



Housing & Growth Committee

13 September 2021

Title	Town Centres Capital Programme Update
Report of	Chairman of Housing and Growth Committee
Wards	West Finchley, Finchley Church End, Burnt Oak, Golders Green, Childs Hill, Garden Suburb
Status	Public
Urgent	Yes
Key	Yes
Enclosures	None
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Summary

Housing and Growth Committee is the lead committee for the Thriving theme of the Barnet Plan as well as the council's Growth Strategy. The council's objective is to support a borough of thriving town centres by working to diversify their role, encouraging a broad mix of uses, delivering new housing and creating an environment in which businesses can succeed. By doing so, the council is not only helping to secure the future of town centres but also ensuring that Barnet's economy and community can successfully rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic.

A key component of the council's work is to deliver environmental improvements through investment in the public realm, helping to drive footfall, increase the amount of time that people want to spend in town centres and, ultimately, help ensure that they are places in which people want to work, visit and live.

This report sets out proposals for taking forward major public realm investment in three of Barnet's main town centres: Finchley Central, Burnt Oak and Golders Green. It also updates Committee members on officers' work to develop a long-term pipeline of investment across other centres.

Officers Recommendations

In relation to proposed public realm investment in Finchley Central, that the Committee:

- 1. Notes that engagement and consultation has commenced on the final phase of design for the new Finchley Square and will conclude on 18 September 2021.**
- 2. Delegates authority to the Deputy Chief Executive acting in the best interests of the council and in consultation with the Chairman to:**
 - a. Approve the Full Business Case following any further required consultation and completion of the final design;**
 - b. Authorise the expenditure of approved Town Centre Capital monies to fund delivery;**
 - c. Commence procurement and approve contract award for delivery of the Square following a procurement exercise, and to authorise any change requests during the lifetime of the contract(s), as required;**
 - d. Negotiate, finalise and complete such other documents as may be required to effectively implement, fund, deliver and/or manage the project;**
 - e. Make any alterations to the extent of the Site with the above recommendations to apply to the Site as altered.**

In relation to proposed public realm investment in Burnt Oak and Golders Green, that the Committee:

- 3. Delegates approval to the Deputy Chief Executive acting in the best interests of the council and in consultation with the Chairman to:**
 - a. Approve Outline and Full Business Cases as required to progress the projects;**
 - b. Procure a suitably qualified consultant team(s) to undertake survey, feasibility and design work to further develop proposals in consultation with the community, businesses and key stakeholders;**
 - c. Authorise expenditure of approved Town Centre Capital monies to fund project delivery, in line with the forecast budgets referenced in paragraphs 1.27 and 1.35 and noting that these will be subject to further refinement;**
 - d. Commence procurement and approve the contract award for a suitably qualified contractor, or contractors, to deliver the public realm interventions, following a procurement exercise, and to authorise any change requests during the lifetime of the contract(s), as required;**

- e. **Negotiate, finalise and complete such other documents as may be required to effectively implement, fund, deliver and/or manage the projects;**
- f. **Make any alterations to the extent of the Sites with the above recommendations to apply to the Sites as altered.**

4. That the Committee notes work being undertaken by officers (referred to in paragraph 1.10) to develop the future pipeline of Town Centre public realm works, in accordance with the funding approved at Policy and Resources Committee of July 2021.

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 Housing and Growth Committee is the lead committee for the Thriving theme of the Barnet Plan, approved at Policy and Resources Committee in February 2021, as well as the Growth Strategy, approved at Housing and Growth Committee in January 2020.
- 1.2 Together, these policy documents set out a vision for supporting thriving town centres across the borough. This will be achieved, among other things, by working to diversify the role of town centres, encouraging a broad mix of uses, delivering new housing and by creating an environment in which businesses can succeed.
- 1.3 Building on the approach set out in the former Entrepreneurial Barnet Strategy, the council is primarily focused on the borough's seven main town centres as these serve the greatest number of residents and have the broadest economic footprint. The seven centres are:
 - Burnt Oak
 - Chipping Barnet
 - Cricklewood
 - Edgware
 - Finchley Central
 - Golders Green
 - North Finchley
- 1.4 The council has ensured that measures are also taken to provide resource and support to other, smaller town centres across the borough. For example, officers developed a Town Centre Strategy for West Hendon Broadway and have been progressing improvements there due to the significant redevelopment of the adjacent West Hendon Estate and the added pressures and opportunities that this creates. Similarly, a number of borough-wide initiatives have been launched that are also open to non-main town centres, such as the successful Discover Barnet 'Shop Safely, Shop Local' campaign and the Temporary Streetspace Fund.
- 1.5 While COVID-19 has undoubtedly impacted high streets and town centres across the borough, in essence, it has exacerbated the long-term challenges that they already faced, including declines in footfall, reduced revenue for small businesses, and competition from online retail. Since March last year, the council has delivered a variety of short-term interventions to support high street businesses facing challenges due to COVID-19. These have included facilitating access to professional advice and networks, direct financial assistance and support to businesses in managing social distancing requirements. The

Committee has been provided with regular updates on these activities (see, for example, agenda item 8 [COVID-19: Recovery Plan – Thriving]).

- 1.6 Over the past year, officers have also been focused on progressing long-term projects and programmes to both support COVID-19 recovery and to ensure that we achieve the goals set out in the Growth Strategy and Corporate Plan. A key component of this has been the development of proposals for major public realm improvements in main town centres. Through enhancements to town centre environments, the council can help to drive footfall, increase the amount of time that people spend in town centres, create new sites for micro businesses, promote community cohesion and pride and reduce the impacts of traffic and congestion. Ultimately, the council aims to ensure that Barnet's town centres are places in which people want to live, work and visit and that they fully reflect the needs, aspirations and means of the wider community.
- 1.7 As a result of this work, the July 2021 Policy and Resources Committee approved £23.5M of Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding to deliver an ambitious programme of renewal in priority town centres. This is in addition to the remaining £4.8M of town centre capital funding, previously approved by Policy and Resources Committee.
- 1.8 This paper provides an update on three major town centre public realm projects and requests permission to progress them through to completion utilising the approved funding. The projects are:
 - Finchley Square (Finchley Central)
 - Burnt Oak Public Realm Improvements (working title)
 - Golders Green Public Realm Improvements (working title)
- 1.9 Further information is provided on each of these below.
- 1.10 Proposals for the longer-term pipeline of town centres projects, incorporating other centres, will be presented to Committee in due course with recommendations for taking them forward.

Finchley Square

- 1.11 The Finchley Square project was identified as a priority and supported by the community through the Finchley Central Town Centre Strategy, adopted by Assets, Regeneration and Growth Committee in November 2017. The project directly addresses concerns raised by local residents and businesses over the poor town centre environment, the lack of any focus or 'centre' to the town centre, insufficient seating and the lack of space for community activities.
- 1.12 In September 2018, Assets, Regeneration and Growth Committee approved expenditure of £550,000 from the existing Town Centre Capital budget to commence delivery of physical and environmental improvements in Finchley Central. At that time, the Committee also delegated the development and approval of a Detailed Business Case for the Finchley Central Town Centre project to the Deputy Chief Executive in Consultation with the Chairman.
- 1.13 Subsequent to this, officers commenced detailed feasibility and design work. This included:

- The establishment of an internal project working group led by the Economic Development team and including officers from Highways, Environment, Planning, Public Health, Community Safety and other services.
- The formation of a new Finchley Central Town Team comprised of local residents and businesses to help steer the project from the start – this represented a step change in how the council works with community members on such projects.
- Commissioning a multi-disciplinary design team led by Kinnear Landscape Architects to undertake design and feasibility work and to support resident engagement.
- Multiple opportunities for wider community input into the emerging proposals for the new square; directly engaging almost 700 people to date in addition to more than 1,600 visitors to the Finchley Central Town Centre website¹.
- Liaison with key stakeholders including Transport for London, the Met Police, Fire Services and adjacent landowners.
- Related partnership activities with the Youth Offending Service, Barnet Mencap, Library Services and Middlesex University.
- The appointment of a local cultural producer to support the development of a Cultural Programme to run alongside development of the new square; the objective is to use the existing space to test new community and economic activities that will be hosted in Finchley Square upon completion.
- Regular ward member and MP engagement.

1.14 The Finchley Square design proposals will create a new centre for the community through the delivery of over 3,500sqm of refurbished, high-quality public realm. The proposals include flexible space for the community to hold commercial, cultural and community activities. Furthermore, the designs adhere to 'Healthy Streets' principles, which means increased planting and greening to improve the pedestrian environment, safety and sense of wellbeing, as well as improvements to street lighting.

1.15 Designs for the new Finchley Square are now available for the public to view on the Engage Barnet platform² as part of a six-week consultation period ending on 18 September 2021. In addition, the project team is hosting six in-person events in Finchley Central. Officers have temporarily closed a section of Albert Place to trial the use of the highway as a public space. Temporary planters and benches have been installed alongside a play area and a music/busking spot using floor graphics. As well as hosting consultation events, the space will be used to trial community activities as part of the Cultural Programme.

1.16 Alongside the development of Finchley Square, officers were successful in securing £50,000 from the Mayor of London's Good Growth Fund to deliver a Public Realm Design Guide by Q4 2021/22. This provides a template and standard for the 'look and feel' of the town centre, including a palette of materials, to be adopted in all future public realm works within Finchley Central, including Finchley Square. The team is working closely with colleagues in the Environment Service to ensure that the Design Guide accords with council requirements and the document will be recommended to Environment Committee for adoption upon completion³.

¹ <https://finchleycentraltowncentre.co.uk/>

² <https://engage.barnet.gov.uk/finchley-central-town-centre-new-public-square>

³ To note, further public consultation may be required on the Public Realm Design Guide.

- 1.17 Finchley Square is at an advanced stage of planning and is currently on course for commencement on site in Q1 2022-23. Once completed, the new square will not only set a high bar for the design of public spaces in Barnet's town centres, it will also act as a strong precedent in ensuring that community members and local businesses are meaningfully engaged from conception through to delivery and beyond.
- 1.18 Having undertaken all the above work, upon completion of the community consultation on 18 September, officers will be in a position to finalise the design and progress the project through to delivery. This report therefore seeks approval to delegate to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman the appropriate decision-making authority to sign-off the Final Business Case, authorise the appointment of suitably qualified contractors and deliver the project.

Burnt Oak Public Realm Improvements

- 1.19 The Burnt Oak Town Centre Strategy was adopted by the council through delegated approval, following a decision of the Assets, Regeneration and Growth Committee in September 2015. The strategy was built on extensive engagement with and input from residents and businesses locally. The Strategy identified a series of physical, environmental and other measures aimed at improving the attractiveness of the town centre and increasing economic vibrancy. Recommendations for interventions were divided into four separate hotspots, and a set of interventions were suggested for each.
- 1.20 Since adoption of the Town Centre Strategy, a range of interventions have been delivered in Burnt Oak, including a shop front improvement scheme, a new library forecourt, a brand new kiosk and other improvements outside the station, improvements to the grounds and entrance of the International Gospel Church, a key institution within the local area, and enhanced coordination to address crime and anti-social behaviour. The Strategy was also instrumental in the preparation of funding bids to government for additional resources for Burnt Oak which, unfortunately, the council was not successful in securing.
- 1.21 More recently throughout the pandemic, the focus has been on supporting businesses to re-open following the series of lockdowns, celebrating independent businesses through the Discover Barnet campaign and on delivering a town centre activation event to encourage footfall and dwell time locally.
- 1.22 In line with the original Town Centre Strategy, officers are also developing an approach to 'creative placemaking' in Burnt Oak. A design team has been appointed to work on the programme, including new artwork, signage and murals. A community steering group has been established to provide an inclusive engagement and consultation platform and the aspiration is that this group will be supported by the council to evolve into a Burnt Oak Town Team, taking on a wider remit within the town centre.
- 1.23 Officers have also developed plans to deliver a further phase of shop front improvements and new temporary planters to improve the shopping experience and create a more attractive and healthy environment.
- 1.24 Aligned with the above, the council has been progressing plans for the re-development of Watling Car Park, ensuring that the scheme will be delivered in a way that directly contributes to wider town centre improvements.

- 1.25 With a range of shorter-term activities underway in Burnt Oak, the council now has an opportunity to deliver significant public realm improvement in the area in line with the Town Centre Strategy. Initial analysis suggests that this can comprise:
- A public realm intervention (c.1,800sqm) to create a link between Silkstream Park, Watling Avenue, the Watling Car Park site and Barnfield Road.
 - Further enhancements to the station gateway to create a sense of arrival (c.700 sqm).
 - Public realm improvements (up to 2,500sqm) on the footways of Watling Avenue and Barnfield Road, to include pavement improvements, trees and greenery, civic furniture, decluttering, street signage and wayfinding interventions.
 - Interventions that address crime and fear of crime in the area.
 - Healthy Streets principles applied throughout.
- 1.26 It is intended that this work will also include the development of a Public Realm Design Guide for Burnt Oak.
- 1.27 The project will build on the precedent being set at Finchley Square both in terms of design quality and the approach to working across services, with community members and with other stakeholders. An approximate budget of £3.5M has been identified for the project, based on the current scope and the fact that works are anticipated to extend to adjacent parks. Funding will come from within approved Town Centre Capital resources and the budget will be updated as the project progresses.
- 1.28 This report seeks Committee approval to delegate to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman all relevant decision making to commence the project, approve relevant Business Cases, appoint consultants and contractors as required and to deliver the project through to completion. On the current timeline, it is estimated that a multi-disciplinary design team can be appointed by Q4 2021/22, consultation, engagement and design undertaken throughout 2022/23 and construction completed by Q4 2023/24. These dates will be subject to refinement as the project is scoped further.

Golders Green Public Realm Improvements

- 1.29 The Golders Green Town Centre Strategy was approved by Housing and Growth Committee in January 2020. The strategy 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.
- 1.30 Since its adoption, officers have been focused on supporting businesses in the town centre throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Businesses in Golders Green were early adopters of Temporary Streetspace Fund parklets and have also been the focus of Discover Barnet case studies and events.
- 1.31 Alongside this work, the Economic Development team has been undertaking initial scoping of public realm improvements identified within the Town Centre Strategy and, as in Burnt Oak, now seeks approval to bring these forward.
- 1.32 Initial proposals are for approximately 2,000sqm of public realm improvements at the junction of Golders Green Crescent and Golders Green Road (A502) as well as potential enhancements along The Riding and in front of the library. Other related public realm projects on Golders Green Road will be reviewed with ward members as opportunities

arise. As elsewhere, the proposed interventions would incorporate Healthy Streets principles and would create new space for economic, community and cultural activities while balancing the needs of car users, pedestrians and others.

- 1.33 The proposals also include an element of cultural activation, wayfinding and graphic identity development. The project would necessitate the formation of a new Golders Green Town Team with local businesses and existing community and faith groups being encouraged to help steer the project. As with the other interventions, an internal project working group would be initiated and officers would also work closely with partners such as TfL.
- 1.34 It is intended that this work will also include the development of a Public Realm Design Guide for the town centre.
- 1.35 An approximate budget of £2.5M has been identified for the project, based on the current scope of the project within the town centres. Funding will come from within existing Town Centre Capital resources and, as above, the budget will be refined as the project progresses.
- 1.36 This report seeks Committee approval to delegate to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman all relevant decision making to commence the project, approve relevant Business Cases, appoint consultants and contractors as required and to deliver the project through to completion. Indicative project timelines suggest that a design team can be appointed by Q1 2022/23, consultation, engagement and design completed by Q2 2023/24 and construction completed by Q1 2024/25. These dates will be subject to refinement as the project is scoped further.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Officers are taking a comprehensive, cross-service approach to pursuing the council's long-term aspirations for Barnet's town centres. The proposals set out above directly support the Barnet Plan and Growth Strategy ambitions for thriving town centres, as well as the goals of the Long-Term Transport Strategy.
- 2.2 Importantly, by taking the proposed action, the council is also supporting the economic recovery of town centres and supporting local businesses as they emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic.

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 invest in the improvement of the urban fabric of town centres, however this would be a missed opportunity to capitalise on developer and other council interventions. It would also see the continued gradual degradation of town centres, inviting criticism from residents and businesses and posing increased pressure on council maintenance budgets.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 Following Committee, officers will continue to progress the town centre projects outlined above. Any individual decisions and actions will be taken by the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman, in accordance with the recommendations.
- 4.2 Officers will continue to maintain regular communication with relevant stakeholder groups – residents, businesses, Members and residents – in accordance with the various programmes of work.
- 4.3 Officers will continue to pursue external funding opportunities should they become available to offset council investment in town centre renewal. Contract Procedure Rules will apply to the expenditure of external funding.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1.1 As noted, the recommendations included in this report directly support council policy, including the Barnet Plan, Growth Strategy and Long-Term Transport Strategy.

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

- 5.2.1 As noted, in July 2021 Policy and Resources Committee approved £23.5M of projected Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds to deliver a programme of town centre renewal. This included a combined total of £7M allocated to Finchley Central and Burnt Oak. The funding is in addition to the £4.8M of remaining approved town centre capital funding, which is being directed at other main town centres and borough-wide projects, subject to appropriate approvals.
- 5.2.2 There are no additional financial implications resulting from these interventions. All costs will be met from within existing approved budgets.
- 5.2.3 Expenditure on these town centre projects was included in the Annual Procurement Forward Plan 2021/22, as adopted at Policy and Resources Committee.
- 5.2.4 The council will procure service contractor(s) in accordance with Barnet's Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 to support the delivery of all associated capital works identified in this report.

5.3 Legal and Constitutional References

- 5.3.1 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.

- To receive reports on relevant performance information and risk on the services, under the remit of the Committee.

5.4 **Insight**

5.4.1 The proposals set out in this report are founded on the development of comprehensive Town Centre Strategies. In addition to community and business engagement, these strategies draw on a range of data and insight sources to draw conclusions and make recommendations for future action in town centres.

5.4.2 Officers will use data and intelligence to assess the impact of major town centre interventions following their completion.

5.5 **Social Value**

5.5.1 The council must comply with the requirements of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, namely to consider how what is to be procured might improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area and how it might act to secure such improvement in conducting procurement. Officers will continue to seek Social Value outcomes throughout all stages of delivery.

5.6 **Risk Management**

5.6.1 The council has an established approach to risk management, which is set out in the Risk Management Framework. Managing risk will be an essential part of programme management and will be used to inform key decisions relating to the town centre projects. All significant risks will be reported to Capital Strategy Board and escalated as required.

5.6.2 There is a risk that there will be resistance from the community with regards to some proposals in town centres. All work identified in this report builds directly on priorities already identified through strategies that have been consulted on and the council has allowed for ongoing community and stakeholder engagement throughout the delivery of these projects.

5.7 **Equalities and Diversity**

5.7.1 The Equality Act, 2010 outlines the provisions of the Public Sector Equalities Duty which requires Public Bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act, 2010;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people of different groups; and
- Foster good relations between people from different groups.

5.7.2 Relevant protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

5.7.3 The Barnet Plan and the Growth Strategy are intended to benefit all communities and groups who live, work and visit the borough, including those with protected characteristics.

5.7.4 An Equalities Impact Assessment and Health Impact Assessment was undertaken on the Growth Strategy, and the outcomes of these were summarised in the report to Housing and Growth Committee seeking approval of the Strategy.

5.7.5 Where individual decisions are required in relation to project delivery, these will be considered on a case-by-case basis to ensure no group is disadvantaged or left behind.

5.8 Corporate Parenting

5.8.1 In line with the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the council has a duty to consider Corporate Parenting Principles in all relevant decision-making. There are no known implications in relation to the town centre projects outlined in this report but this will be reviewed as plans are further developed.

5.9 Consultation and Engagement

5.9.1 Engagement with local stakeholders has been a fundamental part of the council's work in town centres to date and has been instrumental in identifying and developing priority projects to take forward. As set out above, officers will continue to support community and business engagement throughout project delivery and beyond.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

6.1.1 Housing and Growth Committee, November 2017: Entrepreneurial Barnet - Annual Update and Forward Plan

<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=696&MIId=9435&Ver=4>

6.1.2 Housing and Growth Committee, September 2018: Town Centre Capital projects and update on Finchley Central Housing Infrastructure Fund project

<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s48469/Town%20Centre%20Capital%20projects%20and%20update%20on%20Finchley%20Central%20Housing%20Infrastructure%20Fund%20project.pdf>

6.1.3 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>

6.1.4 Housing and Growth Committee, January 2020: Growth Strategy

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

6.1.5 Housing and Growth Committee, January 2020: Golders Green Town Centre Strategy and update on Finchley Central Housing Infrastructure Fund

<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s57507/Golders%20Green%20Town%20Centre%20Strategy%20and%20update%20on%20Finchley%20Central%20Housing%20Infrastructure%20Fund.pdf>

6.1.6 Housing and Growth Committee, June 2021: COVID-19: Recovery Plan – Thriving

<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s65201/COVID-19%20Recovery%20Plan%20Thriving.pdf>

6.1.7 Policy and Resources Committee, July 2021: Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Allocations

<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s65921/Strategic%20CIL%20Allocations%20Final.pdf>