

Finchley Church End Town Centre Strategy

June 2012





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1. Introduction and Purpose

- 1.1 Finchley Church End is one of Barnet's 14 district town centres and is broadly comparable in size to North Finchley, Burnt Oak and Chipping Barnet. It is one of the most visited town centres in the borough and one of the most accessible.
- 1.2 Finchley Church End is identified in Barnet's emerging LDF Core Strategy as a Priority Town Centre with potential for future growth. Any development within the town centre will be required to deliver the objectives set out in the Core Strategy. A core objective is to promote Barnet as a place of economic growth and prosperity supporting the continued vitality and viability of town centres, focussing commercial investment in priority centres such as Finchley Church End. The town centre strategy is intended to provide a framework for managing this anticipated change and guiding future development to ensure that this supports the long term vitality and viability of the town centre, protects and enhances this part of the borough and is deliverable.

The strategy has four key objectives for the town centre:

- To encourage positive change, renewal and investment.
- To foster enterprise.
- To protect the suburban character of the area.
- To improve and enhance the quality of the public realm.

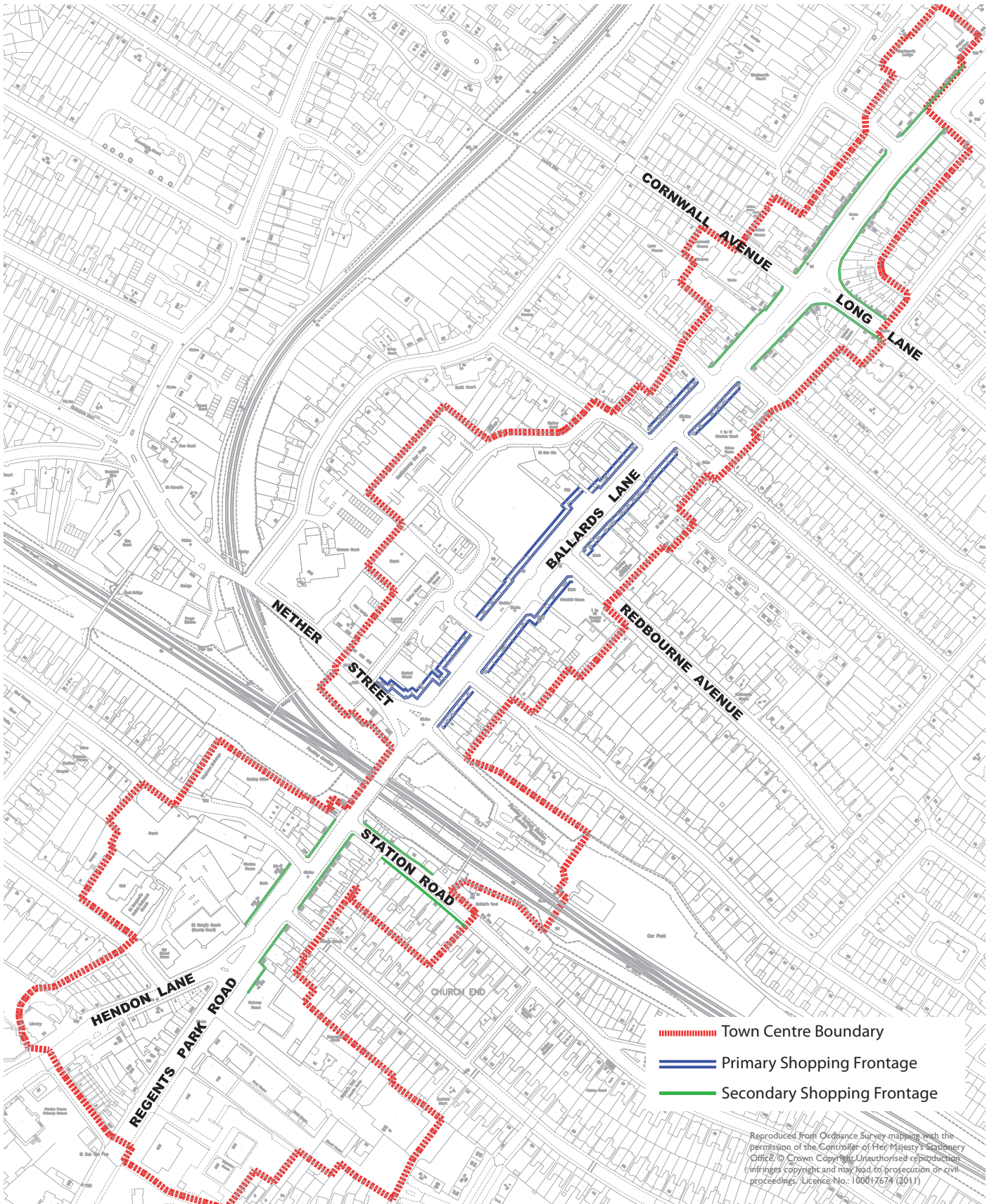
- 1.3 The delivery of these objectives will support the following long term vision.

Finchley Church End will become a thriving, vibrant and sustainable district centre with an enhanced range of independent and niche retailers, convenience retail outlets, and local employment provision. The centre will be easy to access and move around for all users. The historic fabric will be protected, and the quality of the town centre environment improved for all. Change will be delivered through partnership working with both public and private sector landowners to ensure that development is co-ordinated and the benefits for the town centre arising from new development are maximised.

- 1.4 The key purpose of this strategy is to provide a detailed planning framework that can deliver this vision by setting out key development principles and supporting the potential for future growth as well as manage anticipated change. The strategy will be a material planning consideration in the determination of future planning applications within the town centre.



Historic core



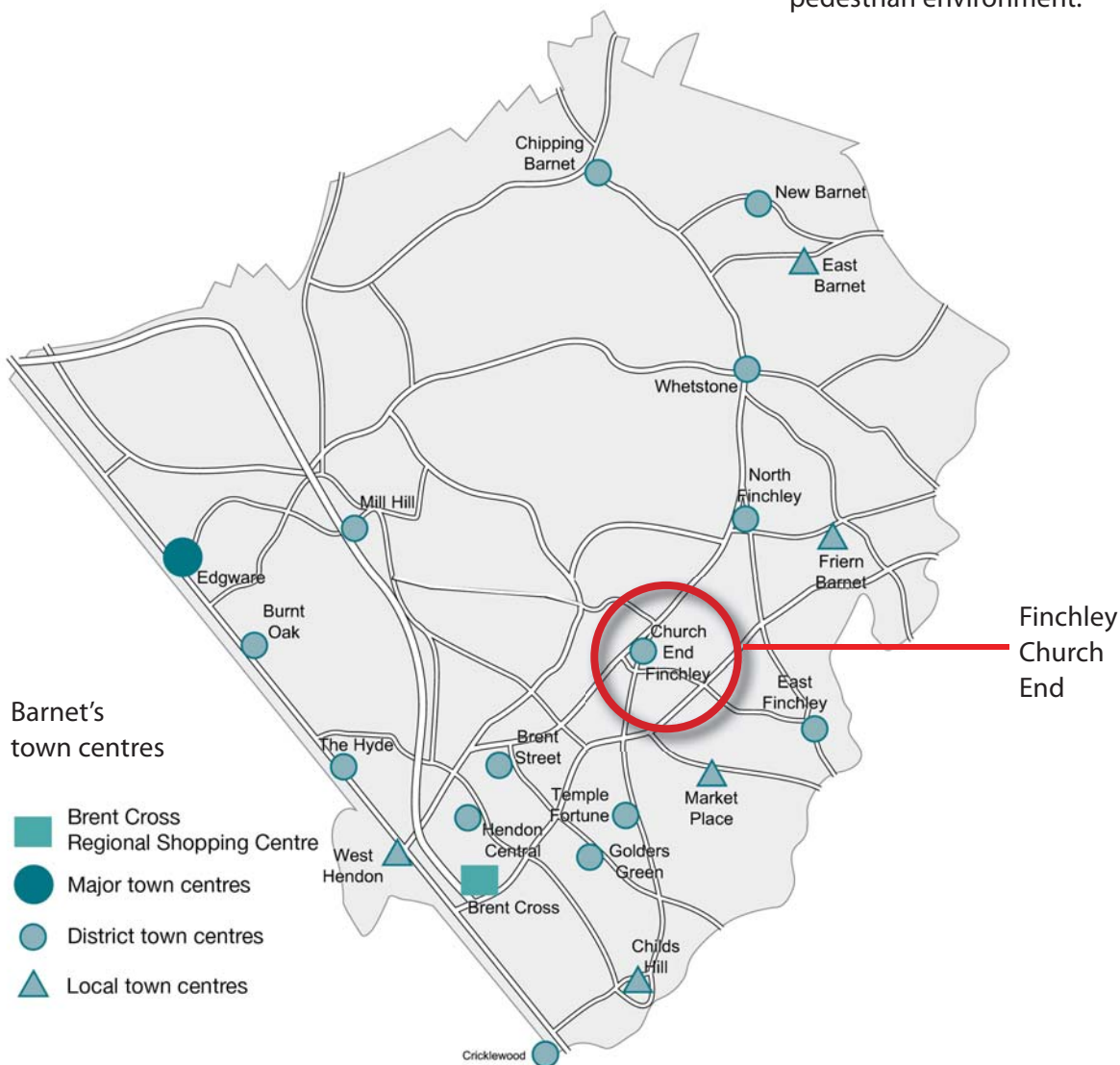
Finchley Church End Town Centre Boundary and Shopping Frontage

2. Background and Priorities

2.1 Finchley Church End is located in the centre of the Borough. The district centre of North Finchley lies to the north east, with East Finchley to the east, Brent Street and Hendon Central to the south west and Temple Fortune and Golders Green to the south. Finchley Church End has a number of characteristics which distinguish it from surrounding centres and which this town centre strategy seeks to enhance through encouraging positive change, investment and renewal.

Character of the Town Centre

2.2 Finchley Church End is linear in form with a ribbon of mostly late 19th and early 20th Century buildings with varied retail and commercial uses at ground floor running for a 1km length from Regents Park Road in the south to Victoria Park in the north. The centre is bisected by the road bridge that crosses the railway line just to the south of Finchley Central Station which lies on the Northern Line at the busy road junction of Nether Street and Ballards Lane. The road bridge over the railway exacerbates congestion by narrowing the road space and creates a poor pedestrian environment.



- 2.3 Finchley Church End's offer differs from surrounding centres and is dominated by a variety of small, independent convenience and specialist shops, with Tesco acting as the main retail anchor in the centre and a significant number of small, independent restaurants. The independent shops and restaurants are a key asset, along with the good transport links by road and public transport. However, a review of the local property market has found that there is limited demand from national retailers to locate in the centre, potentially due to the small size of the retail units in the centre and competition from surrounding centres such as North Finchley.
- 2.4 Finchley Church End is one of the six major office locations in Barnet with an important cluster of employment uses mainly concentrated in purpose built offices at the southern end of the town centre. These uses play an important economic role, providing local employment and supporting a wide range of other businesses in the centre, particularly through the lunchtime trade. There are a small number of taller, 1960s office blocks within the centre which are out of character with the surrounding area and where the office floorspace is of a declining quality and there are varying levels of vacancy.

- 2.5 Reflecting its importance as a viable employment location, the land in the south east of the town centre (the Regents Park Road employment cluster) is designated and therefore safeguarded as a Locally Significant Business Location in the Development Management Policies Document.
- 2.6 Much of the southern section of the town centre is designated as a Conservation Area. This includes the original Church End Village and historic core of the town centre. A Conservation Area Character Appraisal for the Finchley Church End Conservation Area has recently been completed. This will provide the basis for better protecting the historic assets of the area and enhancing the quality of the conservation area over time.
- 2.7 The majority of the residential area surrounding the town centre consists of detached and semi-detached family homes developed between the 1870s and 1930s.
- 2.8 The town centre lies across two wards, Finchley Church End and West Finchley. There is a slightly higher than average proportion of residents aged over 60 in these wards and a higher than average population density. The average income across



Victoria Park



Regent's Park Road at the junction with Ballards Lane

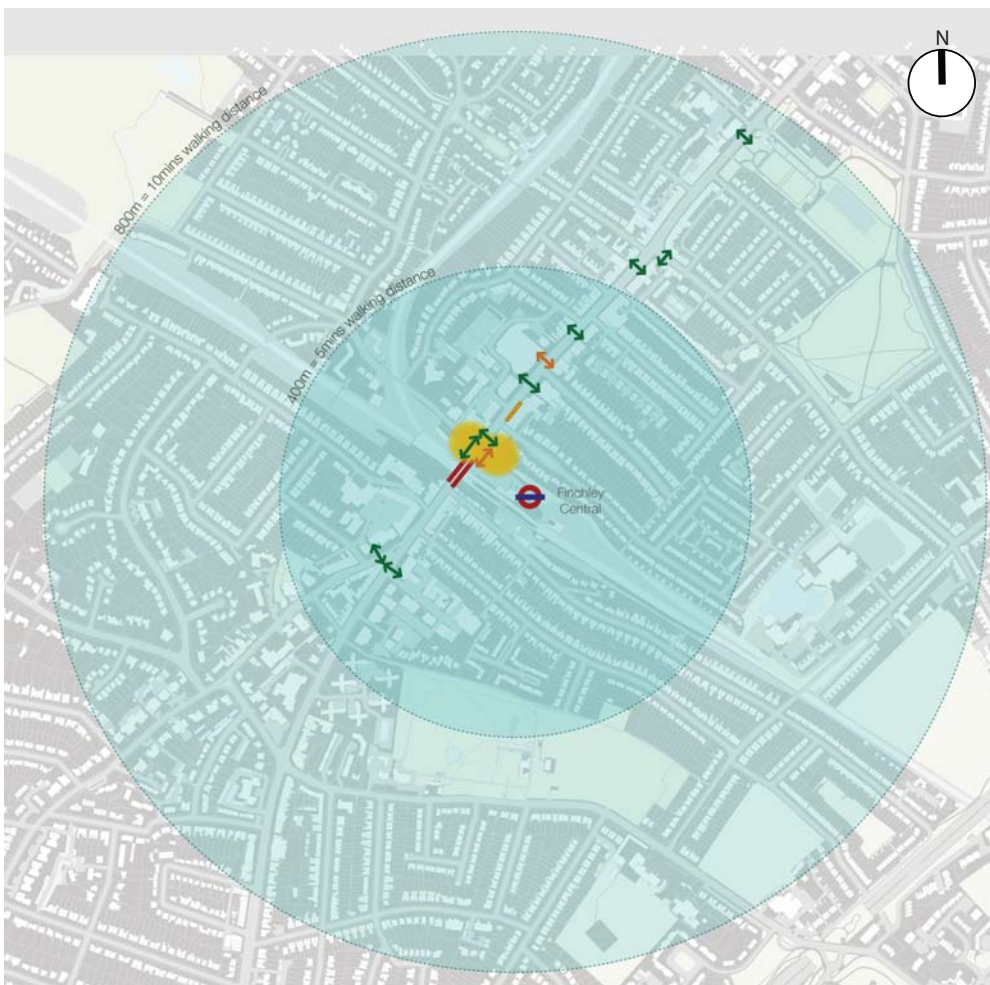
the two wards is 12% above the Barnet average indicating that the town centre has a relatively large and affluent catchment population and that there is scope to better capture the spending power of the surrounding community.

Transport and Movement

2.9 The town centre benefits from good public transport links. Finchley Central Underground Station (Zone 4) is located at the heart of the centre providing direct links into central London and numerous bus routes run along Ballards Lane and Nether Street providing good local connections.

2.10 However, pedestrian access to Finchley Central station is poor, as the station is set back from the main road along Chaville Way which also provides vehicular access to the Station Car Park (see paragraph 2.11). Pedestrian access is also hindered by its location at a busy road junction and the narrow footways across the railway bridge.

2.11 There are excellent road connections to the strategic road network. Ballards Lane (A598) connects Finchley Church End with North Finchley and Whetstone to the north and Hendon, Temple Fortune, Golders Green, the A406 and A1 to the south. However, the location of the town centre on, and adjacent to, these key routes leads to significant traffic congestion through the town centre and at key



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Walking distance and crossings in Finchley Church End

junctions at peak times. This creates a poor quality pedestrian environment, particularly around the Nether Street/Ballards Lane junction and can also have an impact on the journey times of buses.

Parking

2.12 Finchley Central station has a 260 (approximately) space car park which is owned and managed by Transport for London (TfL). However, this is used mainly by commuters because of the charging regime and does not specifically serve the town centre. There is also a 100 (approximately) space multi-storey car park to the rear of Tesco, which is owned and operated by the store. The whole of the town centre lies within a Controlled Parking Zone and there is on street pay and display parking provided along Ballards Lane and adjacent residential streets which is well used.

Issues and Opportunities Consultation

2.13 In February 2010 public consultation was undertaken on the key issues and opportunities for Finchley Church End Town Centre. The outcome of the consultation and specific issues that were raised have been summarised below under a number of headings. The results of this consultation have helped shape the priorities for the town centre strategy set out in paragraph 2.17.

2.14 The Shopping Offer

- Desire to secure improved 'quality' shopping offer, particularly from niche/independent retailers (especially butchers and bakers) but also 'higher quality' chains. Several respondents identified a specific desire for a post office in the town centre.
- Concern to resist big new stores and clear objections to further A2 uses (banks/building societies/estate agents).

- The high rates and rents in the area were highlighted as a reason for shops closing or 'desirable' (niche) businesses not being attracted to the area.

2.15 The Public Realm and Pedestrian Movement

- Strong support was expressed for better pedestrian crossings and an improved pedestrian environment around the station and over the railway bridge; and for improved pedestrian links between the station and the centre.
- General support was expressed for more soft landscaping in the centre and 'greening' of the public realm including tree planting.
- Very strong support was expressed for de-cluttering of the public realm.

2.16 Buildings

- A concern was expressed that there was a need for better protection for Finchley Church End's historic buildings.
- Concerns were expressed about poor quality existing shop fronts, signage and advertising impacting on the visual appearance of the town centre.

2.17 Traffic and Parking

- A number of respondents highlighted that more public car parking was required to support shops.
- Concerns that new development will bring more cars and people to an already overcrowded and congested area and a need for changes to be made to relieve the existing vehicular congestion in the area were raised.
- Some suggestions were made that new developments should be 'car free'.

Priorities for the Town Centre

2.18 The five priorities for change and investment in Finchley Church End to be considered and addressed through this town centre strategy and future development proposals are:

1. Ensure an accessible and integrated town centre and maximise the potential of the existing transport hub;
2. Enhance the character of the town centre;
3. Develop Finchley Church End's role as a sustainable, modern employment centre;
4. Protect, improve and strengthen the existing range of independent retail provision within the town centre; and
5. Improve and green the public realm across the town centre

1. Ensure an accessible and integrated town centre and maximise the potential of the existing transport hub

Finchley Church End is a highly accessible centre due to the location of the tube station in the heart of the town centre and the proximity to the strategic road network. However, there are significant issues in relation to the quality of the environment around, and access to, the station. Through capturing the benefits of new development there is a major opportunity to create a better, more integrated and more accessible transport hub for the Borough by working with TfL and other stakeholders. Particular opportunities include:

- Improving the station environment;
- Developing better linkages between the underground station and bus services;
- Improving pedestrian access to the station;
- Improving the bridge environment;
- Improving pedestrian crossing facilities; and
- Improving the quality of the public realm at key junctions.



The bridge over the railway lines



Poor sense of arrival from the station

2. Enhance the character of the town centre

Finchley Church End has retained much of its historic character. However, the character of the buildings along Ballards Lane and Regents Park Road is being progressively eroded by inappropriately sited advertising hoardings, street clutter, inappropriate signage and poor quality shop fronts. Future development and refurbishment opportunities must be carefully managed to ensure that these enhance the historic character of the town centre. Opportunities to declutter the public realm should also be progressed as and when funding becomes available.



King Edward Hall, Regents Park Road



Corner of Ballards Lane and Hervey Close

3. Develop Finchley Church End's role as a sustainable, modern employment centre

Finchley Church End is already a successful employment centre. Office workers are key to supporting a range of town centre businesses, and an improved pedestrian environment would encourage them to make fuller use of the centre. A significant employment area exists at the southern end of the town centre on the east side of Regents Park Road. However, at present this is poorly integrated with the core retail area. There is scope to consolidate this area as a vibrant office location and to improve connections with wider town centre facilities for the benefit of local employees and businesses; while considering a wider range of uses appropriate to a town centre which will ensure long term viability of some of the older office buildings in Finchley Church End.

4. Protect, improve and strengthen the existing range of independent retail provision within the town centre.

Finchley Church End has a large number of independent retail and service providers, including a number of good quality ethnic restaurants, which meet the needs of the diverse local population and provides a reasonably thriving evening economy. There is an opportunity to build on this distinctive characteristic of the area and enhance the evening economy by improving the quality of existing frontages but also to strengthen the retail core through attracting additional high street retail provision which might include a post office, butcher and bakers within the town centre. There is also an opportunity to work with existing traders to encourage more collaboration and promotion of the town centre to enhance trade and capture the spending power of the surrounding residential community and the large number of office workers located at the southern end of the town centre. Measures might include the creation of a street market in the town centre. This could be located on the wide area of pavement in front of the Tesco store (site 8).



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- 5. Improve and green the public realm across the town centre

Parts of the town centre benefit from mature street trees and other planting, and the quality of environment in these areas is noticeably better than in areas where planting is absent. There are opportunities, particularly along Ballards Lane, to plant mature trees which will enhance the quality of the physical environment, help to reduce the impact of traffic on pedestrians and also provide shade and evaporative cooling. There are also areas of the town centre which would benefit from general decluttering and a more co-ordinated approach to the public realm - particularly in the Core Retail Area.



Regents Park Road looking towards Ballards Lane

Delivery

- 2.19 The overall objective of the strategy is to encourage positive change, renewal and investment in the town centre. The Council is keen to work in partnership with local residents, businesses, land owners, developers and other public bodies to achieve this.
- 2.20 A number of key sites have been identified where there are opportunities for future development and improvement. In Section 3.0 the strategy sets out a series of principles to inform and guide proposals for these sites as they come forward for development and ensure the priorities for the town centre set out in this section can be delivered.
- 2.21 Opportunities to enhance the public realm in the town centre and address current problems are also identified in section 3.0. In many cases these could be brought forward incrementally in different parts of the town centre as opportunities and resources present themselves.
- 2.21 To support future delivery a number of priorities for future funding are set out in Section 4.0.



Office space at Winston House



Historic core, Hendon Lane



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Opportunity sites in Church End

3. Proposals and Opportunities

Opportunity Sites

3.1 Following a detailed analysis of the town centre, including discussions with key stakeholders and landowners, a number of sites with the potential to contribute to the enhancement of Finchley Church End have been identified. The sites are shown on the plan opposite. These sites represent opportunities to deliver new or refurbished buildings to provide new services, facilities, homes and economic opportunities within the town centre.

3.2 Additional sites in the town centre may come forward for development overtime. Development on such sites should also reflect the vision, objectives and overarching development principles contained within this strategy.

3.3 The sites identified fall within three groups:

- Existing office buildings where the owners are presently in discussions with the Council about possible schemes (sites 1 and 3) or where schemes have been granted planning permission (site 2);
- Sites owned predominantly by Transport for London (TfL). There is an opportunity for these sites to be brought forward together in a way which makes a significant contribution to the enhancement of the public realm (sites 4, 5 and 6); and
- Longer term opportunities at Central House and Tesco (sites 7 and 8).

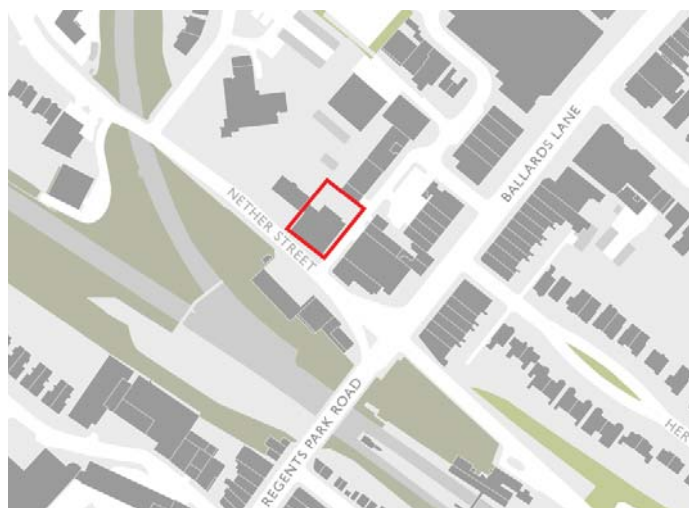


Aerial photograph of Church End

3.4 Existing Office Buildings – Short to medium term opportunities

Site 1: 401-405 Nether Street
 Site area: 0.1ha

This site is located on the corner of Nether Street and Albert Place (leading to Popes Drive) and is currently occupied by a three storey office building fronting on to Nether Street. There is a car park to the north of the building, accessed off Albert Place, beyond which is a five storey office building. Central House is to the east of the site and to the west is a six storey building of residential flats. The site is positioned in a transition zone on the edge of the town centre.



Plan of 401- 405 Nether Street



401- 405 Nether Street (cream building)

Site 2: Winston House and 2-4 Dollis Park
 Site area: 0.6ha

This site contains buildings up to six storeys in height and includes an area of underground parking accessed from Dollis Park Road. The site includes a mixture of office, residential and storage and distribution uses. In addition to this the ground floor units fronting onto Regents Park Road include retail, public house and restaurant, bank and estate agent uses. The position of the building line creates an area of wide pavement on Regents Park Road, into which the public house and restaurant currently spills out with tables and chairs. Planning permission was granted (under application reference F/00497/11) for the redevelopment of this site in March 2012.



Plan of Winston House and 2-4 Dollis Park



Winston House

Site 3: Gateway House
 Site area: 0.2ha

Gateway House is located on the corner of Regents Park Road and Arcadia Avenue, opposite King Edward Hall and close to the Finchley Church End Conservation Area. The building is a modernist office block set back from the street to provide a wider section of pavement along Regents Park Road. The scale and height of this building are at odds with those of the buildings which surround it.

3.5 Sites Owned by Transport for London

Site 4: 290-298 Nether Street
 Site area: 0.3ha

This site is located at the busy junction of Ballards Lane and Nether Street and is currently occupied by a single storey bar and restaurant, a mini-cab firm and hand car washing business. The site is bounded by the railway line to the west and fronts on to Nether Street. As a result of its poor quality buildings, numerous advertisements and cluttered nature this site presently has a negative impact on the townscape of the town centre.



Plan of Gateway House



Plan of 290-298 Nether Street



Gateway House



290-298 Nether Street

Site 5: Finchley Central Station car park (and land to the east)

Site area (car park): 0.7ha (0.6ha if Transport for London building remains)

Finchley Central car park is a strip of land to the north of the underground line and immediately east of Finchley Central Station, which is currently in use for predominantly commuter car parking. The site is bounded to the north by a strip of trees and shrubs which provide some degree of buffer between the site and the two storey detached housing on Hervey Close.

The car park currently has around 260 parking spaces and also contains a building used for operational purposes. It is uncertain if this building needs to be retained. The entrance to the station and car park is set back from Ballards Lane and is reached by an access road (Chaville Way) which slopes down towards the station. The pedestrian environment between the main road and the station) has limited pavement space, a lack of natural surveillance and a generally poor quality public realm. This creates a negative first impression of the town centre and, as a key point of arrival for many users of the surrounding area, requires enhancement.



Finchley Central car park



Finchley Central car park



Plan of Finchley Central Station car park



Finchley Central car park entrance

Site 6: Station Road
Site area: 0.4ha

The site is located to the south of the railway lines on Station Road and contains a number of buildings, comprising a series of single storey retail units, a minicab office and a builders yard with associated offices. The site is not entirely owned by TfL, with the office building at the south-eastern end of the site in a separate ownership. A secondary access to Finchley Central Station, in the form of a pedestrian footbridge over the railway, cuts through the site and leads to significant footfall along its western part.

As with site 6, this western part of the site is a point of arrival for a significant number of users of the town centre and the pedestrian environment in this part of Station Road would benefit from enhancement. The buildings on this site are of a generally poor quality and fail to make effective use of the land. The builders yard also creates noise, disturbance and vehicle movements which detract from the amenity of the neighbouring properties and can cause traffic congestion.



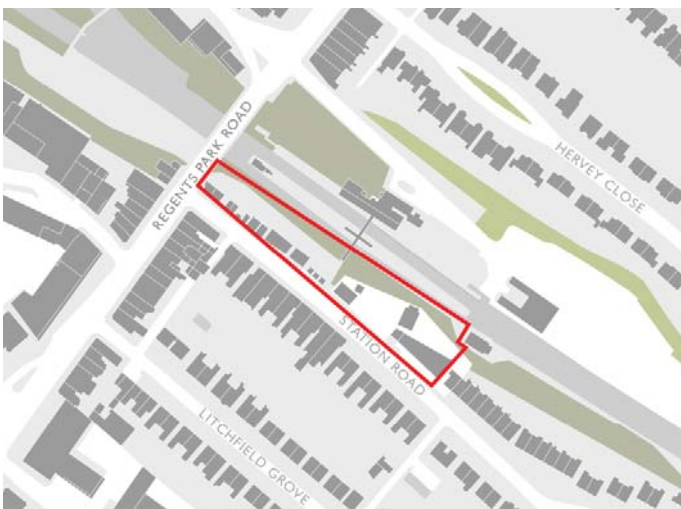
Station Road



Station Road



Station Road



Plan of Station Road site

3.6 Longer Term Opportunities

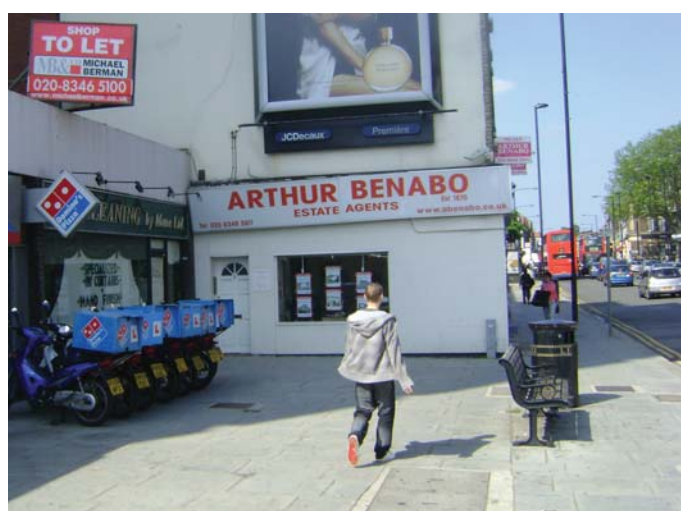
Site 7: Central House and 1-9 Ballards Lane
Site area: 0.1ha

Central House is a nine storey 1960s office block located in a prominent position on the corner of Ballards Lane and Nether Street. The building, which provides low cost office space, is significantly taller than the buildings which surround it and relates poorly to these properties. The ground floor of the building contains retail, takeaway and bar uses.

The site includes 1-9 Ballards Lane, a three storey building fronting Ballards Lane, and some buildings fronting onto Albert Place. The buildings on Ballards Lane sit significantly forward of the predominant building line in this area and substantially reduce the width of the pavement. They could therefore sensibly be included in a comprehensive redevelopment of the site and set back from their current position.



Central House



Pavement reduction on Ballards Lane



Plan of Central House and 1-9 Ballards Lane



Central House

Site 8: Tesco, Ballards Lane
Site area: 1.0ha

This site is situated within the main retail area of Finchley Church End and incorporates the current Tesco supermarket and associated multi-storey car park, accessed from Popes Drive to the rear of the store. The predominantly three storey red brick building is of an unremarkable design, has two storeys of office use above the supermarket and occupies a significant space along Ballards Lane. Where appropriate certain other buildings in the surrounding area might be included in a scheme to facilitate the comprehensive improvement of this site.

The wide, heavily used pavement in front of the supermarket would benefit from improvements to create a more attractive environment for town centre users. This could include the introduction of a market into this area.



Tesco frontage



Tesco car park access



Tesco multi-storey car park



Plan of Tesco and associated car park

Town Centre Wide Development Principles

3.7 Any proposals for development in Finchley Church End will be assessed against national guidance and the development plan for Barnet which comprises the London Plan (July 2011), the saved policies of the adopted Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and the emerging Core Strategy and Development Management Policies documents that form the Local Development Framework which will replace the UDP (Barnet's Planning Policy Framework is set out in Appendix 1). Barnet's priorities for its town centres are set out in the Core Strategy (Policy CS6 - Promoting Barnet's Town Centres). The Development Management Policies document sets out more detailed policies for implementing the Core Strategy, in particular Policy DM11 - Development Principles for Barnet's Town Centres. However, a number of specific principles, opportunities and issues have been identified which are particularly relevant to this town centre and will be applied to development coming forward in Finchley Church End. These are set out below:

Design Quality

3.8 Good design creates environments where people want to be and where businesses want to invest and is essential to delivering places that create social, environmental and economic value. The Council is committed to securing high quality design to enhance the existing character of Finchley Church End and create a sustainable mixed-use environment. The key development sites identified above represent a significant opportunity to enhance the character of the town centre. In order to achieve this proposals for the development of these sites, and any other sites which may come forward, should incorporate the following design principles:

Character

Finchley Church End has a distinctive character, sometimes referred to as the 'Finchley vernacular'. New developments should respond to this in a positive manner, including the incorporation of design features and elements as appropriate.

Proposals within or close to the Finchley Church End Conservation Area should have particular regard to the Character Appraisal for this part of the town centre. This document includes many good examples of the Finchley vernacular from which developments in the centre more widely could also take a positive design lead.

Building heights

Existing buildings within the town centre are generally three or four storeys high (including the ground floor), although there are some significantly taller office buildings, such as Central House and Gateway House, which were built in the 1960's. These taller buildings relate poorly to their context, are in a poor state of repair and detract from the character of the area. The height of new buildings in Finchley Church End will be expected to respect the character of the town centre and respond positively to the surrounding built form.

Materials

Proposed development should incorporate quality materials which are in keeping with the character of Finchley Church End. An example of such material is high quality brick in various shades of red, brown and orange. Besides brick, other appropriate materials frequently have natural finishes, which complement the materials found in the centre's existing built form.

Residential amenity

Any new dwellings proposed in Finchley Church End must provide future occupiers with adequate amenities. New residential units should provide adequate privacy for neighbouring and future occupiers, include suitable levels of external amenity space and have regard to the relevant internal space standards set out in the London Plan, the Mayor's Supplementary Planning Guidance for Housing, and Barnet's Supplementary Planning Document on Sustainable Design and Construction. Dual aspect dwellings should be included wherever possible and the inclusion of any single aspect flats must be fully justified. Numerous sites within the town centre are close to sources of noise and air pollution. This will require careful mitigation in the design of any proposals.

Shop front quality

It is important that shops have well designed frontages that are in keeping with the building they are situated within and wherever possible retain and respect any historical features that are present. The quality of the existing shop fronts varies significantly across Finchley Church End. There are examples of well designed shop fronts which are suitably framed, retain traditional features, have proportional fascias and relate well to the building in which they

are situated. The Council will promote and encourage the sensitive alteration of shop fronts and the replacement of poor design features, such as large internally illuminated box signage, oversized fascias and any elements which do not respect the scale, materials or character of the building they front. The Council's Design Guidance Note 10 'Shopfronts' provides more detailed advice on this issue and should be taken into account when new shop fronts are designed or alterations are made to existing shop fronts.

Advertising and signage

Advertising and signage can have a significant impact on the quality of an area. There are areas within Finchley Church End that contain poorly designed and excessive concentrations of signage and advertisements. These create unnecessary clutter and are detrimental to the character of the town centre. The Council will encourage the removal of inappropriately designed and sited advertisements and signage. Any new advertisements and signage should be designed to take account of the advice provided in the Council Design Guidance Note 1 'Advertising and Signage'.



Natural finishes in Church End



Poor advertising and signage

Appropriate Range of Uses

- 3.9 This strategy is seeking to encourage an appropriate and balanced range of uses within Finchley Church End to meet the needs of residents and businesses. The mixture of uses in the town centre should provide activity throughout the day and into the evening and will need to avoid (or mitigate) any negative impacts, such as congestion or excessive pressure on local services or impacts on surrounding residential areas. The impact of any proposed uses on traffic and local congestion will be an important consideration in the determination of any development proposals in Finchley Church End.
- 3.10 Finchley Church End is an important office location in the borough, which supports a significant amount of employment, and this strategy is looking to reinforce this role. Some of the office space in the older office buildings across the town centre is becoming less viable and proposals for redevelopment or re-use of these sites (1,2,3 and 7) are likely to include a mix of uses. In order to protect employment in the town centre, any net loss of employment generating floor space, employment capacity or jobs will need to be clearly and thoroughly justified.
- 3.11 The provision of a new hotel in an appropriate location could be a positive use in the town centre. This would add to the mixture of uses and encourage activity throughout the day. Any significant additional food store retail use should be consolidated on the existing supermarket site (8). The opportunity to locate a post office within any proposals that come forward in the Core Retail Area should be considered.
- 3.12 While much of any new residential development coming forward is likely to incorporate flats, a mix of dwelling sizes and types should be provided. Certain sites, for example part of site 6 on Station Road, have the potential to provide family houses. The mix of dwellings proposed

on individual sites will need to reflect the priorities identified in the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Document.

Movement, Transport and Parking

- 3.13 Successful development depends on good access and connections for pedestrians, cyclists, public transport and other vehicles, including private cars. This strategy therefore proposes a balanced provision across all modes of transport to ensure that future travel demands can be catered for in Finchley Church End and real travel choice can be provided.
- 3.14 The following section identifies movement, streetscape and public realm opportunities in the area, which will contribute towards enhancing Finchley Church End's special character and facilitating its use. Although many of the identified changes are small in scale, cumulatively they have the potential to significantly enhance the environment for users of the centre. There is a particular focus on pedestrian routes to and from the station and improving pedestrian connections between the station and the nearest bus stops. Subject to suitable survey work it may also be possible to relocate bus stops to improve connections and reduce congestion.
- 3.15 Any proposals for development in Finchley Church End should retain or increase the overall number of public car parking spaces in the town centre. This will be a particular issue for any development of the Station Car Park site. This may involve providing basement or undercroft parking on particular sites. Parking which provides facilities for shoppers and users of the town centre while still accommodating some parking for commuters will be encouraged. Off street parking provision for all new developments will be considered on an individual basis. However, development will normally be required to comply with the requirements of the London Plan, UDP and emerging LDF in terms of providing parking for cars, motorcycles and cyclists.

Potential Public Realm Improvements

- 3.16 Many of the issues identified for Finchley Church End relate to the quality of the public realm. This section sets out some examples of possible public realm improvements. These have been identified in relation to the key junction of Ballards Lane, Nether Street and Chaville Way specifically and also some other examples of improvements that could be made across the town centre more generally. The improvements outlined below are all examples of ways in which Finchley Church End could be enhanced to create a much more pleasant experience for people who use the station and wider town centre. However, these are all subject to the need for detailed designs to be developed, survey work and traffic modelling undertaken (where needed) sourced.

Junction of Ballards Lane, Nether Street and Chaville Way

- 3.17 The area around the junction of Ballards Lane, Nether Street and Chaville Way is a key location in the town centre. It is both a major point of arrival in the area for those who use Finchley Central Station and a key crossing point for users of the town centre more widely. However, at present this area is unattractive, poorly defined and in places complicated to move through.

Broader footways along Chaville Way

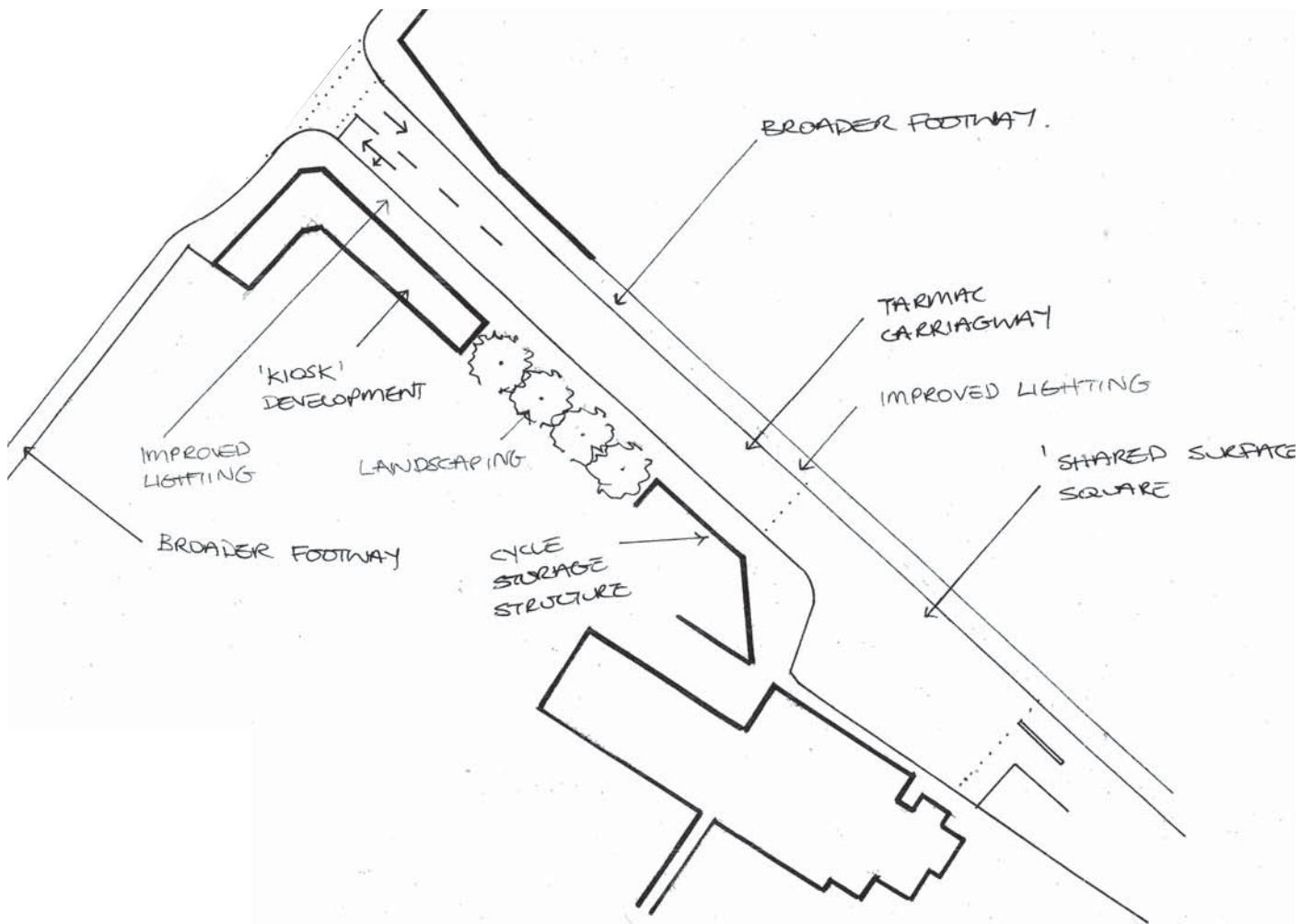
Broader footways along one or both sides of Chaville Way would increase capacity for pedestrians walking to and from the station and improve upon the current situation where significant numbers of people regularly walk in the roadway. On the north side of Chaville Way the existing station car parking would need to be relocated to achieve this.



Junction of Ballards Lane, Nether Street and Chaville Way

Enhanced environment along Chaville Way

Other potential enhancements to the environment along Chaville Way could include tree planting on the south side of the road, improved lighting and the replacement of the existing fencing on the south side of the road with a better quality structure. The use of co-ordinated high quality materials on Chaville Way could also be a means of guiding pedestrians towards Ballards Lane and create a positive first impression of the town centre. This might be assisted further by the provision of some kiosk type retail uses along Chaville Way. The following page contains an example of how this could be achieved.



Illustrative option for environmental improvements along Chaville Way

Provide an enhanced public space in front of Finchley Central Station

An enhanced public space in front of Finchley Central Station would create a more attractive first impression of the area and provide a sense of arrival. If a new shared surface or pedestrian crossing were provided in this area it would allow users of the station to cross this road more easily. As with a number of the options outlined for the area around the junction this would also improve the experience of those looking to move between the underground and bus networks.

Pedestrian crossings around junctions of Nether Street, Ballards Lane and Chaville Way

Appropriately sited new, altered or relocated pedestrian crossings around the junction of these three roads could make it easier for pedestrians to move through this area. However, any changes would need to undergo detailed design, survey work and have traffic modelling undertaken to ensure there would not be any detrimental impact on vehicular movements.

Broader footway near the bus stop on Ballards Lane north of Chaville Way

There may be the potential to increase the width of the footway on the east side of Ballards Lane near the bus stop. This would ease the congestion that occurs in this location at certain times of the day. However, this would be subject to detailed design and survey work.

Improving the Railway Bridge

The footways along the bridge over the railway would benefit from replacement. While these footways are fairly narrow, because of the need to maintain capacity for vehicles in this already congested area it would be difficult to increase footway widths on either side.

Options for removing one footway and widening the other in this area have been examined. However, it is considered that at present both

footways should be maintained, particularly as there is no pedestrian crossing on the southern side of the junction of Ballards Lane and Nether Street.

It has been suggested that the existing bridge might be increased in width or a separate bridge constructed to ease pedestrian congestion in this area and improve the pedestrian environment. Either of these options would require a significant amount of survey work to establish feasibility and an appropriate design approach would need to be developed. Substantial funding would also need to be sourced to deliver such a scheme. At this point in time no detailed work has been undertaken on either option.



Pedestrian crossing at Nether Street junction



Finchley Central Station entrance

Improvements to the wider public realm

3.18 In certain places the experience of those using the town centre has considerable scope for improvement. Examples of issues include unnecessary clutter in the public realm, domination of the pedestrian environment by the road, poorly utilised public space and narrow footways.

Removal of unnecessary street furniture and clutter

The removal of street furniture, such as bollards, guard rails, posts and signage, can ease pedestrian movement, reduce visual clutter and significantly improve the appearance of an area. However, some street furniture provides an important function and so any removal would need to be assessed on an item by item basis.

Where street furniture is added or replaced it should be kept to a minimum, based on a simple palate of high quality materials, be easy to maintain and located in a co-ordinated manner that does not obstruct pedestrian movement. This might be something as simple as locating multiple signs on a single post to avoid the need for multiple supporting posts.

Improving footways

Where footways are replaced the palate of materials selected should be kept simple, of an appropriate quality and used consistently. The simple concrete paving used in many areas works well and could be continued in the same simple manner as other upgrading takes place.

In the long-term there is potential to increase footway widths in parts of the town centre. For example, if Central House and 1-9 Ballards Lane were redeveloped the building line could be pushed back to continue the building line to the north. The creation of wider footways in this location would enhance the suburban feel of the area and could also facilitate other features such as new tree planting.

Additional tree planting

Several parts of the town centre already benefit from substantial tree planting. The broad footways that exists in certain sections of the town centre provide the potential for further tree planting. The species and siting of any new planting would require careful consideration. However, new tree planting is to be encouraged where it is appropriate for the substantial contribution trees can make to softening harsh environments and creating a suburban character.



Scope for tree planting



Reduce street clutter - Regents Park Road



Scope for enhancement of the public realm

4. Delivery

4.1 Achieving the vision and delivering the priorities for change in Finchley Church End will be challenging and the Council cannot implement this strategy alone. The Council will work with a range of stakeholders including the GLA and TfL, landowners, local businesses, utility providers, residents, the voluntary and community sectors and others to ensure that Finchley Church End becomes a thriving, vibrant and viable district centre and the quality of the town centre environment is improved for all.

Partnership Working

4.2 The Council will work with partners, landowners and other stakeholders to secure deliverable schemes and successful change in the town centre. The Council's implementation and delivery strategy is based on on-going partnership working, particularly with TfL who are major land owners in the town centre and a major stakeholder in helping to improve the public realm.

4.3 Partnership working will focus on the co-ordination of the policies, resources and decisions of the key stakeholders so that these are in line with the priorities and the guidance contained within this strategy. Such an approach will ensure that the efforts exerted by partners and stakeholders in progressing their individual objectives will be consistent with, and supportive of, the vision and overarching objectives of this strategy.

4.4 Public engagement and consultation with the local community and resident groups will be important throughout the lifetime of this strategy and will be essential to the success of partnership working. The local community has been engaged and consulted with during the Issues and Options and draft strategy stages and will continue to be consulted with through the submission of planning applications and any proposed updates to the strategy.

4.5 The establishment of a Business Forum for Finchley Church End to encourage greater collaboration between traders and promotion of the town centre will be explored. This has been successful in other town centres in Barnet, including Edgware and Chipping Barnet.

Planning Obligations / Community Infrastructure Levy

4.6 Barnet is currently developing a strategic approach to the implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which enables Local Authorities to set a standard charge for development to contribute towards the costs arising from new development. This approach will be used to ensure that any new development in Finchley Church End will contribute appropriately to meeting infrastructure requirements and will complement the Council's approach to securing S106 contributions.

4.7 It is envisaged that the implementation of the CIL will help secure wider transport / public realm improvements to Finchley Church End. Planning obligations through Section 106 Agreements will still prove appropriate for improvements relating directly to specific development proposals and their associated impacts.

4.8 The priorities for planning obligations for development on sites within the strategy area have been set out to ensure that such contributions help to deliver the objectives of the strategy. The priorities can be summarised as follows:

- Reduce clutter in the public realm through removing unnecessary street furniture, such as signs, sign posts and guard railing that are no longer needed. An example of an area which would benefit from de-cluttering is the junction of Nether Street, Ballards Lane and Chaville Way.

- Provide additional tree planting in appropriate locations, such as the wider sections of pavement on Regents Park Road and Ballards Lane. 4.9
- Improve pedestrian routes in key locations through measures such as the widening of footways and replacement of pavement, for example along Chaville Way to Finchley Central Station.
- Upgrade necessary street furniture to enhance the public realm. Retained or replaced street furniture should use a simple palate of high quality materials, be easy to maintain and located in a co-ordinated manner.
- Create a well designed, shared arrival space outside Finchley Central Station. 4.10
- Improve the quality of the street lighting where necessary across the town centre.

Other Funding Streams

Opportunities to access other funding streams to support delivery of environmental improvements across the town centre will also be explored. The strategy will provide the strategic framework for future bids which could include:

- TfL funding through the Local Implementation Plan.
- GLA funding through the Outer London Fund (or similar).
- Other town centre improvement funds.

4.10 This town centre strategy provides the framework to manage change in Finchley Church End and help realise the development potential of the opportunity sites identified. The strategy offers a major opportunity to enhance the distinctive character of the town centre and help deliver the movement and public realm changes identified in section 3.0. The Council will work in partnership with landowners, residents and other stakeholders to secure successful change in the town centre over the coming years.

Appendix 1

Barnet's Planning Policy Framework

The Mayor's priorities for London's town centres are set out in the:

- London Plan, July 2011.

Barnet's priorities for its town centres are set out in the:

- Adopted Local Plan - Core Strategy DPD, September 2012
- Adopted Local Plan - Development Management Policies, September 2012

A list of the most relevant national planning guidance documents is set out below:

- National Planning Policy Framework, March 2012

In addition to the development plan the following documents are considered of relevance;

- Finchley Church End Conservation Area Character Appraisal Statement (2011);
- Characterisation Study for Barnet (2010);
- Tall Buildings Study (2010);
- Town Centre Floorspace Needs Assessment and Update (2009 and 2010);
- Affordable Housing SPD (2007);
- Planning Obligations SPD (2006);
- Sustainable Construction and Design SPD;
- Contributions to Education SPD (2008);
- Contributions to Libraries SPD (2008);
- Contributions to Healthcare SPD (2008).

For more information:

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