**Barnet’s Local Plan - Examination in Public : The Council’s Opening Statement**

**September 20th 2022**

Introduction by Cllr Barry Rawlings – Leader of the Council

**I would like to welcome the Inspectors, residents, community groups, councillors and developers to this Examination in Public into the Local Plan, a fit for purpose planning framework that replaces the 2012 version and looks ahead to 2036. This Local Plan will help ensure we get the right development in the right places and at the right time.**

**This Plan has been subject to extensive engagement with the local community and I am grateful to all those residents and community groups who have made contributions and helped shape the Plan in a process that began back in 2017. I also want to highlight the work of our Members Advisory Group in guiding the production of this Plan. I would like to acknowledge the valuable contributions of the many Councillors who served on that group, in particular Councillors Shimon Ryde and Wendy Prentice who chaired the proceedings.**

**From my time as a long serving member of the Members Advisory Group I acknowledge that Local Plan production is not easy nor quick. It has been hard to keep people interested and have faith in such a long and complicated process. A Local Plan Examination should be a test of soundness rather than one of endurance.**

**This Plan has been produced within the rules of Government policies as well as the London Plan. I emphasise that this is Barnet’s Plan, a document produced to effectively manage change so that we can keep what is best about Barnet, what makes this Borough a distinctive place.**

**And this distinctiveness can be severely tested by the imposition of top down housing targets. The Government’s housing target – a magic number of 300,000 homes per annum - has not changed since 2018 yet the algorithm – the Standard Method produced to redistribute it has been revised, several times. According to the most recent Standard Method Barnet should be delivering 80,000 new homes by 2036. When planning becomes a ‘numbers game’ it leads to bad growth.**

**Our Local Plan housing target is less than half of that Government figure, and this is challenging in itself. We can’t look at this as simply a crisis of numbers. Yes, significant quantities of new homes are needed but the real problem is not the numbers, it is the affordability, type, design, quality and location of new and existing homes. Getting this right with the supporting infrastructure in terms of schools, open spaces and community facilities, directing growth into the most sustainable locations and making much better use of brownfield land is what we want and expect from our new planning framework. This is good growth.**

**Delivering good growth means that we have to be flexible. Production of this Local Plan has had to contend with changing circumstances and increasing levels of uncertainty, in particular the impact of austerity, Brexit and COVID19. These have all cast a shadow over the Plan and its objectives to build resilience to climate change, provide the homes that people actually need, and protect our open spaces. By producing guidance on implementing the Plan and being**

**pragmatic about the evidence that underpins Local Plan objectives we can adapt to these challenges. We will keep this Plan up-to-date following adoption, ensuring a review within 5 years.**

**In conclusion, the Council is confident that through this Local Plan the positive benefits of growth and investment can be better shared, making Barnet more socially and economically inclusive as well as environmentally sustainable**