

**LONDON BOROUGH OF BARNET
LDF CORE STRATEGY AND
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES**

**Examination in Public – London Borough of Barnet’s Response
Hearing Matter 3: Planning for Barnet’s Town Centres**

Matter 3 – Planning for Barnet’s town centres

1. Is there a sound framework for the development of the borough’s current and proposed network of town centres that reflects Government guidance? What is the logic for the hierarchy of centres set out in the CS? Does the Town Centre Framework provide a sound basis for managing future development in the borough’s centres?

The Town Centre Floorspace Needs Assessment (TCFNA) (CD075) provides a sound framework for the development of the borough’s current network of town centres. PPS4 (NAT038) sets out the need to define the network and hierarchy of town centres and for evidence to demonstrate the need for land or floorspace for all major town centre uses over the plan period. The TCFNA assesses the wider capacity for retail need in the borough and broadly where that need could be met (see answer to Q2 and priority town centres for further detail on this). The TCFNA also assesses the performance of each of the town centres to assess whether they are performing in line with their status and position in the hierarchy of centres in the borough. The conclusions of the Assessment are set out at para 11.3.5 of the Core Strategy.

The 2010 TCFNA Update (CD076) focused on retail capacity, updating quantitative information from 2009 because of new planning commitments and to gauge the impact of the economic downturn. The 2009 work and 2010 update provides a complete picture of Barnet’s retail context

The TCFNA quantitative assessment of retail need is based on a survey of the shopping habits of 1,575 of Barnet’s residents. The survey assessed the need for both convenience and comparison goods from a baseline in 2008 and projected it up to 2026. It also takes into account development of convenience store commitments in the pipeline (updated in 2010) and the expected population growth in the borough. The technique used is a conventional and widely accepted step by step methodology which is consistent with best practice.

The TCFNA qualitative assessment is based on the health check surveys carried out for the town centres. The surveys assessed the role, attraction and performance of Barnet town centres and reviewed retail, leisure, cultural, tourism and office uses. With regards to the retail function the surveys compared the proportions of comparison, convenience, service and vacant floorspace. They identified the large anchor food stores, the

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proportion of multiple chain retailers versus independent retailers, the number of high street banks and town centre markets. They also covered accessibility by public transport, cycling and car parking availability. Finally the environmental quality of each of the centres was assessed including the availability of CCTV.

The logic for the hierarchy of town centres is based on maintaining the vitality and viability of the existing network. Barnet has more town centres than any other London borough with twenty major, district or local centres and most residents are within half a mile of a centre. The TCFNA broadly recommends maintaining the hierarchy identified in the UDP. The London Plan in Annex 1 acknowledges that Brent Cross is a regional shopping centre and highlights at Table A2.2 its potential for change from a Regional Shopping Centre to a Metropolitan Town Centre. Implementation of the BXC planning consent ([CD053a](#)) will enable this change to be made.

Core Strategy paras 11.7.4 to 11.7.7 set out the role of Town Centre Frameworks (TCFs) to support the potential for future growth as part of a planned approach to managing development opportunities for main town centre uses. The TCFs provide a town centre strategy and framework for positive planning decision making, identifying opportunities to enhance the public realm and improve accessibility for all users. They also seek to support the provision of a wide range of shops and services to meet the needs of diverse local populations. PPS4 identifies in EC3.1 (h) that at the local level planning authorities should amongst other things use tools such as town centre strategies to deal with the planning and design issues associated with the growth and management of centres.

Para 11.7.5 sets out what will be covered by the TCFs such as addressing the mix of land uses, the movement opportunities, the design aspects and the creation of a wider role for a town centre. Development principles have been set out in the TCFs to guide proposals for identified opportunity sites. The TCF also addresses delivery and implementation identifying opportunities for pooling of resources.

The status of the TCF is that it provides the basis for managing and promoting positive change in identified town centres and therefore is a material consideration for planning applications in the area. Although not a Neighbourhood Plan the TCF represents something similar and provides a flexible and effective way of

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DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES**

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engaging with local communities and businesses. Following adoption of the New Barnet TCF in November 2010 (CD061b) progress is being made with the remaining TCFs as set out below in Table 1.

Table 1 – Managing Barnet’s Priority Town Centres

	Chipping Barnet	Edgware	Finchley Church End	North Finchley
Business Forum	Established	Established	Emerging	Established
Business Surveys	✓	✓	✓	✓
Outer London Fund	Round 1 Bid - £416k for improvements to public realm and trader support	Round 2 Bid - £620k (awaiting outcome)	-	Round 2 Bid - £1.33m (awaiting outcome)
Town Centre Framework	Draft for consultation anticipated in early 2012	Draft for consultation anticipated in early 2012	Issues and Opportunities consultation Feb 2010 (CD061c) Final draft approved for consultation November 2011 (CD061d)	Issues and Opportunities consultation July 2009 (CD061e)

Each town centre has different issues and the TCF is just one of a number of mechanisms we will use for understanding needs and managing change. An objective shared with the Mayor’s Outer London Fund is the delivery of public realm improvements as well as broader initiatives to support local businesses and help deliver long term economic uplift to the town centres.

2. What is the justification for the selection of priority town centres? Should New Barnet be identified as a priority centre for development and growth? If not, why not?

Barnet’s Sustainable Town Centres Strategy (EVD021) identified a number of the borough’s town centres which require the

**LONDON BOROUGH OF BARNET
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**Examination in Public – London Borough of Barnet’s Response
Hearing Matter 3: Planning for Barnet’s Town Centres**

preparation of a Town Centre Framework to guide future development pressures and manage change. In its role in promoting community development and localism the Council is keen to ensure that any change is managed, is appropriate to the scale of the existing Town Centre and surrounding area, assists in addressing current issues within the Town Centre and results in sustainable change which meets the needs of adjacent communities.

Each priority town centre has development opportunities but faces different problems. At Edgware the issue is competition from Brent Cross Shopping Centre. At Finchley Church End the main issues are ensuring improved connectivity between the office uses on Regents Park Road and the town centre and managing change on sites around the transport hub and in older office buildings. At North Finchley the focus is making the artsdepot the cultural hub of the town centre and maximising the opportunity from co-location of a new landmark library in the building . At Chipping Barnet the focus is on managing change around the Spires shopping centre.

Whetstone is no longer identified as a priority for intervention as the town centre is performing well. A more appropriate approach at this town centre is to focus on planning briefs to manage development opportunities on individual sites.

With regard to New Barnet this is a small District Centre which performs poorly against key vitality and viability indicators and is generally regarded to be in decline because of the increasing attractiveness of competing centres, changing consumer trends, lack of investment in the centre, and lack of planning certainty on a number of significant development sites within, and on the edge of, the town centre which has sparked significant developer interest.

The Direction of Travel ([CD025](#)) was published in November 2009. Draft Policy CS4 identified New Barnet as one of six ‘priority’ town centres where development opportunities would be realised. Specific reference was made at Direction of Travel to the opportunity for additional convenience goods floorspace as part of mixed use development on the former gas works site. Over 250 residents in the New Barnet area submitted a pro-forma objecting to the identification of their town centre as a priority for mixed use development.

**LONDON BOROUGH OF BARNET
LDF CORE STRATEGY AND
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES**

**Examination in Public – London Borough of Barnet’s Response
Hearing Matter 3: Planning for Barnet’s Town Centres**

In February 2010 a draft TCF ([CD061a](#)) for New Barnet was published for public consultation. The TCF set out a Vision and set of objectives to guide the future of the town centre, and presented three alternative scenarios (options) for the future of New Barnet.

The three scenarios were:

Scenario 1 – A Consolidated High Street through maintaining a small but focussed shopping area on East Barnet Road (based around the existing Sainsbury’s Store), resisting significant new retail development and seeking to reverse the decline of the centre through discreet environmental enhancements.

Scenario 2 – A Compact and Intensive High Street with shops, services and food/drink outlets concentrated into a core area on East Barnet Road. Major new retail development encouraged within the core area through redevelopment of existing buildings in order to improve the centre’s offer and competitiveness and to act as a catalyst for wider enhancements to the centre as a whole; with a secondary/complementary offer outside of this core area (to the west of the railway bridge).

Scenario 3 – An Extended High Street to create an extended yet more intensive High Street, where retail and leisure uses would be concentrated into an area extending along East Barnet Road northwards into the former East Barnet Gas Works site, where significant new retail development would be encouraged, taking advantage of the one-off opportunity to significantly extend the High Street.

There was a good response on the Draft TCF with over 780 written responses submitted. Overwhelming support was expressed for Scenario 1 – A Consolidated High Street.

In addition the evidence from the TCFNA changed. Following the 2010 Update to the TCFNA there was less support for the level of growth in convenience goods floorspace anticipated at New Barnet.

Our approach towards New Barnet therefore changed at Publication Stage in September 2010 where the updated document no longer ([CDO17](#)) identifies New Barnet as a priority town centre for development. Rather, Policy CS6 proposes taking a planned approach to managing development in New Barnet (including the preparation of a planning framework).

**LONDON BOROUGH OF BARNET
LDF CORE STRATEGY AND
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES**

**Examination in Public – London Borough of Barnet’s Response
Hearing Matter 3: Planning for Barnet’s Town Centres**

In terms of the TCF Scenario 2 (A Compact and Intensive High Street) could be considered to be the most appropriate solution for the town centre in ‘town planning’ and ‘deliverability’ terms on the basis that it would harness existing developer interest and private sector investment to deliver development which could act as a catalyst for broader, centre-wide improvements/investment.

However, the public consultation responses overwhelmingly favour Scenario 1 (A Consolidated High Street) and it is on this basis and in the context of the wider localism agenda that the aspirations of the local community is the principal driver behind establishing Scenario 1 (A Consolidated High Street) as the preferred scenario to form the basis for the Town Centre Framework for New Barnet ([CD061b](#)).

3. Does the CS provide an appropriate policy context to support additional mixed use retail and residential development in Edgware?

We consider that the CS does provide an appropriate policy context for Edgware.

The TCFNA identifies development opportunities for new convenience and comparison goods development in Edgware. The centre is identified as a priority town centre in the Core Strategy because of these opportunities and the accessibility provided by the bus and tube stations. As shown in Table 1 a Town Centre Framework is being drafted to deliver these opportunities.

In the Core Strategy :

CS1 highlights Edgware as a priority town centre where we will promote mixed use development.

CS3 refers to the opportunities for enhancement and infill housing development in priority town centres including Edgware. It promotes residential uses above ground floor level.

CS5 considers that tall buildings of 8 storeys (or 26 metres above ground level) or more may be appropriate in Edgware. We would expect a tall building to be a mixed use development.

CS6 on Promoting Barnet’s Town Centres provides an appropriate policy context for Edgware highlighting its role in meeting both comparison and convenience retail capacity by 2026.

CS8 on Promoting a Strong and Prosperous Barnet encourages new mixed use commercial floorspace in priority town centres including Edgware.

**LONDON BOROUGH OF BARNET
LDF CORE STRATEGY AND
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES**

**Examination in Public – London Borough of Barnet’s Response
Hearing Matter 3: Planning for Barnet’s Town Centres**

4. What is the logic for requiring significant new retail development to provide a mix of unit sizes? Is Policy DMP DM11 inappropriately ambiguous in its intent?

We consider that the logic for requiring significant retail development to provide a mix of unit sizes is an important aspiration to help maintain the vitality and viability of town centres. The issue of a lack of independent shops has been raised throughout consultation on the LDF. Improving our understanding of local traders’ needs through town centre business forums and surveys is integral to creating successful town centres. To provide the right environment for investment we have to get the balance right between a range of retail outlets.

The Mayor also recognises it as an issue in London Plan Policy 4.9 Small Shops and will consider provision for affordable shops suitable for small or independent traders in retail developments exceeding 2,500 m².

DM11 aims to provide a mix of unit sizes, avoid inward looking layouts, maintain the street frontage and provide suitable and convenient linkages with the rest of the town centre. We consider that the policy is clear and only applies to significant retail development which is defined in DMP para 12.7.8.

Context is an important consideration. In some centres in Barnet significant retail development may not be acceptable. However in those centres where there is potential we consider it appropriate to have the policy to ensure that the approach creates those smaller units which because of their size can provide affordable floorspace for smaller shop units. Preserving the small scale shopping experience in Barnet is considered important.

5. Should CS Policies CS6 and DM11 specifically support independent shops and social enterprises in town centres? If so, why?

CS6 and DM11 do not specifically support independent shops and social enterprises as this goes beyond the scope of Circular 5/05 – Planning Obligations. As stated in our response to question 4 supporting the provision of small retail units will help to ensure that the needs of smaller, independent retailer can be addressed.

There is funding support for independent traders, particularly with regard to capacity building, as part of the Outer London Fund bids for Cricklewood, Edgware and North Finchley as well as the successful bid for Chipping Barnet.