



JON SHEAFF@ASSOCIATES



LB Barnet Open Spaces Strategy

Officer Workshop

8 January 2014

Report



1. Introduction

Public parks have enjoyed a renaissance over the past 20 years because the central role that they play in defining the quality of successful cities has been recognised. All of the world's best cities have high quality public spaces and have adopted green infrastructure as a cornerstone of sustainable development. It is now widely understood that good quality parks offer a number of important economic, social and environmental outcomes.

Barnet has a significant portfolio of greenspace and public parks that are just as important to neighbourhoods in this part of London as anywhere else. But Barnet's parks have suffered from a lack of investment at a time when many other parts of London have ridden the wave of parks regeneration. Barnet is commissioning a new Open Spaces Strategy to address this issue. The strategy will seek to raise the profile of parks within the Council and build a better reputation for the service with stakeholders.

Alongside the development of the strategy, we will be developing a consultation and engagement process to influence key decision makers and build a momentum for change. This workshop was targeted at key officers in the Council, working with them to develop an understanding of the importance of good quality parks based on their individual experience of where they live and work.

The half day session was designed to be creative and inter-active and invited participants to challenge their own perceptions of how parks work and what they offer. This report captures the key points discussed at the workshop.

Attached as appendices are a participant list, the workshop agenda, and a copy of the presentation given by Jon Sheaff on the day.

2. Our favourite places and spaces

Participants were asked to imagine a favourite place or space that was particularly important to them. They wrote the name of the place on a postcard and a few words about why they felt it was special. They then lined up in order of how far the space was from the workshop location, shared the name of their destination and their thoughts on why it was successful. The range of places discussed were as diverse as the New Forest, Granada, the Alps, Berlin, South Africa, Koh Toa, Salcombe Beach, Bordeaux, Doha, Nice and Milford Sound in New Zealand.





Reasons given as to why these spaces were important included :

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Views • Scenery • Variety • Open space • People • Nature • Active • Accessible • Free • A retreat • Like hanging out there • Atmosphere • Nature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beautiful • Landscape • Friends • Sport • Competition • Safe • Alive • Pubs • Walks • Family • Skiing • Picturesque • Sentimental • Open 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportions • Climate • Character • Culture • History • Familiar • Lots to do – activities • Space • Vibrant • The buildings • Food • Friendly • Tranquil
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It was noted that the responses fell into a number of categories including :

- **Location** – a destination, a special place to visit
- **Activities and facilities** - the right things for the right people
- **A sense of belonging** – feeling at ease in a space, understanding how it works and feeling you belong there
- **Evoking emotions** - including ties with family, friends and happy memories

3. Context and Key Issues

Jon Sheaff gave a short presentation setting out the economic, social and environmental benefits of parks and issues which participants might wish to consider when thinking about Barnet open spaces. The presentation slides are included at Appendix 3.

In discussion the definition of ‘parks’ and ‘open spaces’ was raised and it was agreed that the workshop conversation should be wide ranging and include civic spaces and green areas as well as formal parks.

4. Why do open spaces matter?

Participants were asked to work in groups to reflect on the benefits of open spaces in Barnet to a range of different potential users. These included:

- Working parents with two teenage children
- A Local Ward Councillor
- A pre-school child
- A retired local resident
- An active 30 year old local resident
- A local Police Community Support Officer
- A local business person

Participants were not constrained by the 7 user groups provided and could modify them, add to them or create new priority groups that emerged during the discussions.



Specifically they were asked :

- Would this group visit Barnet open spaces?
 - If yes, when and what would they be doing?
 - If no, why not? What would help them to engage with Barnet open spaces?
- What would they love/hate about the current open spaces?
- What might their priorities be for local open spaces in the future?

Each group shared their thoughts on postcards, and tables were then asked to review the outcomes for each group and draw out key messages.



The 'big issues' arising were as follows :

Working parents, 2 teenage children

- Will have different use patterns :
 - parents for leisure and health eg dog walking, concerts, events
 - teenagers for social and sports activities. Need a good range of activities to attract young people such as 3G pitches
- Danger that both these groups will not be regular open space users if the spaces do not provide a range of activities and facilities which meet their needs

Pre-school child

- Dogs, dogs, dogs! Cleanliness is important so dog mess needs to be managed. Dogs are also seen as a potential danger if not kept under control by their owners
- Small children see open spaces as opportunities for freedom, socialising with other children, fun and ice cream, adventure, discovery, animals, interaction with nature and ecology. Open spaces offer developmental opportunities allowing children to make choices about how they use the space and the activities and equipment they access
- Perceptions of parents will influence how children use the spaces
- Important to have areas and green spaces which are easily accessed from where families with young children live
- Likely to be daytime users of the facilities



Retired local resident

- Will use for organised activities such as walks and bowls, and are likely to be day time users
- Will also make use of facilities such as outdoor gyms
- Open spaces can support local interaction and socialising amongst older residents. Facilities such as cafes are important for this
- Likely to want attractive areas with good planting, availability of toilets and places to sit
- Accessibility will be important, including having open spaces close to where they live, and which accommodate mobility issues
- A place for inter-generational activities, for example, somewhere grandparents, parents and children can all go together
- Concerns likely to be around litter, cyclists and groups of young people. They will only wish to use spaces which feel safe

Active 30 year old local resident

- Will tend to be interested in organised sports such as football, socialising, and informal sporting activities such as running/cycling
- Access to services such as WiFi may encourage use of open spaces
- Access to other local facilities they use such as pubs and shops
- Likely to be users of 'iconic' or 'destination' parks which are design led
- Will use open spaces for events so communication about what is happening is important

- Concerns may be around safety/lighting and cleanliness

Police Community Support Officer

- Will be interested in designing out crime and in having open spaces that are well lit and well maintained and managed
- Open spaces can be useful for engaging with the local community if they are well used
- Will have concerns about any spaces which are under-utilised and which encourage vandalism or anti-social behaviour

Local business person

- Open spaces need to be seen as an asset for the business strategy – good places for staff to use and which contribute to health and wellbeing and increased footfall in the local area. Do we need better connections between local town centres and nearby open spaces to maximise the benefits?
- Businesses situated in open spaces should be complimentary to whatever else is in the local area, not in competition with it
- May also fear being associated with a negative brand if open spaces are not perceived to be working well in the local area

Local Ward Councillor

- Can tend to only hear about problems associated with open spaces in their area
- Will want open spaces to be part of the community – generating a sense of belonging, being used for community and civic events, encouraging networking and social interaction
- We need to consider how to strengthen leadership and local advocacy for local open spaces



5. What issues do we need to consider in developing and delivering our open spaces?

Participants were split into two groups and each was given a map of the borough and 100 Barnet Pounds. They were asked to consider how they would spend the money, if this was their entire budget for local open spaces. In terms of prioritising they could opt for a geographical approach, or a user focused approach, or a mixture of both.

Each group had to place their £100 on the board explaining how the funding would be allocated.

Feedback from the exercise raised the following issues :

Group 1

- Took a holistic approach to resource allocation rather than concentrating on geographical areas
- Allocated their budget to the following key areas :
 - Maintenance
 - Income generation
 - Events
 - Safety
 - Accessibility
 - Community upskilling
 - Two specific areas – Brent Cross and Colindale

- In their discussions they particularly considered the issues around sustainability of open spaces and how communities could be mobilised and given the necessary skills in order to develop a longer term exit strategy for the Council.



Group 2

- Also took a holistic approach and prioritised the following in terms of resource allocations :
 - Developing an iconic sports hub
 - Designating three 'destination parks' which would allow for one park in each sector of the borough and which would attract wider investment
 - Community engagement
 - Sports and play facilities
 - Maintenance



- Infrastructure and facilities based on local need
- Promoting and marketing parks and open spaces

6. Action Planning

As a result of the workshop discussions, the following areas were agreed for further action/consideration:

- There should be further community engagement on possible models of how Barnet open spaces might operate in future, including social enterprise approaches to managing parks
- There needs to be a link between the Community Asset Strategy and the work on open spaces
- Consideration should be given to including Regeneration and Leisure programme investment in a linked strategy with any agreed investment in open spaces
- Sustainability, including financial viability and how spaces are used and maintained, is important and needs further consideration
- A joined up approach is important and this will include further discussions with Public Health and Community Engagement interests
- A wider approach to open spaces should be adopted as part of the work, considering all local assets including spaces within schools and social housing developments





7. Conclusion

We are very grateful to those who participated in the workshop and ensured a wide representation of interests from across the Council. The enthusiasm and expertise clearly evident on the day provided a rich contribution to the work on the Open Spaces Strategy. The outcomes of this work will be incorporated in the report currently being developed.





Appendix 1

Participants:

Alan Bowley –	Transformation Director, Street Scene
Luke Ward -	Commissioning and Policy Advisor (Economist), Commissioning Group
Jenny Warren -	Head of Parks, Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing, Street Scene
Richard Playle -	Finance Manager, Street Scene
Gabrielle Melvin -	Programmes and Resources Advisor, Commissioning Group
Andy Spriggs -	Sports and Physical Activity (SPA) Review, Commercial Lead
Stephen McDonald -	Director of Place, Re
Lynn Bishop –	Street Scene Director, Street Scene
Mathew Gunyon -	Partnership and Development Manager, Street Scene
Adam Driscoll –	Infrastructure Planning and Delivery Manager, Re
Martin Cowie –	Head of Planning and Development Management, Re
Judith Ellis –	Property Services Manager, Re
Ian Butt –	Head of Strategic Planning, Re
Hannah Chillingworth –	Policy Officer, Commissioning Group
Lesley Holland -	Commissioning and Equalities Policy Officer, Commissioning Group
Sam Raffell –	Commissioning and Policy Advisor, Commissioning Group
Elissa Rospigliosi -	Commissioning and Policy Advisor, Commissioning Group
Kiran Vagarwal –	Head of Community Safety, Adults and Communities
Flo Armstrong –	Head of Youth and Community, Family Services
Tony Lewis –	Voice of the Child Coordinator, Family Services
Wazi Khan –	Senior Health Improvement Specialist, Public Health
Ugo Odogwu –	Planning Obligations Officer, Re
Tim Hetherington -	Leisure Contract & Sport Development Manager, Adults and Communities



Appendix 2

Workshop Agenda

Timing	Activity
1.00 – 1.15pm	Arrival
1.15 – 1.30pm	Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Purpose of the Day (Sharon Wright, Facilitator)• Our favourite spaces and places exercise
1.30 – 1.45pm	Context and Key Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The big issues for Barnet (Jon Sheaff, Project Lead)
1.45 – 2.45pm	Why do open spaces matter? (Part 1)
2.45 – 3.00pm	Coffee
3.00 – 3.45pm	Why do open spaces matter? (Part 2)
3.45 – 4.45pm	What issues do we need to consider in developing and delivering our open spaces?
4.45 – 5.00pm	Action Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Summary of key points discussed• Next steps
5.00pm	Close



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Appendix 3

Jon Sheaff's Presentation



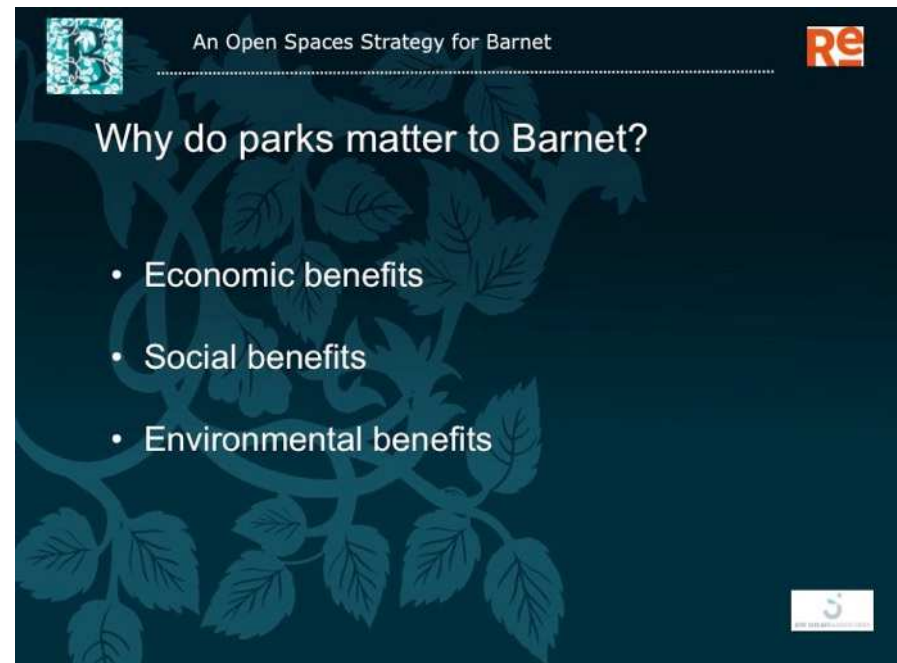
An Open Spaces Strategy for Barnet

Why do parks matter to Barnet?

re

5

This slide features a dark teal background with a pattern of lighter teal leaves and vines. At the top left is a small square image of a person. The title 'An Open Spaces Strategy for Barnet' is at the top center, and 're' is at the top right. The main question 'Why do parks matter to Barnet?' is centered in white. A small white box with the number '5' is in the bottom right corner.



An Open Spaces Strategy for Barnet

Why do parks matter to Barnet?

- Economic benefits
- Social benefits
- Environmental benefits

re

5

This slide features a dark teal background with a pattern of lighter teal leaves and vines. At the top left is a small square image of a person. The title 'An Open Spaces Strategy for Barnet' is at the top center, and 're' is at the top right. The main question 'Why do parks matter to Barnet?' is centered in white. Below it is a bulleted list of three items: 'Economic benefits', 'Social benefits', and 'Environmental benefits'. A small white box with the number '5' is in the bottom right corner.



Why do parks matter to Barnet?



High Line has generated \$2 billion in real estate development and has attracted 5 million visitors



Millennium Park in Chicago is expected to bring to the city over the next 10 years \$1.4 billion in enhanced property values, roughly \$2 billion in tourism, and hundreds of millions more in increased retail and business enhancement.



The message for Barnet?

- A stronger local economy
- Attracting and retaining key workers and talent
- Supporting property values
- Developing the Barnet brand





Why do parks matter to Barnet?



Over 30 million people in England use parks, making around 2.5 billion visits in total each year. 15million park visits in Barnet every year



87% of the population have used their local park or open space in the last year, and 79% have used it in the last six months.

91% of the public believe that parks and public spaces improves peoples' quality of life



Why do parks matter to Barnet?




Where people have good perceived and/or actual access to green space they are 24% more likely to be physically active




Residents in 'high-greenery' environments were 3.3 times more likely to take frequent physical exercise than those in the lowest greenery category

A daily walk in the park reduces the risk of a heart attack by 50%







An Open Spaces Strategy for Barnet




The message for Barnet


- Healthier, more physically active communities
- Strengthened sense of place and belonging
- Reduced health service costs
- Safer places




An Open Spaces Strategy for Barnet



Why do parks matter to Barnet?




1 hectare of trees and shrubs can absorb 1 tonne of CO₂ – equivalent to 100 family cars



Philadelphia receives an average of 43.29 inches of rain per year. Its 10,334 acre park system is 81.3% pervious, reducing rain water runoff by 496 million cubic feet

In urban areas, a 10% increase in tree coverage will counter the predicted 4°C temperature rise over the next 100 years caused by climate change and the heat island effect.





An Open Spaces Strategy for Barnet



The message for Barnet

- Parks as part of a general strategy for flood prevention
- Parks improving air quality and mitigating against urban warming
- Parks as cornerstones of bio-diverse environments



An Open Spaces Strategy for Barnet



by the way...

...education...children...older people...events...food growing...employment...cycling...volunteering... obesity...horticulture...stress...play...disabilities... crime and ASB...heritage...design...ecology...waste and re-cycling.....





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An Open Spaces Strategy for Barnet

What are we waiting for?...

re

5

The image shows the cover of a report titled "An Open Spaces Strategy for Barnet". The cover has a dark teal background with a pattern of lighter teal leaves and vines. At the top left, there is a small square image of a tree. The title "An Open Spaces Strategy for Barnet" is at the top center, and the question "What are we waiting for?..." is in the middle. Logos for "re" and "5" are in the top right and bottom right corners, respectively.

Barnet Youth Board Discussion (30 July 2015)

Sharon Wright gave a short presentation and the following points were made in discussion :

- Parks with good facilities like outdoor gyms and playgrounds work well (eg Broomfield Park/Grovelands). Outdoor gyms seem particularly popular and there should be more of these
- All parks should have facilities to buy reasonably priced refreshments and drinking water freely available
- There is a perception of safety issues in parks – parents are often concerned about young people going to the park won their own or with friends. Having adults around helps – patrols in parks, for example – and having more lights at night
- Burnt Oak and Colindale – there areas have a bad reputation and the perceptions about their parks suffer as a result. Parks could be used as the safe places in those communities, kick starting regeneration and reputation change
- There was a discussion about free WiFi in parks but views were mixed. Some of the Youth Board felt it was essential to get young people to use the parks more (they'll be on their phones so there should be WiFi if they need it). Others felt that parks might be the only place where they could escape phones and computers and relax in a different way. A compromise might be to have WiFi zones so you could use it if you want to, or escape it if you preferred
- There needs to be more toilets and baby changing facilities in parks and it is important that they are kept clean
- Mill Hill Park – schools use this space, and all schools should be encouraged to use their local parks more. Several Youth Board members had experience of doing school PE in the park and really enjoyed it
- Dogs are an issue – either they should be on a lead or there should be designated dog parks
- The biggest parks on the borough should have 'features'. So for example, one could have a Lido, another a skate park or a boating lake. These wouldn't need to be in every park, but having them spread around would make people travel to go there
- Feeling that lots of the local parks had under used space (badly maintained/over grown areas) and that this should be better managed

- Parks are places where children form happy memories – every one loves the swings and everyone loves feeding the ducks! Every child should have a local park which allows them to have these memories
- Festivals, Funfairs and Carnivals are popular events. Would like to see more of these in the local parks and, for example, markets and other events
- Car parking is important and good local parking would encourage people to use parks more

In summary :

- Every park should have, as a minimum, a good playground and outdoor gym, toilets, parking, refreshments and available drinking water, free WiFi in at least some areas, and be safe and clean
- Larger parks should have a 'feature' whether it's a lake or Lido or specialist sports facility
- More should be done to encourage festivals, events and community facilities in Barnet parks
- Parks can be the places which change how you feel about an area. Using parks to change perceptions and reputations is important

A1744 - Barnet Open Spaces Strategy

Consultation Interviews – Key Stakeholder Groups

Barnet Asian Womens' Group – Telephone Interview by EJ – 8/10/15

Interviewee - Nahida Syed

Questions	Key Issues/Responses
Introduction – Who we are	JSA is a Hackney based firm of landscape architects, with over 50 year combined experience, specialising in open space strategy work and design. We have been commissioned by London Borough of Barnet to undertake an Open Spaces Strategy of their behalf.
Background to the Barnet Open Spaces Strategy	Please refer to the attached Introduction to the Barnet Open Spaces Strategy Project
What works well about Barnet Parks and Open Spaces from your community or users groups' perspective?	<p>Are there any aspects of parks that you feel are particularly important or special to your community or users? <i>Park are very important to our users. They are also important for our group as we use them to take our work to our clients. Some are very hard to reach and by going to parks this is where we find people that might need our services. Many of the women who need our help don't come and find us. They aren't in the system but they do use parks.</i></p> <p>Which of the Barnet's POS do you feel work provides best for the needs of your community or users? <i>All of them we could potentially use but there aren't many we can use.</i></p> <p>If Barnet's parks do not provide well for your community or users, are their parks elsewhere that do? <i>I don't know</i></p> <p>What would you find in your 'ideal park'? <i>Somewhere we can rent out facilities in the park cheaply to meet and run workshops and regular groups from.</i></p>
What could work better to support you, your community or users? How could these changes help and what difference it would make?	<i>We find it really hard to get in touch with the right people in the council to help us. In fact often we find they are very unhelpful and don't want to work with us at all.</i>
Priorities – if we could only do 3 things, what would they be? Are there any possible issues you can see in delivering these changes?	<i>It's the council that need to change and not the parks.</i>