to £17.75.

HK also offers great value deals; a lunchtime special from £7 and an all-you-can-eat buffet for £19.95 are advertised outside. My advice? Arrive hungry. Service is friendly and quick, and the service charge is optional.

HK Noodles in London Road, Enfield Town, is open Tuesday to Sunday, 12pm-10pm.

Do you have any suggestions for restaurants in Enfield to review? Email [eatingoutinenfield@gmail.com](mailto:eatingoutinenfield@gmail.com)

## Submit your listing

We can include low-cost community events taking place in Enfield. For next month's listings, email the details of your event to [enfielddispatch@socialspider.com](mailto:enfielddispatch@socialspider.com) by **Monday 16th February**.

## DANCE

### Balboa Nights presents The Sam Virdie Quintet

Wednesday 11th February, 7pm  
The Southgate Club, Crown Lane, Southgate N14 5BP

Music played at all the tempos for dance styles such as balboa, shag or lindy. The band will play two sets starting at 8.30pm. A playlist of classic and contemporary music recordings crafted by DJ Mani Quinn from 8pm.

**Tickets £12**

**Visit** [southgateclub.com](http://southgateclub.com)

## MUSIC

### Music from The Black Barn presents Muse vs Killers

Saturday 14th February, from 7pm  
Forty Hall Farm, Enfield EN2 9HA

A Valentine's tribute band special – Simulation Muse and The Runaway Killers. The first Music from The Black Barn of 2026 kicks off with a massive tribute double-header, bringing two of the UK's most highly regarded tribute acts to the barn for one unforgettable evening of modern rock anthems.

**Tickets £12.50 adults, teens £8**

**Visit** [livestockuk.com/coming-up](http://livestockuk.com/coming-up)

## FASHION

### The Spirit of Afrikan Fashion

Thursday 26th February, 5.30pm-10.30pm  
Millfield Theatre, Silver Street, Edmonton N18 1PJ

In this dark, sometimes snowy, sometimes foggy weather of a British winter, The Spirit of Afrikan Fashion bursts onto the scene at Millfield Theatre with energy, frequency and vibration. Drums, chants, dancing, children and colourful fashion; fabulous children modelling fashion visions that they have personally created. The exquisite spirit of Afrikan fashion is also celebrated through this event.

**Fundraising event – donations encouraged**

**Visit** [millfieldtheatre.co.uk/calendar/the-spirit-of-african-fashion-afrika-centre-fundraiser26](http://millfieldtheatre.co.uk/calendar/the-spirit-of-african-fashion-afrika-centre-fundraiser26)

## CHILDREN

### Encyclopaedia of Happiness

Friday 27th February and Saturday 28th February at 10am, 11.30am and 1pm  
Chickenshed Theatre, 290 Chase Side, Southgate N14 4PE

When the pages of the Encyclopaedia of Happiness start to fade, joy begins disappearing from Joytopia! Join Professor O'Brain and his spirited assistant, Sunny, on a magical, musical journey to find the Grand Philosopher and rescue happiness itself. Intended for ages from seven to eleven years.

**Tickets £5**

**Call** 020 8292 9222

**Email** [bookings@chickenshed.org.uk](mailto:bookings@chickenshed.org.uk)

**Visit** [chickenshed.org.uk/events/encyclopaedia-of-happiness-2](http://chickenshed.org.uk/events/encyclopaedia-of-happiness-2)

## SINGING

### Gospel Workshops

Every third Wednesday of the month, 7.30pm-9.30pm  
Enfield Baptist Church, Cecil Road, Enfield Town EN2 6EX

Learn gospel singing techniques and a fun, inspiration gospel song! Includes refreshments.

**£15 per session**

**Email** [info@vocallysound.co.uk](mailto:info@vocallysound.co.uk)

**Visit** [vocallysound.co.uk](http://vocallysound.co.uk)

## SOCIAL

### LGBT+ Tuesday Social Group

Tuesdays, 8.30pm  
Various pubs around Enfield

Enfield LGBT Network hosts a weekly social gathering at various pubs and bars around Enfield every Tuesday evening. It is an informal meet-up where lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people can meet and socialise within the borough over a quiet drink. The members also arrange other activities during the year. Contact organiser Mark Riley for more details.

**Free to join**

**Call** 07706 453845

**Email** [info@lgbtenfield.org](mailto:info@lgbtenfield.org)

Read more about upcoming events in Enfield on the Dispatch website:

**Visit** [enfielddispatch.co.uk](http://enfielddispatch.co.uk)

## AROUND THE BOROUGH

## WHITEWEBBS

## Toby Carvery issued eviction notice

The Whitewebbs oak had been 20 metres tall but was left as a stump of only 4m



BY JAMES CRACKNELL

THE OWNERS OF TOBY CARVERY have been issued with an eviction order by Enfield Council over what the civic centre claims are “serious breaches” of its lease at Whitewebbs House.

The council confirmed last month it had begun formal legal proceedings against Mitchells & Butlers (M&B) nine months after the partial felling of an ancient oak tree which prompted national

news headlines last April.

M&B has been accused of “failing to engage” with the council over the issue. It has not commented in response to the legal notice.

Tim Leaver, the council’s deputy leader, said: “The destruction of the ancient Whitewebbs oak was a reckless act which caused huge damage to the tree and cut its expected lifespan. It shocked and angered our entire community [...] We ask that M&B issues a public apology and provides financial

reparations for the irreversible damage they have caused as well as compensate the council for the significant costs incurred.”

The English oak, around 450 or 500 years old, was felled suddenly without any prior correspondence with the council. Contractors working for Toby Carvery, which leases Whitewebbs House and its surrounding land, cut off the tree’s main stem, ancient pollard poles and branches, leaving the main stump about four metres tall.

The council’s legal letter makes clear that unless M&B remedies the breaches identified, forfeiture proceedings will commence. There is now expected to be a trial later this year or early next year, after the council filed its legal notice at Edmonton County Court.

The council says it continues to work with arboriculturists to preserve what remains of the tree and its surrounding habitat.

## ENFIELD TOWN

## Anger over controversial bus lane

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

ENFIELD COUNCIL HAS LIFTED the suspension of its controversial bus lane in Church Street after installing a ‘red route’ which it claims will resolve the traffic issues it had created.

The short 24-hour bus lane in Enfield Town was suspended in mid-January after drivers complained it was causing huge tailbacks. A red route, banning all stopping, has now been installed alongside the bus lane, although the civic centre did not explain why the bus lane and red route were not installed simultaneously.

Conservative Town ward councillor Mike Rye warned the red route would not solve the problem as many drivers would ignore it, and deliveries still need to be made to shops without rear access.

A council spokesperson said the

bus lane would “keep buses moving reliably through the town centre” and “improve safety”. They added: “Loading bays have been built into the plans, with dedicated loading areas at both ends of the high street, as well as parking available throughout the town centre.

“We are also investing more in enforcement and in keeping streets cleaner and safer, so the town centre works better for residents, visitors and businesses alike. We are keeping a close eye on the situation and ask drivers to park responsibly so everyone can get around safely.”

However, Cllr Rye called the impact of the bus lane “utter carnage” and added: “I want them to scrap it. The bus lane serves no purpose. The previous arrangement worked perfectly well and it meant traffic could flow seamlessly through.”



The new bus lane in Enfield Town, pictured before the ‘red route’ was installed

## PALMERS GREEN

## Private school proposed for closure

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

AN INDEPENDENT GIRLS’ SCHOOL has been proposed for closure in a move described by a trade union as “deeply upsetting”.

Palmers Green High School sent a letter to parents and guardians last month informing them that it is “with deep sadness” that the governing board is “proposing to close the school in August”.

The *Dispatch* understands that the move would lead to the redundancy of around 50 staff, including 40 teachers, and leave at least 200 pupils needing to find an alternative school for next autumn.

Palmers Green High School was founded over 120 years ago and was only recently named ‘Independent 11–16 School of the Year for Academic Excellence 2026’ by *The Sunday Times*.

In the letter to parents, the chair of governors blamed “sustained and significant decline in pupil numbers over many years” and added:

“The school does not have the financial capacity to continue to operate for another academic year.”

Sue Hill from trade union NASUWT described the news as “deeply upsetting” and added: “The union is in contact with members to offer support and guidance, and we are seeking urgent engagement with the employer so that staff and students are not left in limbo during what is already a very difficult time.”

The closure proposal comes amid the recent involvement of St Albans Education Group (STAEG), brought in to assist the governors. The letter to parents states “as many pupils as possible” will be offered school places at alternative STAEG-run schools around Hertfordshire, including Stormont School in Potters Bar.

A STAEG spokesperson said: “The decision to propose to close Palmers Green High School was taken by its governing body following careful consideration of the school’s

long-term viability. STAEG was not involved in that decision.

“The governing body of Palmers Green High School has proposed the closure of the school at the end of the summer term, following a sustained period of declining pupil numbers and careful consideration of the school’s long-term financial viability.”

The governing body has confirmed that the school will “work in partnership” with STAEG to “help plan for a managed and orderly closure” which “protects pupils’ education and supports families whilst preserving the legacy of the school”.

Melanie Curtis, chair of governors, said: “This is not the future any of us had hoped for. However, as trustees of the school we have a responsibility to act carefully and responsibly in the best interests of the school, its pupils and its staff.”

She added: “We are committed to supporting our pupils [...] and helping each girl find a forward school where she can continue to thrive.”

## FERNY HILL

## Appeal for witnesses to crash

POLICE ARE APPEALING FOR witnesses to a road traffic collision last November which killed a teenager and injured three other people.

At around 11.40pm on Thursday, 6th November, emergency services were called to Ferny Hill – a largely rural road in the north-west of the borough – after a car and van collided.

Three teenage passengers of the car were taken to hospital. The van driver, aged in his 40s, was also taken to hospital. An 18-year-old man died in hospital two days later, while one of two surviving teenage boys suffered

life-changing injuries.

No arrests have been made and officers continue to make enquiries. Detective Constable Pauline Redmond said: “We are appealing for anyone who was in the area on the night of the incident to come forward. We understand there were other vehicles using the road at the time who may have dash cam footage or further information which could aid our investigation. We urge them to contact us as soon as possible.”

Anybody with information should call 101, quoting reference 9358/06NOV.

# Towners face another battle for survival



Towners boss Gavin Macpherson in the dugout at The Dave Bryant Stadium

## Andrew Warshaw on how Enfield Town FC are faring as the business end of the season begins to loom

**E**nfield Town go into a potentially pivotal month with every point precious as they seek to pull away from the danger zone.

With 17 games to go from the start of February until the end of the season, there is still plenty of time to climb the table, but with four sides facing the drop, the importance of not being cast adrift cannot be overstated.

To boost the club's chances of survival for a second straight campaign, three new players were drafted in during January – Corie Andrews and Enfield-born Ruben Bartlett-Antwi, both forwards, plus defensive midfielder Yacou Traore, who will provide the tough-tackling attributes Town have at times been lacking.

One advantage perhaps that Town have over the other clubs near the bottom is that they have been here before and know what it takes to mount a late run to ensure survival – as they managed at the end of last season. Having said that, the entire league is stronger and everyone's nerves will take a battering if the club finds itself in a similar position to last season with a handful of games left in April.

“Would it be the biggest achievement in my management career if we could do it again? A resounding yes,” manager Gavin Macpherson told the *Dispatch*. “I understand the magnitude of what we have to achieve. Supporters up and down the land always think their club should be doing better than it is.

“I acknowledge there have been a lot of points we should have got but didn't, but the league has pushed on and it's a much bigger task this time.”

Asked at the club's recent annual general meeting (AGM) why Town were prone to conceding so many late goals, he put it down to a mentality issue. “It's a question of leadership on the pitch and organisation,” said Gavin, who has been without club captain Mickey Parcell for a number of weeks.

Meanwhile, the club has tweaked its board structure to try and reflect certain areas of expertise, with the election of former Tottenham Hotspur commercial manager Adam Pollington. Adam, who is already involved in coaching the Enfield Town under-12 girls' team and whose wife Laura, a local GP, is Town's club doctor, held his post at Spurs for eleven years and will bring immense acumen and expertise to the table moving forward.

“I'm looking forward to giving everything I can to the role,” Adam told the club's packed AGM. “As a lifelong Town supporter, I feel that the time is right for me to combine my professional expertise and passion for the club to strengthen the efforts of the board, supporters and ultimately the team.”

Adam becomes a director, as does Gabriel

Meytanis, who rejoins the board after a year's absence, while Ram Ismail has been re-elected after his term had expired. Co-opted on to the board but not as directors are Lisa Quinlan-Rahman, who is in charge

of the ladies section, and Neil Lutwyche, who runs the boys youth teams as well as being responsible for pitch management.

In other matters at the AGM, chairman Paul Reed revealed that sponsorship had doubled and confirmed that discussions over a possible artificial pitch were being put on the back burner – at least for the time being – since the idea was not viable. There are still long-term plans, however, to build a new bar facility.

Although the club has increased the number of contracted players and the budget is greater than last season, recruitment is proving once again to be a challenging exercise. As an example of this, Paul revealed that terms had been agreed with a proven striker during the summer after three weeks of discussions, only for his agent to suddenly demand another 20% just 24 hours before the player, who ultimately signed for another club, was going to arrive. It's a stark illustration of what Town have to deal with when it comes to competition for established experience at this level.

Meanwhile, on Saturday, 28th February against Bath City, the club is once again commemorating International Women's Day to showcase the ethos of gender inclusivity. The club is opening the turnstiles free of charge to all women and girls. Among the dignitaries due to attend is Enfield mayor Margaret Greer, Enfield North MP Feryal Clark and a number of visitors from Tottenham Hotspur. Anyone wishing to run a stall on the day should email [commercial@etfc.london](mailto:commercial@etfc.london).

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# Why we remain dedicated to print

*Enfield Dispatch editor James Cracknell on what the future might hold for print newspapers*

In an age when almost everyone has instant access to the latest news headlines on their phones, you might wonder why we bother to keep printing our stories on old-fashioned newsprint.

Well, firstly, it remains easier for us to make money from print. More than half of our income continues to come directly from print advertising. That's because many advertisers rightly recognise the benefits that physical newspapers still have over online, and are willing to pay a premium to reach readers this way.

Secondly, print has a power and an authority that the internet has failed to surpass or replicate. For nearly three decades people have talked about the death of print, with a seeming inevitability that it is only a matter of time before the medium is rendered obsolete.

While print sales have indeed plummeted, there still remains a market for newsprint, and those predicting its demise might soon be forced into a rethink.



**“Print newspapers offer a comforting sense of reliability and trustworthiness that the internet can't match”**

Remember that people also used to once talk the same way about vinyl records, as iTunes and other online music platforms surged

in popularity in the early 2000s. But then something strange happened; the rapid loss of physical media made people realise what

they were losing, and sales of vinyl records began to climb. They have increased every year since 2007 in the UK.

Could the same happen to print? The signs, I would argue, are there. Last month on this page I wrote about how artificial intelligence (AI) was polluting the internet. Bad actors now have incredible technological tools at their disposal for creating fake images and videos, as well as fake news articles. It is becoming increasingly difficult to tell what's real from fake in the online world, and that is only likely to get worse as the 'tech bros' of Silicon Valley continue to push back against government efforts at regulation.

With the online space becoming more and more untrustworthy, where will people go? In an increasingly scary and volatile world, print publications offer a comforting sense of reliability and trustworthiness that the internet can't match. It is that same yearning for the nostalgia of old media that has helped fuel increases in vinyl sales.

So thank you for choosing to pick up the print edition of *Enfield Dispatch*, and being part of our vision of a glorious analogue future.

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