Assets, Regeneration and Growth Committee

16 March 2016

Title	**Town Centres in Barnet**
Report of	Cath Shaw, Commissioning Director, Growth & Development
Wards	All
Status	Public
Enclosures	Appendix A: *Definitions of different types of town centre* Appendix B: *List of local and neighbourhood town centres in Barnet*
Officer Contact Details	Luke Ward, Commissioning and Policy Advisor (Economist), Email: luke.ward@barnet.gov.uk, Telephone: 020 8359 2672

Summary

On 15 December 2014 Assets Regeneration and Growth Committee considered an approach to supporting economic success across the borough.

The approach included specific proposals relating to assisting town centres to respond to the challenges and opportunities associated with national trends like increasing use of internet shopping, growth in socially-focused town centre activities, and a growing population. This will ensure that scarce public resources can be used in a way that maximises returns to local businesses and the public purse.

They also introduced a new category of “main” town centre, which is described as a place serving a wider area with a broader offer of daytime, evening and business services, and with a stronger economic and social/cultural gravity beyond the immediate locality.

The Committee requested additional data relating to town centres so that it can agree an approach. Data from the Greater London Authority relating to the scale, size of local population, and business mixture is included below. The report contains recommendations about which town centres should be considered as “Main”, and sets out an approach to working with and supporting all town centres in Barnet.

Recommendations
The committee is requested to: **1. Approve and confirm the town centres set out in paragraph 2.6 as Main town centres.** **2. Consider and approve the amendments to the "town centre offer" set out in table 1.**

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

1.1 At its meeting on 15 December 2014 ARG Committee asked for further discussion on proposals relating to town centres based on data.

1.2 Specifically, the proposals set out a framework for supporting different kinds of town centres across the fifteen district and major centres, and fifteen neighbourhood centres. They give a defined offer of support for all town centres in the Borough based on their relative sizes, functions and importance to the local community, and potential for future growth. The proposals also introduce the category of "Main" town centre.

1.3 A main town centre is a place that has a wider economic and social function due to its larger scale, size of the local population, infrastructure connections, and broader mixture of businesses and amenities than other centres. It might for example be a place that people travel from further afield to do some shopping, enjoy a meal, work, or to have a business meeting. Definitions of the different types of town centres are set out in Appendix A.

1.4 The committee is asked to agree and approve which town centres in Barnet should be allocated as main town centres based on the data provided in table 2 and the recommendations.

2. THE OFFER

2.1 By giving clarity about the nature of the offer available to different kinds of town centre in Barnet, and also ensuring that limited public resources are allocated on the basis of quality data around things like town centre scale, population size, and an overarching narrative relating to growth and town centre success, the council can ensure that it maximises the positive social and economic impact of its activity.

2.2 This will also ensure that town centres are able to respond to the well-publicised changes facing high streets, including for instance greater use of online shopping services and growing demand from residents for more town centre activities relating to lifestyle such as cafes, restaurants, beauty salons and gyms.

2.3 The proposals have been designed to ensure that even the smallest local centre has a clear and consistent offer of support in place that reflects its importance to the local community and businesses, and gives local businesses and residents easy access to the information and networks they need to boost the success and vitality of the area. They also encourage smaller neighbourhood and local centres to apply for external funding wherever there is the opportunity.

2.4 The offer for each type of town centre is set out in table 1 below. The differences between the different categories are in some cases subtle, for example a main town centre may have a town team that is actively supported and funded by the council, whereas a town team in a smaller district or local centre will have direct access to a wide range of information and networking opportunities with other existing town teams, but wouldn't necessarily receive direct financial support from the council. In terms of new developments, including housing developments, main town centres might be actively marketed outside of the borough as places to focus on, and smaller centres would respond to market forces locally:

Table 1: The Town Centre Offer[1]

Activity	Main Town Centres	District Town Centres	Local Town Centres
Town Teams	Actively supported where there is local demand and potential for them to be operated independently of the Council. This may involve seed funding.	Where there is local demand will actively receive advice and mentoring from the Council.	Where there is local demand will receive information from the Council and encouraged to network with other town teams.
Funding opportunities[7]	Prioritised unless funding has already been allocated for similar intervention in the last two years.	Yes if there is identified local need or if driven locally ~~additional capacity required to accommodate local development~~	Yes if there is identified local need ~~and seen as priority over main or district town centres, or if required to accommodate expected local development.~~ and if driven locally
Support to night time economy	Yes – targeted support focusing on main town centres especially via planning and partnership working with the police.	Yes where there is specific local demand or has been identified as an area of more than local importance to the evening economy..	Only if identified as an area of more than local importance to the evening economy.
Residential Development promoted	Yes – Opportunities actively marketed and promoted to developers and investors.	Where there is market demand.	Where there is market demand.
20mph zones	Where there is local demand and funding 20mph zones will be implemented. Promoted by the Council.	Will be considered on a case-by-case basis according to local need and demand.	Will be considered on a case-by-case basis according to local need and demand.
Markets and street trading	Where there is local need will be actively supported by the Council.	Where there is local demand the Council will provide advice, mentoring and information to support locally-led markets.	Where there is local demand the Council will provide information and networking opportunities to support locally-led markets.
Town Keepers	One for each main town centre, with a wider role to understanding the needs of local businesses and residents and feeding these back.	Where there is identified local need and funding is available.	May share a single town keeper
Town centre accessibility	Actively supported, connection to wider infrastructure and transport links promoted and lobbied for.	Supported where there is local demand or identified need.	Where there is local demand or identified need, and seen as a priority over district town centres.
Parking	There should always be available spaces, even during peak usage.	There should always be available spaces, even during peak usage.	85% capacity at peak periods targeted.

2.5 Table 2 below sets out the most recent data from the GLA for district and major town centres in Barnet (statistics for smaller neighbourhood centres are not collated), including the total amount of space dedicated to all commercial activity, and the total amount devoted to leisure (reflecting an economic and community function wider than purely retail). It is noteworthy that the larger districts have more than twice the commercial floor space of the smaller ones, and Edgware more than three times so.

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[1] Note struck through text in table 1 above reflecting amendment made to the table originally considered by the Committee at its meeting on 15 December 2014.

Table 2: GLA Town Centre Health Check data[2]

Centre	GLA Classification (LP2011)	Total town centre floor space (sq/m)	Leisure services (sq/m)	Main?	Rationale
Edgware	Major	44,938	8,288	Yes	Already a major centre
Chipping Barnet	District	37,013	7,871	Yes	Scale, broad offer
North Finchley	District	36,638	9,854	Yes	Scale, largest resident population in Barnet
Cricklewood	District	35971	11,929	Yes	Cross boundary centre with the largest leisure offer - subject to on-going close working with Camden and Brent
Burnt Oak	District	30,739	6,464	Yes	Scale, evening economy and future growth potential
Church End, Finchley	District	27,574	8,232	Yes	Strong argument around infrastructure and evening economy
Temple Fortune	District	25,924	2,813	No	Predominantly daytime shopping for local residents
Golders Green	District	23,566	5,905	Yes	Based on strategic importance (bus terminal) and location, very close to Golders Green Road local centre
Brent Street	District	19,465	4,680	No	Insufficient scale
East Finchley	District	16,621	5,277	No	Local, high-quality offer but insufficient scale
Whetstone	District	15,584	4,218	No	Well balanced but small and locally-tailored offer
Hendon central	District	15,111	3,929	No	Insufficient scale
Mill Hill	District	14,888	4,393	No	Insufficient scale
New Barnet	District	14,118	3,149	No	Insufficient scale
Colindale/The Hyde	District	9,221	4,354	No	Insufficient scale

2.6 Based on the data above the following seven town centres are proposed as main:

1. Burnt Oak
2. Chipping Barnet
3. Cricklewood
4. Edgware
5. Finchley Church End
6. Golders Green
7. North Finchley

[2] https://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/planning/publications/2013-london-town-centre-check

3. Promoting the local and neighbourhood offer

3.1 The "offer" set out in Table 1 above includes a specific, targeted offer to district, local and neighbourhood centres, providing them with a foundation to develop a stronger local market, more attractive and accessible high streets, and a friendlier business and shopping environment.

3.2 The main difference between main and local centres is the degree to which local business owners and residents are supported to drive through local improvements themselves. For example in neighbourhood centres the emphasis is on providing these groups with the information needed to drive through changes themselves. In Main centres there may be more direct council involvement, for example via direct funding of Town Teams.

3.3 In October 2014 the Chipping Barnet Area Committee suggested that all town centres in that area not identified as Main town centres should be classed as District Centres. Given the significant differences in size and function between established district centres (e.g. Whetstone) and local centres (e.g. Great North Road, Hampden Square) this broad classification may not capture the inherently local nature of many of the smaller places, which focus predominantly on providing a high quality offer to residents living in the immediate vicinity.

3.4 As growth continues in the borough, and Barnet consolidates it's position as the largest borough in London by population, it will be important to retain a degree of flexibility about which town centres are classed as main to reflect the areas of highest growth. The allocation of main town centre in Barnet will be reviewed when the current Entrepreneurial Barnet Strategy expires.

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The proposals relating to Town Centres have undergone a process of research, information gathering, testing with council partners and individual council service areas, and public consultation. They also take into account feedback received by area committees in relation to town centres in Barnet. It is now appropriate to recommend that the proposals are considered and agreed.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

5.1 It would be possible to continue to approach Town Centres in Barnet in the current ad hoc and reactive way. The risk of this approach is that it would not address the well-publicised challenges high streets are facing across the country, in particular growing use of online shopping and major out of town department stores, and rising expectations from residents about the quality of the local town centre offer. This would result in economic growth in Barnet being lower than may actually be the case, businesses and residents being worse off, and LB Barnet retaining a smaller level of Business Rates growth than would be the case if the more joined up and evidence-based strategy set out here was implemented.

6 POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 Should the Committee approve the proposals, work will commence on delivering the individual areas of activity set out within them.

6.2 The delivery of the proposals will be communicated in a targeted way to local business, residents, and potential developers to ensure they are leveraging as much value as possible for the Borough.

7 IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

7.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

The proposals in *Entrepreneurial Barnet* relating to town centres directly support the delivery of the Corporate Plan 2013-2016, particularly the following two corporate priorities:

- Promote responsible growth, development and success across the Borough
- Improve the satisfaction of residents and businesses with the London Borough of Barnet as a place to live, work and study.

The proposals relating to skills and learning in the workforce also relate to the third corporate plan priority area:

- Support families and individuals that need it – promoting independence, learning and well-being.

Where proposals relate to Corporate Plan priorities and indicators, the same indicators will be used to monitor progress. This will ensure continued alignment between *Entrepreneurial Barnet* and the Corporate Plan, and will also prevent any duplication of effort by the Council and its partners.

7.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

7.2.1 The proposals around town centres will be delivered within existing resources, particularly where they align with existing and already funded work programmes.

7.2.2 Where additional funding is required it will be brought in from outside sources, for example Central Government or London Enterprise Panel funding.

7.3 Legal and Constitutional References

7.3.1 There are no specific legal issues. The proposals are in line with the Localism Act (2011), and particularly the General Power of Competence which is a power introduced by section 1(1) of the Localism Act 2011 which gives local authorities the power to do anything an individual can do, unless prohibited by law (and subject to public law principles).

7.3.2 Council Constitution, Responsibility for Functions, Annex A – details the terms of reference of the Assets, Regeneration and Growth Committee which includes “Engagement with the business community and measures to support local business” and “To approve any non-statutory plan or strategy within the remit of the Committee that is not reserved for Full Council or Policy and Resources.”

7.4 Risk Management

7.4.1 There is a risk that if partners in Barnet do not fully understand their role in supporting the development of a successful town centres that other areas will out-compete, resulting in less attractive town centres available to Barnet businesses and residents, reduced income to the Council as Business Rates rise more slowly than would otherwise be the case, and that Barnet will become, relatively speaking, a less attractive place to work, live and invest.

7.5 Equalities and Diversity

7.5.1 Equality and diversity issues are a mandatory consideration in the decision-making of the council. This requires elected Members to satisfy themselves that equality considerations are integrated into day to day business and that all proposals emerging from the finance and business planning process have properly taken into consideration what impact, if any, there is on any protected group and what mitigating factors can be put in train.

7.5.2 The proposals on town centres are part of the overall Entrepreneurial Barnet approach that the Committee approved at its meeting on 15 December 2015. An Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken for Entrepreneurial Barnet, the key findings of which are set out below.

7.5.3 A principle embedded across the proposals is that all people in Barnet, no matter what their background or circumstances, should have equality of opportunity to succeed and gain from the growth of the economy here and nationally.

7.5.4 The Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) assessed the proposals as having a minimal positive impact on equalities groups. This assessment was made following a process of research and evidence gathering to identify any groups in the community who may gain. The key findings of the EIA are summarised below:

- **Age**: Barnet has a growing and ageing population, and a report commissioned from Middlesex by Barnet Council suggests that there is an increasing proportion of this age group seeking work. The strategy acknowledges this and explicitly targets all age groups ensuring that the older population has equal access to opportunities associated with growth.
- **Disability (including mental health problems)**: The Labour Force Survey (Quarter 2, 2012) notes that there is a 30.1% gap in employment rates between disabled and non-disabled people. The strategy focuses on support them into training and employment. It also aims to improve the identification and treatment of mental health in employment services and provide targeted support.

- **Pregnancy and Maternity:** The strategy will provide more opportunities for women with families as it aims to increase opportunities for self-employment, flexible working, and working from home.
- **Ethnicity:** The proposals recognise that some BAME groups have higher unemployment rates than others (ONS market status by ethnic group, 2013). Additional focus will be undertaken to engage with these groups.
- **Religion or belief:** statistics have shown that the Muslim population are more likely to be unemployed than other religions (ONS report on religion, 2013). Focus will be put on ensuring the Muslim population understand how they can access employment opportunities.
- **Gender/Sex:** The Annual Population Survey Employment Indicators (ONS, 2013) notes that the employment rate is lower for women than men. This strategy is inclusive of all and aims to minimise barriers to economic success and create more employment opportunities.
- **Carers:** Just over 9% of the Barnet population provide unpaid care. The strategy will increase opportunities for flexible working and also aims to provide extra support to families and residents that need it.
- **Lone Parents:** The strategy recognises that lone parents are less likely to benefit from economic growth, and that these parents are particularly disadvantaged due to the high cost of childcare provision. The strategy will place extra emphasis on reaching this group.
- **Young people and NEETs:** Barnet is performing well with respect to NEETs, with the fourth lowest number in England. Effort will be made to ensure that young people are able to get a sustainable job.
- There was no specific evidence or local data identified that the **sexual orientation** and **gender reassignment** equality strands will be specifically affected by the proposals.

7.6 **Consultation and Engagement**

7.6.1 Entrepreneurial Barnet was consulted on between 10th September and 20th of November and yielded 25 responses. Overall, there was a positive response with regards to agreement with the five key themes. Separate feedback was also received in the form of four e-mails, and at the Barnet Business Expo attended by 61 small businesses on 23rd October.

7.6.2 In addition to the online consultation, a number of issues were identified at the Barnet Business Expo event on 31 October 2014. These are briefly summarised in the points below. Local businesses identified:

- Affordable work premises and business rates relief for small businesses as important factors for encouraging local growth.
- The provision of an easy to access and effective system that enables small businesses to access council procurement and supply chains, especially where their value is less than £10,000.
- The importance of working with the Federation of Small Businesses and other networks to share knowledge and build connections. Also a wish in the responses to have a local business ‘champion’.
- More readily available information was desired about how to work with the council and access business opportunities. There is also concern that if too

much focus is placed on regeneration, then small businesses will be overlooked, so continued support from the Council is necessary.

7.6.3 These points are recognised in the strategy and will be a particular focus for implementation.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 Consultation page (consultation closed on 20 November 2014): http://engage.barnet.gov.uk/consultation-team/entrepreneurial-barnet/consult_view