

# CHIPPING BARNET RESIDENTS FORUM

8 JANUARY 2009

## ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE FORUM MEETING

	<b>Issue Raised</b>	<b>Response</b>
1.	<p>The latest Planning Policy Statement 12 states that community involvement should be proportionate to the scale of issues involved for example a major change of circumstances such as town centre growth. It further states that pre application community involvement might be required. Does the Council consider the proposals for two new supermarkets and approx 30 other new retail outlets to have a major impact on New Barnet? If yes what community involvement is proposed prior to the planning application? If none why not?</p> <p>(Mr Howard)</p>	<p>Response-Martin Cowie (Head of Planning and Development Management)</p> <p>The planning authority implements policy in accordance with national guidance such as Planning Policy Statement 12, referred to and established local planning documents such as the Unitary Development Plan.</p> <p>It does consider that the provision of two new supermarkets in New Barnet would have a significant impact and has previously indicated that this would be unacceptable. The precise nature of the proposals are not known nor when or if they will be formally submitted as planning applications. The Council is however preparing a town centre planning framework to assist in guiding change and development and this will be subject to comprehensive consultation with the local community and key stakeholders over the course of next few months.</p> <p>The Council is committed to ensuring the delivery of high quality and sustainable development that will bring long term benefit to the town centre and its residents.</p>

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2.	<p>A further white paper from DCLG (2008) Communities in Control; real people real power.says that it “ aims to pass power into the hands of Local communities.... To generate vibrant local democracy in every part of the country.... To give real control over local decisions and services to a wider pool of active citizens.... To shift power influence and responsibility away from existing centres of power into the hands of communities and individual citizens”. (Executive summary paras 1 &amp; 2).</p> <p>What measures are Barnet taking to adopt these changing philosophies? (Mr Howard)</p>	<p>Response - Rosie Evangelou (Corporate Consultation Officer)</p> <p>1. <b>Background</b> Barnet Council is at the forefront of adopting these changing philosophies and very much involved in the national debate on how best to support community influenced decision making. As part of this we are actively looking at new ways of how we can communicate and engage with our residents to give our communities greater control of local decisions and encourage the co production of services.</p> <p>‘Putting the Community First’ is also at the heart of all our corporate priorities. We endeavour to ensure that the services we provide meet the needs of all our communities. From April 2009, as part of the Local Government and Public Involvement Act 2007, local authorities will have a duty to inform, involve and consult with their residents and service users.</p> <p>We have already established many excellent offline traditional methods of involving residents in decisions and service provisions, namely through: our Citizens panel; service user/resident surveys; service user groups; ad-hoc group discussions with our residents; area forums; The Leader Listens; councillor surgeries; youth board; consultation documents; customer access points; comments and complaint cards.</p> <p>2. <b>Moving Forward</b> However, the Council recognises we are experiencing rapid social change and we need to build a stronger relationship with our citizens, having wider and deeper conversations to understand their needs and preferences. Our role is to provide the space for citizens to debate with the council and public agencies, and with each other, the competing priorities and build a consensus on priorities for the area, and explain how decisions were reached. We also want to give citizens greater control over their lives and the ability to make informed choices for themselves. To ensure all citizens have an equal opportunity to do all of this we need to find innovative forms of engagement and new ways of communicating with them.</p>

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2.	Issue two continued...	<p>As part of this recognition and new approach the council has recently developed a strong online presence, namely through our own social media website, whereilive.org. The council has also established a presence on facebook; twitter, flickr and the Leader of the Council has launched his own Leader Listens website.</p> <p><b>3. Whereilive.org in detail</b> Whereilive.org is an attempt to create a space for residents to share their experiences of the borough in their own words through the ability to write text, take photographs or record videos that best describe how they feel about their area. Simply posing the questions “what’s it like where you live? What do you most like and what would you most like to change?” The website was piloted with staff during August before launching it in the pilot areas in September, and launched Borough-wide Jan 2009.</p> <p>This website site is supplemented with additional online work to reach out into places where people are already having these conversations, such as Facebook, video sharing sites such as YouTube, photo sharing sites such as Flickr and a host of local blogs. The council has also gone out and engaged with residents face to face through a series of vox pop interviews which can now be viewed on the whereilive website.</p> <p><b>4. Conclusions</b> It is the support and development of these networks of people across Barnet’s communities and public sector that Barnet aims to engage with a “wider pool of active citizens” and “generate vibrant local democracy” as the white paper promotes. Eventually it is hoped that these networks of people will collectively use their knowledge to inform and encourage residents to take on more of the powers available to them to impact on their communities and the borough as a whole.</p>
3.	<p>Has the Council yet had any discussion with Mr &amp; Mrs Walsh with a view to extending their lease of the temporary accommodation in Stapylton Road car park?</p> <p>(Mrs Massey)</p>	<p>George Church (Principal Valuer - Property Services Team)</p> <p>No, we have not yet had a meeting, but the matter was discussed at senior officer level before Christmas and I am seeking a meeting with the owner of the market in the first working week of the New Year.</p>

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4.	<p>Are the Councillors of Barnet considering a 50% reduction in their expenses claims to bring them inline with Councillors of surrounding Boroughs?</p> <p>(Mr Ashwood)</p>	<p>Nick Musgrove (Corporate Governance Directorate)</p> <p>The Members' Allowances are approved on the basis of recommendations made by an Independent Review Panel.</p>
5.	<p>Mr Ashwood has asked if there has been any consideration to appointing a resident to the position of Chairman for this forum.</p> <p>(Mr Ashwood)</p>	<p>Nick Musgrove (Corporate Governance Directorate)</p> <p>The Constitution requires that the Chairman of the Forum be a member of the Council.</p>
6.	<p>Is Clive Medlam qualified to speculate on the money market? What is the current position of Barnet Council's Icelandic Bank accounts and is the council insured for any potential losses due to the current circumstances?</p> <p>(Mr Ashwood)</p>	<p>Clive Medlam (Chief Finance Officer-Finance)</p> <p>The Chief Finance Officer holds the required qualification for this post, as required by legislation. The council was not speculating on the money market, it has no powers to do this. The council will always have cash balances at the end of each working day and these balances need to be placed somewhere. This treasury management activity is governed by the Treasury Management Strategy that is approved annually by the Cabinet Resources Committee, and all deposits placed in Icelandic banks were in accordance with this strategy. There was a very detailed report on this to Cabinet on 23 October 2008, which can be viewed on the council's website.</p> <p>The Icelandic banks are now in Administration and payments back to the council will be addressed through this process, though there is no clear timescale for this as yet.</p> <p>Insurance for this event might be possible but would be prohibitively expensive.</p>

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7.	<p>Who advised Cora Vigar (Barnet Homes) that she could ignore Health and Safety issues, are Barnet Homes insured for accidents if they occur as a result of this?</p> <p>(Mr Ashwood)</p>	<p>Cora Vigar (Head of Corporate Services, Barnet Homes)</p> <p>Barnet Homes takes health &amp; safety extremely seriously and has a comprehensive framework in place to ensure that H&amp;S considerations are taken into account and monitored as appropriate. The suggestion that H&amp;S is ignored is therefore strongly refuted.</p> <p>It is assumed that Mr Ashwood is referring to the roadway at Crocusfield, Dollis Valley. This roadway is deemed as being housing land and therefore the responsibility for the maintenance of this rests with Barnet Homes, acting as agents for London Borough of Barnet. However following the introduction of the right to buy approximately 50% of the houses that benefit from this roadway have been sold freehold. Therefore Barnet Homes have explored the option of having the road adopted by London Borough of Barnet so that the maintenance would become the responsibility of their highways team. LBB have confirmed that they are would not consider adopting the roadway, either in its current state or if Barnet Homes resurfaced the roadway prior to the adoption taking place.</p> <p>Therefore Barnet Homes have commenced options of looking at resurfacing or rebuilding the roadway as required. A meeting is scheduled to take place on site during the next four weeks to develop the specification so that costs for these works can be sought.</p> <p>Barnet Homes has Public Liability insurance which covers costs that it may become legally liable to pay or damages and claimants' costs in respect of accidental injury or damage to property.</p>
8.	<p>Why do Barnet employees fail to adhere to the Freedom of Information Act, do they see themselves as being exempt from the law?</p> <p>(Mr Ashwood)</p>	<p>Vinod Mandora (Information Governance Consultant, Corporate Governance Directorate)</p> <p>Barnet employees are not exempt from the Freedom of Information Act and do not consider this to be the case. We have responded to Mr Ashwood's requests and have had meetings with him to go through his requests and concerns. We are in the process of replying to the latest FOI request from Mr Ashwood.</p>

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9.	<p>At the last Chipping Barnet Residents' Forum, a written response to my question on the Tesco Express planning application stated that "the planning authority had not failed to determine the Tesco Express planning application" and that "Tesco had lodged an appeal in the event that the Council does not approve the proposal". Subsequently, I have discovered that this is an inaccurate picture of the situation and this is supported by several different Council documents. I am concerned that the response given at the forum was at best unhelpful and at worst misleading. Would officers be able to provide clarification on this matter along an update on the timing of the Planning Appeal.</p> <p>(Mr Dix)</p>	<p>Response-Martin Cowie (Head of Planning and Development Management)</p> <p>The planning application ref. N09569E/08 was registered on 12 February 2008 and on 8 October 2008 Tesco lodged an appeal against non-determination. As part of the appeal process, the local planning authority is required to indicate what decision it would have reached had an appeal not been lodged. Therefore, the application was reported to the Chipping Barnet Area Planning Sub-Committee meeting of 15 November 2008, where a resolution was made that had an appeal not been lodged then the Local Planning Authority would have REFUSED planning permission.</p> <p>A public inquiry is set to be held in March in relation to the appeal against non-determination.</p> <p>On 5<sup>th</sup> November 2008 a further application was registered as it is understood Tesco are hoping that they can seek a local consent before the public inquiry and withdraw the appeal.</p> <p>They have recently approached the authority with a view to postponing the inquiry, while this latest application is being considered. Residents who have made representations in relation the case will be notified of any changes.</p> <p>As previously highlighted, prior to the appeal being made the authority had been negotiating for sometime with Tesco around a number of complicated issues concerning parking, opening hours, servicing and delivery arrangements. Clarity was sought to better understand the implications of the proposals in order that a robust and informed decision could be taken by the Council.</p>
10.	<p>Mr Mehta would like to know when the pavements at the bottom of Russell Lane, N20 will be repaired. It is very dangerous to walk on these pavements.</p> <p>(Mr Mehta)</p>	<p>Chris Chrysostomou (Chief Engineer -Highways)</p> <p>The pavements at the bottom of Russell Lane will be considered as part of next years planned maintenance programme subject to meeting the criteria; funding availability and committee approval. Highways Planned maintenance programme for 09/10 will be reported to the March 09 AESC committee and Mr Mehta would be advised.</p>

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11.	<p>Question on Barnet Market.</p> <p>If as some rumours suggest, the owners of the market might consider resurfacing the original site and moving the stalls back on a temporary basis until they can begin their long term development plan, would they require new planning permission and the full implementation of health and safety procedures? In other words, would such a course of action have to be treated by the Council as a completely new application?</p> <p>(Mr Gardiner)</p>	<p>Dave Prince (Chipping Barnet Area Planning Manager)</p> <p>It is considered that the proposal as outlined in the question would constitute development for which planning permission would be required. Any such application would be considered on its planning merits and would be assessed against the relevant policies in the Adopted Unitary Development Plan. Any other material considerations would also be taken into account and this would include the planning history of the site. Should an application be received then neighbouring residents would be consulted in the usual way. To date no such planning application has been submitted.</p>