

A new Plan for London

The Barnet Society's Message to Sadiq Khan...

OUR RESPONSE TO THE MAYOR OF LONDON'S "A CITY FOR ALL LONDONERS"

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, is seeking Londoners' views on his statement of intent for a better London. He is consulting informally on the six topics listed below prior to re-drafting the London Plan in the first half of next year.

This is a great chance to tell him the views of The Barnet Society. We share many benefits and challenges with other parts of London, but have an identity and priorities of our own.

This leaflet summarises our initial views on the topics that matter most to us.

We welcome your comments before we submit our response on 10 December 2016.

For **further information** about the Mayor's vision, go to

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/london-plan-full-review>

Please email any comments no later than 8 December 2016 to the Chair of the Barnet Society's Planning & Environment Committee, robin.bishop@gmx.co.uk

Many thanks!

1. ACCOMMODATING GROWTH

Town centres and High Streets

- a. The Mayor wants to see more **development in town centres**, which he calls 'hubs for retail and community activity'. The Barnet Society agrees that, as retail methods evolve and housing need increases, it makes sense to focus development in these areas, provided that it is carried out to a suitable scale and sufficiently high quality.
- b. He is going to be looking at **TfL-owned land at/around railway stations** and will be promoting 'significant and much higher-density housing development' in such locations. Any intensification should, if done well, aid our ailing High Street and historic Market and would be welcome, especially since the Mayor clearly states that he wishes to continue to protect the Green Belt and other designated green spaces.
- c. We believe there are limits to development around **High Barnet Station** without eroding the greenery which makes it one of Chipping Barnet's attractive 'green gateways'.
- d. Although development would be easier around **New Barnet Station**, we are alarmed at the recent dramatic loss of businesses in its vicinity due to residential conversion of commercial buildings.

2. TRANSPORT

Priorities for Outer London

- a. Chipping Barnet's green spaces are key to its character. More use of them for **pedestrian and cycle travel** between neighbourhoods should be encouraged.
- b. We appreciate the difficulties of improving road capacity in our area, and generally we support restraint of **vehicle use** – but only if commensurate improvements are made to **public transport**.
- c. The Mayor should consider more **orbital links** between Barnet borough and adjoining authorities – preferably tram or light rail – including across the Green Belt where necessary, to link new destinations on either side of the borough.
- d. Chipping Barnet's **bus** connections, though good southwards, will need improvement to the east, west and north into Hertfordshire, particularly to and from larger shopping centres and our local hospitals. Our significant and growing population of students and elderly residents are particularly dependent on them, but the services have not benefitted from the same investment as Central London.
- e. **Oyster cards** should be valid for all public transport trips made within and in the vicinity of Greater London, including bus routes 84, 84A & 614.
- f. We would welcome **more flexible bus services**, particularly linking The Spires shopping precinct, Barnet Market, Barnet Hospital and High Barnet Station – including, if possible, provision of a procured small minibus service using the station yard.

3. AN INCLUSIVE CITY

Healthy Environments

- a. Chipping Barnet is blessed with many fine natural advantages, particularly its proximity to so much open and interlinked space. We have much to contribute to the ongoing debate about what constitutes an **inclusive and healthy environment**.
 - b. More should be done to exploit these features and also to encourage the general level of wellbeing among our residents. Maintaining and encouraging good **healthy lifestyles** will be important, right from the early years of school through to retirement, and we all have a part to play in this.
 - c. To facilitate the Mayor's wish for successful growth, sufficient and well located **provision for health, sport, open space, recreation and lifelong learning** will be essential.
 - d. We welcome his respect for the **distinct character** of different parts of the city. The London Plan must include adequate protection and enhancement of the buildings, landscapes and other features that are so important to the character, **culture and history** of an area.
 - e. We would like to see practical encouragement of **voluntary groups** – charities, civic societies and the like – especially local organisations working across communities to bring people together and create a sense of community and place.
4. ENVIRONMENT

The Green Belt and other open spaces

- a. We welcome the Mayor's determination to protect the **Green Belt** and other designated green spaces, because our Society was founded 70 years ago specifically to protect such lands in and around Chipping Barnet. His support is especially helpful now that pressure to build is probably greater, and planning policy weaker, than when we were founded.
- b. The value of green spaces is multiplied, visually and ecologically, when they link together. In Barnet's Dollis Valley, for example, the almost seamless **continuity** of Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land, Sites of Nature Conservation and Scientific Interest, etc. with private gardens and undesignated greenery creates a wonderful linear park that benefits wildlife and any Londoner who wishes to access it – and more should be encouraged to do so.
- c. In our case, the Dollis Valley and the greens, commons and woods that surround us on three sides also carry **historical associations** of national significance such as the Battle of Barnet – archaeological investigations into which are in progress; and Barnet Market and Fair – London's essential livestock market and entertainment centre for centuries.
- d. We strongly believe that the Green Belt should remain much as when it was first created. In practice, however, we accept that changes have inevitably occurred, and that this process is likely to continue. However, we could only accept **development** where housing, educational or other need is most convincingly demonstrated, supported by rigorous appraisal of alternative options, costs and benefits.

- e. Any resulting architectural, transport and landscape schemes must be to the **highest design and environmental standards**, with sufficient and appropriate compensatory planting, amenity space and provision for wildlife.

Delivering the National Park City

- f. The aims of the proposal for a '**National Park City**' are quite consistent with our own, which are to defend the range and quality of Chipping Barnet's open spaces and encourage local interest and involvement with our heritage.
- g. From published information to date, we are unclear how the 'National Park City' would sit alongside our own Council's recently adopted strategy for parks and open spaces. If the new London Plan stimulates a more proactive approach to their **planning and management, access to funding and sanctions** for failure to protect and enhance them, though, we would be glad to support it.

Sustainability

- h. The Mayor's targets for air quality, energy efficiency, a zero-carbon city by 2050 and other aspects of the environment are ambitious but admirable.

5. HOUSING

Suburban intensification and the existing housing stock

- a. The Mayor predicts that London's population will grow to 10.5 million by 2041, putting pressure on housing, transport and the environment, and **new and more diverse housing** is one of his highest priorities. We welcome this. It is important, however, that infrastructure is also increased such as health provision, schools, transport, parking, etc.
- b. We are very pleased to see that he recognises the importance of maintaining the **Green Belt and other green spaces**. These spaces will become even more important as current housing developments are much denser than those provided in the past.
- c. **Until recently, Chipping Barnet was a relatively mixed community in terms of income and home tenure, and we would like to restore that balance as much as possible.**
- d. We are pleased that he wishes to continue the policy that 50% of all new homes be **affordable** – though 35% (and no viability assessments allowed) may be more realistic.
- e. Affordability needs to be better defined. The current definition of property purchased or let at 80% of market value is **unaffordable** in Barnet. The cap on housing benefit means many properties in Barnet are too expensive for those living on benefits in Barnet, and they are being re-housed far from London, often where job opportunities are fewer.
- f. In Barnet, **social housing** is meagre and dwindling. We wish to see a significant increase, for example through grant-aided rented accommodation or home ownership.
- g. We support the Mayor's wish for **different models of affordable housing**. A welcome option would be housing for key workers currently being priced out such as nurses,

hospital porters, teachers, TfL workers, police and shift workers – not least for Barnet General Hospital, which is the biggest employer in our area.

- h. We welcome the Mayor's action to reduce the numbers of **rough sleepers**. More shared housing needs to be provided.

6. ECONOMY

Space for SMEs and affordable workspace

- a. One of the Mayor's main priorities is to support **small and medium-sized businesses** by protecting existing workspace, identifying new, including workspace in new housing developments, and including affordable space in new commercial developments. We support this because Chipping Barnet's businesses have dwindled drastically.
- b. He also plans Creative Enterprise Zones specifically for **creative workers** who find it difficult to afford to work in London, and wants to develop innovative financial models to support them. We need to keep them, and Chipping Barnet – historically the home of innovative start-ups such as movie-making and medical equipment – could be so again.
- c. In Chipping Barnet, several hundred new homes are being planned or constructed. It would make sense if at least some of the **incoming earners** could find work locally.
- d. We welcome his commitment to improving **digital connectivity**. Parts of Barnet have exceptionally poor broadband service, which is a significant brake on business.