

Full triangulated account for the 2011 riots in Enfield

Beyond Contagion

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The Enfield ‘riot’

Sunday 7th – Monday 8th August 2011

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List of abbreviations

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BBM	BlackBerry Messenger
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
EBC	Enfield Borough Council
HMIC	Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary
IMD	Indices of Multiple Deprivation
IPCC	Independent Police Complaints Commission
LSOA	Lower Super Output Area
MP	Member of Parliament
MPS	Metropolitan Police Service
PSU	Police Support Unit
SNT	Safer Neighbourhoods Team
TSG	Territorial Support Group
UTC	Universal Time Coordinated

1. Methodology

The methodological approach used to analyse the disturbances in Enfield borough on in early August 2011 in this paper essentially follows that outlined by Stott et al. in their examination of disorders in Tottenham and Hackney over the same period.¹ The main feature of this method is the use of triangulation to substantiate the veracity of the timing, location and content of a particular incident within an event. There are essentially three types of information that make up the triangle, *post-event* accounts by participants and eye-witnesses, real-time media recorded *during* the events and *physical* evidence of the actions of the crowd. Through directly cross-referencing these forms of evidence and indirectly making reasoned assessments of the quantity and quality of the sources a level of confidence can be determined in a particular incident having occurred and when and where it happened. Validating each incident in this manner generates a solid evidential base for the latter assessment of patterns in the physical movements, actions and reactions of the protagonists in complex group interactions such as urban 'rioting'.

Central to the process of understanding complex features of urban disturbance is the creation of a triangulated timeline of incidents within the overall event. This can be constructed from the collection, collation and cross-referencing of discrete pieces of evidence or, as in this particular case, by adding evidence to existing timelines to substantiate, question or enhance their content. The essentially collinear nature of the timeline was overcome to a degree by creating coded parallel paths to account for the decomposition of crowds into smaller independent units and, conversely, intersection of these paths to cover re-composition of groups into larger bodies. The timeline also functions on a spatial level by interacting with two and three dimensional maps, opening an additional perspective on the events.

In addition, to this situational geography of the 'riot' event this paper considers two other geographies, social and psychological in order to understand why Enfield Town was targeted by 'rioters'. The social-geographic analysis consists of spatial comparisons of measures of relative socio-economic deprivation from a national, city, borough and Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) perspective, a study of ethnicity at a ward level and from a political viewpoint, local council voting patterns. This quantitative data was compared with the qualitative evidence provided by participant accounts and residents perceptions of the borough of Enfield, Enfield Town and their 'home' areas, comprising the psychological fraction of the analysis.

2. Data Sources

The structure of the event timeline for the disturbances that occurred in Enfield Borough on 7-8th August 2011 that underlies this paper was based on two published reports. The first was an 'Enfield' case-study, a special section of the overall Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) assessment of the unrest in August 2011 which contained a textual and schematic timeline.² The second, a textual timeline, appeared in Enfield Borough Council's (EBC) assessment of the

¹ (C. Stott, Drury, & Reicher, 2016).

² (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012).

disturbances.³ Both of these reports were published in 2012, within a few months of the incidents in August the previous year. Combining these two timelines provided the initial chronological structure which was then populated and triangulated with additional evidence from a number of sources.

The bulk of participant testimonies of the disturbances were obtained from the Guardian & London School of Economics 'Reading the Riots' project and comprised 13 relevant interviews.⁴ Some additional, though limited, participant accounts were obtained from the academic literature survey, which yielded only five papers with significant reference to the Enfield disturbances, out of more than a 130 that discuss the 'riots' of August 2011. Extensive local and national newspaper searches yielded more than 50 sources which provided not only objective information as to the location, timing and content of incidents but also some eye-witness testimony.

Outside of the two specific case-studies in the MPS and EBC reports only two other governmental reports deal with the Enfield disorders in any detail. These are the Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) review and the transcripts of the hearings given to the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee in 2011 by Enfield North MP Nick De Bois and local businessman Andrew Nicholas, both of whom were eye-witnesses to the events and their immediate aftermath.⁵

Project researchers conducted field trips to the locations of disorders in Enfield borough to gather observational data of the layout of key sites during which they interviewed Enfield Council's Head of Corporate Police and Performance, the (ex)Enfield Town retail centre manager and several opportunistically sampled local shopkeepers and long-term residents. In addition, a Metropolitan Police Inspector in charge of a unit of public order trained officers who attended the disturbances in Enfield Town was also interviewed.

Twenty-five online videos were obtained which vary from post-event news reports to real-time footage taken by participants in or eye-witnesses to the unrest. Along with photographic sources, these were cross referenced using Google Street View to determine their exact locations and, by examining other time-stamped evidence, chronologically catalogued. A database of 2.6 million 'riot related' tweets collected during the August 2011 disturbances by the *Guardian & London School of Economics 'Reading the Riots' project*⁶ was filtered for all instances where the word 'Enfield' was present producing a subset of approximately 72,000 relevant tweets. These items were analysed to collect relevant images, to provide evidence for timing of events and to determine prevalence of particular images in social media.⁷

³ (Enfield Council, 2012).

⁴ (Guardian & London School of Economics, 2011a).

⁵ (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2011; House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2011).

⁶ (Procter, 2011).

⁷ Selections from the Twitter database were supplied to the Beyond Contagion project in 2017 as part of a collaboration with Warwick University. In the following account these are referenced as the *Guardian & London School of Economics Reading the Riots Twitter Database* (Guardian & London School of Economics, 2011b). Individual tweets are delineated by the author and a Universal Time Coordinated (UTC) time stamp. It should be noted that British Summer Time is UTC + 1 hour, so all tweets were corrected to take this into account in the timeline.

Time-lines and real-time reporting on blogs that were created during the unrest to track events provided additional temporal and spatial evidence. Online anti-crime web pages provided useful material such as lists of damaged and looted properties in Enfield borough. Finally, comprehensive data on sites, times and types of crimes related to the disorders in the borough of Enfield provided by the MPS were of particular use in locating events that were less well reported in other media.⁸

These various data sources were used to flesh-out the skeleton timeline and, through the process of triangulation of the original and new material, significant errors in the MPS and EBC reports were isolated and corrected.⁹ In addition, existing incidents were further corroborated, new events added to the timeline and others called into question. This process of evidential enhancement, triangulation and rationalisation allowed a more definitive and comprehensive timeline of the events of Sunday 7th August 2011 in Enfield borough to be produced. It was this improved timeline that formed the basis of the detailed chronology presented in this paper.

Background socio-economic data on the borough of Enfield was obtained from a series of summary reports and memoranda concerning census data produced by EBC. Visual representations of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation were taken from recognised online sources.¹⁰ Finally, EBC provided raw data from surveys of young people and adult and young offenders involved in the 'riots' that they carried out in the wake of the disturbances, summaries of which were included in their final report.¹¹

3. Analysis

Introduction

For a few hours on the evening of Sunday August 7th 2011 Enfield Town in North London became the focus of both national and global media as hundreds of people engaged in sporadic clashes with police, property damage and looting. These incidents were the first sign that the serious unrest which took place on the streets of Haringey the previous night was beginning to spread. It was this perception that garnered the intense attention of the media. A television reporter on the scene later that evening described the ominous gathering of the crowds during the afternoon, the "aggressive" and "threatening atmosphere", sinister Twitter

⁸ This information was provided in Excel spreadsheet form as part of a Research Information Sharing Agreement between the MPS and the Beyond Contagion research team (February 9, 2017). In the following account it is referenced as *MPS August 2011 Disorders Crime Data* (Metropolitan Police Service, 2017) and the location of specific reported crimes determined by postcode is added to the citation.

⁹ For example, the MPS report conflated a massive fire at the Sony warehouse on Solar Way, three miles to the north-east of Enfield Town near Waltham Cross, with the disturbances on Sunday 7th August 2011 (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 57, 59). In fact, the fire actually occurred twenty-four hours later and according to the EBC report it was considered by Police to be unrelated to the disturbances (Enfield Council, 2012, p.3). The error was compounded in the MPS report with a large image of the destroyed warehouse used on the front cover of their Enfield case study. In contrast, errors in the EBC report were mainly concerned with timing of incidents and appear to be related to misunderstandings of time-stamps for television reports.

¹⁰ (Trimble).

¹¹ (Enfield Council, 2012 p. 25).

and Facebook campaigns targeting Enfield Town and “anarchists communicating with other by mobile phone”.¹² In characterising the events the reporter stated:

It’s not like it’s a march or protest it’s just literally sporadic violence, indiscriminate against whatever gets in their path, whenever they think they can get away with it.¹³

Whilst the unrest continued late into the Sunday evening and into the early hours of the following morning in the neighbouring districts of Ponders End and Edmonton political commentators and journalists were swiftly branding the behaviours and motivations of the Enfield ‘rioters’. Conservative MP for Enfield North Nick De Bois in widely publicised interviews classified the participants as:

clearly an organised bunch of criminals that have set out to undertake this activity, some no doubt will want to profit from it if they can, others here hell-bent on violence. It’s simple, it is just criminal thuggish behaviour; there is no cause here.¹⁴

The nihilistic narrative of ‘absence of a cause’ was taken to its extreme by the leader of Enfield Borough Council, Doug Taylor, who claimed that the incidents constituted “an attack on the people of Enfield” and were:

way beyond the norm and there is no justification, no proper explanation, no mitigation for what we are seeing tonight.¹⁵

Taylor also drew attention to fact that many participants in the unrest appeared to have travelled to Enfield Town stating that “we don’t know where these people came from”, almost as if an invading alien army had suddenly materialised. Other political commentators made reference to the perceived affluence of the area in a crude attempt to scotch arguments about ‘social deprivation’ as being a potential driver for the disturbances:

Enfield isn’t a deprived inner-city ghetto, it’s a peaceful middle-class suburb. The disturbances there weren’t a protest against police brutality....One thing is certain: this wasn’t about poverty, not in the material sense. If there’s poverty, it’s spiritual poverty, moral poverty and poverty of ambition.¹⁶

If the events in Enfield Town on Sunday 7th August had been an aberration then then it is likely that the media narrative of the peculiar ‘Enfield riots’ would have been more securely fixed in the popular memory. The tale would have remained with “no proper explanation” as an invasion of a sleepy middle-class suburb by an alien and nihilistic criminal mob bent on mindless violence and indiscriminate destruction of property. However, the day after the outbreak of the disturbances in Enfield Borough the media circus left town to chase juicier stories as the 2011 ‘riots’ moved on to numerous locations across London and further afield

¹² (Givemethat 808Kick, 2011).

¹³ (LondonRiotsNews, 2013).

¹⁴ (LondonRiotsNews, 2013).

¹⁵ (Givemethat 808Kick, 2011).

¹⁶ (Kelsey, 2015, p. 255).

to the cities of Birmingham, Liverpool, Bristol and Leeds. Instead the crude media narrative of the Enfield tale would be repeated in cities and towns across the country.

Precursors to the ‘Enfield Riot’

The denial of ‘a cause’ for the Enfield ‘rioters’ was an attempt by local politicians to disconnect the events of Sunday 7th August from those that occurred over the previous days in the neighbouring borough of Haringey. The death of Mark Duggan at the hands of a Metropolitan Police fire arms team on Thursday 4th August 2011 in Tottenham Hale has been extensively investigated though, for many, the event still remains unresolved.¹⁷ The chain of events that occurred over the two days after Duggan’s death have also been well-documented and it is clear there was a serious breakdown of communication between the institutions involved as well as with the family of the victim.¹⁸ In addition, statements to the media concerning the shooting made by the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) over this period were erroneous, contradicted by eye-witness accounts in the press and led to rumours of a ‘police assassination’ in Tottenham.¹⁹

The lack of acknowledgement and information about the shooting given to the relatives of Duggan by the authorities enhanced both their distress and the growing atmosphere of distrust in the community. As a result, a peaceful protest by about two hundred people, including members of Mark Duggan’s family, took place outside Tottenham police station late in the afternoon on Saturday 6th August. There is some disagreement in the sources as to the precise incident which led to an outbreak of violence that evening but from approximately 9.00pm a serious disturbance involving hundreds of people was underway on Tottenham High Road to the north and south of the police station.²⁰

The following few hours were characterised by clashes between the crowds and Police Support Units (PSU),²¹ targeted attacks by ‘rioters’ on police property and buildings associated with the local authority and criminal justice system and minimal, selective looting. Violence was almost exclusively aimed at the police and damage to private houses and property was essentially collateral damage due to fires set in neighbouring commercial premises. Stott et al. noted that as the evening wore on a change in emphasis became apparent with evidence of:

crowd members being celebratory and of changed power relations with the police...This raises the suggestion that ‘rioters’ were able to challenge the police with impunity, one index of which is the increasing inability of the police to prevent acts of criminality. This suggests a changed meaning and a politicization of property damage; crowd members come to see and celebrate such actions as a sign of police impotence.²²

¹⁷ (Independent Police Complaints Commission, 2015a).

¹⁸ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012; Independent Police Complaints Commission, 2015b).

¹⁹ (Moore-Bridger, Parsons, & Davenport, 2011; Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 24-25).

²⁰ (C. Stott et al., 2016, pp. 969-970; C. Stott et al., Forthcoming).

²¹ A police support unit is a mobile group of police officers who have undergone public order tactical training to Level 2 PSU. A typical PSU consists of three carriers (vans) containing an inspector, three sergeants and 18 constables plus three drivers (College of Policing).

²² (C. Stott et al., 2016, p. 972).

These behaviours were reflected in the first sign of the spread of the unrest in the local area which occurred after midnight on the Sunday morning. As police fought pitched battles with 'rioters' on the High Road to the north of the police station extensive looting took place in Tottenham Hale Retail Park a mile away to the south. An hour or so later further looting broke out in Wood Green, two miles to the west, which continued until dawn.²³

Enfield Town: Gateway to the west...

The borough of Enfield lies immediately to the north of Haringey (Figure 1) though from the perspective of social deprivation it has significant differences with its neighbour. Of the 33 London boroughs ranked in 2015 by Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Haringey was placed 6th and Enfield came in 12th. It is of interest to note that the recent trend for London boroughs has been to move down the rankings relative to the rest of England. However, Enfield remained absolutely static compared to its overall position of 64th out of 326 English boroughs in 2010 and moved up from 14th in comparison to other London authorities.²⁴ So attempts by politicians to portray Enfield Town, in the aftermath of the riots, as an affluent middle-class suburb may have some local traction but the picture for the wider borough of Enfield is certainly more complex.

This is borne out by the visual analysis of the IMD by Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) shown in Figure 2.²⁵ There are striking differences between the rankings for the east (relatively deprived) and west (relatively affluent) parts of the borough, with the A10 (known colloquially as the Great Cambridge Road), running north-south, marking a sharp demarcation between them. To the east of the A10 lies a strip of less affluent neighbourhoods, squeezed against the Chingford Reservoirs, running south through Ponders End and into the more deprived areas of Edmonton and Tottenham. Even more significant is that Enfield Town, the centre of civic power for the borough, lies just to the west of the A10; effectively an affluent 'frontier-town' and gateway to the middle-class suburbs in the west of the borough.

The stark divisions in wealth between the East and West of the borough are mirrored by the distribution of non-White ethnic groups by electoral ward shown in Figure 3 and by political affiliation. Figure 4 displays the results of the 2010 local elections for the borough.²⁶

²³ (Intakes: Communities, commodities and class in the August 2011 riots, 2011, p. 2; C. Stott et al., Forthcoming).

²⁴ (Enfield Council, 2015).

²⁵ (Trimble).

²⁶ (Enfield London Borough council elections, 2016).

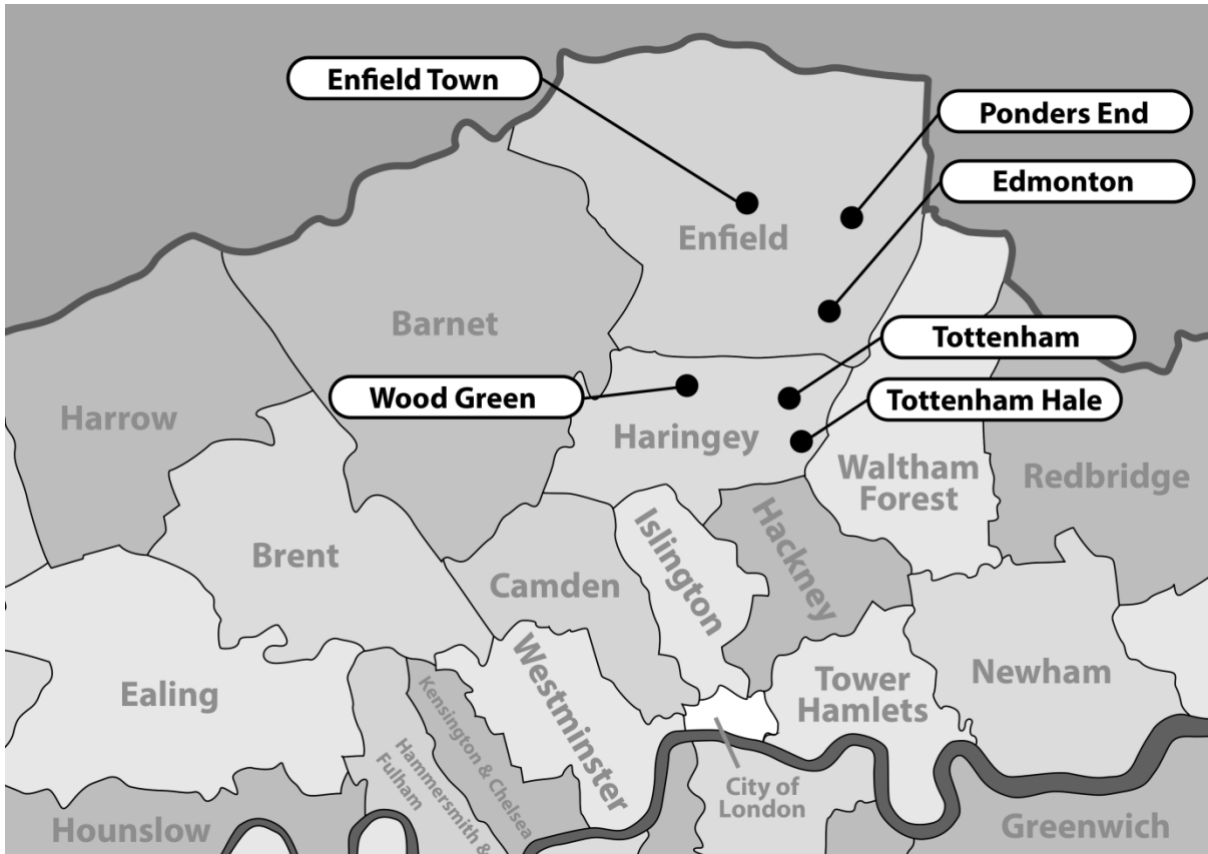


Figure 1: North London Boroughs of Haringey and Enfield showing locations of disturbances on 6-7 August 2011

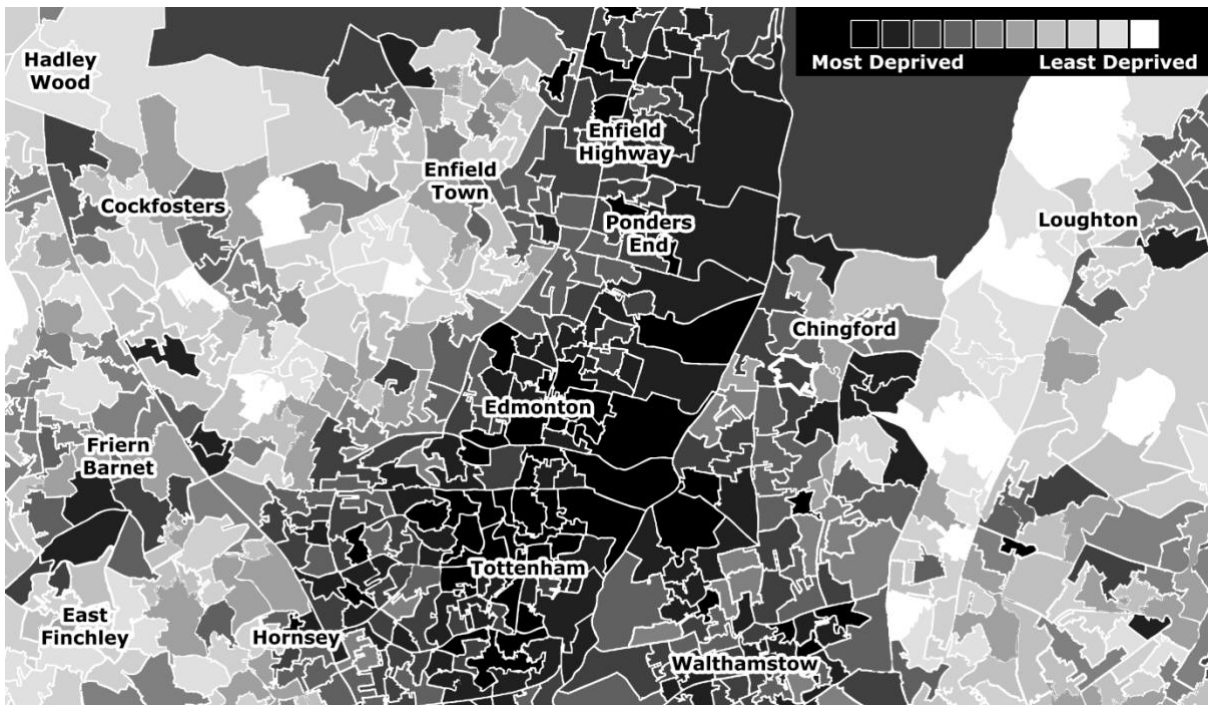


Figure 2: IMD (2015) by LSOA for North London boroughs of Enfield and Haringey

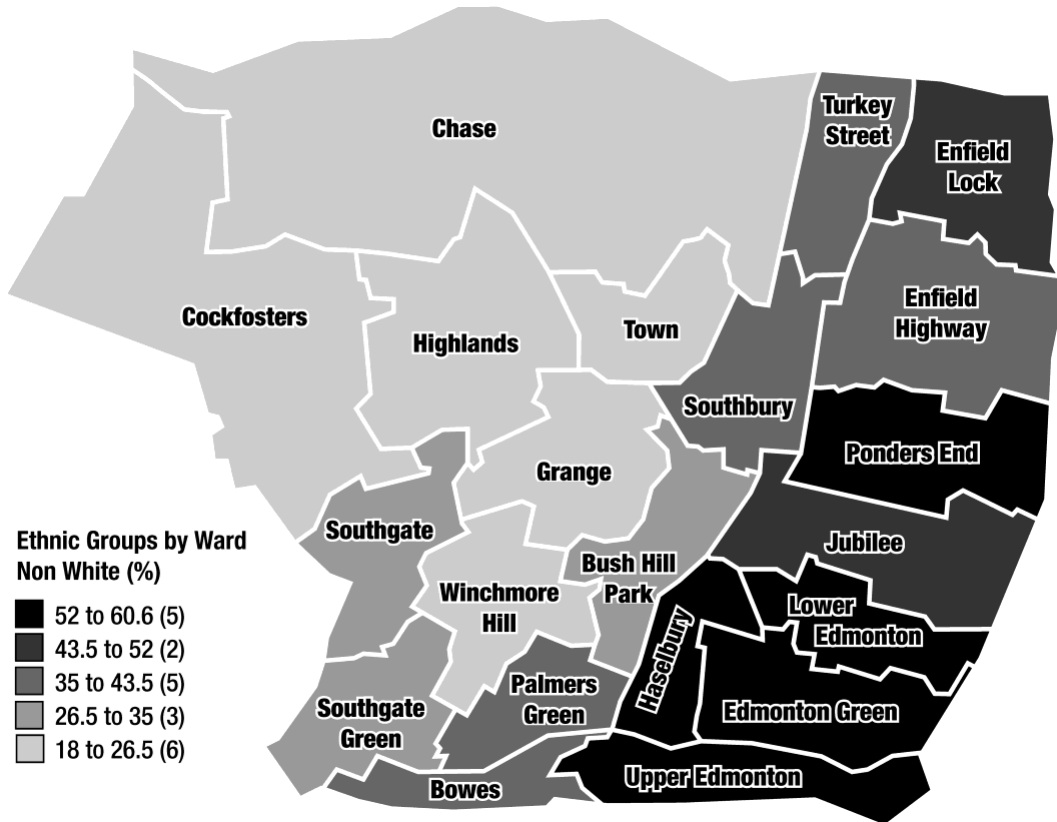


Figure 3: Distribution of Non White ethnic groups by electoral ward in the London borough of Enfield (2011 census).

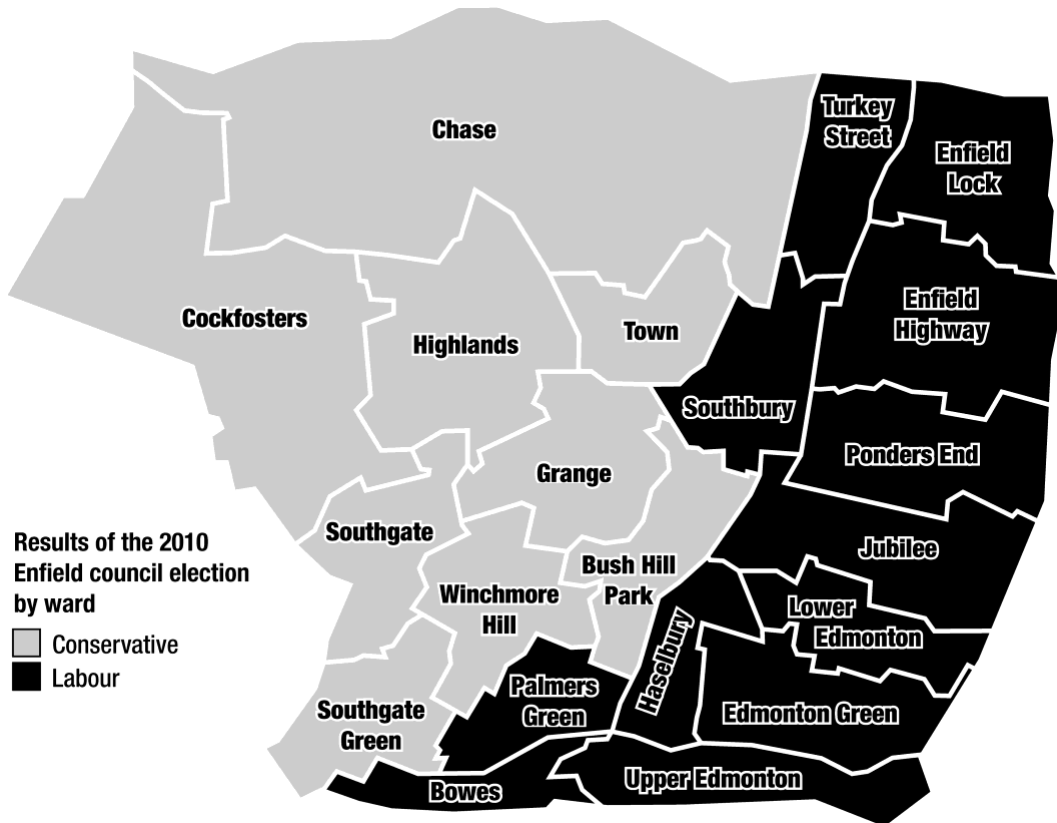


Figure 4: Election results for Enfield Borough Council (2010)

The consequences of these differences in socio-economic conditions in the borough were alluded to by a native of the area:

Statisticians say people who reside in affluent western Enfield live ten years longer on average than people from Enfield's poorer east. It's an east-west divide mirrored by a similar socio-economic chasm in Enfield's southern neighbour, Haringey, where Muswell Hill and Crouch End contrast starkly with Tottenham.²⁷

The socio-economic divisions in the borough are reflected in the geography local to Enfield Town. To the west of the main shopping street are the predominantly middle-class avenues of Chase Side followed by green belt land interspersed with affluent suburbs (such as World's End, Oakwood, Southgate and Cockfosters), country parks and golf courses. In contrast, driving a few minutes east from Enfield Town Centre along the Southbury Road (A110), passing the railway station, leads to a locality of retail parks and trading estates clustered around the dividing line of the A10. A few minutes further on lies Ponders End and the junction with the Hertford Road, the southern route to the far less-affluent neighbourhoods of Edmonton and Tottenham.

Interviews with long-time residents of the Enfield Town emphasised the socio-economic differences between the east and west of the borough:

It was quite a divide, was the borough...the main dividing line is the A10. And that, I've always thought, is quite a difference. Really it's almost like two boroughs, to be honest. It used to be, going back fifty years, it was two boroughs. And so it is quite a divide.²⁸

If you asked most of the residents of Enfield they would say "I'm quite happy to come to Enfield town and to Southgate, I don't go down to Edmonton Green.²⁹ I don't go to Wood Green anymore".

I think if you live in Grange Park³⁰...you probably never go to Ponders End. People in Ponders End...well, quite a lot of them I know don't like coming into Enfield Town because they prefer to get the bus...and go to Edmonton Green.³¹

In the wake of the 'riot' of 2011, a blogger drew attention to Enfield Town centre as a contested locale on the border between relative affluence and poverty in the borough:

Every day Enfield Town's anonymous shopping area is disturbed by groups of uninspired youngsters coming in from across the north London borough's east-west social divide. On school day afternoons police keep a watchful eye on

²⁷ (Coleman, 2011).

²⁸ (R1, Interview 2, 2016).

²⁹ Southgate is approximately four miles to the south-west of Enfield Town whilst Edmonton Green lies two miles to the south-east, see Figure 3.

³⁰ Grange Park is approximately one mile to the south-west of Enfield Town, see Figure 3.

³¹ (R2, Interview 2, 2016).

clusters of young people 'jamming' outside McDonald's and the HMV... A quieter form of individual looting has taken place in the Town's dull shopping precinct each day for many years. Store staff maintain crackling radio contact with the shopping precinct's padding, patrolling security guards.³²

This was backed up by an interview with an official involved in retail security in Enfield Town in 2011 who was asked where shoplifters resided:

Generally speaking they would be from Edmonton or Tottenham...But it's [Enfield Town] not the sort of place...that would be flagged up on their radar especially. The only thing is because it is a little bit middle class and you've got your Waitrose and this, that, and the other, they would possibly see it, from the dipper's [pickpocket] point of view rather than shoplifter's, as quite easy picking...and that we do see more and more...

The respondent then drew a clear distinction with shopping areas in the east of the borough and Enfield Town:

Edmonton Green would be different because it's labelled as such, and because it has over the years had a lot of problems. Which is sad, and perhaps in a way it's unfairly labelled now because you've got a lot of CCTV, this, that, and the other. And generally if you're going down there you're going to be more streetwise anyway. So it's [Enfield Town] not the sort of place you would expect anything. So it was a big shock to us all, Enfield Town is one of the last places you would ever expect to be a riot.³³

These testimonies point towards the symbolic significance of Enfield Town, situated as it is, on the social, economic and ethnic boundary of the wider borough. Perceived as an affluent 'frontier town', it already had a pre-history of youth from the east of the borough travelling there to 'hang out' or engage in petty crime well before the unrest of the summer of 2011.

Target selection, communication and mobilisation

In order to understand the processes that led to the targeting of Enfield Town it is useful to study the testimonies of those that took part in the disturbances in North London over the weekend of 6-7th August 2011. The perception of Enfield Town and the other suburbs in the west of the borough of Enfield as being an affluent 'other' was confirmed by a number of respondents. One participant who travelled with a group of prospective 'looters' stated:

We did get to the areas that we hoped to reach, it wasn't Tottenham or Edmonton, it was other areas in North London that are, you know, more upmarket, be it, you know, even if it's just Oakwood or somewhere like that.³⁴

³² (Coleman, 2011).

³³ (R1, Interview 2, 2016).

³⁴ Transcript LON1110111004 64-66. Oakwood lies approximately three miles to the west of Enfield Town.

In comparing their home neighbourhood of Edmonton with Enfield Town the respondent added:

Edmonton ain't got shit. The Police know that and because they know like, you know, Enfield is an area where, it's not down to racism, you get what I'm saying, don't take it the wrong way but at the end of the day, Edmonton, they said, is a United Nations feeding station. There's a lot of councillors, or you know people that work for the council like I'm talking, you know, middle class white people that live in the other areas, you know, be it Oakwood, Southgate, Enfield, Barnet, places like that, you get what I'm saying.³⁵ So obviously like a lot of the Police, I don't even know how many Policemen live in Edmonton, yeah, but if you was to get the actual statistics to where all of the Police live, I'm sure they live in the other areas you know, they don't live in Edmonton so they was probably trying to protect the areas they live in.³⁶

Enfield Town also functioned as neutral ground for a number of participants who were tied by inter-neighbourhood or post-code conflicts. One respondent who had taken part in the Tottenham 'riot' the night before the events in Enfield Town stated that:

A lot of people from my area didn't go [to the Tottenham 'riot'] because of the rivalries. They all went to Enfield.³⁷

Other interviewees claimed that Enfield Town had already been targeted for attack in the early hours of Sunday morning as the violence on the streets of Tottenham began to wane:

A. Yeah at that point um, it was quite late and people started slowly dispersing the high road and um... from there I just like, went home and ignored any stupid phone calls people gave me and stayed at home.

Q. What do you mean, stupid phone calls?

A. There was people saying do you wanna do this, do you wanna do that? I was like that's not my interest thanks.

Q. Yeah, but like people suggesting...?

A. Going other places. And I was like, nah, defeats the point for me.

Q. What places were they suggesting?

A. Wood green, Enfield, just making it go further.³⁸

The need to spread the disturbances from the epicentre in Tottenham was central to the discussions amongst those who had participated in the violence on the Saturday evening:

Basically, to tell you the truth, I'm from Edmonton, it started in Tottenham, there was a lot of people from Edmonton thinking OK, what's the next step? Cause it started in Tottenham that night but that same night they took it to Wood Green as well, yeah, so it spread quickly already, it spread instantly yeah and then there

³⁵ Barnet is approximately six miles west of Enfield Town.

³⁶ Transcript LON1110111004 325-334.

³⁷ Transcript LON1510114302 110-111.

³⁸ Transcript LON0111110703 163-175.

was a lot of people from Edmonton or Enfield, or even people from wider areas thinking OK, where's the next area they can hit? And that was Enfield, you know it didn't go to the same extent but they done it and that's how it kept spreading.³⁹

Appearing before the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, MP for North Enfield, Nick de Bois touched on these processes of communication, assessment and decision-making, some of which occurred on social media:

Well, my opinion is that there were probably two groups of people who came to Enfield. I think that there were people who, from the night before, for all I know, may have looked around and thought, "Why are we doing this to our own area in Tottenham?" and collected at Enfield. I think the communication lines and the relationships between the two boroughs are quite close. I think there was opportunism, and it became a self-fulfilling prophecy...because during the day, early on in the day, there were a number of target towns being discussed on the social media. Enfield emerged, and suddenly it becomes this self-fulfilling prophecy...it was an affluent part of the borough. So I suspect it ticked the boxes from that point of view.⁴⁰

It appears Enfield Town did 'tick the boxes' as far as the Tottenham 'rioters' and their potential collaborators were concerned. It was perceived to be an upmarket area, was considered neutral ground as far as inter-area or 'gang' rivalries were concerned and there was a pre-history of young people travelling to the contested shopping centre to 'hang-out', shop or commit petty-crime. A central tactical consideration, which was noted by police sources and was clearly understood by those planning further disorder, was that the events in Tottenham the previous night would lead to a significant police operation in that area on the following day; or as one participant put it "Everyone go Enfield, it's empty".⁴¹ Crucially, although outside the borough of Haringey, Enfield Town is only a fifteen minute train journey from Tottenham⁴² and as one blogger noted, by bus or car:

it's only a quick bomb up the A10 Cambridge Road to Enfield [Town] passing through Edmonton Green, Lower Edmonton and Northumberland Park. That's only a short brick chuck from Bruce Grove where the carpet store and flats were horrifically burnt out on Saturday night.⁴³

Those that engaged in the initial process of target selection generally did so by word of mouth or through relatively secure social network media, typically BlackBerry Messenger (BBM) systems. It was through such devices that the following communication was widely broadcast on the Sunday morning and afternoon:

³⁹ Transcript LON1110111004 224-230.

⁴⁰ (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2011, p. Ev 39).

⁴¹ Transcript LON0610111404 208-209.

⁴² Enfield Town is the last stop on the London Overground line which passes through Edmonton from Seven Sisters and Bruce Grove in Tottenham.

⁴³ (Coleman, 2011).

Everyone in edmonton enfield woodgreen everywhere in north link up at enfield town station 4 o clock sharp!!!! Start leaving ur yards [houses] n linking up with you niggas [friends]. Guck da feds [police], bring your ballys [mask up] and your bags trollys, cars vans, hammers the lot!! Keep sending this around to bare man [lots of people], make sure no snitch boys [informers] get dis!!! What ever ends [home areas] your from put your ballys on link up and cause havoc, just rob everything. Police can't stop it. Dead the fires though!! Rebroadcast!!!!⁴⁴(Intakes: Communities, commodities and class in the August 2011 riots.2011)

The line 'dead the fires' was a call to halt the burning of properties, which through the national media had spectacularly branded the disturbances in Tottenham the previous night.

Preparations, assembly and the emergence of conflict

Despite the attempt by the instigators of the call out to retain security over their communication by using the pin protected BBM service rather than other, less secure, forms of social media⁴⁵ the message leaked out.⁴⁶ According to Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) sources the first intelligence reports referring to Enfield Town as a potential target amongst several alternatives came from BBM messages passed onto them just after midday on the Sunday afternoon.⁴⁷ The MPS for the borough of Enfield reacted to the intelligence reports in three ways. At 2.00pm a Safer Neighbourhoods Team (SNT) were sent to patrol Enfield Town Centre and two marked police cars were sent to keep watch on the proposed meeting point in the intercepted BBM message, Enfield Town railway station (Locations 5 and 1 respectively on Figure 5).⁴⁸ Between 3.00 and 3.30pm police used the *Enfield Business Against Crime* radio network, which linked the security teams in the two shopping malls and larger shops, to inform them of the potential for unrest and advising them to close down.⁴⁹ One of these malls was subsequently sealed off by deploying the shutters. As businesses began to shut down, police officers warned members of the public and encouraged them to leave the town centre.⁵⁰ Finally, at 3.25pm, Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 was authorised for the borough of Enfield, which allowed police officers to order the removal of

⁴⁴ (Intakes: Communities, commodities and class in the August 2011 riots, 2011, p. 2).

⁴⁵ A number of participants in the Enfield disturbances made it clear that Facebook, Twitter and other social networking sites were widely regarded as insecure media as they could be tracked by police. For example, see Transcript LON0610111404 215-217.

⁴⁶ According to David Lammy MP for Tottenham the above BBM message targeting Enfield Town was received on the Sunday morning by one of his younger constituents who informed his parents. They passed it via a local councillor to the police (Lammy, 2012, pp. 27-29).

⁴⁷ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 56-58; Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2011, pp. 113-114; Jefferson, 2014, p. 17; Guardian & London School of Economics, 2011a, pp. 30-31; Intakes: Communities, commodities and class in the August 2011 riots, 2011, pp. 1-2). This timing is corroborated by the first tweet specifically mentioning Enfield Town as a target at 12.29pm: "mandem [a group of friends] are getting brave and planning riots EVERYWHERE ! - Edmonton Green, Lewisham and Enfield town, really though?" (Guardian & London School of Economics, 2011b, ShanieceDouglas UTC 11:29:16).

⁴⁸ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 56-58; Enfield Council, 2012, p. 12).

⁴⁹ Later in the day this system was also used for real-time communication between the police and businesses. The town centre manager stated "We could communicate with the majority of shops and talk to the police...Palace Gardens security team were keeping us aware of what was going on and giving information about where groups were gathering" (Swift action and radio link kept looting low in town, 2011).

⁵⁰ (Enfield Council, 2012, p. 12; Hardiman, 2011; Betting shops targeted as police grapple with rioters in town centre, 2011; Swift action and radio link kept looting low in town, 2011).

facial coverings and to stop and search pedestrians and vehicles at will.⁵¹ Thus, what would have otherwise been a busy town centre populated with shoppers and other members of the public now became a largely closed and unusually deserted space.

At about 3.00pm, as these measures were being implemented, several arrests were made of Black juveniles outside a Subway fast-food outlet on Church Street in the town centre. Half an hour later images of the youths being apprehended, including one of a youngster spread-eagled by police officers over the bonnet of a police car, began to circulate on Twitter.⁵² At 3.30pm, just as the town centre completed its 'lock-down', the first signs that the BBM callout had been successful became apparent as groups of youths began arriving at Enfield Town station.⁵³ As more people arrived on trains and buses police officers used Section 60 powers to search their person and identify them.⁵⁴ The following three hours were marked by a tense stand-off between growing crowds and an increasingly heavy police presence:

On what was a warm, mainly sunny day, a large group of youths, with faces covered with bandanas, masks and hoodies, congregated around the Town, primarily in the Market Place, McDonald's and Cecil Road. Police officers were taunted with veiled threats, but stood their ground. The CCTV footage...showed that the people involved in the rioting came from all ethnic backgrounds and ages and included young women.⁵⁵

One participant recalled this tense period:

To be honest Enfield it was like, when's it going to start? Come on, who's dashing the first rock...⁵⁶

At about 5.00pm after reports of a crowd of 50-100 youths were breaking shop windows in Edmonton several miles away, MPS Central Command, sent four Police Support Units (PSU) to assist the borough, one of which arrived in Enfield Town about forty-five minutes later.⁵⁷

⁵¹ (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2011, pp. 113-114).

⁵² (Guardian & London School of Economics, 2011b, BrumProtestor UTC 15:42:07, CL_SuBella 14:11:00 and xSamanthaHx UTC 14:32:18)

⁵³ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 56-58).

⁵⁴ (Hardiman, 2011d; Hardiman, 2011i).

⁵⁵ (Enfield Council, 2012, p.7).

⁵⁶ Transcript LON1510114302 317-318.

⁵⁷ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 56-57).

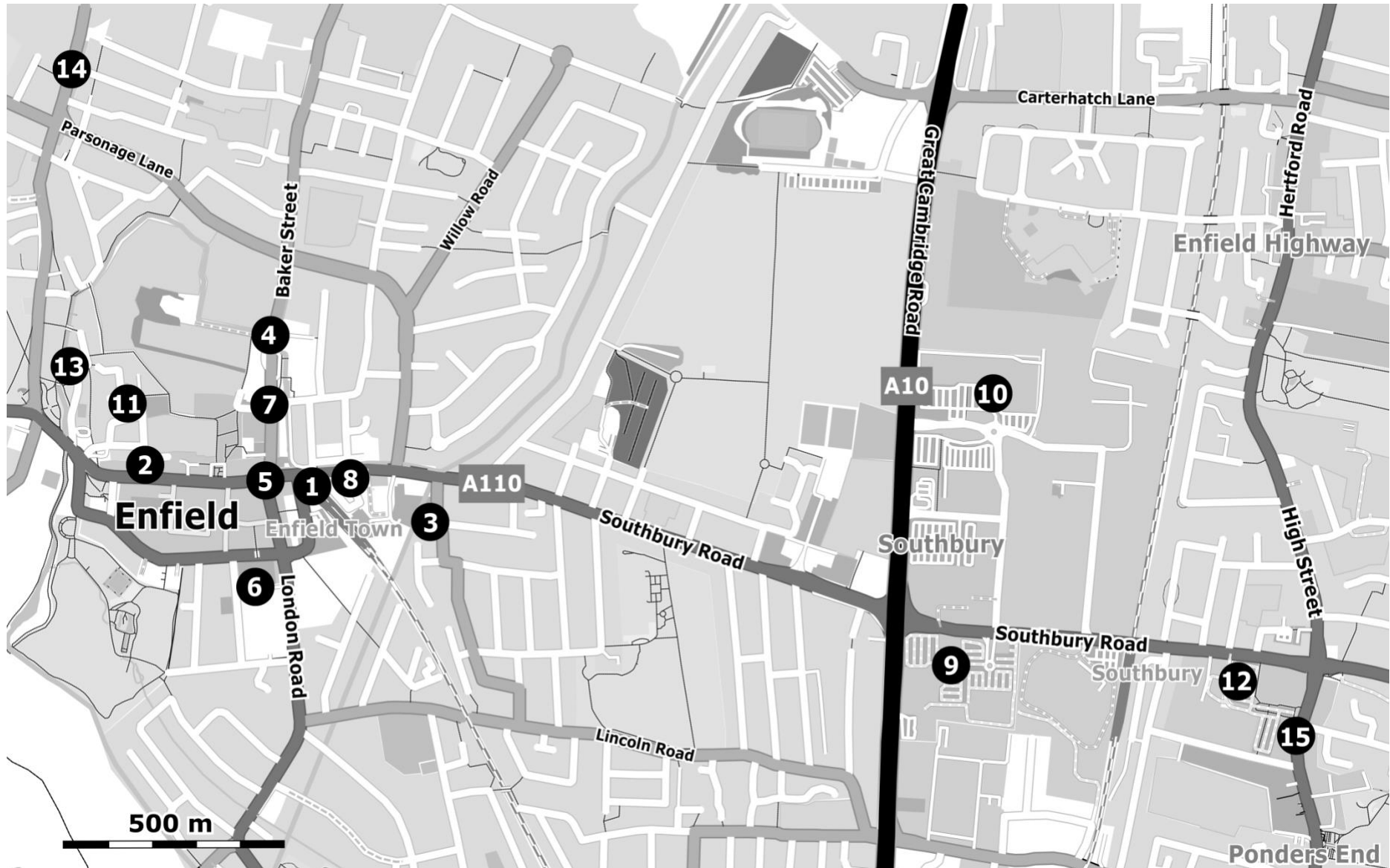


Figure 5: Enfield Town and Ponders End.

Figure 5: Key

- 1: Enfield Town: Station
- 2: Enfield Town: Church Street
- 3: Enfield Town: Queens Road - Tesco's
- 4: Enfield Town: Police Station
- 5: Enfield Town Centre
- 6: Enfield Town: Cecil Road – Argos
- 7: Enfield Town: Silver Street
- 8: Enfield Town: Colman Parade
- 9: De Mandeville Retail Park
- 10: Enfield Retail Park
- 11: Enfield Town: Little Park Gardens
- 12: Ponders End: High Street – Tesco's
- 13: Enfield Town: Gentleman's Row
- 14: Enfield Town: Chase Side
- 15: Ponders End: High Street

Just before 6.30pm on Church Street, the main shopping street in Enfield Town (Location 2, Figure 5) a crowd of 80-100 people armed with rubble from a road works began breaking the windows of an HMV store and an adjacent mobile phone shop, which they then proceeded to loot. Others began building a make-shift barricade out of rubbish bins and road work barriers outside the nearby Post Office. Further up the road another group smashed the windows of Starbucks and Pearsons, a large department store.⁵⁸ One eye-witness, a BBC reporter, tweeted "most rioters looked under 16, lots of young girls throwing concrete slabs through shop windows".⁵⁹ The outbreak of property damage and looting attracted a police car which stopped at the barricade and according to one eye-witness:

turned up trying to deter them, but instead they turned on the police car, jumped on the roof and absolutely trashed it.⁶⁰

The police officers escaped from the vehicle which was then attacked with bricks and concrete blocks.⁶¹ An MPS report noted:

This marked an escalation in the level of disorder and it was also significant that the actions of the crowd tended to suggest aggression towards authority rather than a focus on looting.⁶²

⁵⁸ (Enfield Council, 2012, p.12; 'Turn looting children in to police,' says mum who reported her own Olympic ambassador daughter for 'taking part in rioting' 2011; Hardiman, 2011b; Bowater & Hazell, 2011; Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, EN2 6AF; Hackney Hive, 2011; Uaware, 2011).

⁵⁹ (Hardiman, 2011h).

⁶⁰ (Ensor, Hough, & Sanchez, 2011).

⁶¹ ('Turn looting children in to police,' says mum who reported her own Olympic ambassador daughter for 'taking part in rioting' 2011; Camber, Martin, & Wilkes, 2011; Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 56-58; Enfield Council, 2012, p. 12; Hardiman, 2011f; George Manfred, 2011; Ensor, 2011; Ensor et al., 2011; Hackney Hive, 2011; Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, EN2 6EA).

⁶² (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 58).

In response to the mounting violence two further PSU's were sent by the MPS and a Public Order Commander, Chief Inspector Graham Dean, arrived in Enfield Town. At this point the decision was made to withdraw all non-Public Order trained officers from the immediate scene.⁶³ A Police Inspector in charge of a PSU that had travelled from a football match in East London to attend Enfield Town described the scene as his unit reached the town centre:

When we arrived obviously we were quite visible. Prior to us being there it was the local borough police. A panda car, some foot officers etc. So when we turn up in carriers, big vans already dressed [in public order equipment] so ... that inevitably means that normal members of the public would leave and most of what we saw at that time was very young people in their very stereotypical trainers sportswear type no particular defined group as such but that sort of casual sportswear and ... they just seemed to be revelling in it really.⁶⁴

Twenty minutes after the incidents on Church Street at the other end of Enfield Town security guards reported that 30-50 masked youths were attempting to break into the large Tesco Superstore to the rear of Enfield Town station (Location 3, Figure 5). A PSU rushed to the scene, engaged the group and then chased them along nearby residential streets towards the Southbury Road.⁶⁵

Patterns of conflict

After these initial skirmishes in Enfield Town there was a lull in the violence for over an hour. However, photos of the damaged police vehicle, barricaded streets and of HMV being looted were now passing through electronic social networks, confirming to any doubters that the 'Enfield riot' was a reality.⁶⁶ By 8.00pm CCTV intelligence began to reach police showing a growth in the crowds congregating near Enfield Town station as even more people began to arrive, swelling the numbers present to several hundred.⁶⁷ St Andrews Road, opposite the station, appeared to be a pre-planned congregation point. Around 200 young people lingered there, some wearing masks. Others in the crowd knocked down walls, and were smashing bricks into smaller pieces against the floor to make them easier to throw at police.⁶⁸ By 8.10pm police officers at the station were claiming that they were having bricks and bottles thrown at them.⁶⁹ There was also a report that a separate group of a hundred hooded youths had gathered close to Enfield Town Police station (Location 4, Figure 5).⁷⁰

The earlier pause in the violence had given time for the MPS to send for further reinforcements from the City of London police, to deploy a Territorial Support Group (TSG)

⁶³ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 56-58).

⁶⁴ (Interview 3, 2017).

⁶⁵ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 56-59; Hardiman, 2011a; Hardiman, 2011h; Guardian & London School of Economics, 2011b, chrissnelltweet UTC 17:54:16; Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, EN1 1QF).

⁶⁶ Analysis of twitter data demonstrated that within half an hour of the initial outbreak of violence (from about 7.00pm) these three images were being widely disseminated on social media (Guardian & London School of Economics, 2011b).

⁶⁷ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 56-59). Estimates of the numbers of those involved in the incidents in Enfield Town in all the sources range from 200-600.

⁶⁸ (The Guardian, 2011; Lewis, 2011a).

⁶⁹ (Guardian & London School of Economics, 2011b, billykenber UTC 19:11:33).

⁷⁰ (BBC, 2011).

unit⁷¹ and a number of dog-handlers. However, at about 8.20pm violence reignited close to the station, as described by local MP, Nick de Bois:

I'd been chatting to the owner of Bar Ten when about 20 youths walked past, two of them carrying crowbars. A large police van was coming down London Road, when it turned right – the crowd went for it and managed to smash a window. Then it went a little crazy.⁷²

In response riot police charged at the crowd outside the station who fled en masse into the town centre.⁷³ Some elements of the crowd then turned their attention to tearing open the shutters of a jewellers and a neighbouring betting shop (Location 5, Figure 5). More than £40,000 of jewellery was stolen before the dramatic arrival of three TSG vans caused the looters to scatter from the shops. The following few minutes saw confusion in the town centre as police officers in full riot gear dispersed the crowds using batons and dogs, making a number of arrests in the process.⁷⁴ The arrival of the TSG unit in Enfield Town centre was later described by de Bois:

What was happening quite quickly...was more public order police were arriving from Tottenham...They arrived quickly and they arrived obviously in the TSG vehicles, which in itself probably and ultimately incited the level of violence to a new level.⁷⁵

As de Bois alluded to, the aggressive dispersal of the crowd from the town centre did not lessen the violence. As dusk fell, a crowd of 150 attacked police lines on London Road and then smashed the shop front of Argos with bricks and rubble (Location 6, Figure 5).⁷⁶ Two hundred metres further south along the London Road, an unmarked and a marked police car were damaged by missiles and abandoned on Essex Road. An attempt was made to set the latter on fire.⁷⁷

As the action on London Road unfolded, a second group of 50-100 people, to the north of Enfield Town centre on Silver Street, looted a chemist and then began to wreck a Bathroom department store (Location 7, Figure 5). Having attracted a TSG unit they then set about bombarding them with bricks, until waving their batons, the police charged.⁷⁸ The to and fro of the battle on Silver Street continued for about ten minutes before the TSG unit drove the

⁷¹ A Territorial Support Group (TSG) is a specialized police support unit within the MPS trained to Level 1 PSU to deal with serious incidents of public disorder. A typical TSG unit consists of three carriers (vans), 18 constables and three sergeants reporting to an Inspector (College of Policing).

⁷² (McConnell, 2011).

⁷³ (Rogers & Sedghi, 2011; Lewis, 2011a; Hardiman, 2011b; Betting shops targeted as police grapple with rioters in town centre, 2011; McConnell, 2011; Bowater & Hazell, 2011).

⁷⁴ (Lewis, 2011a; Enfield Council, 2012, p. 13; Corfield, 2011; The Guardian, 2011; KommondossChannel, 2011; RT, 2011b; Camber et al., 2011; BBC, 2011; Kenber, 2011; Ochyra, 2011; Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, EN2 6LU) and Transcript LON1510114302 122-124.

⁷⁵ (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2011, Ev 39).

⁷⁶ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 56-59; Enfield Council, 2012, p. 13; Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, EN2 6TR).

⁷⁷ (Bowater & Hazell, 2011, Image 2; gettyimages, 2011; Army Rumour Service, 2011; Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, EN2 6TZ).

⁷⁸ (kickracistarse, 2011; newsreeldemocracy, 2011; paramambo, 2011).

'rioters' into Enfield Grammar School playing fields where they scattered over fences and into the back alleys of the west end of Enfield Town.⁷⁹

At this point the police operation to secure Enfield Town centre was joined by a mounted police unit that had arrived on the scene an hour previously and a helicopter.⁸⁰ Around 9.00pm the MPS made the decision to push the remaining people from outside the railway station eastwards down the Southbury Road.⁸¹ Breaking into smaller groups, many of the 'rioters' had already come to a similar judgment but for quite different reasons. Leaving the police to defend the now empty Enfield Town centre they headed on foot towards two retail parks situated on the junction with the A10 (Great Cambridge Road). As a parting gesture one group smashed a line of small retailers including a pharmacy, a betting shop and an empty sandwich bar (Location 8, Figure 5) with apparent impunity, before making their way into the gathering darkness.⁸²

As the police secured the town centre and the majority of the 'rioters' made their way east along the Southbury Road, others, who had dispersed through the playing fields of the Grammar School, were now in some of the wealthiest avenues of Enfield Town. Their route, a wide arc skirting the west and north of Enfield Town through fashionable and affluent Chase Side, was marked by a burning cars, an Audi (Location 11, Figure 5) and Ford (Location 13, Figure 5), vandalism to other private vehicles and homes, followed by a number of smashed and looted shops (Location 14, Figure 5). Acting on intelligence that petrol bombs had been thrown, the MPS Public Order Commander deemed it unsafe for the Fire Brigade to intervene and left the cars to burn.⁸³

Looting of the retail parks

The police tactics to deal with the disturbances in Enfield Town had involved waiting for adequate reinforcements to arrive before they acted. By 9.30pm they had a number of public-order trained PSU and TSG units, police dogs, Jankel armoured vehicles and several helicopters in the vicinity.⁸⁴ The plan to disperse the crowds from the centre of Enfield Town and then seal it off appeared to have been a success. However, the policed perimeter remained close to the town centre and had only been extended about 200m along the Southbury Road.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ (Coleman, 2011; BBC, 2011; Storyful., 2011; Roberts, 2011; Ochyra, 2011) and Transcript LON1210110820 332-364. Holly Walk appears to have been one of the main 'escape routes' from the TSG unit (Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, EN2 6QB).

⁸⁰ (Lewis, 2011a).

⁸¹ (Victoria Tilson, 2014; Chris Spiteri, 2011).

⁸² (Enfield Council, 2012, p. 13; Corfield, 2011; GHSRArchives, 2011; Uaware, 2011; Betting shops targeted as police grapple with rioters in town centre, 2011; Ochyra, 2011; Pharmacist forced to face thugs after police fail to help, 2011) and Transcript LON1510114302 125-126.

⁸³ (Enfield Council, 2012, p. 12; Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, pp. 56-59; Coleman, 2011; Terror at car blaze leaves martial arts coach's life in ruins 2011; kie7077, 2011; Uaware, 2011; Hardiman, 2011e; Corfield, 2011; Hardiman, 2011e; Ochyra, 2011; Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, EN2 0PW, EN2 0AR, EN2 0ND, EN2 0PR, EN2 0RJ, EN2 6PT, EN2 6PU, EN2 6PQ and EN2 6QB).

⁸⁴ (Guardian & London School of Economics, 2011b, PatchSheridan UTC 20:27:02, SciStarborne UTC 20:28:43, eepyaich UTC 20:35:43)

⁸⁵ (Guardian & London School of Economics, 2011b, unclebarry UTC 20:30:56)

The first signs that the MPS tactic to disperse the main body of the ‘rioters’ eastwards along the Southbury Road was improvident came with several reports around 9.30pm of PSU carriers travelling to Enfield Town being attacked with “bricks and paving slabs” by a crowd of over 100.⁸⁶ This was followed a quarter of an hour later by news that the Enfield and De Mandeville retail parks about a mile from Enfield Town, situated north and south respectively of the A10-Southbury Road junction (Locations 9 and 10, Figure 5), were being invaded by groups of ‘looters’.⁸⁷ A number of commercial outlets were targeted, including Argos, PC World, Comet and Curry’s (electrical goods), JB Sport and Sports Direct (clothing) and Sainsbury’s (General).⁸⁸ Other stores such as Toys R Us and Pets at Home were completely untouched.⁸⁹ It wasn’t until after 10.00pm that the MPS Public Order Commander felt confident enough to release police resources from Enfield Town centre to deal with the looting.⁹⁰ By that stage most of the ‘looters’ had moved on from the retail parks, leaving only small numbers of late-comers and stragglers to be arrested and in some cases violently dealt with by the arriving PSU’s.⁹¹

The principal route of the retreating ‘rioters’ was again exposed at around 10.20pm when, half a mile further east, the Tesco Extra store in Ponders End was looted by 60-70 people of £100,000 of stock including DVDs, computer games, televisions, sports equipment and some food (Location 12, Figure 5).⁹² Twelve members of staff watched from the back of the shop as the thieving took place, with one commenting “It was like some people were doing their weekly shop”.⁹³ By 10.30pm the route of the ‘rioters and looters’ was becoming increasingly clear to MPS commanders. Most of those on foot were now heading south along the Hertford Road through Ponders End, towards Edmonton and the boundary with the borough of Haringey. Though this did not mean they were now in full retreat; police units sent to intercept ‘looters’ in the retail parks and Ponders End had been attacked with missiles, shops along the Hertford Road were being damaged and looted and at 10.40pm reports came in that shops were now being attacked in Edmonton.⁹⁴ As a result of these incidents the decision was made to block the route from Ponders end to Edmonton by barricading the main north-south thoroughfare, Fore Street, with police vans. This was achieved just after 11.00pm and, despite attempts by rioters to create their own barricade with a burning post van on Fore Street, extensive looting in Edmonton was probably prevented by these actions combined with a large police presence.⁹⁵

The remainder of the evening and the early hours of Monday morning were marked by sporadic incidents of property damage, looting and violence throughout the borough of

⁸⁶ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, EN1 1YG and EN1 1YY).

⁸⁷ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, EN1 1TH, EN1 1TW, EN1 3RW).

⁸⁸(Enfield Council, 2012, p. 13; RT, 2011a; RT, 2011c; Darlington, 2011a; Uaware, 2011).

⁸⁹ (Darlington, 2011a).

⁹⁰ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, pp. 56-59).

⁹¹ Transcripts LON0610111701 82-184, LON1510114302 126-143 and LON2410111009 146-149, 199-209, 308-325.

⁹² (Enfield Council, 2012, p. 13; Uaware, 2011; Metropolitan Police Service, 2017, EN3 4DP).

⁹³ (Darlington, 2011b).

⁹⁴ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012 pp. 56-59; Enfield Council, 2012 p. 13).

⁹⁵ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012 pp. 56-59; Enfield Council, 2012 p. 13).

Enfield.⁹⁶ It was not until 3.00am that the MPS were able to claim that they had “regained control”, though there were isolated incidents of looting reported until dawn.⁹⁷

4. Points of significance

There are a number of significant points that arise from the analysis of the disturbances in Enfield borough that occurred principally on Sunday 7th August 2011 but reverberated over the following days. These features are outlined below.

Unlike the more spontaneous Tottenham and Hackney ‘riots’ examined by Stott et al.⁹⁸ the gathering in Enfield Town was did not conform to conventional definitions of a protest or demonstration and was clearly planned in advance. This was apparent in several eye-witness accounts, with one Guardian journalist claiming “The mood was calmer, it felt premeditated”.⁹⁹ A participant comparing several of the disturbances over that weekend captured the mood of the Enfield ‘riots’:

Tottenham angry, Wood Green was a joke, and Enfield was serious...they wanted to prove a point to the police, they wanted to get back at them.¹⁰⁰

The selection of Enfield Town with the aim of spreading the disorders was a both a consequence of the disturbances in Haringey the day before and a tactical response to the expected heavy policing in that borough in their aftermath. Enfield Town was not a random target; evidence suggests that it was selected on the basis that it was relatively easy to travel to and was considered to be an ‘upmarket’ area, thereby providing both looting opportunities and a location for indiscriminate damage to property. It also functioned as neutral ground from the perspective of inter-area rivalries and had an existing pre-history of contestation between youth from poorer parts of the borough and private and public security personnel in the shopping centre.

Organising a ‘contentious gathering’ in a particular location does not mean that confrontation is inevitable or that if a confrontation occurs, it will necessarily develop into violence. Although the authorities had advance information that Enfield Town was a potential target, reacted by shutting the town centre down and instigated potentially provocative measures such as Section 60 powers, it took nearly three hours of tense standoff between interlopers and police before damage to property and violence was initiated by the former. The reason for apparent inaction by the Enfield Town police when faced with a masked and aggressive crowd was stated retrospectively by a local Detective Chief Inspector:

It's clear that there were more people to deal with than officers and the events were organised by social networking. The tactics used were to contain the rioters

⁹⁶ (Enfield Council, 2012, p. 13).

⁹⁷ (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012, p. 60).

⁹⁸ (C. Stott et al., 2016; C. Stott & Reicher, 2011; C. Stott et al., Forthcoming).

⁹⁹ (Lewis, 2011a).

¹⁰⁰ Transcript LON1210110820 368-372.

and keep the public safe rather than go in and arrest them in the act – that is what the police are trained to do.¹⁰¹

After initial outbreak of violence in Enfield Town centre had occurred there was a lull in the action for more than an hour before it resumed in the vicinity of the railway station. However, by this stage it was estimated that sixty public-order trained and equipped officers were present in Enfield Town.¹⁰² The arrival of a TSG unit in the midst of the looting of the jewellers in the town centre and their aggressive dispersal of the crowd using batons and dogs may have intensified the violence. However, for nearly five hours the interlopers occupied Enfield Town refusing to leave, suggesting that this was no mere looting mission but was, in itself, an expression of power.

The original BBM call out which encouraged travelling to Enfield Town did not solely generate the crowds in Enfield Town. Instead there appear to be two phases to the mobilisation and assembly process. The second phase occurred after visual images of the looting of HMV and the damaged police car in the town centre at 6.30pm entered social media networks. The actuality of the ‘Enfield riot’ became a spur for others to travel to the area, leading to increases in the crowd size at the station at 8.00pm.

From eye-witness accounts and from studying video evidence the composition of the crowds appears to be in the main made up of young adults from a number of ethnic groups, with White and African-Caribbean youths predominating. Though a minority, there were a significant number of women present in the crowds.

As was alluded to in the introduction, the disturbances in Enfield Town were characterised by most of the media and local political commentators as being an exercise in looting. However, studying the behaviour of the crowds in Enfield Town suggests that the primary motive was not acquisitive, despite the content of the BBM callout. Instead property damage and looting had several motives; to draw the police into stand-up fights, as an assertion of power and to emphasise the impotence of the authorities.¹⁰³ However, as the evening wore on the dynamics of the disturbances began to change. After the assertion of power through the occupation of Enfield Town centre and attacks on police units and property in the early evening the crowds then moved onto the nearby retail parks where the commodity riot form began to predominate amongst the participants.¹⁰⁴ This was characterised by targeting high value items that could be easily transported, the use of vehicles and avoiding police units rather than directly engaging with them. However, when some smaller groups found themselves in the wealthier avenues of Chase Side, west of Enfield Town, they resorted to property damage more in keeping with the “discriminating indiscriminatio” noted by Ball and Drury in similar areas of London.¹⁰⁵

Despite these variations in the application of theft, damage to property and violence against the person some clear limiting behaviours can be drawn from the evidence. Apart from an

¹⁰¹ (Hardiman, 2011g).

¹⁰² (Bowater & Hazell, 2011).

¹⁰³ (C. Stott et al., 2016, p. 9; C. Stott et al., Forthcoming).

¹⁰⁴ (Intakes: Communities, commodities and class in the August 2011 riots, 2011, p.7).

¹⁰⁵ (Ball & Drury, 2012, p.17).

account of some residents being pushed by fleeing 'rioters' in Enfield Town there were no accounts of violence to the person other than that carried out against police officers.¹⁰⁶ This was reflected in the significant number of police vehicles that were damaged, in several cases with the occupants still inside. As far as arson is concerned, in keeping with the BBM call out to 'dead the fires', no major building fires occurred on the night of 7-8th August in Enfield Borough. However, four unoccupied civilian vehicles were burned out, two in Chase Side west of Enfield Town and two other in Edmonton, and there were a number of small fires in rubbish bins. From the perspective of property damage, there were very few direct attacks on private houses and these were limited to the wealthy area of Chase Side. However, there was considerable damage to a number of shops and businesses. Selective looting was apparent throughout the evening, particularly in the retail parks, where it was generally determined by value, portability and the desires of the young.

A key feature of the disturbances was the route that the retreating participants took from Enfield Town. This exposed not only the location of the home neighbourhoods of the travellers to Enfield Town but also the social geography of the borough. If we view the occupation of Enfield Town as an extended 'raid' by interlopers from other areas then we would expect to see them return towards what they regarded as 'safety' rather than heading off into the unknown neighbourhoods of the west of the borough. This is precisely what the evidence suggests, with the 'raiders' choosing to head eastwards along the Southbury Road, robbing retail parks along the way, before heading south along the Hertford Road towards the 'safety' of their home areas in Edmonton and Tottenham. Any groups that ended up to the west of Enfield Town were forced by the occupation of the town centre by police to take circumferential routes to the north in order to get back onto the pathway to home.

Little has been mentioned in this analysis concerning inter-ethnic tensions, specifically between residents of Enfield Town and the poorer and more cosmopolitan areas to the south and east of the borough. These were exposed in part by the actions of White vigilante groups that marched onto the streets of Enfield Town and Ponders End on the Tuesday evening following the disturbances.¹⁰⁷ This study has, however, specifically concentrated on the events of Sunday 7th and Monday 8th August 2011 that are considered by the author to have comprised the 'Enfield riot'.

¹⁰⁶ (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2011, Ev 39). In the other disturbances in Enfield borough this also appeared to be the case, although there were reports of two fire engines being damaged by missiles in Edmonton (Hardiman, 2011c).

¹⁰⁷ (Lewis, 2011b).

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