

A new image for the North Circular

Framework for change

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Foreword



Councillor John Detre
Lead Member for
Regeneration

I am delighted to introduce this major new regeneration initiative for Brent.

Regeneration is about finding ways of making long term, positive change. The council has a strong history of successful regeneration programmes. We aim to make the North Circular Road regeneration initiative our next big achievement.

The North Circular Road regeneration initiative presents its own unique challenges. Unlike many of our past regeneration schemes there is no obvious 'site boundary' and no single estate which requires rebuilding. Rather, the regeneration areas are defined by their relationship to the North Circular Road, land ownership is fragmented, and development values low. The need for a step change in the quality of the residential environment is acute.

The success of the North Circular Road programme will depend on us setting a clear and ambitious vision for what we want to achieve over the long term – 20 or 30 years – and then finding imaginative ways to create and exploit opportunities to deliver this vision

in a piecemeal, step by step way. We will need to retain our commitment to the overall vision, but be flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances.

The delivery of the North Circular Road regeneration programme is likely to take many years and require the input of a wide range of stakeholders. Throughout this time it is crucial that an open and transparent dialogue is maintained with local communities. Brent Council will provide clear leadership to the programme, whilst recognising that the overall direction of the programme needs to be shaped by regular and ongoing community consultation and engagement.

This document is a key part of that process – it sets out our initial thoughts and ideas, and I would very much welcome your comments and contributions.

Please send your ideas and comments to:

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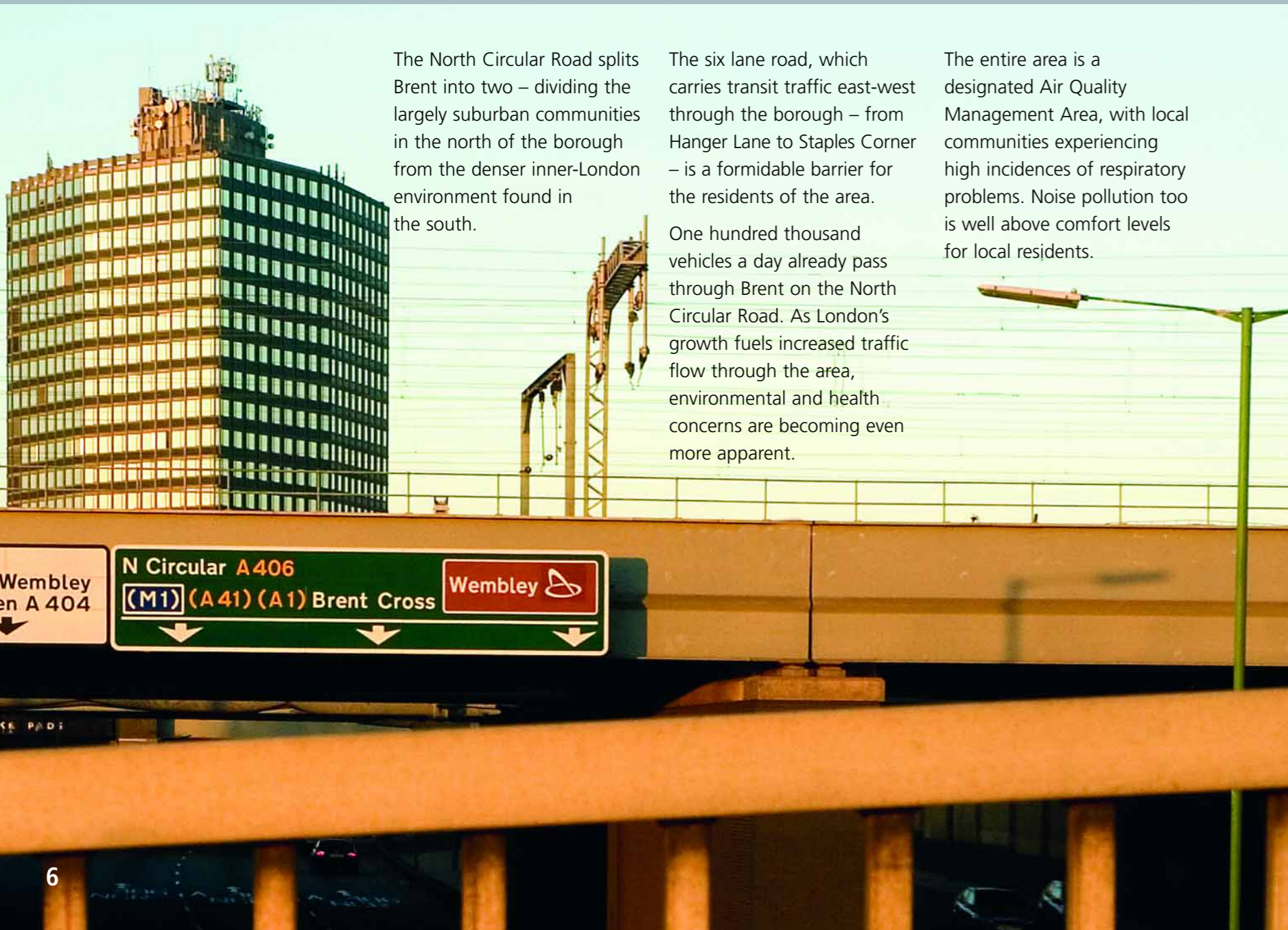
Introduction

The North Circular Road splits Brent into two – dividing the largely suburban communities in the north of the borough from the denser inner-London environment found in the south.

The six lane road, which carries transit traffic east-west through the borough – from Hanger Lane to Staples Corner – is a formidable barrier for the residents of the area.

One hundred thousand vehicles a day already pass through Brent on the North Circular Road. As London's growth fuels increased traffic flow through the area, environmental and health concerns are becoming even more apparent.

The entire area is a designated Air Quality Management Area, with local communities experiencing high incidences of respiratory problems. Noise pollution too is well above comfort levels for local residents.



This document sets out Brent Council's initial ideas for improvements to the North Circular Road Regeneration Area. These ideas seek to both address the negative impacts of the North Circular Road and to exploit the many opportunities presented across the area.

Positive steps towards change to the environmental, social and economic conditions have already been made through investment in neighbourhood renewal programmes in areas adjacent to the North Circular Road – St Raphael's, Brentfield, Mitchelbrook and Stonebridge have all benefited. Brent in2work continue to provide intensive employment programmes to help local people secure work and increase their incomes.

Any physical regeneration undertaken in this area will build upon the economic and social work already done.

Historically, local people have been central to all of the regeneration programmes in the area. The success of the North Circular Road initiative will very much depend on local people remaining integral to the development and delivery of this vision.

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Wembley Stadium

A visionary approach

We want the North Circular Road to connect distinct places rather than simply pass through anonymous areas.

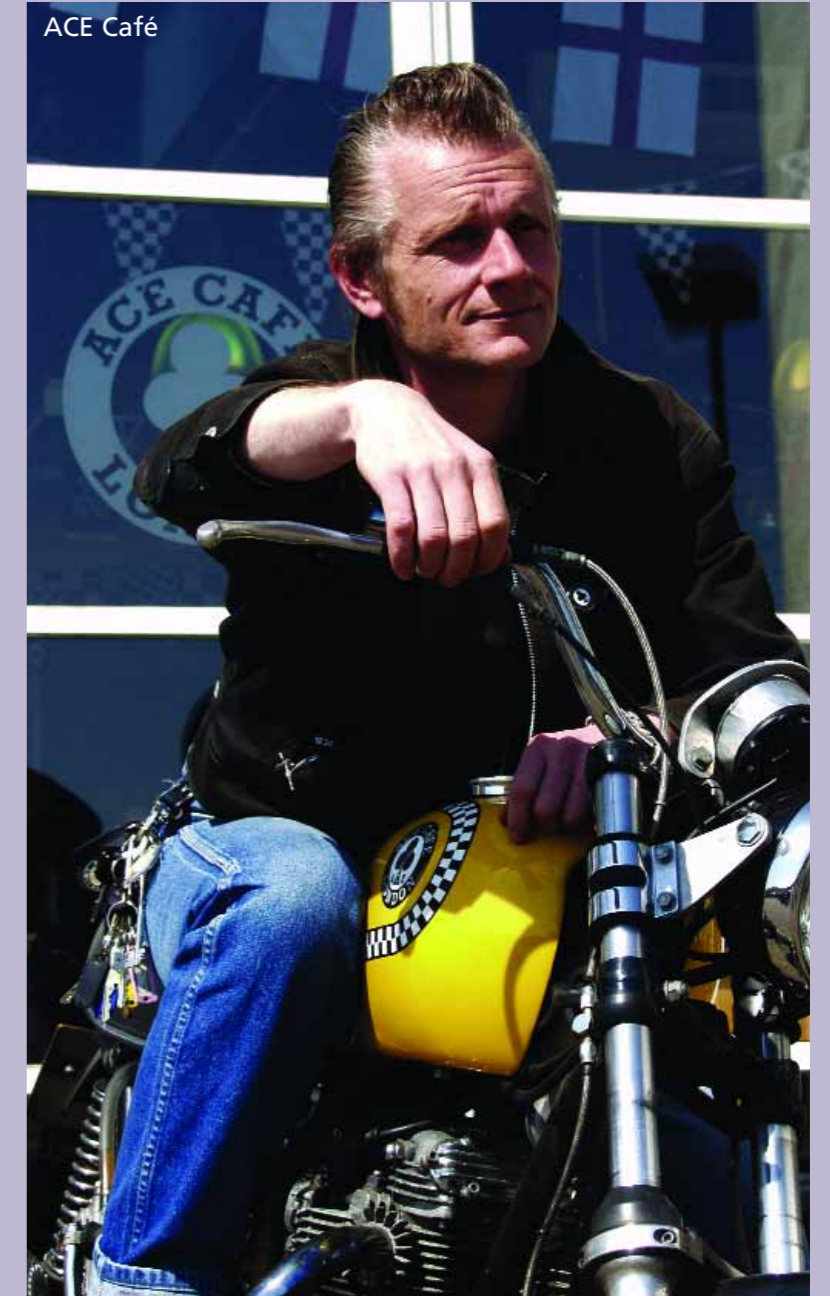
Shri Swaminarayan Mandir

Imagination and ambition are required to build a new vision for the North Circular Road corridor. Market forces alone are unlikely to deliver the scale of regeneration necessary to make a step change in the life quality of the area. Intervention and input from all possible stakeholders, from public to private, and from the local community to global investors is required to make a distinct and sustainable impact.

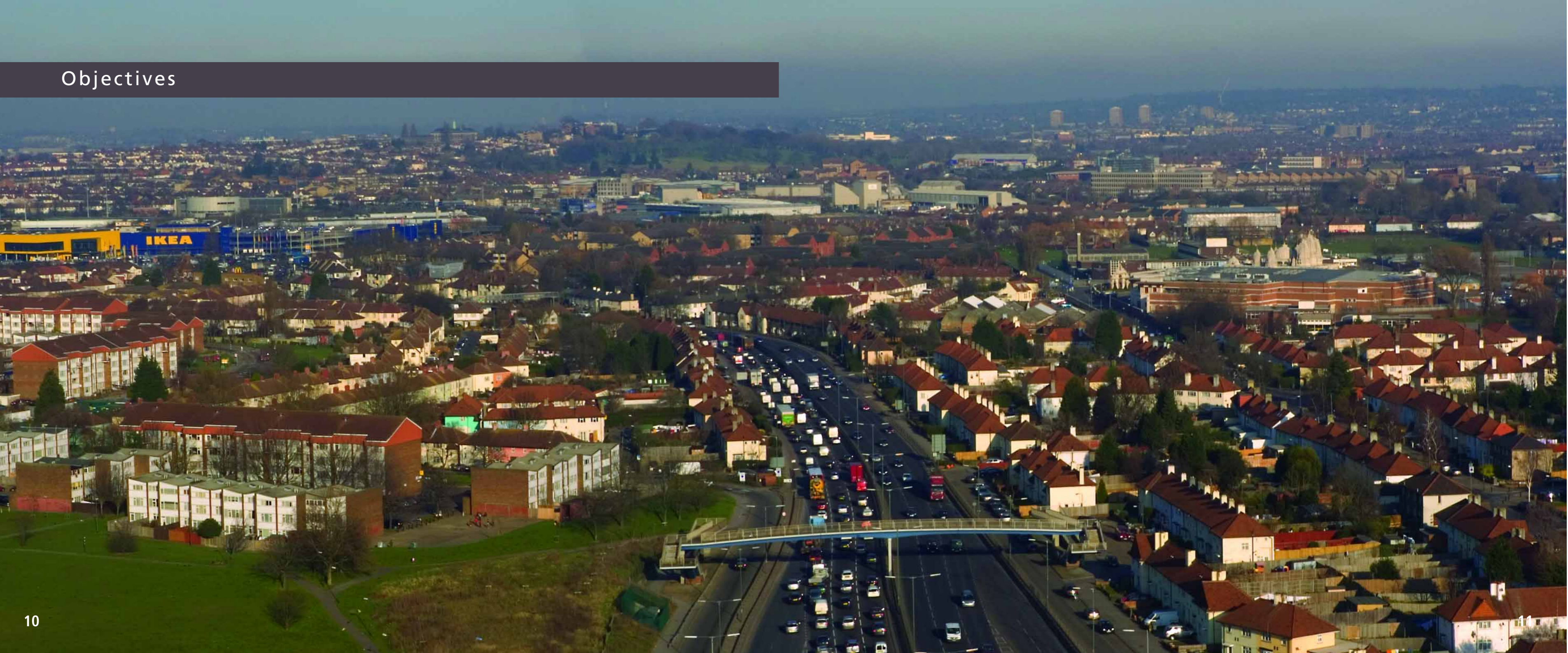
Quite simply, our vision is to transform the North Circular Road Regeneration Area. We recognise that this will be an incremental process and that there will be many challenges along the way. Underpinning our vision are four key outcomes that we want to achieve for this area:

- ▶ countering the negative environmental impacts of the North Circular Road by turning the Brent section into the 'greenest' stretch of highway in London
- ▶ the creation of a series of distinct places within the regeneration area, and for the North Circular Road to connect these places rather than simply pass through anonymous suburban areas
- ▶ the creation of a significantly improved environment for local communities – with less pollution, more green space, improved connectivity and better community facilities
- ▶ the showcasing of the borough's key attractions – many of which sit adjacent to the North Circular Road – improving their visibility and accessibility for visitors and local communities alike. These key attractions include: Wembley, Welsh Harp, IKEA, Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Ace Café and, just outside of the Borough, the Brent Cross regeneration area.

ACE Café



Objectives



Delivering change within the North Circular Road Regeneration Area will be challenging. On the face of it there are a number of constraints to major regeneration – fragmented land ownership, low development values and poor transport links among them. We have to recognise that the North Circular Road serves a wider regional function and there will be times when there will be tensions between meeting the needs of local communities, the needs of the borough and the needs of London as a whole.

This document attempts to create a framework that all stakeholders can sign up to. It sets the parameters for the long term and incremental regeneration of the North Circular Road Regeneration Area. It also identifies some initial ideas for projects that will contribute towards that regeneration. Our success will depend on the council, its partners and local communities identifying and exploiting opportunities for change, and maintaining an ongoing dialogue and debate as to the detailed nature of that change.

Our ambition is for long term and incremental regeneration of the North Circular Road Regeneration Area.

The key delivery objectives for the North Circular Road Regeneration programmes are:

1. To improve the quality of the physical environment along the length of the North Circular Road from Hanger Lane to Staples Corner. Specifically:

- ▶ promote a comprehensive development scheme at the Unisys/Bridge Park site that is to be defined by landmark architecture and impeccable green credentials
- ▶ support a comprehensive development scheme for the Northfields Industrial Estate, linking directly with the proposed new growth area further along the canal at Alperton
- ▶ transform the Brentfield and St Raphael's Estates, which suffer the worst environmental degradation as a result of proximity to the North Circular Road
- ▶ ensure links between the North Circular Road programme and the adjacent Brent Cross / Cricklewood regeneration scheme.

2. Develop a radical open space strategy for the area, linking local communities to existing and potential new open spaces.

3. Provide a comprehensive package of transport improvements including enhanced stations, better connectivity and improved junctions along the North Circular Road itself.

4. Continue to promote economic and social regeneration in the area, ensuring that local residents have access to improved local services and a greatly enhanced quality of life.



Objective 1

To improve the quality of the physical environment



A number of specific opportunities exist to improve the quality of the physical environment along the Brent section of the North Circular Road. These include:

- ▶ Unisys / Bridge Park
- ▶ Northfields Industrial Estate
- ▶ Brentfield Estate
- ▶ St Raphael's Estate
- ▶ Park Royal – Abbey Road and Twyford Tip
- ▶ Wembley Point.

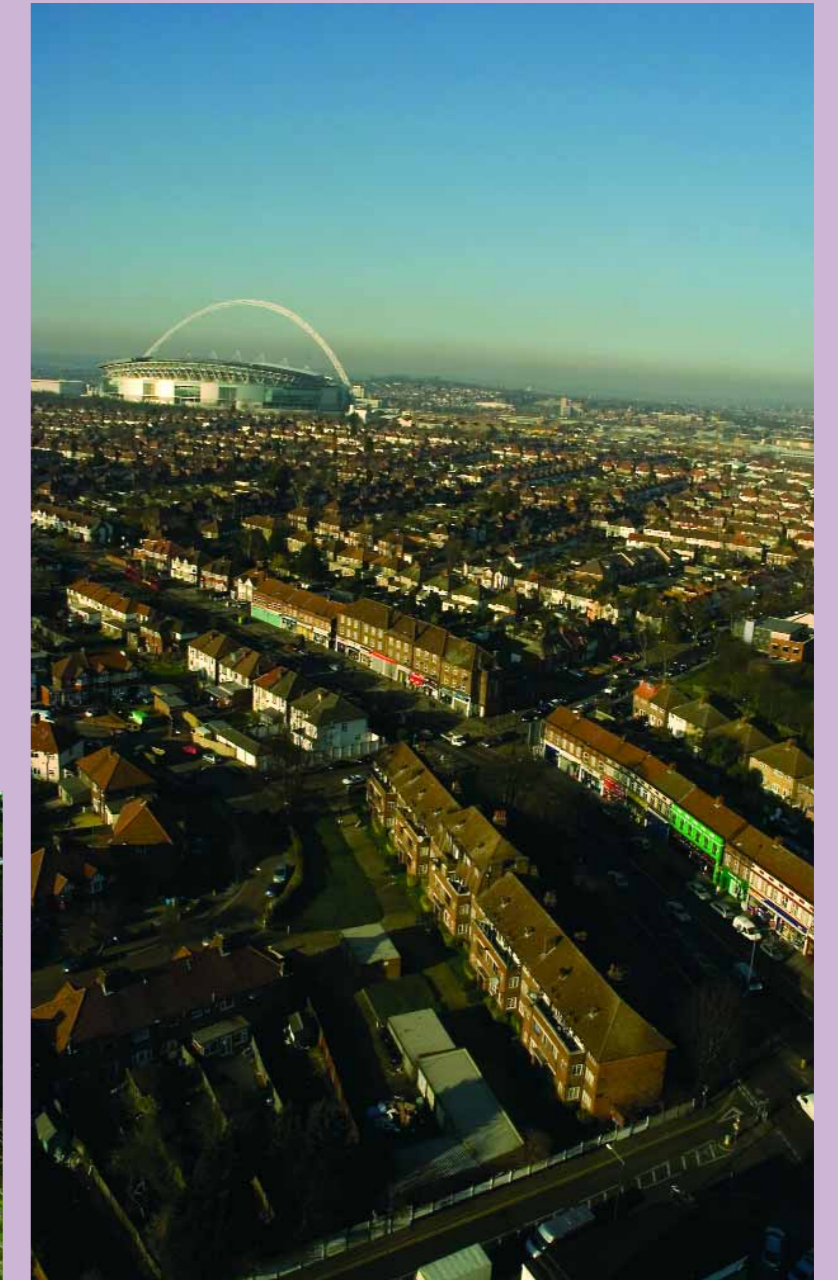
In addition, the London Borough of Barnet is currently bringing forward large scale

regeneration proposals for Brent Cross and Cricklewood, immediately adjacent to the Brent section of the North Circular Road.

This document focuses on maximising those opportunities which may require a degree of public sector intervention in order to bring them forward. Over the lifetime of the regeneration programme it is likely that other opportunity sites will also be identified and developed to contribute to the overall regeneration outcomes.



Welsh Harp



1a Unisys / Stonebridge Park



Bridge Park Community Leisure Centre

By virtue of its prominent location, there is an opportunity for the site to make a bold statement with its use of architecture and environmentally sensitive design.

This 2.8 hectare site sits at the junction of the North Circular and Harrow Road. The site comprises of two empty office buildings (previously occupied by Unisys), Brent Council's Bridge Park complex (which includes a range of sports, leisure, conference and business facilities), and a small scrap business.

A comprehensive redevelopment of the site is likely to present the best regeneration potential.

The site will need to deliver a new community sports facility, to replace the existing Bridge Park complex, and could also accommodate a mixed use development incorporating residential, office and hotel uses. There is scope to consider the suitability of the site for decant residential units, in association with any proposals to improve parts of the St Raphael's and Brentfield estates.

The site has scope to make a significant contribution to improving the transport, severance and connectivity challenges by providing improved links across the North Circular Road to Stonebridge Park tube station and the proposed Wembley Park Royal 'fast bus' connection.

By virtue of its prominent location, there is a real opportunity for this site to set a strong precedent for the remainder of the regeneration area through the use of iconic architecture and environmentally sensitive design. Any development of the site should complement the potential new development of the Wembley Point site opposite.

Comprehensive delivery of the site is likely to require either site assembly or a joint venture partnership arrangement, both of which will be considered by the council.

1b
Northfields Industrial Estate



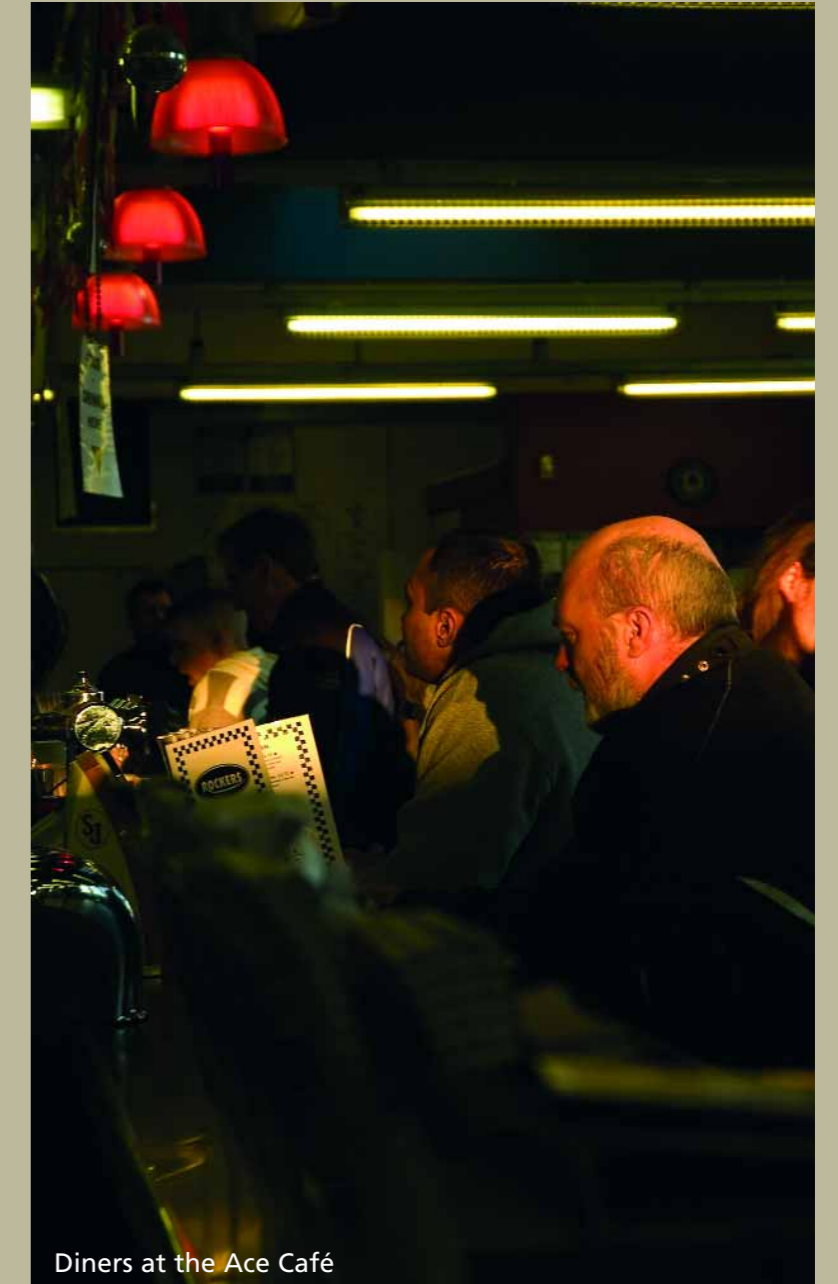
Grand Union Canal

The canal itself is significantly under-utilised, and provides a real opportunity to establish a whole new identity for the local community.

The Northfields Industrial Estate consists of 8.5 hectares of low grade employment and warehouse use, much of which is vacant. The site stretches north westwards from Stonebridge Park Station, and is severed from the bulk of the adjoining Park Royal Industrial Estate by the North Circular Road. The estate is predominately within the ownership of Brixton Estates.

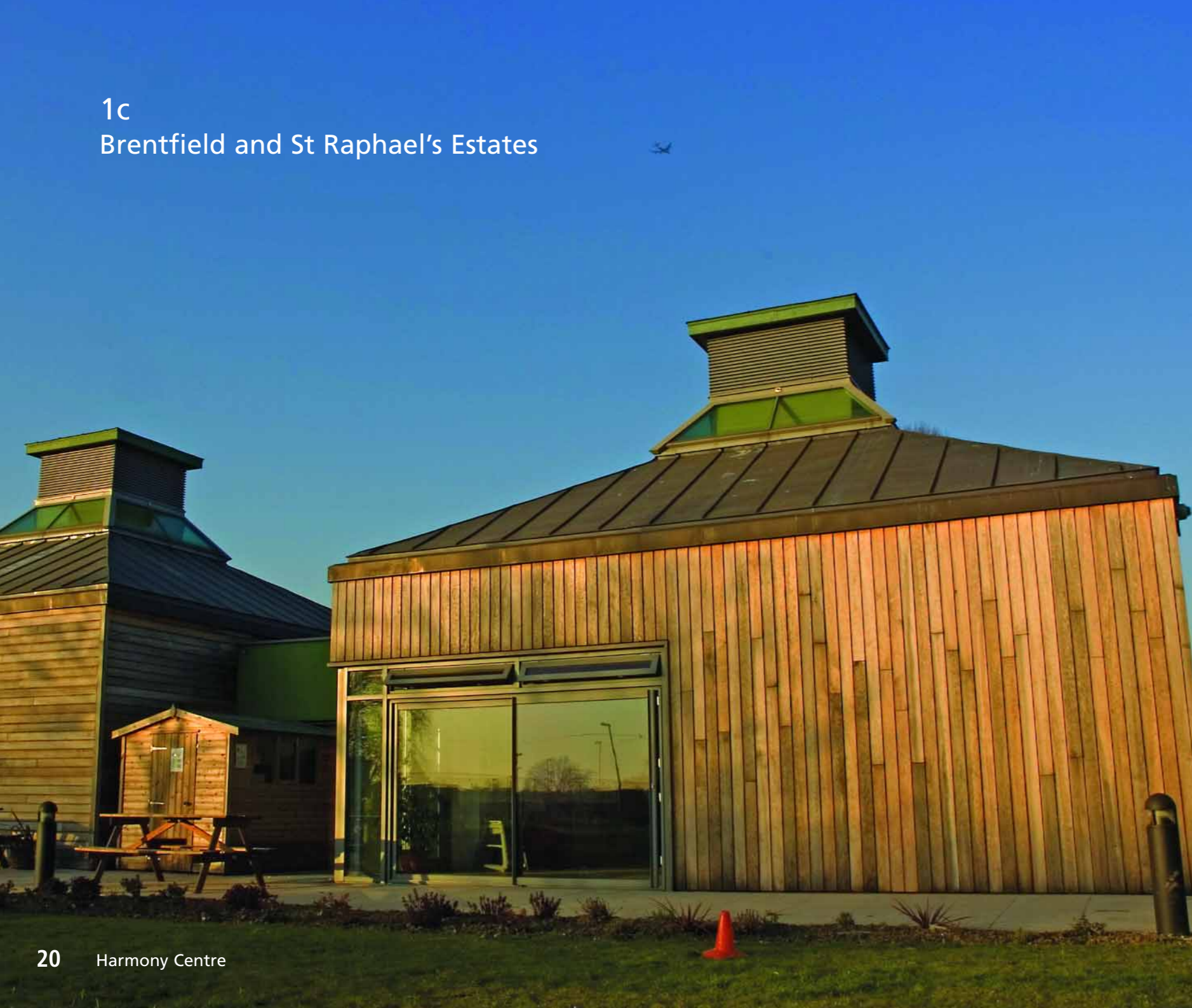
Northfields is primarily an employment site, and future development proposals will need to demonstrate how the site's employment potential can be maximised. Nevertheless, there may be scope for a more mixed use development, particularly in the areas adjacent to the Grand Union Canal, running up towards Alperton.

The canal itself is significantly under-utilised, and provides a real opportunity to establish a whole new identity for the local community. Mixed use waterside communities, affordable workspaces and an enhanced public realm, incorporating green links, will all be promoted. There is a real opportunity here to make a contribution to the greening of the North Circular Road Regeneration Area.



Diners at the Ace Café

1c Brentfield and St Raphael's Estates



The Brentfield and St Raphael's Estates are large residential areas that straddle adjacent sides of the North Circular Road. Brentfield Estate lies to the south, while St Raphael's Estate is situated north of the road. The character of the estates is quite different – Brentfield comprising largely semi-detached and terraced properties with large rear gardens, whilst St Raphael's is largely made up of flats and maisonettes.

Originally built as social housing estates, both are now mixed tenure, with significant numbers of residents invoking the 'right to buy'. The major exceptions to this are the properties that immediately front the North Circular Road, which remain predominantly in council ownership.

Socio-economic conditions on the estates are improving but remain below average, with low income and employment levels. Health issues are of particular concern. Respiratory problems in the area are notably high, almost certainly as a consequence of the close proximity to the North Circular Road. Ongoing surveys show a persistently low satisfaction rate amongst the residents regarding their environment.

An opportunity exists to rethink the Brentfield and St Raphael's Estates.



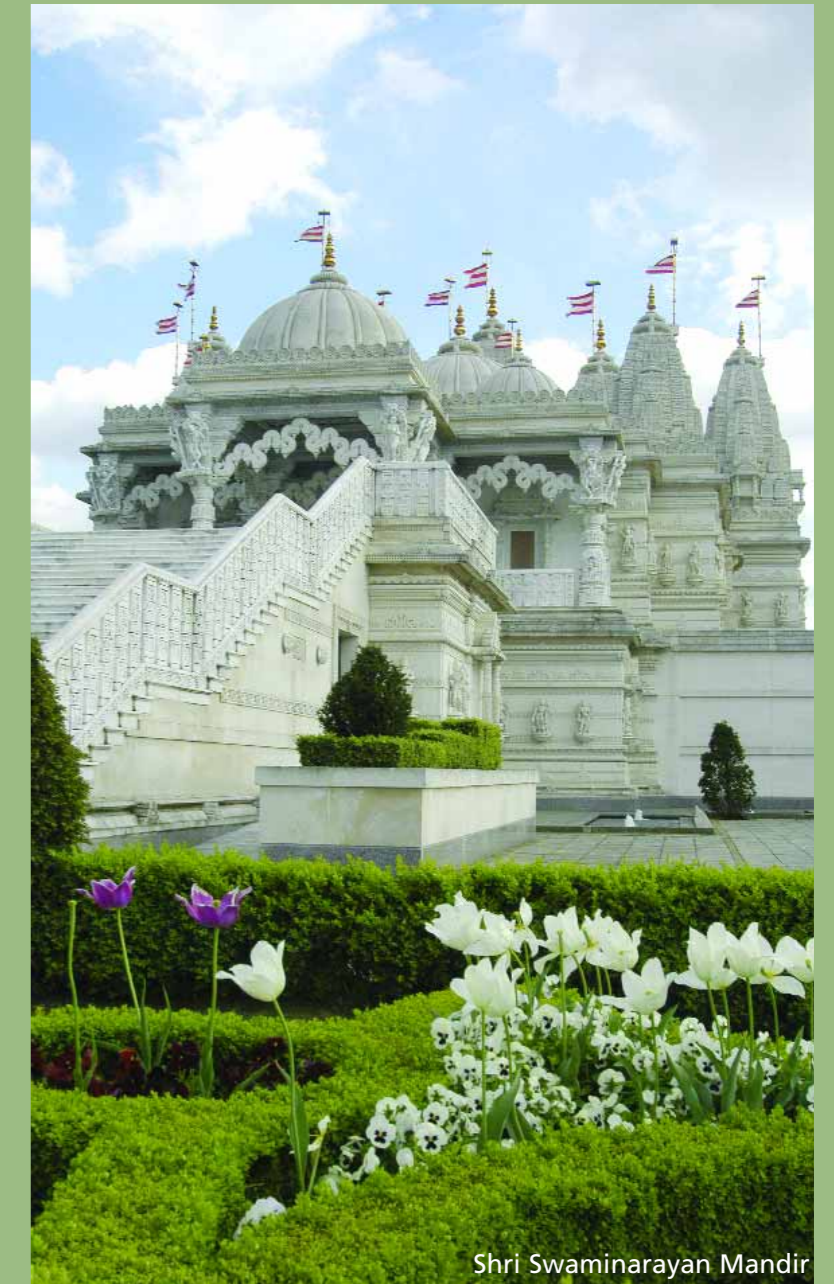
Residents watching the Tri-Unity Festival parade

Our ambition is to improve the connectivity between the estates and the wider area.

An opportunity exists to re-think the Brentfield and St Raphael's Estates. Ideas for regeneration include:

- ▶ comprehensive regeneration of the estates, including re-provision of the majority of residential properties. This option would be long term, and challenging to deliver given the mixed tenure nature of the estates
- ▶ removal of those properties most adversely affected by the North Circular Road, and their replacement with a 'green buffer zone' corridor designed to mitigate noise and air pollution for the remaining residents
- ▶ creating a stronger 'sense of place' for these areas, and in particular finding ways of establishing a community heart, incorporating services and facilities for local residents
- ▶ improved connectivity between the estates and the wider areas, building on the 'Walking Links' work undertaken in recent years, including better pedestrian links across the North Circular Road and better links to public transport nodes
- ▶ enhancing the quality of open space within the estates – including exploring suggestions such as green bridges linking the proposed new buffer zones with Brent River Park, and a new parkland setting for the Shri Swaminarayan temple
- ▶ a new North Circular Road junction at IKEA, which will reduce isolation on the estates, make a significant contribution to improving air quality and negate the need for 'rat running' by cars through St Raphael's in particular.

We want to create a stronger 'sense of place' for these communities.



Shri Swaminarayan Mandir

Objective 2

Develop a comprehensive open space strategy for the area

The North Circular Road already links a number of important open spaces – from the Welsh Harp to the Brent River Park adjacent to the St Raphael's Estate. Local people place a particularly strong premium on high quality open space. There is also real scope to explore how open space and environmental measures can be used imaginatively to help mitigate air and noise pollution associated with the North Circular Road. The vision is for a new 'green network' of high quality, accessible and usable open spaces.

Ideas for regeneration that would contribute to this network include:

- ▶ improved access to the Welsh Harp, in a way which both promotes greater use and reduces the potential for anti-social behaviour
- ▶ re-invigorated local parks incorporating improved sporting and play facilities, and creating spaces where people of all ages can gather to socialise and reflect
- ▶ a new, publicly accessible, parkland setting for the Shri Swaminarayan Mandir
- ▶ a new 'green buffer' running adjacent to the North Circular Road, providing mitigation for air and noise pollution and potentially scope for cycle and pedestrian routes
- ▶ new 'green bridges' traversing the North Circular Road, improving connectivity between communities – specifically in the vicinity of the St Raphael's and Brentfield estates
- ▶ opening up the Grand Union Canal by providing improved pedestrian and cycle access and connectivity, and promoting mixed use developments along its length that provide activity and character
- ▶ build on the recent improvements to the Brent River Park by extending the pedestrian and cycle network from the park, both along Wealdstone Brook to Wembley Park Station and also to the Welsh Harp.

Local people place a particularly strong premium on high quality open space.

Objective 3

Provide a comprehensive package of transport improvements

A critical component of the North Circular Road regeneration initiative is the need to make a step change in the quality of local transport connections. This stretch of the North Circular Road acts as a physical divide between communities. The road itself is congested for much of the day, and in particular on Wembley event days and during peak shopping times at IKEA.

The area is poorly served by public transport. Pedestrian routes are convoluted due to heavy traffic and poor junction crossings. This results in problems of isolation, severance and poor access to essential services for local residents.

Poor transport connections also severely hinders development potential, contributing to low property values.

The North Circular Road regeneration initiative provides a real opportunity to address this situation. In order to achieve improved transport links, strong collaborative partnerships need to be established with Transport for London, London Buses, and developers at key destinations within the regeneration area.

A good start has been made – the successful Walking Links project has already taken steps to improve key pedestrian routes in the area and provides a strong foundation for ongoing partnership working on a larger scale.

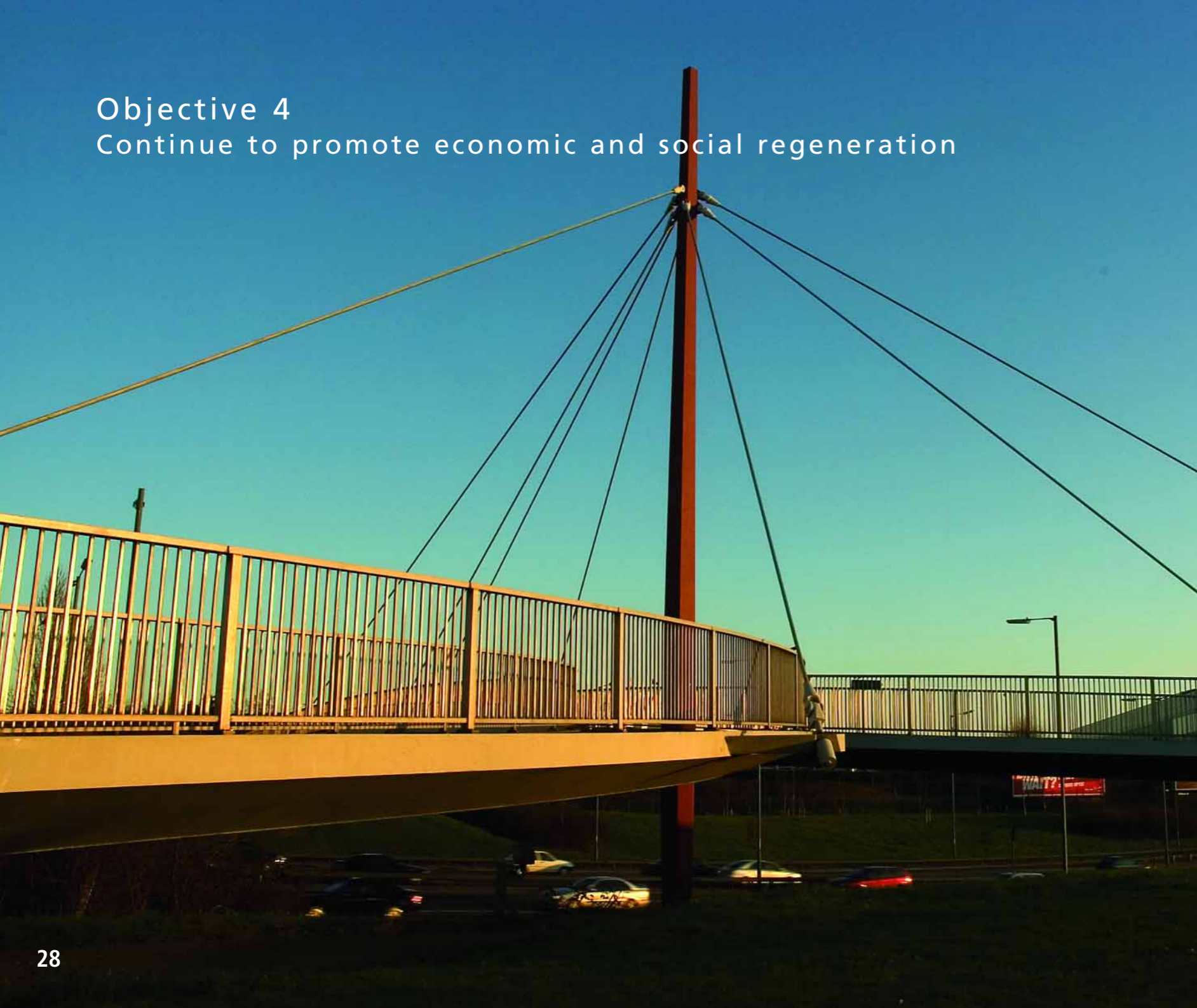
Poor transport connections severely hinders development potential, contributing to low property values.

New initiatives could include:

- ▶ station improvements, including further improvement works to both Neasden and Stonebridge Park stations, and a new public transport interchange at Stonebridge Park to connect with the proposed Wembley – Park Royal ‘fast bus’
- ▶ Wembley – Park Royal ‘fast bus’, which will stop at Stonebridge Park and will provide direct connections for local people to the employment opportunities and new facilities at both Wembley and Park Royal
- ▶ junction improvements on the North Circular Road, most specifically at the IKEA junction which is the only ‘at grade’ junction along this stretch of the North Circular Road, despite being the main access point for Wembley Stadium and Wembley City
- ▶ New and safe pedestrian routes providing improved access to local facilities and amenities. Of particular importance are routes linking both established and new communities with Stonebridge Park and Neasden stations, as well as enhanced routes from the stations to attractions such as IKEA and the Shri Swaminarayan Mandir. All pedestrian routes should be direct, well sign-posted, safe from crime and physically attractive
- ▶ ‘green bridges’ across the North Circular Road that reduce severance, improve connectivity and provide new access to open parklands for residents and visitors
- ▶ Enhanced signage for vehicle access from the North Circular Road to improve legibility and access to the main attractions adjacent to the North Circular Road, including: Wembley Stadium and City, Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Welsh Harp, IKEA, Tesco and the Ace Café.

Objective 4

Continue to promote economic and social regeneration



The residential communities adjacent to the North Circular Road are amongst the most deprived in West London. Employment rates, qualification levels and average incomes are lower, whilst crime rates are higher and health levels poorer.

Many of the individual areas are designated as priority neighbourhoods in Brent's Regeneration Strategy. St Raphael's, Brentfield, Mitchelbrook, Stonebridge and Church End have all been the subject of a series of neighbourhood renewal interventions over the last five years and there have been some notable success stories. Re-assurance policing and enhanced warden services have contributed to a significant reduction in the fear of crime. Mitchelbrook school has been transformed into a top 20 per cent performing primary school, and many local people have been supported into employment as a direct result of intensive local employment programmes.

The neighbourhood renewal programmes have provided a foundation for further improvement. It is critical that as the physical changes are implemented, the social and economic impacts are also maximised.

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Regeneration interventions could include:

- ▶ maximising the employment potential of new development sites, in particular those in the Park Royal and Northfields Industrial Estates
- ▶ providing bespoke employment and training packages through Brentin2work to help local people access these jobs
- ▶ intensive local outreach programmes to identify those people who are eligible for work and who want to work, coupled with effective job preparation programmes
- ▶ clear proposals for improved community, sports, education and health facilities across the regeneration area
- ▶ new pedestrian and public transport routes to make it easier for local people to physically access new jobs, education and health facilities.



Moving forward

The North Circular Road Regeneration Area provides an exciting opportunity for change, with the potential to improve the quality of the environment and life opportunities for all residents. The task requires an overarching framework and a commitment to change by all partners over the long-term.

Specifically, Brent Council commits to:

- ▶ providing ongoing leadership for the North Circular Road initiative
- ▶ continue to promote improvements to public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure in order to connect this area to the Greater London community. We see this as being pivotal to unlocking the area to market investment and in reducing the isolation of local communities
- ▶ working in partnership with the local community, developers, the Government, the Mayor of London, the Greater London Authority, Design for London, London Development Agency, Transport for London, West London and neighbouring boroughs to help deliver the North Circular Road regeneration vision
- ▶ investing council and other resources into a multi-disciplinary project team able to drive forward regeneration in line with the ambitions set out in this document. Encompassing regeneration, planning, housing, communication, consultation and property specialists, the team will provide an holistic service for all development partners

▶ being pragmatic and open-minded in our approach to new development proposals, in order to ensure the best possible solutions for the people of London and Brent

▶ deliver a co-ordinated approach to regeneration by considering the role of the North Circular Road Regeneration Area in the context of the wider development plan for Brent

▶ provide civic leadership by ensuring forums for debate and consultation with local residents and businesses to ensure that they are full participants in, and beneficiaries of, the regeneration programme

▶ secure the best possible funding packages to deliver this vision. Brent already has an impressive track record of attracting funding and we will use this expertise to deliver further resources into the area.

North Circular Road and surrounds

