

## HEY BIG SPENDER

Analysis of Enfield Council's Development Control and Planning expenditure

### Introduction.

Enfield needs a lot more affordable homes, but these have not been built at the scale needed, and Enfield Council is now one of the worst performing local authorities in London in terms of meeting housing targets. Building genuinely affordable family sized homes has been a particular issue over the last 10 years, and Enfield now has more families living in Temporary Accommodation than almost any other borough.

Enfield and other London councils face similar challenges, so why has Enfield Council performed poorly in comparison to other local authorities when it comes to housing?

One of the reasons given for this poor performance by the Council is that the planning department has not been adequately funded and has had a shortage of skilled staff. <sup>[1]</sup> To assess this theory, we compared the '*local authority revenue expenditure and financing data*', for Enfield's planning department and other outer London boroughs with each council's planning performance (e.g. housing delivery). This would show if Enfield Council's planning department have been delivering better or worse value for money than other local authorities.

This analysis found that Enfield Council is poor value for money. Despite the Council spending considerably more on Development Control than most other outer London councils, it is delivering far less on multiple planning metrics. The amount spent by Enfield Council on employee salaries within Development Control has trebled since 2017 and is now the highest on record for Enfield and is far higher than almost all other outer London boroughs. In short, the analysis confirms that a lack of funding is NOT the reason Enfield Council performs poorly compared to other local authorities in terms of housing delivery and planning performance, far from it.

The findings of our analysis are summarised in this report.

## **What is “Development Control”?**

Development Control is *“the process of determining planning applications submitted by individuals and commercial developers. It aims to ensure that development in the Borough is in accordance with the Local Plan and is carried out in the best interests of the general public and the area.”* <sup>[2]</sup>

To put it another way, Development Control (or Development Management) is the department within Enfield Council responsible for ensuring new housing gets built and that it's the type of housing Enfield needs e.g. meets policies in terms of being affordable, sustainable, decent quality, the right size etc. It is also responsible for other planning matters such as changes to buildings (e.g. extensions, home improvements) and infrastructure.

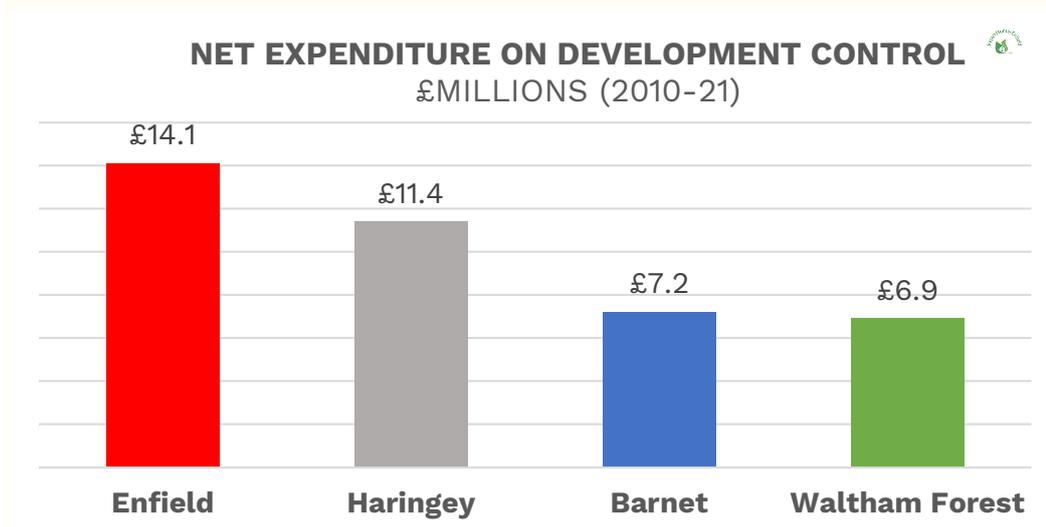
## **How much does Enfield Council spend on Development Control?**

The 'local authority revenue expenditure and financing data' shows that Enfield Council has spent more than £14 million\* on Development Control since 2010 (*\*this is 'net expenditure' which is the amount after any income generated from fees has been accounted for*).<sup>[3]</sup>

## **How does Enfield's expenditure compare to other boroughs?**

Enfield Council's expenditure on Development Control is far higher than neighbouring councils. For example, since 2010, Waltham Forest Council has spent £6.9 million on Development Control, less than half the amount spent by Enfield Council. [See Chart 1]

**Chart 1:** Development Control ‘Net Expenditure’ 2010-21



**Source:** Local authority revenue expenditure and financing - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

Since 2018, Enfield Council has had the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest Employee Expenditure of outer London councils and the 6<sup>th</sup> highest Net Expenditure. [See Table 1]

**Table 1:** Development Control ‘Employee Costs’ and ‘Net Expenditure’ 2018-21

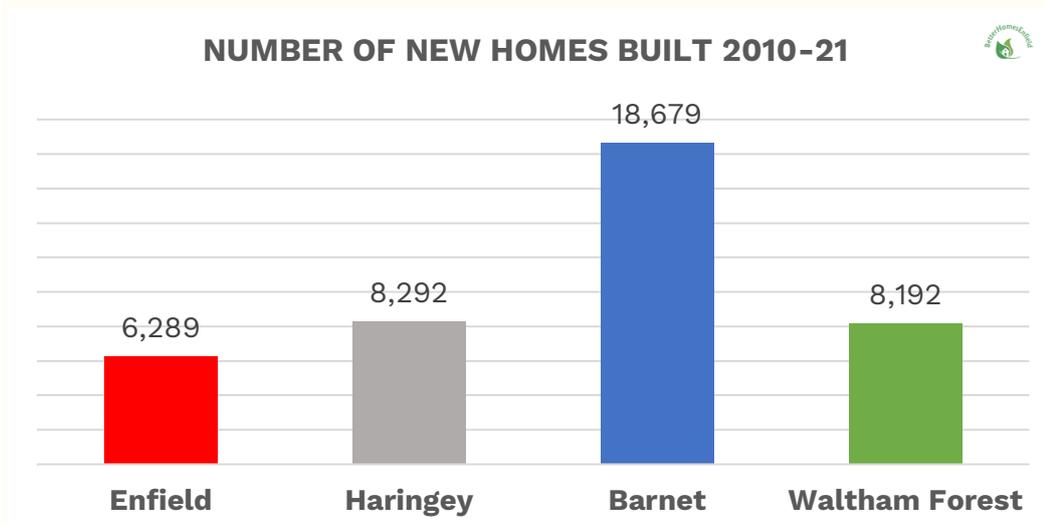
Council	Employee costs £million	Net Expenditure* £million
Croydon	9.7	1.3
<b>Enfield</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>2.6</b>
Brent	8.9	0.3
Ealing	7.8	3.4
Hillingdon	7.7	1.6
Bromley	6.3	5.0
Havering	6.2	3.5
Hounslow	5.2	-2.1
Richmond	4.9	1.5
Haringey	4.7	4.1
Merton	4.3	2.0
Bexley	4.2	0.9
Waltham Forest	4.0	1.5
Sutton	3.8	2.5
Harrow	3.7	-0.7
Redbridge	3.3	-0.4
Barking & Dagenham	2.7	3.0
Kingston	2.5	-0.4
Barnet	1.7	1.0

**Source:** Local authority revenue expenditure and financing - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

## Is Enfield Council's high expenditure justified?

No. Enfield Council has spent more on Development Control than its neighbouring councils but has also delivered far fewer homes. [See Chart 2]

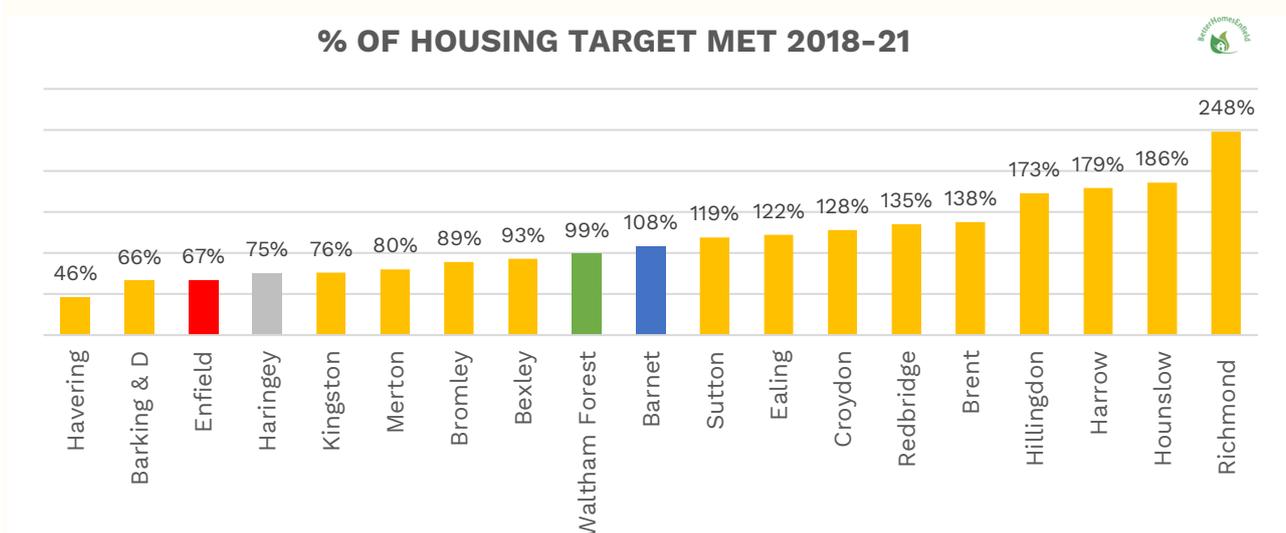
**Chart 2:** Number of new (additional) homes built 2010-21



**Source:** Local authority housing data and Housing Delivery Test: 2021 measurement

Furthermore, despite the elevated level of expenditure on Development Control, Enfield is one of the worst performing councils in London in terms of meeting housing targets. The 2018-21 Housing Delivery Test, which measures the extent to which councils meet housing targets, places Enfield third from bottom. [4]

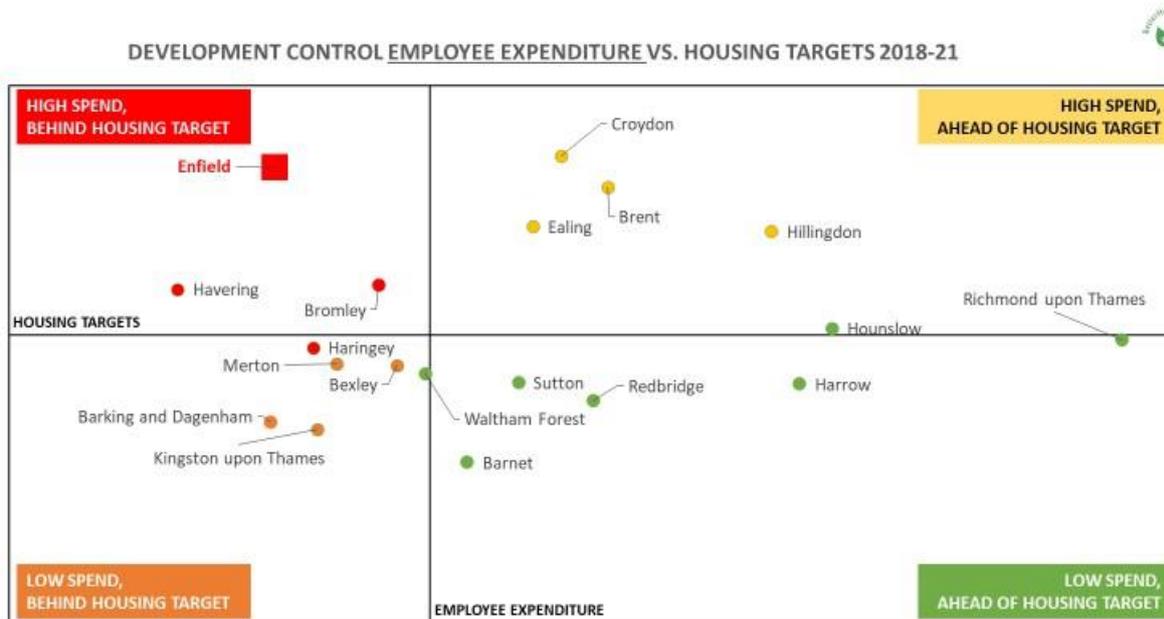
**Chart 3:** Housing Delivery Test results 2018-21



**Source:** Housing Delivery Test: 2021 measurement - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

Cross referencing the 'Housing Delivery Test' results with 'Employee Expenditure' data shows that Enfield spends considerably more than other councils on employees but performs poorly in terms of meeting housing targets. [See Chart 4]

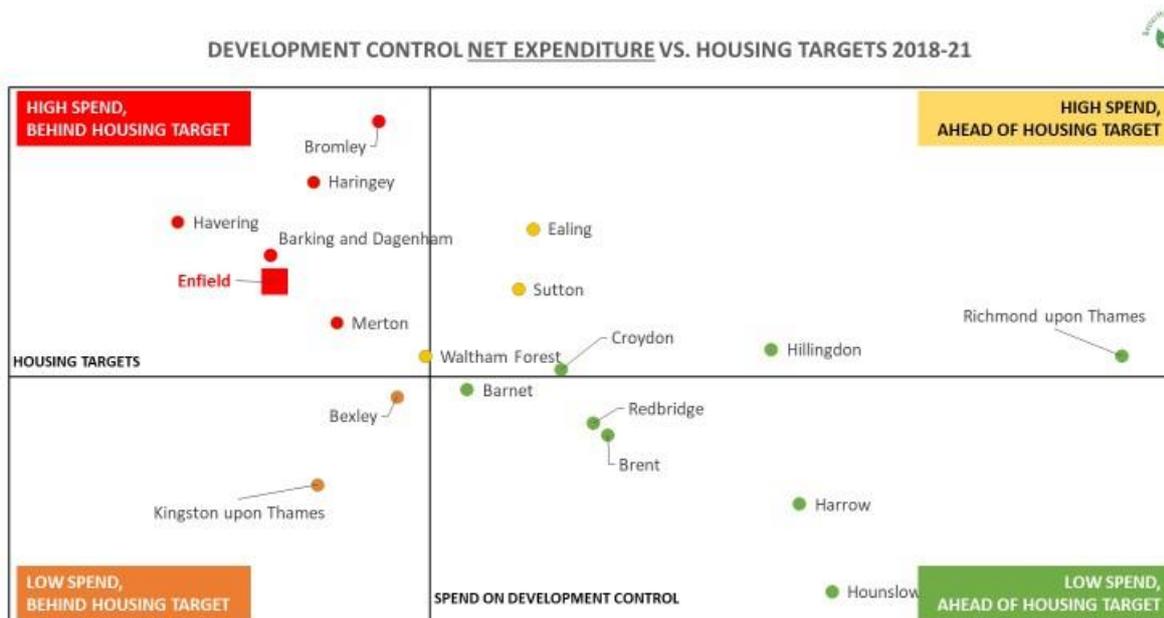
**Chart 4:** Development Control 'Employee Expenditure' vs Housing Delivery Test result 2018-21



Source: Local authority revenue expenditure and financing - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authority-revenue-expenditure-and-financing))  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authority-revenue-expenditure-and-financing>

Comparing the 'Housing Delivery Test' results with 'Net Expenditure' also shows that Enfield Council performs poorly.

**Chart 5:** Development Control 'Net Expenditure' vs Housing Delivery Test result 2018-21



Source: Local authority revenue expenditure and financing - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authority-revenue-expenditure-and-financing)) – NET EXPENDITURE i.e. after accounting for costs AND income  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authority-revenue-expenditure-and-financing>

To look at it another way; since 2010 each home built in Enfield cost £2,241 in Development Control expenditure, far more than neighbouring councils. [See Table 2]

**Table 2:** Development Control ‘Net Expenditure’ per additional home built 2010-21

Local Authority	Development Control Costs Per Home
<b>Enfield</b>	<b>£2,241</b>
Haringey	£1,379
Barnet	£386
Waltham Forest	£842

Furthermore, our analysis of the number of planning applications submitted to Enfield Council since 2018 found that Enfield Council’s expenditure per application is far higher than the outer London average. [See Table 3]

**Table 3:** Development Control ‘Net Expenditure’ per planning application submitted 2018-21

	Applications submitted	Net expenditure (£million)	Expenditure per application (£)
<b>Enfield</b>	<b>5,956</b>	<b>2.634</b>	<b>442</b>
<b>Outer London Average</b>	5,771	1.604	277

**Source:** Planning applications statistics and Local authority revenue expenditure and financing (www.gov.uk)

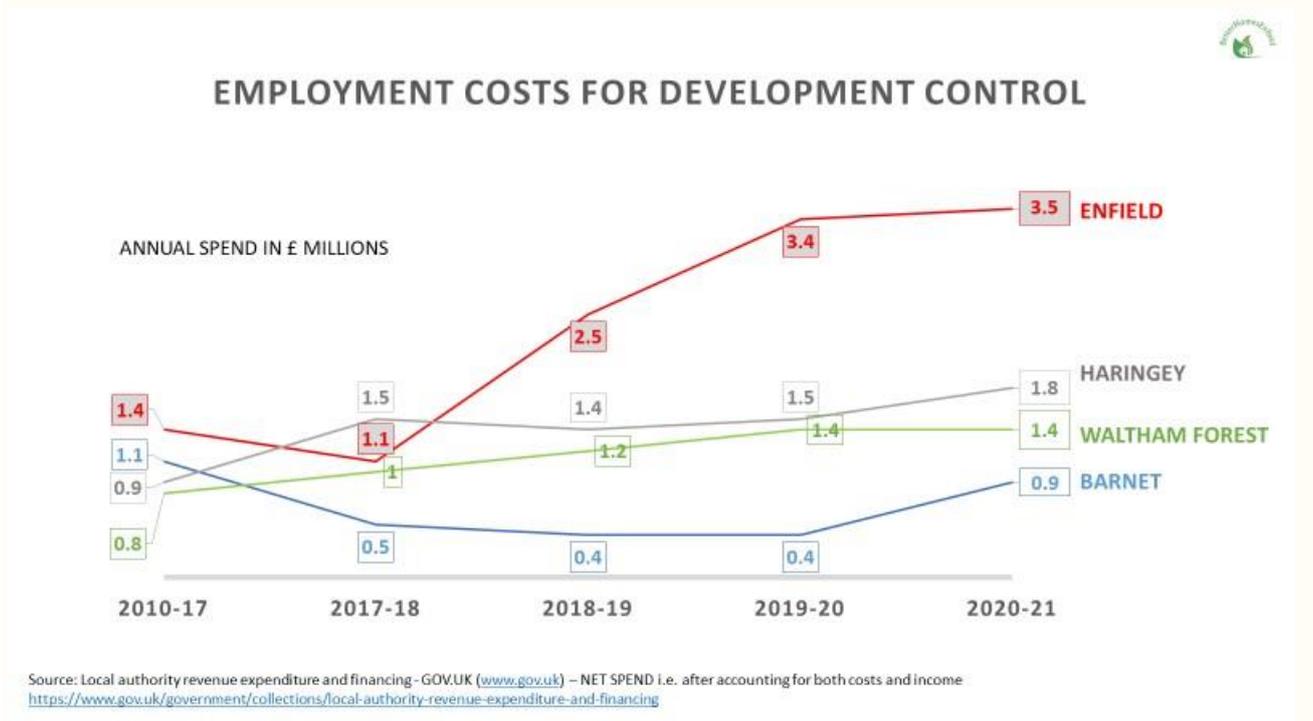
Whichever way you look at it, Enfield Council is spending more on Development Control than most other outer London authorities but delivering less.

### What is Enfield Council doing about its high spend and poor performance?

Enfield Council recognises that its planning service needs to improve and has developed a ‘Service Improvement Plan’. One part of this plan has been to significantly increase the number of people working directly within its Development Control department and consequently there has been an unprecedented increase in expenditure on employees.

In 2017-18, Enfield Council spent £1.1 million on Development Control employees’ salaries but this had more than trebled to £3.5 million by 2019-20. <sup>[5]</sup> The employee expenditure is now far higher than neighbouring local authorities and the highest on record. <sup>[6]</sup> [see Chart 6]

**Chart 6:** Change in Employment Expenditure



### Is the increased expenditure justified?

It is hard to see how such a substantial increase in employee expenditure is justified, especially as Enfield’s housing targets are significantly lower than Haringey’s and Barnet’s, and slightly lower than Waltham Forest’s. <sup>[7]</sup>

Enfield’s housing targets have increased since 2016, but they have also increased across other outer London boroughs where employee expenditure has not risen to the same extent. Enfield Council’s increase is unprecedented; the average increase across outer London is 30% over existing costs; in Enfield, the increase is over 200%.

The most recent expenditure data available (2020-21) shows that Enfield now has the second highest Development Control employee expenditure of all outer London boroughs – only Brent spends more but notably has a housing target nearly twice that of Enfield’s. <sup>[8]</sup> [See Table 4]

**Table 4:** Development Control ‘Employee Costs’ and Annual Housing Target 2020-21

Borough	Employee costs £million	Annual Housing Target
Brent	3.6	2,325
<b>Enfield</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>1,246</b>
Croydon	3.2	2,079
Ealing	2.9	2,157
Hillingdon	2.8	1,083
Bromley	2.3	774
Havering	2.1	1,285
Hounslow	2.0	1,782
Haringey	1.8	1,592
Richmond upon Thames	1.7	411
Harrow	1.6	802
Merton	1.5	918
Waltham Forest	1.4	1,264
Sutton	1.3	469
Bexley	1.3	685
Barking & Dagenham	1.1	1,944
Barnet	0.9	2,364
Kingston Upon Thames	0.8	964
Redbridge	0.8	1,409

**Source:** Local authority revenue expenditure and financing ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

Furthermore, the total employee expenditure across all of Enfield Council’s Planning and Development departments has increased from £1.9 million in 2017 to £9.8 million in 2020-21, which is a higher employee expenditure than all other outer London boroughs and recruitment seems to be continuing.

**Table 5:** Examples of recent advertised roles (Enfield Council)

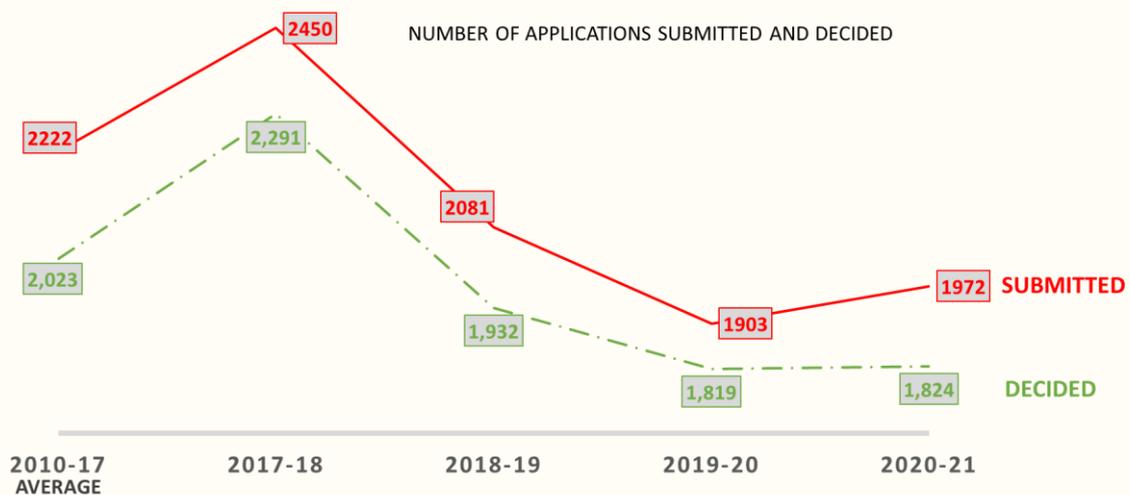
ROLE	SALARY ADVERTISED	DATE
<b>Director of Planning and Growth</b>	Up to £125,244	Jan-22
<b>Joint Head of Development Management</b>	Up to £78,462	Jul-22
<b>Principal Planning Officer</b>	£53,817	Apr-22
<b>Senior Planning Officer</b>	£46,772	Jul-22
<b>Senior Planning Officer</b>	£46,772	May-22
<b>Principal Regeneration Officer</b>	£39,564 - £42,585	Jul-22
<b>Senior Urban Designer</b>	£35,496 - £38,385	Aug-22
<b>Planning apprentices</b>	Up to £25,578	Jun-22

Employee expenditure has grown enormously yet our analysis of the government’s planning application statistics shows that the number of applications submitted and decided by Enfield’s Development Control department has declined by around 21% since 2017. [See chart 7].

**Chart 7:** Enfield Council - Applications ‘submitted’ and ‘decided’ 2010-21



### NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS AND DECISIONS (ENFIELD)



Source: [Planning applications statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-applications-statistics)  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-applications-statistics>

The planning application statistics also show that the number of applications given an extension of time to be decided increased by 34% in Enfield. This means expenditure on Development Control has significantly increased whilst Enfield Council is receiving fewer applications and taking longer to make decisions.

Furthermore, despite the unprecedented increase in employee costs, the proportion of applications approved in Enfield between 2018-21 is lower than the outer London average for new ‘major’ housing schemes (71% in Enfield vs. 78% average), and for ‘minor’ new housing schemes (44% in Enfield vs. 59% average), and ‘householder developments’ such as extensions (70% in Enfield vs. 79% average).

There is a theory that increasing expenditure on in-house employees saves money (e.g. by reducing expenditure on external consultants and agency staff), and that additional staff enable the Council to deal with more planning applications and therefore create the additional income needed to pay for the increase in employment costs. Whilst there is some logic and credibility to this approach, this is not what has happened in Enfield -

the number of applications is decreasing and the total net expenditure on Enfield's Development Control department has significantly increased over the last 3 years (i.e. by 68%) because the additional expenditure on employees has not been compensated for by increased income. In March 2021 the Regeneration & Economic Development Scrutiny Panel were informed that the planning service had delivered a "balanced budget for past two years", which implies that expenditure has been matched by income, but this is not reflected in the local authority revenue expenditure and financing data, which shows that expenditure has significantly exceeded income. Furthermore, such huge increases in direct employment costs could put the council at considerable financial risk, particularly if the development pipeline slows and schemes are put on hold as appears to be happening in Enfield (Sarah Cary, Enfield Council's Director of Place recently told New London Quarterly that Enfield was considering putting sites on hold – see NLQ Issue 51).

In conclusion, a lack of funding is not the reason Enfield Council's housing performance is so poor in comparison to other local authorities. Development Control in Enfield has been well funded but has still performed poorly compared to other outer London councils. Both the failure to deliver the housing needed, as well as the significant increases in council expenditure on Development Control should be a cause for concern for Enfield's local politicians and senior decision makers, as this may indicate more systemic or cultural failings and place the council at serious financial risk.

## References

1. Agenda item - Improving the Planning Processes | Enfield Council  
<https://governance.enfield.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=50720>
2. [https://www.hastings.gov.uk/planning/advice/submitting/planning\\_dc\\_explained/](https://www.hastings.gov.uk/planning/advice/submitting/planning_dc_explained/)
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authority-revenue-expenditure-and-financing>
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-delivery-test-2021-measurement>
5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authority-revenue-expenditure-and-financing>
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8. <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/new-london-plan/london-plan-2021>