



HOUSING AND GROWTH COMMITTEE

14 June 2021

Title	Chipping Barnet Community Plan
Report of	Councillor Richard Cornelius
Wards	High Barnet Ward
Status	Public
Urgent	Non-urgent
Key	Non-key
Enclosures	Appendix : CBCP Engagement Summary and Next Steps (pdf)
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Summary

This report presents the Chipping Barnet Community Plan found at <https://cbcommunityplan.co.uk>, for approval by Committee. In keeping with the approach taken in other main town centres, the Plan includes a range of projects and interventions aimed at improving Chipping Barnet Town Centre. These broadly cover land use, public realm, community and economic development. The Community Plan was developed through extensive consultation with residents and businesses.

This report recommends that officers proceed to develop five priority projects identified in the Community Plan. These projects have been highlighted by community members, local businesses and ward members as being of particular significance or priority through the engagement and consultation process. Subject to Committee approval, the next step will be to undertake further feasibility and business case development of these projects.

Recommendations

That the Housing and Growth Committee:

- 1. Note and approve the Chipping Barnet Community Plan: <https://cbcommunityplan.co.uk>, which sets out a range of ways that the council can work with community members, businesses and other partners to improve Chipping Barnet Town Centre.**
- 2. Agree that the five recommended priority projects listed under paragraph 2.6 can proceed to further feasibility and business case development.**

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 Barnet's Growth Strategy 2020-30 sets out a vision for thriving town centres. It commits the council to working with local communities and partners to support the economy by enabling small businesses to succeed and helping to create places in which people want to live, work and invest.
- 1.2 The Growth Strategy includes proposals for assisting town centres to respond to the challenges and opportunities associated with national trends, such as increasing use of internet shopping, a move away from retail towards a greater mix of uses, and a growing population. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated many of these trends, particularly in relation to online retail.
- 1.3 Over a number of years, the council has worked with traders, residents and other groups in Barnet's high streets to develop town centre strategies and implementation plans. These aim to build consensus around a number of practical actions designed to improve the look of the centre, guide future investment, and develop the unique character of each centre. 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 improvements.
- 1.4 In 2019, following a competitive tender process, the council appointed consultancy *Architecture 00* to develop a Community Plan (also known as a Town Centre Strategy) for Chipping Barnet, work on which started in December 2019. The Plan is now complete and ready for adoption. The Plan 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 To move the Community Plan into a delivery phase, this report also recommends that officers swiftly move to undertaking further feasibility work on five prioritised projects identified through the consultation process. This will entail development of outline business cases, project programme and outline budgets to support officers to work with the community and other partners to realise these projects.

- 1.6 Officers will continue to share progress and engage with the public on all of the projects identified within the plan via the Chipping Barnet Community Plan website. Updates will also be included in future reports to Committee.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 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. Chipping Barnet is classified as a 'main town centre' and is therefore prioritised in terms of development and investment. The purpose of the Community Plan is to provide a handbook and overarching guidance for the council, local communities and partners that will kick-start improvements to the Town Centre.

- 2.2 This Plan 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 the trends it needs to adapt to
- What changes local people and stakeholders want to see

- 2.3 Through engagement with the community, a series of seven shared principles have been established for Chipping Barnet Town Centre. Together these contribute to a vision for what the Community Plan aims to achieve and act as principles to inform any future development within the town centre. The seven principles are:

1. We want to be proud of Chipping Barnet
2. We want our town centre to be a destination that is enjoyable to visit
3. We want more reasons to visit and stay in the town centre throughout the day, evening and weekend
4. We want high street businesses and ventures to thrive
5. We want to expand and establish new civic and cultural and community assets for all
6. We want to actively be involved and invest in our town centre
7. We want Chipping Barnet to be a vibrant, thriving place to live, work and visit

- 2.4 The strategy was developed through extensive engagement and consultation and represents the views of local people, businesses and others. Engagement activities included: hosting and attending project events; undertaking business and resident surveys; holding workshops with local groups, individuals, college students and others to develop ideas; business surveys were also carried out door-to-door and online; hosting 'walk and talks'; maintaining contact through a mailing list on project progress; and developing an online website to enable the community to engage with the Plan.

This consultation was undertaken in three main rounds: at the formation stage, testing our understanding at an outline draft stage and, finally, at the end of the process when people were asked to respond to the draft Community Plan. The engagement can be summarised as follows:

- Over 270 people subscribed to the project mailing list
- 145 responses were received to the online surveys completed at the formation stage
- Over 35 one-to-one conversations with local businesses and key local groups
- Over 160 conversations were held with individuals and local groups at local events at the formation stage
- Five focus groups were hosted to test the outline draft of the community plan
- Over 3,500 visits were made to the Community Plan website during the six-week consultation period
- Over 700 comments received in response to the draft Community Plan
- A series of dedicated engagement and consultation sessions with ward members and the local MP

2.5 Overall, consultation on the final draft of the Chipping Barnet Community Plan shows that people are largely supportive of the principles, character areas and project ideas captured. As set out within the Appendix CBCP Engagement Summary and Proposed Next Steps, the final Community Plan now being recommended for adoption has been revised in response to public consultation on the draft version.

2.6 Through the consultation process we gathered the community's thoughts, support and commitments regarding all of the project ideas proposed within the Plan. Following this assessment, which is detailed in the Appendix, the recommendation is that these proceed to feasibility and outline business case stages to assess whether and how they should proceed. The five recommended priority projects are:

2.6.1 **Routes & Riches Wayfinding**

This study will develop a brief to establish a new approach to wayfinding and placemaking throughout the town centre. The aim is to highlight key destinations locally within and near to the town centre and routes through the area, such as scenic walking paths, green spaces within Barnet and the adjacent green belt, as well as sites of historic interest. This work will identify opportunities and key locations to develop new signage and other communications tools in and around the town centre. The project builds on Chipping Barnet's existing status as a popular departure point for ramblers and supports the wider objective of developing an identity for Chipping Barnet based on its unique history and proximity to open green space.

2.6.2 **Activating the Public Realm**

This study will produce a brief that identifies opportunities and measures to activate, enhance and green the public realm around the historic centre, with a particular onus on making the junction outside the college safer and improving

the experience of those moving between the station and the high street. The study will aim to improve connectivity in this area, carefully considering how the public realm can better promote the numerous historic and community assets so that they are more prominent and accessible to all users of the high street.

2.6.3 Play Masterplan

This study will produce a brief for a holistic play masterplan focused on the Old Courthouse Park. The study will include an assessment of constraints and opportunities and will propose ways in which this important local asset could better support the visitor economy of the town centre. The study will look to identify a series of play interventions that will explore physical, sensory and planting elements, whilst also identifying opportunities to improve accessibility and safety within the park.

2.6.4 Co-working Space

This study will seek to identify how the council could repurpose a underutilised high street asset to achieve the community's aspiration to have a flexible workspace for the town centre, which is also a goal of the Growth Strategy. This study will develop and test an outline business model, engage the market to help identify potential operators and demonstrate demand for flexible workspace on the high street. As part of this study, the project will also look at the potential to integrate other projects identified within the plan such as the High Street Incubator.

2.6.5 Employment Hub

This study aims to identify the longer-term potential to create an employment hub within the town centre to support new and diverse employment opportunities. It will also address potential synergies with other Community Plan priorities to increase the community infrastructure available within the town centre. This study will develop a feasibility study to define what a Chipping Barnet Employment Hub is. It will identify suitable locations, develop a concept scheme, outline space requirements and typologies, identify potential operators, governance models and partnerships (e.g. Barnet and Southgate College) and identify demand for different types of workspace.

2.7 Please refer to the Appendix CBCP Engagement Summary and Proposed Next Steps for more information on all of the priority projects.

2.8 To support the development of these feasibility studies, in addition to engaging with professional colleagues as required, the council will host project workshops with members of the community who have come forward as project champions through the consultation stage.

2.9 Upon adoption of the Community Plan by Housing and Growth Committee, officers will commence work on the projects outlined above. Alongside the feasibility studies the council will identify funding options, including external grant monies available to support the realisation of any viable initiatives.

2.10 Once adopted, the Community Plan will provide an up-to-date view of the aspirations of the council, local residents and businesses for the future of the town centre. As such, it will be an important tool in any discussions between

the council and developers. However, it is important to note that officers will also need to consider complementary planning policy, including an update to the Spires Planning Framework 2012, to ensure that there is sufficient direction to guide development through the planning process. Adoption of the Chipping Barnet Community Plan will assist the council in moving to implement any such policy and in a manner that has the support of local residents and businesses.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 Town centres are important sites of economic, social and community activity and therefore form a key part of the council's approach to growth 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 support them to become thriving places for all and to maximise the benefits of future development for existing residents and businesses.
- 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 improve Chipping Barnet Town Centre.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 Should the Committee approve the recommendation to adopt the Chipping Barnet Community Plan, officers will commence work to develop the initial five projects identified as priorities by the community. This commitment is included in the Delivery Plan for the council's new Growth Strategy.

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 the Growth Strategy 2020-30, which builds on the commitment set out in Entrepreneurial Barnet to provide additional support to main Town Centres.
- 5.1.2 The Growth Strategy 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.

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

- 5.2.1 In relation to the Chipping Barnet Community Plan, further financial implications will be required on approval of any future Business Case. These will return to

committee as appropriate for proper democratic scrutiny.

5.2.2 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 Chipping Barnet a more attractive destination.

5.4 **Legal and Constitutional References**

5.4.1 The proposals to develop a strategy and business plan for Chipping Barnet 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 Chipping Barnet.

5.4.3 The council's Constitution, Article 7.5 Committees, Forums, Working Groups and Partnerships, sets out the functions of the Housing and Growth Committee:

- Responsibility for housing matters including strategy, homelessness, social housing and housing grants, commissioning of environmental health functions for private sector housing,
- regeneration strategy and oversee major regeneration schemes, asset management, employment strategy, business support and engagement.

5.5 **Risk Management**

5.5.1 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.

5.5.2 The Feasibility studies and Business Case being undertaken for Chipping Barnet 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;
 - 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 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.

5.6.11 The feasibility studies and Business Cases 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, business and ward member consultation was undertaken in the development of the Chipping Barnet Community Plan.

5.8.2 There will be opportunities for residents to continue to engage with these projects either through the Town Team, project workshops, ongoing consultation events or through updates that will continue to be posted upon the Community Plan website.

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 Growth Strategy (2020):

<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s57408/Appendix%201%20-%20Growth%20Strategy.pdf>

- 6.2 **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>

- 6.3 **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>

- 6.4 **Chipping Barnet Community Plan :**
<https://cbcommunityplan.co.uk>