

opinion

Growing pains

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Barnet Council's assertion that massive investment is needed in the borough is accurate - and not before time.

The estimated 40,000 new people in the borough, over the next ten years, will overstretch resources in their current state - especially if primary care trusts in this and neighbouring boroughs push forward with their plans to regionalise health services.

The task ahead should not be underestimated, not least because infrastructure cannot be compartmentalised. Housing, transport, hospitals and schools will all need investment. But for all the intellectual work and publicity by the council, we are no nearer finding a source of investment.

Population increase should not be seen as a poisoned chalice. The fundamental principle of the council's position is that, if marshalled correctly, population growth and timely development will be good for Barnet.

As Andrew Dismore MP pointed out, the issue is not one set in the future, but happening now. The council's assessment of Barnet as a

'successful' borough will stand or fall on its ability to deal with the growth.

There is legitimate concern that the government could make enough noise about investment in suburbs to win marginal seats in the next election, before letting Barnet's ideas go the way of the dodo. So it is crucial the council keeps up the publicity.

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