



**Cabinet
24 April 2017**

**Report from Strategic Director
Regeneration and Environment**

Wards affected: All Wards

Town Centres: Action and Investment Planning

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Brent's Town Centres and High Streets¹ are critical to the borough's economy and vibrancy; most residents live near one of them and they generate a significant number of jobs and business rates for the borough.
- 1.2 Like many centres across the country and London, many have struggled to maintain a positive presence and character, often suffering as a result of wider socio-economic trends such as the emergence of 'out of town' shopping (e.g. Brent Cross) and the internet-shopping era. The struggles of the town centres then has a knock on effect to local businesses and employment as well as the look and feel of the places in which Brent residents can spend their leisure time, thus affecting their wellbeing.
- 1.3 To survive and thrive in this new environment, the town centre will need to diversify their offer to become places where people live, work and spend their leisure time. The town centre's will also need to be bold and look forward to the future in which digital technology will only become more intertwined with almost everything we do, most certainly the retail and consumer experience.
- 1.4 The report illustrates planned improvements and proposes recommendations to begin the practical actions required to improve the town centre experience, whilst also highlighting the opportunities for longer term and more significant

¹ Town Centres and High Streets will be used through the report. Town Centres are a more holistic description of a place that can accommodate a wide range of services and core characteristics, such as housing, workspace, and cultural activities, in addition to retail. High streets refers to smaller centres where retail is the more predominant function.

investment to transform them into successful places for our residents, businesses and visitors to the borough.

- 1.5 In the preparation of this report, in addition to Legal and Finance, the team has consulted/requested information from the following :

Children & Young People (Safeguarding, Performance and Strategy)
Community Wellbeing (including Public Health, Housing and Culture)
Policy Performance & Partnerships (Regeneration Outcome Based Review)
Regeneration & Environment (Inward Investment and Capital Delivery, Planning, Transport and Licensing and Community Protection)
Resources (Strategic Property and Commercial Services - Resources)

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet agree:

- 2.1 To progress the detailed development and implementation of the draft action and investment plans for the nine town centres.
- 2.2 To prioritise nine town centres where council and external investment can be focussed to generate greater impact upon the council's priorities (see Action and Investment Plans, Appendix 1), including Wembley High Road, Ealing Road, Harlesden, Willesden, Neasden, Church End, Kilburn High Road, Colindale/ The Hyde, and Burnt Oak.
- 2.3 To prioritise six of these for additional town centre management resource, responding to levels of need identified (such as street-scene and anti-social behaviour, identified in Appendix 1), including Wembley High Road, Ealing Rd, Harlesden, Willesden, Neasden and Church End.

3. Executive Summary

- 3.1 The purpose of the recommended approach in this report is to enable the town centres in Brent to adapt and thrive, through diversification of their core purpose for businesses, residents and visitors.

Overarching this report is a new up to date definition of town centres within the London and National socio-economic context. With the challenges faced by traditional retail centres, particularly with the rapid expansion of online shopping, town centres need to adapt and diversify. Town Centres will still play a critical function for local communities, and whilst retail will continue to have significant importance to their use and success, they must also respond to the access to services, leisure and cultural needs of local residents and/or visitors, as well as help meet population growth pressures for housing, workspace and jobs.

- 3.2 This report proposes an approach to town centre investment and action that will support the delivery of the Brent 2020 Vision and the Borough Plan aspirations. Through this approach, Brent's town centres can become places and destinations that Brent's residents and businesses will be proud of, and that will attract more visitors and investment to Brent.
- 3.3 Nine high streets have been approved for the development of investment plans around three workstream of actions. The nine high streets are: Wembley High Road, Ealing Road, Harlesden, Kilburn High Road, Church End, Neasden, Burnt Oak, Colindale/The Hyde, and Willesden, and the workstreams are:
- Town centre management priorities
 - Current/ planned capital activity
 - Future opportunities for capital investment
- 3.4 Business partnerships will also be considered for the largest of the prioritised centres with the greatest chance of this being a viable option. This will include Wembley High Road, Ealing Road, Harlesden, Willesden and Kilburn. Business Improvement Districts (BIDS) can enhance the business leadership of town centre management and improvement.
- 3.5 Resources for taking forward these plans have been considered, three Town Centre Manager posts have been established within the Regeneration and Environment Directorate and included within the 2017/18 base budget. Their remit will be to accelerate the pace of change in the six priority town centres (Wembley High Road, Ealing Road, Harlesden, Willesden, Church End and Neasden), focussed on the leadership of improved town centre management.
- 3.6 The capital investment plans will need to be developed (see draft Town Centre Investment Plans in Appendix 1). Project proposals are likely to be financed via one or more of the following identified sources:
- Prioritisation of Community Infrastructure Levy to support town centre development.
 - Utilising the council's ability to invest its own capital finance, either to unlock development where there is market failure, or to invest in assets that could generate capital gain or revenue income.
 - Bidding for external investment, led by the strategic investment plans. It seems clear that the Greater London Authority (GLA) under the leadership of the new Mayor of London will invest in capital initiatives to

support economic and housing growth in outer-London, however, the details of upcoming funds are not yet known.

- 3.7 Whilst the draft investment plans have been solely developed by council officers at this stage, it will be imperative to engage a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that the plans are taken forward in partnership, with the insight and support of communities and elected members.

4. Responding to borough priorities

- 4.1 The town centre action and investment plans are designed to deliver against the councils strategic priorities and address identified issues in our centres. Ultimately success in delivery will lead to more vibrant town centres that can serve a range of purposes to different communities, whilst also improving the economic prosperity of the borough. The key priorities and issues being addressed through the plans are:

Address economic growth pressures

- 4.2 Brent's town centres already account for one fifth of business rates generated in Brent and have more potential via diversification of use of space, particularly maximising commercial workspace in and around the town centres.
- 4.3 Since 2010, the Council has been experimenting with meanwhile and pop up shop reactivation projects in support of the council's ambitions for social and economic regeneration. Past successful meanwhile projects include: South Kilburn Studios, New Windows on Willesden Green, Queens Parade in Willesden Green, Learning from Kilburn, Cottrell House and Chesterfield House. Taking on board the learnings and insights from the above projects, future considerations will be explored by the council but only as a flexible response to short-term opportunities.
- 4.4 Future focus will take into account the range of different methods to effectively reactivate vacant properties in priority high streets, including short-term and flexible (for example, meanwhile use or pop up spaces) to long-term and sustainable (for example, permanent workspaces).
- 4.5 The workspace study commissioned by the council is due to be completed in early 2017, which can inform the development of workspace in existing sites or new developments, to attract different businesses to Brent. Managed workspaces or incubators could be focussed on growth industries in London and West London, to attract companies with high growth potential to the London Borough of Brent. Larger spaces can provide 'move on' opportunities for businesses that might otherwise look elsewhere as they seek to expand their operations.

- 4.6 The impact of Business Rates revaluation may have the effect of driving out businesses from central London areas into outer areas. A recent report by Colliers International² illustrates the negative impact of the business rates revaluation on Central London businesses, stating that the biggest losers will be businesses based with Central London, with Dover Street, in Mayfair earmarked for an enormous 415% increase. Other popular outer London areas such as Brixton, Hammersmith and Southall are also likely to experience sharp spikes of over 89%. The stark increases present a potential opportunity for Brent to create an attractive offer for business relocation into Brent, with its position being more positive with an 11.9% increase.
- 4.7 A report by London First in association with EY³, provides analysis that illustrates the positive economic impacts that the 24 hour tube service will have on London's economy. The new 24 hour weekend could add up to 2,200 new jobs with over 500 jobs directly employed in operating the service. The extended tube service will also add £77 million to London's economy each year. Many parts of Brent will benefit from the introduction of the round the clock tube service on Friday and Saturday nights as the borough is well served by Jubilee (Kingsbury, Wembley Park, Neasden, Willesden Green and Kilburn), Northern (Burnt Oak and Colindale) and Piccadilly (Alperton) lines.
- 4.8 Business networks, clustering, and business support add additional value to attract investment. This can be invested in by the council to build the capacity of these forums, and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are an effective model that are well established across London (there are 50 in total), with none yet established in Brent. BIDs would help high streets lobby for their needs, and invest in their priorities (more detail in section 7 – Partnerships, resource and engagement).
- 4.9 Projected population growth in Brent also places pressure on jobs. The Brent economy will need to grow to sustain local employment. This can be enabled in the town centres via the action and investment plan opportunities for workspace creation and diversification of uses.

Health and Wellbeing

- 4.10 Brent's Borough Plan highlights the need to ensure Brent's residents are supporting people to live healthier lives and reducing health inequalities, as well

² Colliers International (2015) *How the 2017 Rating Revaluation will affect High Street Retailers*, London: <http://www.colliers.com/-/media/files/emea/uk/services/business-rates/20160909-how-the-2017-rating-revaluation-will-affect-high-street-retailer.pdf?la=en-gb>

³ <http://londonfirst.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Londons-24-hour-economy.pdf>

as the Sustainability and Transformation Plan⁴ aspiration to respond to key local demands. Those most relevant to town centres include the impact of low value food outlets on Brent's high levels of childhood obesity and diabetes, and the prominence of pay day loan and betting shops can be problematic for mental health issues (approximately 34,000 residents are thought to have a common mental health issue in Brent). Recent rise in illegal shisha bars in town centres adds to the negative health and wellbeing impacts.

Community and Culture

4.11 The Borough Plan supports good quality, accessible arts and leisure facilities that will improve the quality of life of Brent's residents. Cultural presence in town centres will support this aim, whilst also improving the vibrancy of the area and creating additional footfall that may then increase their dwell time and spend in the area. The diversity of the Brent communities presents unique opportunities to shape our centres to feed cultural needs of Brent residents and welcome visitors from outside the borough to enjoy the cultural offer.

Accessible and Attractive

4.12 The Borough Plan states that we have a key role in making sure that Brent is an attractive place to live, with a pleasant environment, clean streets, roads in good repair, as well as reducing crime, particularly violent crime.

4.13 Brent also seeks to improve walking and cycling routes and reduce overcrowding on buses, which improves people's enjoyment of the town centre, and responds to the high levels of physical inactivity identified in Brent through the Sustainability and Transformation Plan.

4.14 Accessibility extends to online access. This means that the shops and facilities in town centres perform better if they are accessible on line and users of town centres are able to access free broadband in the centres.

Accommodate housing needs and growth:

4.15 Between 2015-2020 Brent's population is forecast to grow by 17,000 (11,200 working age), generating additional demand on housing at a time when supply is already clearly outstripped by demand across London. Town centre housing development can help to respond to the challenge, whilst also adding to the vibrancy and viability of centres by generating increased local footfall, dwell time

⁴ The Sustainability and Transformation Plan is an NHS led, joint local government and NHS five year transformation plan, ensuring health and care systems are built around the needs of the local population. It is delivered at regional level; Brent is part of North West London, along with Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Kensington and Chelsea, and Westminster.

and local spend. The Borough Plan responds to this growth, planning to increase the supply of affordable, good quality housing, and the 2020 Vision further prioritises housing supply.

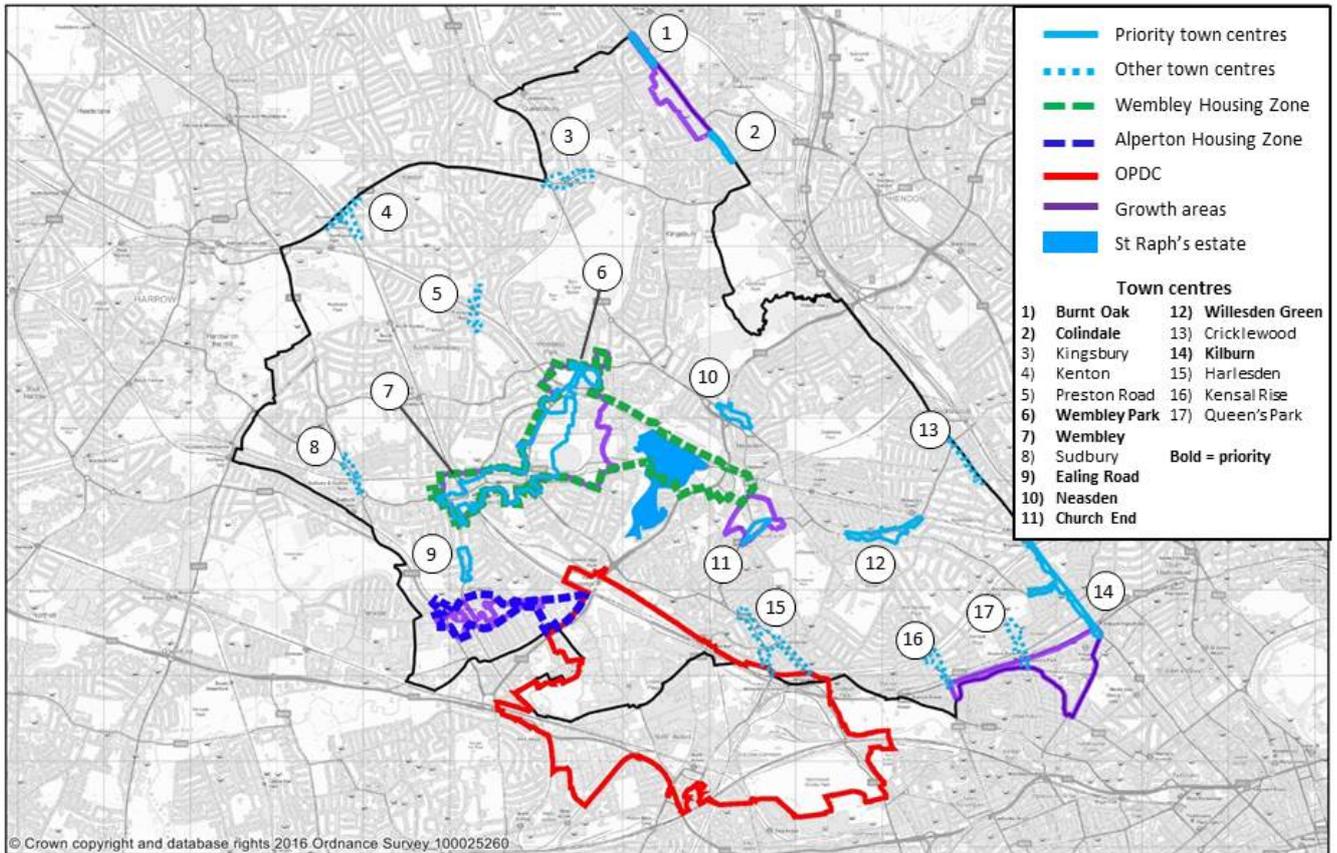
Raising Income:

- 4.16 The council seeks opportunities to raise local income and tax revenues to support the delivery of core services, to mitigate reducing government grant.
- 4.17 When taking forward the investment strategies for town centres, it is advised the council carefully consider investment in land or housing that can yield income, either capital receipts, or more importantly, ongoing revenue streams (e.g. through purchasing land, developing private rented accommodation within the scheme that can be retained for ongoing rental yield, or commercial floorspace, e.g. to stimulate supply for SMEs).
- 4.18 More generally, with the devolution of business rates, maintaining successful town centres and minimising vacancy rates may form an important part of the council's income generation strategy. This depends on the final details of the business rates devolution deal (see section 7 – Partnerships, resource and engagement).

5. Background Information

- 5.1 Brent is a large and diverse borough. There are seventeen distinct centres, which form the local heart of each community. See Map 1 below.
- 5.2 Nearly every resident lives within half a mile of at least one of them. Brent's town centres are the economic, civic, retail, leisure and transport hubs of the borough.
- 5.3 They are also significant drivers of the economy, contributing approximately one fifth of Brent's business rates and represent a key area of opportunity for further economic growth and income generation.

How the town centres have evolved



0 1 2 kilometres



Map 1: Map of Brent's High Streets

5.4 In order to succeed, Brent's town centres must adapt to the unprecedented changes that have taken place to the retail sector in recent decades. Retail patterns continue to change, adapting to the internet-shopping generation. Research conducted by London Council's in October 2015 highlights that there has been a significant growth in Omni channel shopping (shopping online via a number of platforms: desktop, mobile and tablet) as consumers prefer the ease, accessibility and speediness of purchasing online. This is an upward trend that is unlikely to change;

"After a decade in which Amazon had risen progressively to become the UK's eighth largest retailer, and with many retailers of the view that total online sales would lie in the range 25 to 30% by 2020 –the shift to the era of the digital high street was deepening and accelerating... Whilst supermarkets are also becoming more important for comparison shopping". (British High Streets: Crisis to Recovery, Neil Wrigley and Dionysia Lambiri).

5.5 The impact of these trends on London is that the growth of long term consumer expenditure is projected to be down by a quarter, despite a doubling in the level of London's population growth (as estimated in Experian's 2009 study and the 2011 London Plan).

In addition to these social and technological changes, the recession in 2008 impacted the town centres across the UK, with increases in vacancy levels and reductions in consumer confidence and footfall. Nationally vacancy levels peaked following the recession and have subsequently recovered. In Brent levels have also decreased since the recession but still remain high with levels in Kilburn, Neasden, Harlesden and Wembley remaining higher than the London average. However, as Table 1 highlights vacancy levels within the primary frontage (the core retail area) generally remain low. This reflects that vacant frontage is generally concentrated on the edge of Brent's town centres, and points to the need to consolidate the retail core and diversify areas on the periphery for other uses, such as residential or employment space.

Table 1: Vacancy levels (Source: GLA/Brent Health Checks & Local Data Company, 2013)

Centre Type	Centre Name	Vacancy levels as a % of primary frontage	Vacant retail floorspace as a % of total town centre floorspace
Major	Kilburn	3.0	14
	Wembley	6.9	15
District	Burnt Oak	0.0	9
	Colindale	0.0	12
	Cricklewood	2.9	7
	Ealing Road	1.4	2
	Harlesden	5.6	14
	Kingsbury	1.0	5
	Neasden	8.3	16
	Preston Road	0.0	9
	Wembley Park	4.4	4
	Willesden Green	4.2	11
Local	Church End	7.5	Not available
	Kensal Rise	2.8	Not available
	Kenton	0.0	8
	Queen's Park	4.6	Not available
	Sudbury	9.3	Not available
London Average			9.4
National Average			14.1

- 5.6 From the 2013 analysis data above on vacancy levels across Brent's town centres, Sudbury is shown to have the highest vacancy rate in the borough. The rate of vacancy in Sudbury seems relatively high at 9.3% of the length of primary frontage. Sudbury is one of Brent's smaller centres, comprising 64 units - 35 of which are in the primary frontage. The high level of vacant frontage is due to 3 units being vacant at the time the survey was undertaken. Of these units only one has been persistently vacant.
- 5.7 Retail rents within the prime town centres⁵ also decreased following the recession before somewhat stabilising. Despite this recovery, rental rates in Kilburn (£100 per sq.ft) and Wembley (£75 per sq.ft) are still below the Outer London average of £133 per sq.ft, as per figure 1. This is in part an indicator of demand and could be associated with Brent's town centres being characterised by smaller retail units, the average unit size being 151 sq.m for comparison and 191 sq.m convenience (Goat Experian data), and a lower proportion of multiples. A benefit is that relatively low rents and smaller units have the potential to make Brent more attractive for independent traders and start-up businesses. The converse is that it can be often occupied by 'lower value' uses such as betting shops, pay day loan companies, and fast food outlets.

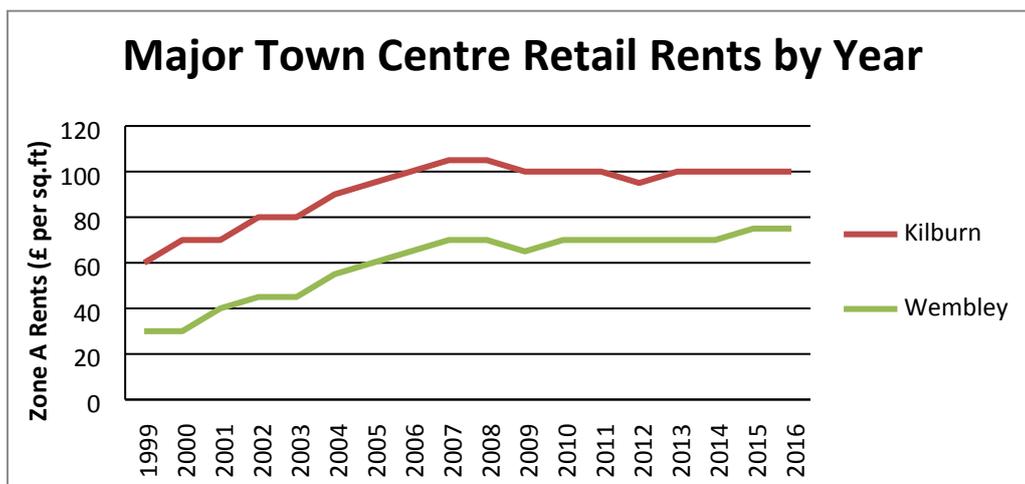


Figure 1: Prime Retail Rents (Source: Colliers)

- 5.8 The marked increase in the concentration of perceived 'lower value' uses, such as hot food takeaways, betting shops and pay day loan shops, is London-wide, and reflected in Brent. Between 2007 and 2013 the number of betting shops in Brent's town centres increased 41% from 43 to 61, whilst the number of pawnbrokers/payday lenders increased 171% from 7 to 19. Centres in wards with higher levels of deprivation have witnessed a greater concentration of these uses. The dominance of these uses impacts the vitality of town centres and raises concerns around public health and anti-social behaviour.

⁵ 'Prime' refers to Zone A town centres

- 5.9 The Brent Joint Strategic Needs Assessment highlights obesity, in particular childhood obesity, is one of the boroughs key challenges. Childhood obesity rates in Brent remain higher than the England average. 11% of reception year pupils and 24% of year 6 pupils were obese in 2012/13. Brent Council has also undertaken research locally which found students who attended schools with takeaways within a 400m radius of the schools consumed takeaways more often at lunch times, on the journey home and for the evening meal. One in 4 students stated if there were no takeaways within 400m of the school they would not go. Access to takeaway food therefore has a clear impact on eating patterns and health.
- 5.10 Information on the health impacts of betting shops and pay day loan shops at a local level is more limited; however the demographics of Brent's residents indicate they are particularly at risk from social impacts, such as problem gambling. As summarised in the report Health on the High Street by the Royal Society for Public Health 'There is strong evidence that increasing opportunities – availability and accessibility – to gambling does increase the number of regular and problem gamblers in an area'. The Council has subsequently taken forward Development Management Policies which place a cap on the proportion of takeaways, betting shops and pay day loans shops in town centres, to ensure they form part of a diverse mix of uses. In addition, the policy restricts takeaways and shisha cafes opening within 400 metres of secondary schools and further education establishments.

The Future Town Centre

- 5.11 The core of town centres will continue to be retail, but an offer that adapts to the increase in convenience shopping and digital retail and consumer experience.

Convenience shopping has had a resurgence; "IGD's forecast that the convenience store grocery sector would add more sales (+£11.6 bn)... and by 2019 would account for almost a quarter (24.1%) of total UK grocery sales [compared with] the once dominant one-stop 'superstores & hypermarkets' sector whose market share was forecast to collapse over the 5 year period [2014-19]" (Opinion Pieces, University of Southampton, 2014)

The scope for digital influence on town centres is in its infancy and is only likely to accelerate, providing challenges and significant opportunities to town centres;

"The coming years will be characterised by an increased use of various online customer-contact channels and devices for Internet access... mobile-Internet, the physical and virtual worlds will become increasingly interwoven. New technologies such as 3D images, holograms, and augmented reality provide opportunities to present products and

services in an interactive way.” (Opinion Pieces, University of Southampton, 2014)

- 5.12 The continued pace of technological development will create significant opportunities and challenges for the Brent town centres, the wider economy and infrastructure. For example, driverless cars, which was until recently in research and development is now becoming a reality, with trials of their use internationally, and in the UK legislation and law seeking to adapt to their existing through an upcoming Modern Transport Bill. This is a useful example of the impacts of such developments, as it would be significant for businesses in terms of accessibility to their products (potentially without impact upon parking), as well as people who may be given more opportunity to visit such locations, or competition further afield.
- 5.13 This is part of a wider development of ‘Smart Infrastructure’, connecting digital technology and monitoring systems to the physical environment. For town centres this can intersect in multiple ways, such as energy, utility and waste systems, as well as through communications technology; e.g. “Online customer care and mobile ‘apps’ are being provided, serving the customer when they want, by time or day or location. Data can be converted to voice, and voice to data, or from language A to language B.” (Smart Infrastructure: The Future, the Royal Academy of Engineering). This provides opportunities for how people interact with providers of services, whether community, consumer or retail. It could provide opportunities for improved traffic systems in busy areas of London, such as through intelligent traffic systems, made more user-friendly, “integrating all transport modes and operators so that travellers can optimally plan their journeys using real-time information, which reduces both congestion and emissions.” (Our Future Depends on Intelligent Infrastructure, Siemens).
- 5.14 Learning from the recently commissioned digital high street pilot programme in Wembley, it was identified that 67% of local businesses were “not online”, significantly higher than the national average of 50%. In realisation of the changing pace of our high streets, it is imperative to ensure the right level of digital skills and infrastructure is available.
- 5.15 As well as becoming smarter, Brent’s town centres can and are already diversifying, with mixed economies. With the notable exception of Ealing Road, the town centres are dominated by service functions (i.e. professional and financial services, restaurants/cafes, drinking establishments and takeaways). This is reflective of the national trend of centres diversifying from traditional retail functions. Figure 2 below highlights the rise of professional services in Brent’s town centres.

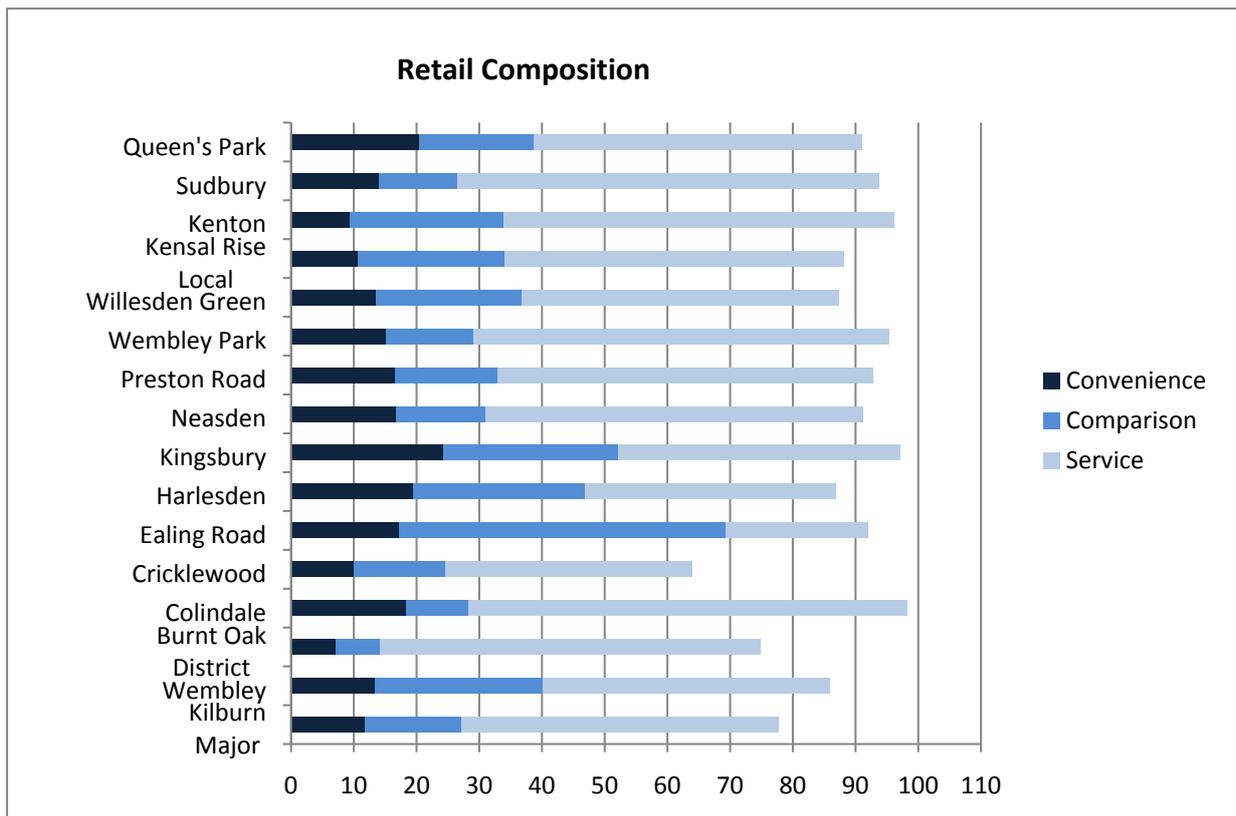


Figure 2: Retail Composition of Brent's Town Centres (Source: Brent Town Centre Health Checks)

5.16 This direction of travel indicates the potential to diversify town centres, moving away from a vision dominated by retail uses and measures of success, toward something that incorporates wider economic uses. However, the data sets are limited, but should not limit the scope of the town centre vision for the future. Diversification must move beyond the consumer and economic uses, to the wider opportunities to enliven town centres, increasing their footfall and day to day usage, including cultural and leisure uses (including the night time economy) and considering the potential to develop housing in areas of low value use, to increase dwelling, community and local spend.

5.17 Looking forward the town centres need to diversify:

“As decision makers try to find coherent ways forward for our high streets and towns, it is necessary both to go with the grain of long-term trends and to understand the significance of newly emergent phenomena. What is certain is that high streets will not revert back to pre-crisis forms – particularly nostalgic images of those forms... Emergent relationships between online and offline, retail and leisure & community spaces, and corporates and independents, suggest symbiotic relationships are at the heart of future high street configurations.” (British High Streets: From Crisis to Recovery)

6. Defining the new Town Centre

6.1 To ensure town centres in Brent respond to both the borough's priorities outlined in section 4 and the socio-economic context in section 5, the following definition is proposed to help frame the future of Brent's town centres.

- Retail: Retain and build a high quality retail and consumer offer, but not as the sole function.
- Economic growth: Maximise opportunities for commercial use (i.e. workspace), jobs and enterprise to support economic growth.
- Accessible and attractive: locations that people can easily access (physically and online), and that is a welcoming and positive environment.
- Community based: A place for the community to enjoy, through a mixed range of high quality community uses (leisure, entertainment and cultural facilities). Easy access to consumer services (public, private and voluntary sector services).
- Housing: Liveable places that providing attractive residential living options to meet housing needs and growth.

6.2 *Retail offer and access to consumer services:*

- An offer that is accessible for convenience shopping is identified as the success factor for retail in a successful town centre. However, some locations may have the 'pull factor' to attract footfall from further afield (e.g. Ealing Road)
- The offer should maximise the benefits of local cultural character where possible (e.g. ethnic diversity in food or clothing).

6.3 *Promoting economic growth :*

- To support the creation of jobs for local residents, as well as potential income via a devolved business rates model.

6.4 *Accessible and attractive:*

- The centres must be attractive destinations with high quality public realm. They must also be accessible for residents of the local catchment, as well as visitors from further afield to maximise the pull factor of the town centres.

6.5 *Community uses:*

- A range of leisure or cultural uses that support the local community, as well as the potential to attract wider audiences where appropriate.
- The quality of this offer, including the aspiration to reduce unhealthy fast food outlets, replaced with more quality produce, can have the dual benefit of local quality of life and wellbeing as well as attracting additional footfall to the centre that adds to the vibrancy and local spend in other areas such as retail and consumer services.
- Consumer Services (Public, private and voluntary) - Consumer services are an excellent way of attracting people to the town centres and can enable building of capacity of public or voluntary services, e.g. health services, community facilities, or professional services (e.g. estate agents, lawyers or accountants). It attracts people to spend time in the centres, which can lead to greater vibrancy and viability.

6.6 *Accommodate housing needs and growth:*

- To accommodate local residents and key workers and the growth in population forecast (population growth of 17,000 by 2020 (GLA Population Survey)).
- Housing growth in or around the town centre has the added benefit of building a local catchment of residents who will spend time and money in their respective centre, adding to its vibrancy and viability.

7. Town Centre action and investment plans

Prioritisation

- 7.1 Of the seventeen town centres in Brent, town centre management and investment plans have been developed for nine town centres. The rationale for selection was based on their ability to meet the borough priorities identified in section 4.
- 7.2 Of these nine centres, it is proposed that six should receive support of the additional Town Centre Managers, to respond to the scale of needs identified from current and recurring issues that negatively affect these centres.

Action and investment plans

7.3 The Action and Investment Plans in Appendix 1 provide an overview of the activity required to improve town centre management as well as capital investment.

7.4 The town centre priorities are unique for each area, however, key themes have emerged:

In response to immediate issues identified by residents, businesses and officers. In summary, the following can be highlighted regarding town centre management action required:

- The majority of centres are not welcoming, as they are not well maintained, clean, safe or green. Issues such as pest control, fly-tipping, commercial waste management, as well as planning licencing, environmental health and trading standards issues have been identified.
- The issues identified can be best resolved by a coordinated council approach. Intensive campaigns and activity that bring together council resources is one option to take forward.
- Operational coordination is required, which will be trialled by the Town Centre Managers in the six prioritised centres.
- Engagement with businesses and the community is key, including education, incentives (carrot) and enforcement (stick). For example, compliance with business rate, planning regulation, or waste management all require ownership of businesses, or it is a case of continual firefighting. Also, one businesses negative behaviour has a knock on effect to another, collective responsibility is needed, which could be facilitated by the existence of strong business groups.

7.5 Capital investment is bespoke to each centre and the following themes are clear.

- Significant activity is already being progressed, much of which is focussed on improving the retail offer, the public realm, or transport.
- There are other opportunities identified that are being progressed, for more substantial mixed use development, but often without considering the wider implications or potential for the town centre/ high street as a whole.

- Future opportunities are wide ranging and have the potential to unlock growth in the centres, through a range of uses from retail, to cultural, commercial or housing uses.
- A more coordinated approach to the investment of town centres is needed. There are significant opportunities, particularly for the nine prioritised centres, which will need to be invested in a coordinated way responding to the overall vision and definition of the town centres that has been set in this report.
- Investment will require the council to consider its levers (e.g. CIL and capital investment) in order to move quickly and independently from external investment (e.g. GLA).

Outcomes

7.6 A set of measures are required that respond to the proposed purpose of the action and investment plans.

7.7 Outcomes are summarised below. A full list can be found in Appendix 3: Outcomes, measures of success and KPIs.

7.8 Outcomes Summary

- *Baseline data*: to benchmark and track improvements (will need to include community and visitors opinion)
- *Retail and consumer*: reduced vacancy rates, and particularly long term vacancy rates, and improved/ widened offer
- *Economic growth*: workspace created; employment and apprenticeships created; business rates generated.
- *Accessible and attractive*: improved public realm (clean, safe and green) and improved access via different transport/ travel modes.
- *Community uses*: New uses (measurable by number of users and increase in physical footprint of community uses)
- *Housing growth*: new development (number of units).
- *Vibrancy of town centres*: footfall and usage by different communities.

8. Partnerships, Resources and Engagement

- 8.1 It has been highlighted in the report that the investment plans have been developed by council officers. Moving forward it will be critical to engage the community and formulate ideas and proposals for the opportunity sites available. The process of engagement will need to ensure that community input is structured with clear opportunities in mind, e.g. a range of sites for alternative uses of workspace or housing, but not as a fait accompli once funding has already been secured (e.g. CIL or GLA investment).
- 8.2 Engagement will include Ward Members, resident & tenant associations, Neighbourhood Planning forums, and business partnerships.

Town Centre Managers – delivering the plans

- 8.3 Town Centre Management resource for the six prioritised town centres is proposed to lead delivery of the respective plan [note, three Town Centre Managers posts have been established, with one covering the Wembley and Ealing Road area, which are in close proximity to one another, another for Harlesden and Willesden, and the third for Neasden and Church End. They will provide the capacity to deliver the plans, coordinating activities with the support of relevant officers, as well as reaching out and securing the involvement of the key stakeholders.

The Town Centre Managers will inform opportunities for investment in the six prioritised town centres.

- 8.4 They will also contribute to feasibility studies to test the appetite for BIDs and other possible sustainable models in five priority high streets identified in section 3.4 (Wembley, Ealing Road, Harlesden, Willesden and Kilburn) utilising already committed New Homes Bonus funding (time limited to the 2017/18 financial year).
- 8.5 They will also help to build stronger business and resident relationships by being a voice of the council in the selected town centres and taking forward the improved town centre management approach and action plans. For this to be effective, council services will have to work responsively to their needs with a common level of prioritisation in the town centres.

Potential Sources of Funding

Community Infrastructure Levy

- 8.6 CIL is identified as a potential source of funding to support the town centre investment plans but all business cases will be reviewed to ensure they deliver

on Council priorities and that they demonstrate value for money. The Town Centre Commissioners will need to write business cases to the appropriate Boards and/or Cabinet and funding will be allocated to successful bids, subject to Cabinet Approval, for requests over £500k.

- 8.7 Brent CIL receipts currently stand at c£18.3m for strategic projects and c£3.4m for neighbourhood projects.
- 8.8 The first item on Brent's adopted CIL Regulation 123 List (types of infrastructure which can be wholly or partly funded by CIL) is "public realm infrastructure, including town centre improvement projects and street trees". Brent's Draft Investment Strategy states that the medium and long term focus for investment will include "Revitalising high streets as major retail destinations". CIL represents a commonly recognised source of funding for delivery of Town Centre action plans.

Mayor of London, Greater London Authority & London Enterprise Panel

- 8.9 The previous Mayor invested £189m of regeneration funding, with £131.5m match-funding, into more than 85 High Streets. Pan-London this funding saw 1,000 shopfronts improved, 1,577 jobs created, and 3,000 businesses and young people receive training and support. Programmes have included the London Regeneration, Outer London, Growing Places and High Street Funds. The new Mayor has not yet announced a funding settlement with Government and HM Treasury, however one might expect some trickle down from the Autumn Statement in November 2016 and Budget March 2017. GLA Officers have confirmed that High Streets and Workspaces remain regeneration priorities for future funding. As detailed LB Brent has benefited from GLA and London Enterprise Panel (LEP) funding in the past and will clearly want to be alive to any future opportunities and be in a position to make bids for future funding.

Transport for London

- 8.10 The Council works with Transport for London (TfL) on schemes to improve road safety; particularly for vulnerable users such as pedestrians and cyclists, accessibility and connectivity for public transport and smooth traffic flows whilst prioritising the needs of the local community including parking and loading facilities for residents and businesses.

Funding for public realm and road safety scheme improvements is available through a range of TfL funding streams, including the Local Implementation Plan (LIP) allocation to deliver the Mayors Transport Strategy, Mayors Air Quality Funding, Bus Pinch Point Funding and Principal Road Network. Schemes are developed to focus on accessibility and connectivity for public transport and

smooth traffic flows; particularly for vulnerable users such as pedestrians and cyclists, whilst prioritising the needs of the local community including parking and loading facilities for residents and businesses. Brent capital funding that may be available includes, S106, CIL and highways main programme.

Council capital investment

8.11 The Draft Investment Strategy identifies 'Revitalising high streets as major retail destinations' as a medium to longer term investment opportunity. More detailed investment criteria could benefit high street development by unlocking key sites for development, for sale or retention, with the potential for income generation. Broadly the following criteria could be considered for council investment in physical assets on high streets, all subject to an appropriately robust business case:

- Land or property that packages a site to enable development and intensification.
- Land or property that is an eyesore or has not been sufficiently invested in or promoted to secure development, intensification and the delivery of environmental improvements and a coherent sense of place.
- Land or property that can provide higher financial returns, whilst also seeking to diversify the mix of uses to meet council priorities (e.g. affordable housing, workspace etc.).

8.12 A proposal is being taken to Cabinet in November to establish a Wholly Owned Company (WOC), for the purpose of buying residential property. In the future other opportunities could be explored in relation to investment in the town centres. Setting up a WOC may or may not be the best option in this situation.

Business Partnerships and Support

Business Partnership/ BID development

8.13 Good progress has been made by Brent to create empowered business groups and partnerships, with five being formed to date. The ambition now is to establish an empowered business group in every priority high street in Brent.

8.14 One opportunity to stem from these developed and active business partnerships in some priority high streets would be to evolve into a Business Improvement District (BID model), thus creating financially sustainable and self-sufficient organisations, independent from council resources

- 8.15 It is estimated that it will cost £35,000 of New Homes Bonus to scope the feasibility of BIDs in the five identified town centres. This funding is already committed to supporting local business growth. Scoping will test the rateable value required for a successful outer London high street BID, test interest and build support for a BID, and establish the process necessary to take forward a formal ballot. It could be a challenging time to establish a BID due to the business rates payment required (usually 1-4% with the majority being closer to the bottom end of the scale). It will require development of business-led partnerships in the immediate future, with advocates from within the business community. Town Centre Managers can take forward these studies in collaboration with the high street businesses. See Appendix 4 for more information regarding BIDs.

Business intelligence: Base-lining data for high streets

- 8.16 £60,000 of New Homes Bonus has already been committed to be invested in information base-lining for the nine prioritised high streets to support their development, related to the requirements for outcome measurements (see Appendix 3).

Business Support: Advice and guidance to SMEs

- 8.17 To support growth of existing businesses in the four priority high streets and in workspace hubs, £90,000 of New Homes Bonus revenue funding has been committed to providing focussed support (£30,000 per high street). This will include such activities as workshops and 1-2-1 support for marketing, access to finance, digital skills, and business planning.

Digital High Street

- 8.18 As discussed in section 5, in light of evolving digital trends, it is integral to support and strengthen the appeal and accessibility of priority high streets, and to assist in the long term sustainability of SMEs. Focus within prioritised high streets, will include digital upskilling from the delivery of digital skills workshops and mentoring. This will help businesses increase in confidence and capacity when using digital tools to develop their engagement with new and existing customers.

The ambition for Brent is that every priority high street will have high speed broadband and be “discoverable” by 2020.

The Digital High Street Pilot has created a number of insights to help inform future action and investments plans regarding skills and infrastructure development. Future opportunities could include the deployment of a Wi-Fi reward incentivisation scheme to ensure that our priority high streets are discoverable, through acting as attractive advertising platform.

In addition, there is scope for setting up a “Digital Hub” in every priority high street, taking advantage of any under-utilised or vacant units. The hubs will act as a focal point for community engagement, digital inclusion training as well as continuing SME and business mentoring and will complement aims to increase business and local centre discovery.

9. Programme of delivery

- 9.1 A high level programme plan has been developed highlighting key phases of implementation. See Appendix 5.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1 A number of the BID proposals detailed in section 8 to this report refers to the use of New Homes Bonus (NHB) to meet associated costs.. The NHB monies referred to are within existing Council allocations.
- 10.2 BIDs are cost neutral to the Council once they are established and have the potential to drive business growth through businesses paying for additional services that make the BID areas more attractive to customers. There are set-up costs outlined in the paper for which there are existing NHB monies allocated. BIDs are different to Enterprise Zones that would keep the growth in business rates. It is important to recognise the differences in the two models.
- 10.3 This paper identifies areas of potential Capital expenditure but does not request additional funding at this time. Any proposals for council investment in physical assets on high streets will be subject to development of robust business cases and subsequent reports to Cabinet.

11. Legal Implications

- 11.1 Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 provides for agreements that allows the Council to impose positive and negative covenants on a land owner, who wishes to develop their land. The Council may use the provisions of the S106 Agreement to impose the requirement for the Developer to make financial contributions towards the local area.
- 11.2 The Planning Act 2008 provides powers to the Council to impose a charge on new buildings above a certain size. The Charge is paid by owners of land who wish to develop land and the finance raised can be used toward the local infrastructure.
- 11.3 Under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 the Government may make grants to the Council for any purpose including the New Homes Bonus councils may decide how to spend the New Homes Bonus, which is based on the amount of extra Council Tax revenue raised for new-build homes.

12. Risk Implications

Action	Mitigation	Risk level following mitigation
Town Centre Managers become fire-fighters of operational issues without time to lead investment plans.	Clear job descriptions and associated work plans. Working groups of operational services should be established for the priority centres to coordinate town centre management. It must be a shared responsibility.	Low
Town Centre Managers unable to achieve rapid response to issues raised due to inflexible contracts.	A review of waste and highways maintenance contracts is being conducted by Environment services, which should identify options for this flexibility and issues still remaining.	Medium
Capital investment plans enacted without sufficient engagement of communities and relevant stakeholders leading to public disengagement and/ or dissatisfaction.	Development of town centre communications strategy. Ensure that any town centre capital investment projects or programmes go through appropriate consultation and engagement processes, as well as decision making governance.	Low
Council investment in assets that depreciate, or create bad debt.	Council investment to be carefully managed through a clear criteria to judge when investment is appropriate, and utilising existing capital decision making governance.	Low

13. Diversity Implications

There are neutral impacts on the protected characteristics at this stage. As site specific proposals are developed equality impacts are anticipated, the detail of which will need to be determined at the time.

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