

Planning & Environment Report

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Just as I was looking forward to a summer break, two of the biggest projects in my time on the Society Committee came along: a proposal to build 450 homes at High Barnet Station and the long-awaited planning application for 152 homes on the Whalebones estate. They're covered in separate articles on Pages 1-3.

Two other very important initiatives have also been launched, with far less public attention.

The first is the Council's draft Growth Strategy. This sounds dry, but could hardly be more important for the future of Barnet. In the absence of the Council's new Local Plan (not published until later this year), it proposes guidelines for development and identifies actions that could benefit Chipping Barnet considerably. To mention a few:

- A regional park in the north of Barnet.
- Investment in a reliable and fast east-west connection across the borough.
- A conservation-minded leisure destination on the Upper Dollis Brook.

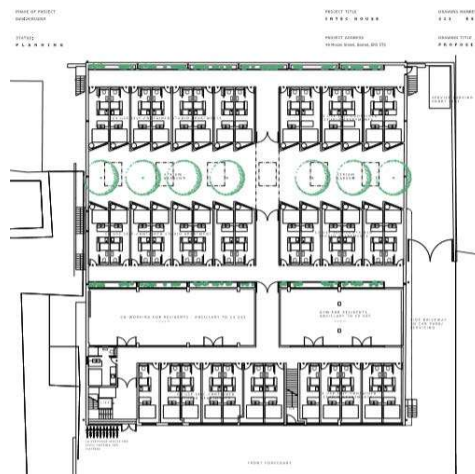
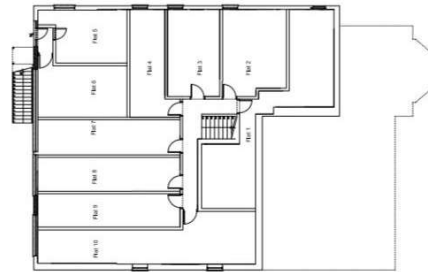
The Strategy can be found at: <https://engage.barnet.gov.uk/growth-strategy>
The deadline for comments is Sunday 15 September.

The Strategy also proposes to explore the potential for town centre diversification building on Chipping Barnet's heritage and character, which leads me to the second initiative.

Following the Chipping Barnet Town Team's rapid (albeit unsuccessful) bid last spring for a grant from the government's Future High Streets Fund, the Council has taken on a Town Centre Investment Manager to boost future regeneration, and is recruiting consultants to work with local stakeholders to draw up a Community Plan identifying at least five projects to enhance the area. As active members of the CBT, we will be fully involved – and so could you be, if you have ideas and time to offer!

A symbol of our intent to revitalise the town centre is the High Street pedestrian improvements. We've agreed nearly all the design details with Highways, clustering benches and bins close to trees to leave the pavements as uncluttered as possible.

Widening of pavements and moving of lamp posts is under way, and we're



promised that they'll be ready for the Christmas Fayre. Street furniture will follow later.

Turning to recent building developments, much the worst have been for conversions of commercial buildings into micro-studios at 49 Moxon Street (107 units) and 17 Park Road (36 units) Plans above.

The tiny size of the flats and their lack of decent daylight and views would never normally be allowed. Unfortunately they were prior notifications (not full planning applications) so, under

the government's recent planning relaxations, the planners were obliged to grant permission unless they raised issues to do with such things as highways, contamination or flooding. We objected nonetheless, and the planners did refuse permission – though a smaller proposal for Moxon Street (39 units) has been submitted.

The Council (and we) are concerned about the considerable loss of workspace in Barnet – particularly evident in places like New Barnet, where most of the offices near the station have been turned into flats. The Council has introduced an Article 4 Direction controlling employment-residential conversions in High and New Barnet town centres, but it won't come into effect until 20 September, and won't cover Park Road or Moxon Street.

If you are concerned too, please sign this petition to Parliament: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/267559>. More information can be found at: <https://www.levitbernstein.co.uk/research-writing/why-the-government-should-end-pdr-for-office-to-residential-conversions/>

Other recent cases:

Refused

New house off Langley Row, Hadley Highstone – On a patch of Green Belt littered with shacks in the hope that they could be exchanged for a permanent building.

Carport, 23 Hillside Gardens – This had been built over a front garden, and would have created a dreadful precedent for other residential streets.

Awaiting a decision

Fern Room site, Salisbury Road – The developer has returned with a design more sympathetic to the existing street.

Brake Shear House; Kingmaker House, Station Road and 2 Bruce Road – Controversial proposals, all still undetermined. Meadow Works have appealed over the delay.

Gone to appeal

Avalon palazzo, Barnet Road – We had objected, and the planners had refused it.

151-153 High Street – We were neutral, but the planners refused it.

Cotswold Lodge, Stapylton Road – We supported it, but the planners have refused it.