

Planning & environment – Robin’s update for Committee 17 September 2020

PLANNING ISSUES

Council

1. High Street
 - Pedestrian improvements complete except for bins.
2. Chipping Barnet Community Plan
 - October (for 6 weeks) – Online public exhibition of possible projects
 - BSoc review panel – Robin, Gail, Andrew, Simons C & W
 - December? – Selection of five projects for detailed study (LBB & CBTT)

Planning policy

3. UK planning system
 - Government has loosened planning controls still further:
 - 8 Commercial, Business & Service Use Classes have been combined into a new Class E
 - No permission is required to switch between them (subject to H&S safeguards)
 - 2 Community Use Classes have been combined into new Class F2
 - Government consultation on *Changes to the Current Planning System*. This will:
 - Set national housing requirements. According to its proposed algorithm, Barnet’s annual housing target will rise 88% (from 3,060 to 5,744 p.a.)
 - ‘First Homes’ (discounted by 30%) will be prioritised over other affordable homes
 - The threshold above which developers must contribute to affordable housing will be temporarily lifted
 - ‘Permission in Principle’ will be granted for major housing developments
 - Deadline for comments – 1 October
 - Government consultation on White Paper *Planning for the Future*
 - My summary:

The government’s proposed planning reforms are the Society’s biggest challenge since it was founded. The present system enables us to comment on individual planning applications; the new one will put a stop to that.

The *Planning for the Future* White Paper aims to simplify local plans and speed up building, particularly of the 300,000 homes it says are needed annually. In parallel, the government is consulting on an algorithm to determine local targets. Good luck with that.

New local plans will zone all land as either Growth, Renewal or Protected areas. In Growth areas, outline planning permission will automatically be granted. In Renewal or Protected Areas automatic approval will be given to pre-established types of development.

The latter would be in addition to the already considerable range of development which no longer requires permission. Barnet can already expect a flurry of roof extensions and changes of use, especially in and around high streets, subject only to a minimum of restrictions.

The public will be encouraged to comment on the Council’s draft Local Plan and on design codes for local development. Improved digital technology will apparently make it

easier for us to get involved in local plans and design codes via social networks and mobile phones.

Leaving aside the touching faith in technology, the main problem here is that without greater public education and council willingness to share information, most of us are unlikely to have the time or inclination to participate.

The proposals are not without merit: the present system is definitely over-complicated. The Green Belt, Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings will continue to be protected, and enforcement of planning law will be strengthened. But the present legal safeguards are imperfect, and no improvements are proposed.

The reforms will be deeply disruptive. The future of Sadiq Khan's London Plan and Barnet's Local Plan – long in preparation – is now in doubt. The Council planning department will have to be reorganised. Drawing up design codes is likely to be lengthy and problematic. It will take years before the new system is fully working. Meanwhile, much damage could be done.

- Theresa Villiers's comments to the Town Team on 4 September:

TV said there were some very worrying proposals coming from the Government at the moment including permitted development rights to add two storeys on top of custom-built flats and terraced homes. Exceptions would be made in Conservation Areas and property built before 1948 but it could still be potentially pretty damaging. She had had meetings alongside a number of other London Conservative MPs with the Chief Whip, the Housing Minister and the Prime Minister to express concern about that proposal and the general attack on the suburbs at the moment from these high density development proposals.

There was also the White Paper on Planning which in theory would do away entirely with the local level of decision-making on individual applications. That was only a consultation and she very much hoped it would not go through in its present form and she was doing her best to shift the direction. She was sorry to say in this instance the Government was not helping. There was a huge amount of anxiety about the planning reforms proposed and she very much hoped they would look very different by the time they made it to the statute book as she feared for the long-term impact on suburbs.

- Deadline for comments to London Forum – 28 September
- Deadline for comments to Government – 29 October

4. Barnet Local Plan – Council sticking to its current timetable (publication Spring 2022)
5. London Plan – Government stalling approval
6. Hertsmere Local Plan – On hold

TfL

7. 384 bus – Sham 'consultation' 20 July. Cockfosters-Edgware route started 29 August
8. High Barnet & Cockfosters Station developments – Still no planning application
9. Arnos Grove Station – Decision still awaited

RECENT CASEWORK (SELECTION)

Planning permission refused

10. Victoria Quarter – 652 homes. Planning Committee voted against 11-0
11. Kingmaker House, Station Road – Proposal for 145 flats dismissed by the Planning Inspector. The developer will have to be content with the 139 already approved
12. 28 Prospect Road – We objected to replacement of this good Arts & Crafts house by a block of six flats



Existing – 2-storey house with front garden



Proposed – 3-storey block with parking in place of garden and large projection to rear

13. 22 Hendon Wood Lane – We supported the replacement of decrepit sheds in the Green Belt by four unobtrusive houses
14. 69-75 High Street – We objected to this backland office development as unworthy of the Conservation Area

Other planning decisions awaited

15. Whalebones Estate – 152 homes. We objected to overdevelopment & breach of the CA
16. Gas peaking plant, Partingdale Lane – We objected to this abuse of the Green Belt
17. 151-153 High Street (former car showroom) – We supported this improved scheme

Applications approved

18. The Totteridge Academy city farm – We supported this use of Green Belt land
19. Old Courthouse Surgery, 27 Wood Street – We were neutral about this extension

20. Cotswold Lodge, Stapylton Road – Success after three previous refusals. We supported the sympathetic restoration and extension of this Victorian house

21. Sky studios, Rowley Lane

Conservation Areas

22. 70 High Street & 1 Sunset View – Theresa Villiers, the Chair of Planning Cllr Ryde & Cllr Sowerby have all expressed concern about these two test cases, both currently subject of enforcement

23. 54A High Street – During opening up of this Listed Building, possible Tudor remains have been found. Dendrochronology testing is being arranged



Conservation Area Advisory Committee

I'd like to record the my gratitude to Markus Geiger, who has represented us on the Conservation Area Advisory Committee for nearly 10 years, but has decided to step down on health grounds. Fortunately Guy Braithwaite has agreed to take on his responsibilities.