



HOUSING & GROWTH COMMITTEE

27th January 2020

Title	Golders Green Town Centre Strategy and update on Finchley Central Housing Infrastructure Fund
Report of	Chairman of Housing & Growth
Wards	Finchley Church End, Golders Green, Garden Suburb and Childs Hill
Status	Public
Urgent	Non-urgent
Key	Non-key
Enclosures	Appendix 1: Golders Green Town Centre Strategy
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Summary

This report presents the Golders Green Town Centre Strategy for approval by Committee. In keeping with the approach taken in other Main Town Centres, the Strategy includes a range of projects and interventions aimed at improving Golders Green, covering land use, public realm, community and economic development and other areas. The Strategy was developed through extensive consultation with residents and businesses.

The report also seeks approval to enter into a sub contract with Transport for London relating to the Housing Infrastructure Fund (Marginal Viability Fund) at Finchley Central Station.

Officers Recommendations

That the Housing and Growth Committee:

1. Note and approve the Town Centre Strategy for Golders Green (included as an Appendix to this report) which sets out a range of ways that the council can

work with community members, businesses and other partners to improve this important part of the borough.

- 2. Note progress with the Housing Infrastructure Fund aimed at supporting delivery of new housing at Finchley Central Station.**
- 3. Delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman, to enter into a grant agreement with Transport for London. This agreement will enable the funds to be transferred to TfL from the council as set out in the GLA HIF/MVF funding agreement dated 13th December 2019, which sets out the terms for expenditure of the Housing Infrastructure Fund.**

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 Entrepreneurial Barnet 2015-2020 sets out how the council will work with partners to support the economy by focusing on enabling small businesses to succeed, and encouraging thriving town centres that people want to live, work and invest in. The priority focus on town centres is further increased in the Growth Strategy 2020-2030.
- 1.2 Entrepreneurial Barnet includes 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 public resources can be used in a way that maximise returns to local businesses and the public purse. This can be achieved through a targeted programme of investment that contributes toward the overall vitality and safeguards the distinctiveness of our town centres.
- 1.3 Over a number of years, the council has worked with traders, residents and other groups in Barnet's main high streets to develop town centre strategies and implementation plans. In the past, such strategies have been developed for Cricklewood, Burnt Oak and Finchley Central. These strategies aim to build consensus around a number of practical actions designed to improve the look of the centre, guide future development and develop the unique character of town centres. The strategies have also acted to direct council Town Centre Capital funding and have been instrumental in enabling the council to apply for external funding to deliver town centre improvements.
- 1.4 In 2017, following a competitive tender process, the council appointed consultancy Fluid to develop a Town Centre Strategy for Golders Green, work on which began in the autumn of that year. After a considerable period of time, the strategy is now complete and ready for adoption. The strategy does not commit the council, or indeed any other partner, to a particular investment or course of action. Rather, it sets out an over-arching vision for the area, based on extensive engagement with the local community, and presents a number of projects to support delivery of the vision.

- 1.5 This report also provides Committee with an update on funding due to be released by central government in support of housing delivery in the borough. In September 2017, Transport for London (TfL) approached the council with a proposed bid for the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) for a scheme at Finchley Central Station. The council proceeded to submit a bid under the Marginal Viability Fund element of the Housing Infrastructure Fund for the development at Finchley Central station. It was initially announced that this bid had been successful in attracting funding of £9.8m, which was reported to ARG Committee in September 2018. However, following further review by Homes England, this was reduced to £5.7m. In keeping with government funding deadlines, the council entered into a main agreement with the GLA on 13th December 2019.
- 1.6 This report now requests approval for officers to enter into a sub-agreement for the expenditure of funds, transferring the grant and legal responsibility to TfL and enabling project delivery to commence.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Golders Green Town Centre Strategy

- 2.1 Barnet Council is committed to improving its residents' lives and making its high streets great places to live, work, learn, shop, relax, invest, socialise and visit for all. Golders Green is classified as a 'Main Town Centre' and is therefore prioritised in Barnet's Entrepreneurial Strategy 2015-2020 in terms of development and investment. The purpose of the Town Centre Strategy is to provide a handbook and overarching guidance for the council, Golders Green communities and partners that will kick-start improvements to the Town Centre.
- 2.2 The strategy has been shaped by an understanding of the area's unique history and current conditions - physically, socially, politically, economically and environmentally, considering:
- What is driving change
 - The way the place is today and how it has changed
 - What locals and stakeholders think
- 2.3 Through consultation, the strategy identifies a number of challenges to be addressed, including:
- Economy – Notwithstanding the offer provided by specialist ethnic/cultural shops and restaurants, there is competition from other nearby centres with many people choosing to drive elsewhere rather than walk to Golders Green Town Centre.
 - Community facilities – Lack of public spaces and facilities for the whole community, limited awareness of community assets that do exist.
 - Character – Need to create an exciting and modern image for Golders Green while protecting and enhancing its heritage.

- Movement – Need to improve the environment to encourage walking, cycling and use of public transport while managing vehicular traffic and considering the needs of an aging population.
- Environment – Pollution, poor cleanliness and lack of greenery.

2.4 The strategy was developed through extensive engagement and consultation and represents the views of local people, businesses and others. Activities included meetings with local groups and individuals, community groups and others, a series of on-site and online engagement tools such as local pop-up events, ‘walk and talks’ and online surveys. Business surveys were also carried out door-to-door and online.

2.5 There were two main rounds of engagement: at the formation stage and at the end of the process when people were asked to respond to the draft strategy. In total:

- Over 390 people subscribed to the project newsletter
- More than 1,000 fliers were distributed locally publicising engagement activities and seeking views
- Over 270 surveys were completed at the formation stage
- Approximately 40 people were engaged at formation stage pop-up events
- Approximately 250 people attended pop-up events to provide feedback on the vision and strategy developed

2.6 Overall, consultation activities demonstrated that people want to see Golders Green as a safe, thriving, inclusive, charming and comfortable place.

2.7 Based on the community’s aspirations, a comprehensive vision for Golders Green was developed which describes a positive change for the Town Centre:

By 2030 Golders Green Town Centre will have grown incrementally as an attractive, characterful, and well-connected place surrounded by historic parks and neighbourhoods. It will celebrate its distinctive social and built heritage, making its community proud.

It will be a welcoming, inclusive, attractive and vibrant place where people feel safe, at home and part of a diverse and generous community that helps its members to live well and prosper together.

The Town Centre and surrounding neighbourhoods will contribute to providing new homes for a growing and aging population, as well as flexible workspaces for new and existing businesses. It will offer great access to sustainable transport, public realms, healthy lifestyles, quality local services, leisure and learning facilities.

Embracing the future, built on its past, Golders Green will be enhanced, reinventing itself with new opportunities and recognised as a special place to live and visit in North London.

- 2.8 This vision is underpinned by three broad aims:
- Celebrate the unique qualities of Golders Green – addressing the attractiveness of the area and sense of pride locally
 - Make room for people – focusing on well-being, social and economic activity
 - Adapt to the 21st Century – addressing sustainability and smart technologies
- 2.9 The final strategy document has been revised in response to public consultation on the draft version which took place in October 2019. This demonstrated clear support, with over 70% of survey respondents agreeing with the overall vision. This level of support was maintained over the three ‘character areas’ identified, with only the Golders Green Hub area around the station falling below this, at 60% (but with 20% stating they were neutral regarding this area). This general level of support was also reflected in the face-to-face conversations with over 250 community members.
- 2.10 When people were asked to prioritise projects, the following themes arose as being most important:
- Celebrate and strengthen the identity of Golders Green
 - Undertake public realm improvements to improve access to green and civic infrastructure and encourage active travel
 - Improve the capacity of the high street to meet the needs of a diverse and ageing community
 - Strengthen and facilitate the agency of the local community over their high street
 - Create areas on the high street to host community events such as markets
 - Support existing and new businesses and entrepreneurs to thrive on the high street, with a focus diversifying the type of employment space and growing the cultural and evening economy
- 2.11 Upon adoption of the strategy by Committee, officers will develop a Business Case for an initial pilot project, or projects, to be delivered within the town centre that will specifically address these priorities. Funding for any future project will be requested from the Town Centres Capital Budget.

Finchley Central HIF project

- 2.12 At its meeting of September 2018, Assets, Regeneration and Growth Committee (now Housing and Growth) noted that the council had been successful in its bid on behalf of Transport for London for £9.8m from the Housing Infrastructure Fund to address the marginal viability of development at Finchley Central Station. This bid was subject to further analysis by MHCLG, following which a final award of £5,705,671 was made.

- 2.13 Throughout 2019, while Planning officers advised TfL and their development partner Taylor Wimpey on emerging proposals for the scheme, Growth Team officers have been working with TfL on progressing the HIF bid.
- 2.14 On 13th December 2019, Barnet Council entered into a funding agreement with the GLA (the authority administering the fund in the London region) in order to meet the government-set deadline for drawing down funding. This decision was taken under delegated authority by the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman of Housing and Growth Committee on 11th December 2019.
- 2.15 This report now seeks delegated authority for the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman, to enter into a sub-agreement with Transport for London setting out the terms for expenditure of the funding. The sub-agreement is set for completion by mid-February.
- 2.16 Investment from the Housing Infrastructure Fund will support early enabling works required by the scheme, including relocation of London Underground facilities, key junction improvements and embankment works. More broadly, the HIF funding will unlock the viability of the scheme to deliver much-needed homes along with new retail and commercial units. TfL has committed to deliver 40% affordable housing on this scheme.
- 2.17 The council's 2017 Finchley Central Town Centre Strategy identifies this site as a key opportunity within the town centre and the report identifies the railway bridge as creating an awkward 'pinch point' that acts to divide the high street.
- 2.18 Funding for all other infrastructure works and to deliver the wider project is the responsibility of TfL and Taylor Wimpey. TfL has full financial authority to cover all costs pertaining to its stake in the joint venture. Barnet Council is not making any financial contribution to the housing development.
- 2.19 The government-mandated timetable for release and expenditure of the HIF grant necessitates that legal funding agreements be prepared in advance of planning permission. It should be noted, however, that the council's involvement in administering the funding in no way fetters its duties as the local planning authority. As such, the council will ensure that any proposals for Finchley Central are compliant with planning policy.
- 2.20 By supporting TfL to secure this funding, it will allow the council to have more direct involvement in the development of the scheme as TfL will be required to provide regular monitoring updates in relation to project delivery.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 Town centres are important sites of economic, employment, services and community activity and therefore, a key part of the council's approach to the economy and regeneration.
- 3.2 The council could opt not to intervene in the development of town centres at all, however this would be a missed opportunity to capitalise on developer and other council interventions.
- 3.3 The council could opt to leave town centre renewal to the market and take only a reactive approach that responds to individual planning applications, licensing and other decisions as they come forward. However, this approach could result in dis-jointed interventions that do not sufficiently respond to the scale and opportunity in taking a more strategic approach to Golders Green Town Centre.
- 3.4 The council could opt not to progress the HIF funding opportunity, however, this would undermine the ambitions outlined in the draft Local Plan and new Growth Strategy to encourage housing development in town centres.
- 3.5 Should the sub-agreement not be signed with TfL, the funding for the project will revert back to the GLA.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 Should the Committee approve the recommendation to adopt the Golders Green Town Centre Strategy, officers will commence work on a Business Case to bring forward projects identified as priorities by the community. This commitment is included in the Delivery Plan for the council's new Growth Strategy.
- 4.2 Officers will also continue to work with HBPL to complete the HIF sub-agreement with TfL.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1.1 Barnet's approach to supporting the local economy to grow, is outlined in Entrepreneurial Barnet. Within Entrepreneurial Barnet, the Town Centre offer specifically outlines the council's commitment to providing additional support to actively market and promote opportunities to developers when dealing with main Town Centres.
- 5.1.2 Entrepreneurial Barnet directly supports delivery of the Corporate Plan, Barnet 2024, particularly the goals of promoting responsible growth within the borough, encouraging development and success, revitalising communities whilst protecting what residents love about the borough.
- 5.1.3 The Housing Strategy 2015-25 highlights the role of purpose-built private rented sector housing located within or around town centres in addressing housing

needs, as well as supporting labour mobility.

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

5.2.1 In relation to the Golders Green Town Centre Strategy, further financial implications will be required on approval of any future Business Case.

5.2.2 The HIF funding is for infrastructure works at Finchley Central Station. The adoption of the recommendations will result in no additional cost to the council, as the cost of any additional resources will be recovered from the HIF funding grant this agreement is requesting permission to secure. Statutory planning functions will continue to be delivered as part of the main planning application led by TfL and will be caveated within the sub-agreement.

5.2.3 In relation to HIF funding, all monies will be drawn down against quarterly milestones that have been established against a project programme. As set out in the main funding agreement with the GLA, TfL will be required to submit all completed claims to the council for Senior Officer approval prior to being submitted to the GLA to review and approve for funding to be released via the council to TfL for the Finchley Central Station project.

5.2.4 The £5,705,671 secured from the Housing Infrastructure Fund will be added to the council's Capital Programme once all legal agreements are in place.

5.2.5 There are no anticipated implications in IT or sustainability in relation to either project.

5.3 Social Value

5.3.1 The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires people who commission public services to consider how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits.

5.3.2 Social benefits will principally be secured through opportunities to increase housing delivery (including affordable housing), widen the range of leisure, cultural and commercial activities and improvements to the public realm. These activities will help to make Finchley Central a more attractive destination.

5.4 Legal and Constitutional References

5.4.1 The proposals to develop a strategy and business plan for Golders Green town centre 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).

5.4.2 Where required, planning permission will be sought to enable the implementation of specific projects in Golders Green.

- 5.4.3 The DPR for the funding agreement with the GLA dated 11th December 2019 permitted the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman of the Housing and Growth Committee to enter into the Housing Infrastructure Fund/Marginal Viability Fund (HIF/MVF) agreement with the Greater London Authority (GLA) dated 13th December 2019.
- 5.4.4 The GLA issued the agreement on behalf of the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) to secure £5,705,671 of funding on behalf of Transport For London (TfL) to address the marginal viability of the TfL-led Finchley Central Station Development scheme. This Report seeks authority to transfer the grant monies by entering into a sub-grant agreement with TfL as stipulated by the GLA.
- 5.4.5 The Marginal Viability Funding provides the final or missing piece of infrastructure to get sites allocated or existing sites unblocked quickly with a requirement for London bids to be led by the boroughs. TfL will lead on the infrastructure works to deliver new residential homes in the area, enabling the council to fulfil an important statutory duty. The council will not be entering into any works contracts but will enter into a sub-grant agreement with TfL complying with any State Aid requirements. TfL will need to apply for planning consent for development. Officers have consulted the Planning and Property team to raise title queries relating to the land.
- 5.4.6 Constitution, Article 7, Committees, Forums and Partnerships sets out the terms of reference of the Housing & Growth Committee which includes: Responsibility for housing matters including housing strategy, homelessness, social housing and housing grants, commissioning of environmental health functions for private sector housing.
- 5.4.7 Article 16, rule 6.2 External Funding applies to this Agreement. Rule 6.2.5 states Chief Officers must advise the Chief Finance Officer of all grant and subsidy notifications as soon as they are received.
- 5.4.8 The process outlined in the body of the report complies with the Contract Procedure Rules.

5.5 Risk Management

- 5.5.1 Barnet has, since the HIF bid stage, worked in collaboration with TfL, with TfL providing, reviewing and signing off the information within the final grant agreement. This includes confirming the outlined responsibilities and terms Barnet will pass on within the sub-agreement between the council and TfL.
- 5.5.2 There is a risk that satisfactory planning permission may not be obtained, which is being mitigated through extensive consultation between the council, TfL and Taylor Wimpey. The GLA is aware of this outstanding statutory risk. Should the development not receive planning permission then it will be at the GLA's discretion to reclaim any HIF funding. All responsibility for expenditure in relation to the works identified to be delivered within the HIF agreement is being assumed by TfL.

5.5.3 Underpinning the risk identified above is the risk of resistance to any proposed development by local community members and others. TfL has undertaken and has continuing plans to engage with the local community as a part of the design process.

5.5.4 All projects will identify project-related risks and escalate these as and when this is appropriate. Town Centre projects can be complex as a result of the different uses, landlords and services on our high street. Council officers have recognised the need to have dedicated resource to manage the capital delivery of projects and propose to bring in additional capacity for this purpose.

5.5.5 The Business Case for Golders Green Town Centre projects will identify risks and mitigation strategies.

5.6 Equalities and Diversity

5.6.1 Equality and diversity issues are a mandatory consideration in the decision-making of the council.

5.6.2 Decision-makers should have due regard to the public sector equality duty in making their decisions. The equalities duties are continuing duties, and are not duties to secure a particular outcome.

5.6.3 It is important that the decision-maker has regard to the statutory grounds in the light of all available material such as consultation responses. The statutory grounds of the public sector equality duty are found at section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and are as follows:

5.6.4 A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

5.6.5 Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard to the need to:

- a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- c) characteristically that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;

- d) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

5.6.6 The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.

5.6.7 Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard to the need to:

- a) Tackle prejudice, and
- b) Promote understanding.

5.6.8 Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others; but that is not to be taken as permitting conduct that would otherwise be prohibited by or under this Act. The relevant protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and Civil partnership

5.6.9 The project will have positive benefits for the community and will give improved access to the facilities in the area.

5.6.10 As part of the sub-agreement with TfL, the council will require TfL to provide an equality impact assessment. The council will continue to monitor this document alongside the projects delivery.

5.6.11 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.

5.6.12 The proposals on town centres are part of the overall Entrepreneurial Barnet approach that the Assets, Regeneration and Growth Committee approved at its meeting on 15 December 2015. An Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken for Entrepreneurial Barnet, the key findings of which were outlined in the paper presented to Assets, Regeneration and Growth Committee in March 2015.

5.6.13 The proposals will ensure that people in the area, no matter what their background and circumstances, should have equality of opportunity to succeed and gain from the improvements and growth of the economy in the town centre.

5.7 Corporate Parenting

5.7.1 There aren't any direct links with the council's corporate parenting function and this project.

5.8 Consultation and Engagement

5.8.1 As previously noted, extensive community consultation was undertaken in the development of the Golders Green Town Centre Strategy.

5.8.2 Consultation and Engagement has been undertaken in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) for the wider Finchley Central Station Scheme. A period of formal consultation was undertaken by TfL from Sunday 16th to Monday 17th of June 2019. All comments, whether completed questionnaires or written responses, were considered by TfL with equal weight. TfL plan to undertake a second phase of engagement in January 2020 prior to them submitting the main application.

5.8.3 There will be opportunities for residents to engage with these projects either through town teams or consultation events. These events will take place in Autumn.

5.9 Insight

5.9.1 Insight data informs town centre strategies, including data related to town centre vacancy rates, index of multiple deprivation and footfall measurements.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

6.1 **Entrepreneurial Barnet 2015-2020 (approved at Assets Regeneration and Growth Committee December 2014):**

<https://www.barnet.gov.uk/dam/jcr:e326f566-5394-4a68-921c5fee57541c9a/Entrepreneurial%20Barnet%202015-2020.pdf>

6.2 **Council Budget 2018/19 Financial Forward Plan and Capital Programme, Appendix E2 Capital Programme by Delivery Unit:**

<http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s45350/Appendix%20E2%20-%20Capital%20Programme%20by%20Delivery%20Unit.pdf>

6.3 **Town Centres in Barnet (approved at Assets, Regeneration and Growth Committee March 2015):**

<http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s21967/Town%20Centres%20in%20Barnet.pdf>

6.4 **Town Centre Capital projects and update on Finchley Central Housing**

Infrastructure Fund project (approved at Assets, Regeneration and Growth Committee September 2018):

<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=696&MId=9764&Ver=4>

6.5 Growth Strategy (draft June 2019):

<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s52934/Growth%20Strategy.pdf>
