



LBB DRAFT GROWTH STRATEGY 2019-2030

Response of the Barnet Society

14 September 2019

INTRODUCTION

The Barnet Society is a non-political organisation with some 600 members that seeks to influence local and central government on aspects of planning and the environment in and around the parliamentary constituency of Chipping Barnet.

We have focused in the first instance on aspects of the draft Strategy that would, or could, impact on our part of the borough. Most of the comments that follow apply, however, to the whole of Barnet.

Direct quotations from the draft Strategy are in [blue](#).

P.4, Executive Summary

We support the general aims of the Strategy [to offer greater local opportunities, create better places, encourage more active lifestyles and over time increase the health and wellbeing of Barnet's residents](#).

We also support the Council's three key principles. But on their own these could damage or destroy qualities that make Barnet special. We therefore advocate adding three others for new growth to be acceptable:

- 4. Safeguard the buildings and places of architectural, historical and social value that define Barnet's character.**
- 5. Protect and enhance our green and blue environmental assets.**
- 6. Ensure that growth is sustainable and meets the highest environmental standards reasonably attainable.**

By the end date of this Strategy, it will probably be too late to mitigate catastrophic climate change. That challenge must be at the forefront of the Council's planning now.

P.5, Thriving Town Centres

The Council's first two objectives, [supporting the strengthened identity and diversification of town centres and joined-up service delivery for healthier high streets](#) are exactly what Chipping Barnet Town Team (CBTT) has been fighting for, and its recognition of the value of Town Teams is very welcome.

We support the third, [deliver high quality workspace](#), but believe affordability is as important as quality. We would also like variety of workspace type and tenure to be facilitated.

We also support the fourth objective, to [build on existing strengths to create a thriving evening economy](#).

We believe that the biggest challenges in relation to town centres are these:

1. Committed, consistent, practical and joined-up Council support – ideally with Town Centre Managers working in tandem with Town Teams .
2. Enforcement of environmental standards e.g. street cleaning, rubbish collection and (especially in Conservation Areas) shopfront design and upkeep.
3. Getting buy-in from traders.
4. Funding!

P.6, A Great Borough to Live in and Visit

We fully support the first four objectives. Objective 1, [deliver social infrastructure](#), is especially challenging because pressure on roads, primary schools and essential services such as clinics and dentists is already acute. Nearly a thousand new homes are currently in the pipeline for Chipping Barnet, and yet more are proposed in the Strategy.

Objectives 2-4, [get the best out of the borough's green assets, grow the visitor economy and provide a broader canvas for creative industries](#) could have been taken directly from the Town Team's recent bid to the Future High Streets Fund (which predated this Strategy).

For Chipping Barnet residents, Objective 5, [establish Brent Cross as a destination](#), is not a high priority.

P.7, Spatial Approach – East

We support [focused growth in areas of good transport accessibility](#), and the ambition to [deliver a little over 1/3 of homes](#) seems fair. But we question the housing targets set by the government, and we are concerned that commitment to a good balance of employment and housing types and tenures is lacking.

P.13, A Growing Borough

We agree with all of Objectives 1-4, but would also like the Council to commit to an additional Objective:

- 5. Encourage high standards of design and sustainability for new homes and their settings.**

It is also important that local character is respected. Chipping Barnet, for example, currently has no high-rise (over 10 storey) buildings. We do not object to high density development (up to 5 or 6 storeys) in appropriate places, but it must intrude as little as possible on views from nearby open spaces and the Green Belt. Green 'lungs' that separate neighbourhoods and give them identity (e.g. the Whalebones smallholding between High Barnet and Arkley) must be safeguarded.

P.14-16, Increasing Housing Supply

We do not question Barnet's need for additional housing, but we do question the overall quantity. We have noticed significant disparities between the Government Standard Methodology, the GLA Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Barnet's own projections. We also have doubts about future projections of housing need in the South-East, especially post-Brexit given the likely consequent economic slow-down and departure of EU citizens. Barnet's own target must be verified rigorously before any final decisions are made.

Although we agree about the need for affordable housing, we believe the government's definition of 'affordability' is inadequate in Barnet's current market situation, and that the Council's rent policy of 65% of market rent should be reviewed.

We welcome the Council's determination [to increase the supply of all forms of private and affordable housing](#), but want it expanded to include social housing. The range of housing should include:

- Student
- Key worker
- HMOs
- Co-housing and co-living
- Special and supported homes
- Other forms of social housing and shared ownership.

All these types have a useful contribution to make, provided that they are properly planned, regulated and monitored.

That 2,546 households currently live in temporary housing is a disgrace, but their needs will not be addressed just by building more homes; they have to be suitable and genuinely affordable.

P.17, A Connected Borough

We agree with all of the objectives.

P.18-20, Keeping Barnet Moving

This section of the Growth Strategy is a bit thin. Strategies are easy to promote: attention to detail is as important. We would like clearer commitment to several aspects of transport.

Transport hubs – Enhancing interchange at transport hubs between rail and tube, taxi, buses and individual modes (e.g. pedal and motorised bicycles including e-scooters) is essential.

Buses – Increasing use depends not just on frequency and reliability of services, but also the ease and attractiveness of pick-up/set-down points en route. Hail-and-ride sections are particularly vulnerable in this respect.

Orbital links – Curiously, this section only includes rail connections (though other modes are mentioned elsewhere). We would like bus, tram, light rail and affordable very rapid transit (AVRT) to be considered too – across or beneath the Green Belt where necessary.

Roads – To reduce delays to buses, more main roads need to be considered for application of increased waiting restrictions. Nowadays busy sections of certain roads cannot accommodate two-way moving traffic with parking on both sides of the road, even on a Sunday, given the general increase in vehicle width in the past 30 years. In Chipping Barnet, examples include the A110 (Station Road) & A109 (Oakleigh Road North).

Cycling – We welcome the possible improvements mentioned, in this section and elsewhere, especially as Barnet's commitment to cycling has been a weakness in the past. But there is a notable silence about cycling in the East of the Borough.

Walking – Practical steps are needed, both to encourage walking (e.g. by facilitating crossing at road junctions) and to foster pedestrian discipline (e.g. by promoting respect for fellow walkers and discourage mobile phone use while walking).

We would also like recognition of issues arising from Chipping Barnet's location at the edge of London.

Car usage – Because Greater London transport strategies do not apply to Hertsmere, bus service provision and ticketing facilities are adversely affected. That encourages local residents to use private cars for relatively short distance and time trips to neighbouring centres (and for Hertsmere commuters via Barnet to do likewise).

Car parking – Wholesale removal of parking at High Barnet and New Barnet Stations would be counter-productive, displacing cars onto local streets and discouraging car-sharing and other integrated transport solutions.

Public transport – An increasing number of Barnet residents work, shop and/or are educated in other Outer London boroughs, Hertsmere or beyond. Better provision needs to be made for bus (and other) connections to such places as Enfield, Crews Hill, Potters Bar, St Albans, Borehamwood, Edgware, Colindale and other points east, north and west. This will entail both improving existing services and planning new ones.

The last point is of particular importance in relation to housing developments at and around the transport hubs of Edgware, Mill Hill, High Barnet, New Barnet and (though outside Barnet, a close neighbour) Cockfosters. Unless planning briefs and designs plan adequately for future new services and public transport improvements at those hubs, a huge opportunity will be lost.

P.32-33, Spatial Approach

We would like an undertaking to explore a new orbital route in the north of the borough, not least in view of this section's commitment to new visitor destinations.

P.43, A Regional Park

We welcome the commitment to improved orbital connections, including (as mentioned above) in the north. These could include bus, tram, light rail and affordable very rapid transit (AVRT) – across or beneath the Green Belt where necessary.

P.45, Centre of the Borough

We support priority intervention bullet points 1, [a regional park](#), 5, [orbital transport](#), 7, [North West Green Belt masterplan](#) & 8, [Upper Dollis Brook](#).

In relation to the 2nd bullet, we dispute the current draft masterplan for [a new sports hub at Barnet Playing Fields](#). We support improving facilities for sports and leisure in the Dollis Valley, but believe that the current proposal is over-ambitious (£11.2m – as big as a primary school), and we strongly oppose the specific location proposed on Barnet Playing Fields. The business case for this proposal is unsubstantiated, and its proposed location in the middle of the Green Belt – which the Council is committed to protect – is unacceptable and should be moved.

P.46-51, East of the Borough

As mentioned above (P.18-20), we would welcome improved orbital connections of every kind, not just rail.

As also mentioned in P.18-20, cycling warrants a mention. Barnet Hill and other current topographical challenges will diminish with e-cycles and e-scooters, and would be mitigated by separate lanes in key places.

P.47, East of the Borough

The last paragraph's reference to [investments the council is already making in Chipping Barnet](#) is misleading. It may be true of Chipping Barnet constituency (e.g. the New Barnet Leisure Centre) as a whole, but the only significant new public investment in High Barnet for many years has been by the Mayor of London (Outer London Fund upgrading of St John the Baptist's churchyard) and TfL (High Street pavement widening and planting). Section 106 money from Barnet & Southgate College for public realm improvements has evaporated. Until very recently, getting Council support for any initiatives in High Barnet town centre has been a frustrating struggle.

P.48, A1000/A598 Growth Corridor

We agree in principle that [town centres along this growth corridor...present substantial regeneration opportunities for the borough to deliver growth and support local needs](#). But we would strongly oppose continuous medium/high-rise ribbon development from Golders Green to High Barnet.

Since most brownfield land in High and New Barnet has been, or is in the course of being, developed, we are not convinced that there is great [potential for supportive housing-led investments that will inject investment and activity into these high streets](#).

P.51, Our priorities for delivering growth in the east of the borough

The interventions that we would most support are bullets 1a, [explore the potential for town centre diversification and housing delivery at Chipping Barnet that builds on the heritage and character of the area](#) and 1b, [Continue delivery of the Victoria Quarter masterplan and other mixed use or housing sites around New Barnet, alongside place-making interventions](#).

In relation to 1a, though, most brownfield land in Chipping Barnet has been, or is in the course of being, developed. Since greenery and buildings of quality must not be sacrificed, diversification and housing delivery will largely depend on smart and sympathetic adaptation of existing stock.

We are sceptical about the Council's claims in 1g to [work with TfL to shape developments at High Barnet](#), and 5, [work with TfL to plan for transport related growth](#). We have yet to see the strong Council leadership that such large and sensitive projects badly need, either in terms of planning policy, community engagement or design guidelines.

At High Barnet, for example, no connection has yet been made between TfL's plans for the underground station and the Chipping Barnet Town Team's aspirations – supported by the Council's Community Plan – for a more welcoming, accessible and distinctive urban environment. Both should collaborate on enhancing greenery in and around the town centre, enhancing transport mode interchanges to existing and future new bus services, and exploring smart vehicular movement and parking solutions.

P.52, Indicative Quantitative Indicators

The only environmental indicator (NO²) is quite inadequate.

And why are there no Qualitative Indicators?