

# **Town Centre Regeneration in Brent**

## **Membership:**

**Councillor Peter Corcoran**  
**Councillor Lesley Jones, (Chair )**  
**Councillor Suresh Kansagra**

# Contents

<b>Foreword.....</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>Executive Summary.....</b>	<b>Page 4</b>
<b>Recommendations.....</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>Page 6</b>
<b>Policy framework.....</b>	<b>Page 7</b>
<b>Brent context.....</b>	<b>Page 8</b>
<b>Task Group findings.....</b>	<b>Page 9</b>
<b>Council Wide Approach.....</b>	<b>Page 10</b>
<b>Role of Town Centre Managers.....</b>	<b>Page 10</b>
<b>Develop a local vision.....</b>	<b>Page 11</b>
<b>Redefinition of High Street.....</b>	<b>Page 12</b>
<b>Local Demographics.....</b>	<b>Page 13</b>
<b>Crime.....</b>	<b>Page 13</b>
<b>Environmental Issues.....</b>	<b>Page 14</b>
<b>Access to Town Centres.....</b>	<b>Page 16</b>
<b>Transport and Employment.....</b>	<b>Page 17</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>Page 18</b>



Foreword by Cllr Lesley Jones, Chair of the Town Centre Regeneration Task Group

As a councillor, I am very aware of the value that local people place on their town centres, which are the heart of local communities and provide easy access to shops, post offices, banks, pubs and restaurants.

Brent is fortunate to have many such centres, thirteen in total varying in size and footfall. The new development at Wembley will also provide the borough with a new modern complex providing a range of leisure and retail facilities.

During the course of our work, it became apparent that the role of town centres is changing. Many of the traditional shops such as butchers and bakers which used to frequent our high streets have been subsumed into larger supermarkets.

The challenge for many councils including Brent, is to discover ways to keep centres lively and vibrant spaces in view of changes arising from modern shopping styles such as internet shopping and large retail complexes.

Our dedicated town centre management team and many other departments across the council are already doing a lot of good work to support local centres

The recommendations developed by this task group contain a range of interventions to encourage people to shop locally and to maintain high environmental standards that make town centres pleasant places for shopping.

I would like thank my fellow task group members who have taken time out of their busy schedules to participate in this review. Thanks also to all those who gave evidence at our meetings.

A new Town Centre Strategy will be ready by the end of 2008 and coupled with our recommendations will provide a focus for future work on town centre regeneration in Brent. I look forward to seeing the outcome of this in due course.

## Executive summary

### Introduction

Town centres across the UK have been in decline over the last twenty years. The increase in car use means people are more mobile and are able to travel further to do their shopping, resulting in more competition among shopping centres. The rise of people buying on the internet has also contributed to changes in shopping patterns.

The overview and scrutiny committee commissioned this task group to review the council's approach to town centre regeneration. Members were asked to consider what could be done to stem the decline of town centres and what interventions would be useful for those at risk of failing.

The task group's findings aim to inform the new town centre strategy which should be ready by the end of 2008. This will be important in developing a joint council wide approach to town centre management.

There are around thirteen town centres in Brent of different sizes some of which border with neighbouring boroughs. The GLA have ranked town centres in London by hierarchy rated according to their size, status, range of shops and the wider facilities that they provide. Wembley and Kilburn are the main centres in Brent. Smaller district centres include Willesden Green and Harlesden

### Key findings of the task group:

- The Council has two town centre managers who look after Wembley, Willesden and Harlesden. They play an essential role in managing local partnerships, being the first point of contact for their town centre and levering in additional funding for town centre projects. The task group felt that they would benefit from additional support from officers across the council when dealing with environmental issues.
- A newly appointed neighbourhood working team will be able to identify town centre issues at the ward level.
- There is a key role for the planning department in helping to redefine town centres and identify sites on the edge of the high street, which would be suitable for alternative use such as offices or leisure facilities.
- Other challenges affecting town centres include crime and environmental issues such as dumping of large bulky items and litter.
- Transportation is a key issue within town centres. There needs to be a balance between parking facilities for short stay shopping and pedestrian concerns that high traffic volumes make centres unpleasant for shopping. Local Residents could also be affected by congestion and poor air quality.

## **Recommendations**

- 1. That a core group of officers work in partnership with Town Centre Managers to ensure a quick response to environmental issues**
- 2. That the new town centre strategy is endorsed by the relevant portfolio holder and clear resources are identified to deliver its objectives**
- 3. That neighbourhood working officers ensure that local businesses are included within their consultation**
- 4. That neighbourhood working officers with a town centre in their ward dedicate at least one walkabout a year to focus on town centre issues**
- 5. That the planning department identify a suitable location to trial a project on flexible uses of property on the periphery of the high street**
- 6. That the Streetcare department explore practicalities and possible opportunities for a pilot scheme on fixed penalty fines for people who drop litter.**
- 7. That the Environmental Health Team develops a specific performance indicator around ensuring that all local shops have a trade waste contract.**
- 8. That the transportation unit investigate the possibility for more dual use of car parking bays, i.e. residents/pay and display and more short term parking in the town centre.**

## **Introduction**

Town centres across the UK have been in decline over the last twenty years. The increase in car use means people are more mobile and are able to travel further to do their shopping, resulting in more competition among shopping centres. The rise of people buying on the internet has also contributed to changes in shopping patterns.

The overview and scrutiny committee commissioned this task group to review the council's approach to town centre regeneration. Members were asked to consider what could be done to stem the decline of town centres and what interventions would be useful for those at risk of failing.

## **Background**

Town Centres are often the heart of the local community. They are the hub for economic, social and leisure activities; often a microcosm of the wider community, giving an insight into the demographics, people, culture, diversity and economic prospects of an area. When successful, town centres are the economic engines of most communities, allowing enterprise to flourish and providing jobs for local people.

The growth of out of town 'American style' retail centres and the expansion of supermarkets revolutionised shopping patterns in the UK. Economies of scale have enabled larger supermarkets to bombard consumers with more choice, lower prices, free parking and longer opening hours. The rise of the car means that people are more mobile and willing to travel further to do their shopping.

The larger supermarkets have swallowed up the trade of the specialist shops such as butchers and bakers. This means that traditional high streets which would have provided a mix to cater for local needs no longer exist and many local centres have experienced a decline in footfall. Research suggests<sup>1</sup> that the larger centres have managed to survive or recreate themselves in the face of competition but smaller centres are more likely to feel the impact.

The rise in technologies such as internet shopping has also affected the use of the high street with more people favouring supermarket home deliveries ordered on-line. The rise of the global economy with many local jobs moving overseas to cheaper locations has also led to people having to travel further to employment thus putting pressure on the transport system and increasing the impact of climate change.

As a result, town centres are in decline and attracting high concentrations of crime and at night are often 'no go areas' rather than lively vibrant spaces for local communities.

---

<sup>1</sup> London's Suburbs Unlocking their potential, URBED.

The changing role of the high street has sparked a debate amongst planners and government policy makers on what the future of town centres should look like. Local authorities are at the centre of this discourse and are in the position to shape policy to create town centres that future generations will be proud of. For councils this is about more than regeneration and planning but also cuts into the heart of their social inclusion and place shaping role.

## **Methodology**

The task group wanted to influence the forthcoming Town Centre Strategy which is currently being developed by the Town Centre Management Team. The strategy will play a key role in providing an overarching strategic framework for a new vision for town centres in Brent.

The task group agreed to focus on three main areas

- To consider initiatives that will help to revive Brent's Town Centres through looking at good practice in other councils
- To look at the contribution of other services in the council to town centre regeneration in Brent
- To identify themes that should be included in the town centre strategy

The task group met with:

The West London Business Group

Assistant Director, Regeneration

Senior Community Safety Officer

Director of Streetcare

Director of Planning

Local residents who act as street watchers and report environmental issues to the council

Head of Major Projects, Transportation Unit

Town Centre Managers, Wembley, Willesden and Harlesden

Further evidence was gathered via a questionnaire to all Brent Councillors asking for their views on how to regenerate town centres

The following research was also undertaken to support the task group:

- Discussions with local authorities and internet search to find good practice examples on town centre regeneration
- Review of policy reports on town centre regeneration

## **The Policy Framework**

Since the early 1990's government policy has sought to stem the rise of the out of town retail centres and move towards the promotion of more sustainable developments which

reduce the need for the car. In 1996 the government published Planning Policy Six: Town Centres and Retail Developments. (PPG6). This introduced the concept of the 'sequential approach' which states that business and leisure activity such as shops, banks and offices should be located in the town centre or if no sites are available as close to the town centre as possible. This guidance has been influential in encouraging retail developments back into towns.

Further policy guidance for town centres at the regional level rests at the Greater London Authority through the London Plan. This document sets out a statutory planning framework which guides development in London. Although the document is still in the early stages of implementation, it highlights the important role of town centres and encourages boroughs to develop ways to support them. The Plan states a similar view to PPG6, that boroughs should pursue a policy of intensification. This means that all new developments should be directed to the town centre to provide a business hub within these areas, ensuring that they are the centre for activity. This in turn feeds into the council's own Unitary Development Plan 2004, which sets out policies related to town centre development in Brent.

## **The Brent Context**

There are around thirteen town centres in Brent of different sizes, some of which border neighbouring boroughs. The GLA has ranked town centres in London according to their size, status, range of shops and the wider facilities that they provide. Wembley and Kilburn are the main centres in Brent. Smaller centres known as district centres include Willesden Green and Harlesden, a full list is included at **Appendix A**.

The most significant piece of work on town centre regeneration currently taking place in the borough is the regeneration of Wembley.

The new Wembley Development is set to become the flagship town centre for Brent. The £4.6 billion development will include a range of top retailers, a leisure complex and new housing. In accordance with the Mayor of London's intensification policy, Brent Council's Director for Planning told the task group that all new retail developments are being directed to the Wembley area. This development will provide much needed improvements and a catalyst for regeneration across the borough as a whole.

The council has a dedicated Town Centre Management team consisting of two town centre managers (TCM) who look after Wembley, Willesden and Harlesden and an information officer. Their role is to develop partnerships and work with businesses working strategically for the improvement of regeneration within Wembley, Willesden and Harlesden Town Centres. Town Centre Managers (TCM's) also market the town centres and attract external funding. TCM's told the task group that they had recently been successful in securing almost £1 million from the London Development Agency's funding stream called the 'enhance pot' for improvement to town centres. One of the projects will be looking at how to develop a brand for Willesden. It is hoped that this work will give the area a distinct identity and attract investment.



The Corporate Strategy 2006-2010 sets out a range of measures which contribute to the town centres agenda. It has agreed to deliver:

- Provide 20 accessible public toilets in town centres and parks across the borough by 2010.
- Improvements in the quality of roads and pavements in town centres  
Creating a broader retail offer within Brent's high streets and town centres
- An increase in the retail floor space, turnover, visitor numbers and profitability of Wembley and Kilburn retail sectors
- A Town Centre Strategy for Brent agreed by mid 2008 and delivery of its action plan
- Reduce illegal trading in the borough Sign-up 500 local traders to the 'Good Traders' scheme by 2010.
- The Regeneration Action Plan published in 2007 has identified a strategic priority in relation to town centres:
- Develop a clear framework for measuring the performance of Brents town centres, and the impact of existing interventions on those most at risk of decline

The Regeneration Action Plan 2007 -2009 has set out measures for town centres, activities will include:

Develop a clear framework for measuring the performance of Brent's town centres, and the impact of existing interventions on those most at risk of decline Develop and implement a town centre strategy to secure healthy and vibrant town centres that meet the needs of local people. As part of the strategy:

- Review the existing Town Centre management arrangements across the Borough with a view to maximising their effectiveness
- Set out a clear approach for new investment in Town Centres, which considers the role of a range of mixed uses including retail, leisure, community and residential. Consider the potential for a critical mass of new retail within the Wembley regeneration area.

## **Task Group Findings**

Overall, the task group found that town centres in Brent faced two main issues. Firstly the larger centres need to continue to attract businesses to the area to provide jobs for local people and serve as a catalyst to attract developers and generate further regeneration. Secondly smaller centres are unlikely to be what they once were; the key

to the future vibrancy of local centres is to encourage a good range of retail, cultural and essential services to locate on the high street.

If this can be achieved, it will provide a focal point for local communities to improve footfall and enable local businesses to thrive. This approach supports the findings of research by the North and West London Alliance on Town Centres<sup>2</sup>

TCM's highlighted that although some of Brent's high streets are lively vibrant places, many have been in decline for a number of years due to a range of reasons including underinvestment, competition from neighbouring centres and changing local demographics. The borough faces many of the challenges that exist in town centres nationally such as problems of accessibility due to lack of parking spaces, high levels of crime and antisocial behaviour, illegal use of shop forecourts, graffiti and people dropping litter. All of which contribute to making the centre unattractive which causes shoppers to go elsewhere.

The Director of Planning told members of the task group that the borough faces challenges in attracting retailers largely because many are choosing to locate in Brent Cross, which is currently under expansion. The TCM for Wembley reported that many of the large retailers require bigger units than are currently available on Wembley High Road therefore they will not come to the area.

The task group identified the following themes and developed some recommendations which would improve town centres in Brent:

#### A Council wide Approach

The town centre regeneration strategy outlined in the corporate strategy will be the main vehicle to deliver lasting change within town centres. It will be important to ensure that the town centre strategy has ownership from the relevant portfolio holder and is backed by an action plan and a commitment to see the objectives delivered.

The town centre management team is currently working with consultants to review the current arrangements for Town Centre Management and will develop a strategy with mini action plans for all centres in Brent. This work is also an important aspect of the sustainability agenda which has been identified as one of the priorities of the current administration.

#### **Recommendation:**

That new Town Centre Strategy is endorsed by the relevant portfolio holder and clear resources are identified to deliver its objectives.

---

<sup>2</sup> Over the Edge? Town Centres and the London Economy, North London Strategic Alliance and the West London Alliance, 2007

## **Role of Town Centre Managers**

The task group found that town centre managers play an essential role in developing strategic partnerships with local businesses and other stakeholders to tackle issues within town centres. They have also obtained funding for town centre improvements from the Local Development Agency. The West London Business Group pointed out that having town centre managers acting as a point of contact for businesses who are considering locating in Brent made a significant difference. TCM's are also able to deal with queries and provide expert advice about the borough.

One of the councillors who responded to the task group survey lamented the loss of town centre support in their area. Other council officers raised concerns in relation to a town centre manager being able to work effectively across two town centres.

Councillors received anecdotal evidence that improvements need to be made in ensuring that environmental issues reported by town centre managers are responded to promptly. The task group agreed that the best way forward would be for the town centre management team to develop stronger working relationships with streetcare and environmental health to deal with environmental issues.

### **Recommendation:**

That a core group of officers work in partnership with Town Centre Managers to ensure a quick response to environmental issues

## **Develop a Local Vision**

A thriving town centre can help to engender a sense of identity and local pride. Many smaller local neighborhood centres need to attract back those residents who live locally but choose to use other centres. The TCM for Willesden reported this as a specific problem, Willesden is an affluent area but many local people go elsewhere to do their shopping.

The Assistant Director for Regeneration highlighted that we need to promote small specialised centres such as Ealing Road which caters for a niche market but has a wider appeal.

Local ward councillors already play a lead role in local communities through liaising with residents and acting as an interface between the council and local residents. They can also act as a conduit for town centre issues by feeding them through the relevant channels.

Brent has recently appointed a new neighbourhood working team who will work with councillors to develop a ward plan to tackle issues of concern to residents. Although each ward will have a dedicated budget of £20,000, the primary aim will be to influence main stream budgets to re-direct resources to areas identified in the ward plan. The task

group found a variety work happening at the ward level to address town centre issues. The questionnaire to local councillors highlighted that partnerships are in place and it be will important to ensure that these are fed into the ward plan. For those wards which have a town centre, neighbourhood working can be useful mechanism to achieve change.

The task group also found that limited resources mean that town centre manager's focus mainly on the larger centres in Brent and smaller centres do not benefit from any dedicated support. It is particularly important to ensure that concerns of local businesses are acted upon. Members felt that it is important to ensure that businesses in the area are supported where possible.

The West London Business Group reported that there would be benefit in the council providing a dedicated point of contact for businesses to seek advice on issues of concern such as crime and how to navigate the planning system. The Assistant Director for Regeneration told the task group that a hot line number was set up but was not well utilised. A new Economic Development Officer had recently been appointed and who would be looking at how to manage the councils relationship with local businesses.

#### **Recommendation**

That neighbourhood working officers ensure that local businesses are included within their consultation

That neighbourhood working officers with a town centre in their ward dedicate at least one walkabout a year to focus on town centre issues

#### **Redefinition of High Street**

Many of the properties on Brent high streets are dominated by shops on short term lets with landlords living abroad and properties managed by agencies. Shop owners struggle to make a profit and this is exacerbated by high rents. This results in an uninspiring retail mix and in general a lack of investment by landlords.

The Assistant Director for Regeneration pointed out that we need to make bold decisions about the use of properties on our high streets. Many shop owners are making low profits and are unable to participate in measures that could bring about improvements such as Business Improvement Districts<sup>3</sup>.

Our high streets need to be configured to reflect the needs of the local area. A long row of shops often means that many of them are poor quality and degraded which will impact upon the quality of the local street scene.

A possible solution for the council, is to evaluate which local high streets would benefit

---

<sup>3</sup> A Business Improvement District (BID) is a precisely-defined geographical area of a town, city, or commercial district, where businesses have voted to invest collectively in local improvements in addition to those delivered by statutory authorities.

from shortening them by allowing more flexible usage of properties on the peripheries. This would involve the planning department identifying sites that have a number of shops that are struggling to make a profit or buildings that are disused altogether and re-designating them for mixed use. New usage would include office, leisure and accommodation. This would be subject to planning permission.

This approach was supported by the Assistant Director for Regeneration, Town Centre Managers and the Head of Major Projects in the Transportation Unit. The Director of Planning reported that this takes place already where suitable sites are identified. The task group would like to see this approach actively pursued as a policy following consultation with local people and ward councillors.

### **Recommendation**

That the planning department identify a suitable location to trial a project on flexible uses of property on the periphery of the high street

### **Local Demographics**

Brent's changing demographics have had a major impact on the high street. The task group heard that Wembley used to be an affluent area but over time has become home to migrant communities who have less disposable income. The Director for Planning pointed out that Marks and Spenser's on Wembley High Road suffered declining sales and eventually closed due to the competition from Primark.

The Assistant Director for Regeneration pointed out that as residents increase their disposable income this will in turn impact upon the types of business that locate on the high street. Improvements in an area are brought about by a range of measures including driving up standards in schools, housing, transport links and tackling crime. This will draw people to the area and lead to a demand for quality local retail and independent shops and attract developers and improve footfall and retail quality on local high streets.

### **Crime**

The Senior Community Officer reported that town centres in Brent are often crime hotspots with different types of illegal activity prevalent in different areas. The Director for Streetcare pointed out that most of the new CCTV installations go to town centres for this reason. Much of the work of the Community Safety Team has focussed on developing a partnership approach to addressing these issues. A project to tackle street drinking on Wembley High Road involved a partnership between the council and Brent Primary Care Trust.

Task Group members believed that Safer Neighbourhood Teams, which consist of a team of Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's) in every ward in London has gone some way to improve crime in Brent's high streets. The Senior Community Officer told the task group that Safer Neighbourhood Panels exist in every ward and they develop a crime plan to identify actions to tackle crime locally. The Officer also pointed out that a holistic approach needs to be taken when planning for town centres for example a proliferation of betting shops can contribute to high crime rates. It would be useful if decisions on planning applications could take into account crime and disorder issues. There are different drivers of crime in every town centre we need to recognise what these are and avoid them where possible.

## **Environmental Issues**

A clean and attractive environment is essential to attract people to town centres. *The Over the Edge: Town Centres and the London Economy* report states that "Town Centres not only need to be clean, green and safe' if they are to attract and retain major employers, but they also need to offer staff the image of a good working place"<sup>4</sup>This view was shared by the Director of Streetcare who pointed out that residents expect town centre cleaning to be of a high standard. Brent is developing a Public Realm Strategy which deals with many of the environmental issues raised in this report.

The task group noted that PCSO's play a positive role in providing a reassurance on the street in terms of crime but had less success in reporting environmental issues which was also part of their role.

The new neighbourhood working team also has a key role in tackling environmental concerns they will be working closely with streetcare, who have a dedicated officer for every ward in the borough to report environmental concerns.

A member of the task group pointed out that despite the council's best efforts, litter dropping remained a problem on the high street. A member of the task group gave an example about how members of the local community were mobilised to pick up litter from their local high street and within minutes of completing the task it was dirty again. It was felt that enforcement was needed to send a strong message to people about zero tolerance towards litter dropping.

Although the council has a range of measures in place to deal with litter, the problem still persists. The task group feel that enforcement is necessary. A suggested approach would be to run a small pilot scheme of issuing fixed penalty notices using, CCTV evidence within a designated area. The pilot would identify how this scheme can be rolled out more widely across town centres in the borough. Such schemes have already been introduced in other parts of London and English Cities.

Evidence from town centre managers and local councillors found that local businesses dumping waste was a significant problem in many high streets. This is not only a visible

---

<sup>4</sup> Over the Edge? Town Centres and the London Economy , North London Strategic Alliance, West London Alliance

eyesore for residents but could also lead to other undesirable effects such as attracting rodents.

**Recommendation:**

That a pilot scheme is trialled in a designated area to issue fixed penalty fines to people who drop litter.

That the Environmental Health Team develops a specific performance indicator around ensuring that all local shops have a trade waste contract.

This approach has already been adopted by London Borough of Southwark and Cheltenham Borough Council:

**London Borough of Southwark**

In 2002, Southwark was one of the dirtiest boroughs in London. Politicians agreed that a zero tolerance approach through issuing Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) would be an effective way to tackle the problem. The council employed an enforcement team who issue fines to both individuals and businesses who drop litter or abandon waste. The enforcement team has software that enables them to check the addresses of the offenders on site.

The enforcement team works with the police to carry out 'litter blitzes', where they go to train stations or town centres en mass and issue FPN to those who drop litter. The police attend to verify addresses and maintain the peace.

The council has issued more fixed penalty notices than any other London Borough. It also has one of the highest collection rates in London as 87% of people who are issued with FPN pay their fines. Southwark is now the 5th cleanest borough in London.

**London Borough Southwark: Fines issued in 2007**

Month	Number of fines
January	180
February	223
March	164
April	168
May	196
June	397
July	279

Source: London Borough of Southwark

### **Case study Cheltenham BC – fixed penalty notices**

Cheltenham is a tourist destination and it is well known for its annual festival. The cleanliness of the environment is an important consideration both for visitors and residents. The council was looking for ways to improve the environment that would not place further demand on the street cleansing budget, and in turn the council tax payer.

The demonstration project set out to establish whether enforcement could provide a cost-effective route to maintaining a clean environment by tackling litter, waste, clutter, fly-posting and graffiti and in the long term by changing people's attitudes to waste and litter.

Consultation revealed a strong public demand for the introduction of fixed penalty notices. Additional funding from the council created a new post - an environmental enforcement officer. Existing highway enforcement officers agreed to take on environmental enforcement so the team in total consisted of three people. Cabinet agreed a policy on the use of fixed penalty notices and delegated responsibility to the relevant group director.

An awareness campaign was run supported by the Tidy Cheltenham Group and Police Community Support officers. The introduction of fixed penalty notices received a lot of press and captured public attention. Officers were due to begin issuing notices in August 2004.

Source: IDeA knowledge website

### **Access to Town Centres**

Accessibility to town centres was also raised as an issue. Shoppers like to have somewhere to park and most high streets in Brent do not have parking. Both the TCM's and Head of Special projects in Transportation raised parking as a problem. Brent is quite unique within London Boroughs in that the council only owns a few car parks and the rest are within private ownership. The public have more confidence in car parks which are run by the council. Shoppers like to know that there is car parking available before setting out on their trip.

However this needs to be balanced with requests for more pedestrianisation of high streets. When asked what they would like future town centres to look like, Streetwatchers, who are local residents who volunteer to report environmental issues to the council, told the task group that they should be places where people can meet and socialise. It was thought that traffic often makes this difficult due to noise and pollution, Harlesden was cited as a particular problem. Sudbury was thought to be a nice green town centre and is a good example which can be spread across the borough.

The Head of Major Projects within the Transportation Team reported that Kingsbury has enjoyed the benefits of retaining of public footways despite pressure for parking and through traffic. The transportation team recognise the benefits of adopting this approach



more widely . There are however different demands that need to be balanced. Transport for London regulations want to reduce congestion in the broadest sense. Their policy is to redesignate the boundary between the cyclist, people with disabilities, the pedestrian and the private motorist, with the pedestrian first in the hierarchy.

Many of the parking bays which are restricted for designated residential use are only fully used in the evenings. Shoppers would benefit from using these bays during the day for a quick shopping trip. This would also help to attract more shoppers to the high street. One of the task group members felt that this would be particularly beneficial on Ealing Road. It is evident that the design and configuration of controlled parking schemes are strongly biased by the responses of local residents who form the majority of respondents to local consultation. More weight could be given to the needs of town centres for both customer parking and servicing of shops.

**Recommendation:**

That the transportation department investigate the possibility for more dual use of car parking bays

### **Transport and Employment**

A report by the London Assembly entitled Semi-detached: Reconnecting London's Suburbs<sup>5</sup> highlights the interlinking problems of transport and employment facing the suburbs. As many people who live in outer London commute to employment in the centre, this has led to the rise of car use in outer London and more pressure on public transport. However there is a lack of infrastructure to support a higher quality public transport to increase to meet the demand. A report entitled Outer London Issues for the London Plan,<sup>6</sup> highlights that even with planned additions to capacity such as Crossrail, overcrowding is still likely to increase at worrying rates. The report further warns that in outer London the workforce is forecast to increase faster than jobs with the majority of workers heading off to central London.

The West London Business Group noted that businesses are faced with high cost for space in West London and it is often cheaper for businesses to locate outside of the London area. Skills shortages and difficulties in navigating through planning requirements were also cited as problems for businesses who may be considering locating in Brent.

This cuts into the heart of the sustainability agenda. In order for the council to reduce carbon emissions and energy use we need to create communities which people can live and work locally, thus reducing the need to travel. Town Centres need to be places that local people are proud of and keen to raise families and establish long-term roots. Achieving this will involve a combination of attracting larger businesses to locate in

---

<sup>5</sup> Semi-Detached: Reconnecting London's Suburbs, June 2007

<sup>6</sup> Outer London Issues for the London Plan, Greater London Authority, May 2007

Brent and supporting more facilities for home working in the borough. The West London Business Group who felt that the council should consider encouraging IT support on the high street. This would provide IT support to people who live locally and work from home.

The council has had some success in tackling these issues through its award winning Brentin2 work employment programme that has managed to place over two thousand local people into jobs.

## **Conclusion**

The task group are aware that this is not an exhaustive review of all the work to improve town centres in Brent. Other areas that would benefit from scrutiny could include how to develop the evening economy and what further support could be provided to small and medium size enterprises in the borough. However the measures outlined in this report, will build upon the good work that is already taking place to regenerate town centres in Brent.

## Appendix A

### London Plan Town Centre Clarification

<b>Major Centres</b> Wembley Kilburn	
<b>District Centres</b> Burnt Oak Cricklewood Colindale/The Hyde Harrow Harlesden Willesden Green Wembley Park Preston Road Neasden Ealing Road Kingsbury	