



# Meanwhile Use Strategy



South Kilburn Studios, Image © Brent Council



Coming Soon Club, Image © Brent Council



The Granville, Image © Brent Council



Queens Parade, Image © Meanwhile Space

# Introduction

Meanwhile Uses happen with interim occupation of vacant or underutilised premises, sites or spaces, during a period until a landlord secures a new lease, in advance of redevelopment, or in a long term vacant space<sup>1</sup>. Meanwhile Uses take multiple forms and deliver against a variety of regeneration objectives. For local authorities, meanwhile uses are opportunities for placemaking, enterprise, business innovation and jobs, creative expression, and community development. For landlords, meanwhile uses can provide security, reduce costs and offer options to test out new uses. For providers and occupiers, meanwhile uses accommodate flexible, low-cost space for start-ups, microbusinesses, SMEs, and community groups.

Brent's Meanwhile Use Strategy builds on research and best practice within the borough and across wider London, and is divided into five sections:

1. How to activate Meanwhile Uses: 10-Point Action Plan
2. Meanwhile Use in the UK: Policy Context
3. Meanwhile in Practice: Opportunities & Constraints
4. Meanwhile in Brent: Past, Present & Future
5. Brent's Town Centres

Business reels from the shock of the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown, with the UK officially in recession for the first time in 11 years<sup>2</sup>. Early estimates prior to government intervention considered a fifth of small businesses to be at high risk<sup>3</sup> and increased business closures together with a slowdown in new start-ups have been reported<sup>4</sup>. Consumer spending is down, and with a second wave of coronavirus, renewed government restrictions, and the ending of the furlough scheme, the state of the high street becomes increasingly precarious. Retail and hospitality services – both vital to Brent's economy – are viewed as sectors least resilient to recession, and many commercial premises that have shutdown will not reopen.

In this context, meanwhile uses provide an opportunity to fill rising commercial vacancies, and have the potential to diversify and reinvigorate town centres and high streets over the longer term, where traditional uses have been lost, are no longer viable and will not return. There are many types of meanwhile projects, from public to private spaces, from town centres to green spaces to outer city brownfield sites. Meanwhile uses pop up to activate and animate places with a diverse range of transient commercial, creative and residential uses.

Brent's Meanwhile Use Strategy sets out why and where we should encourage meanwhile uses in the borough, with a focus on commercial and creative uses in town centres. This strategy aims to facilitate a consistent and joined up approach to the planning and delivery of meanwhile use projects between the Council and its partners, to increase their scope and reach, and maximise their social and economic benefits for Brent businesses and residents.

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<sup>1</sup> Palaiologou, G. (2019) Meanwhile Space: 10 Years in Practice

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/bulletins/gdpfirstquarterlyestimateuk/apriltojune2020>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.thecfn.org.uk/18-of-all-smes-are-set-to-collapse-within-the-next-4-weeks-unless-the-government-steps-in-a-team-of-leading-industry-professionals-are-ready-to-launch-such-a-rescue-plan/>

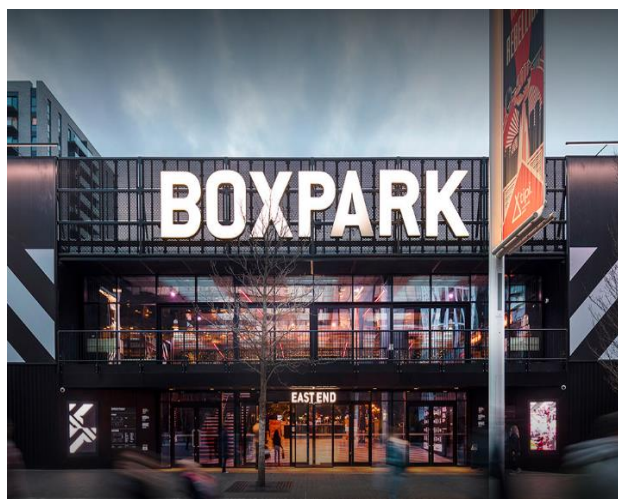
<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/5d198135-b38f-4512-b611-9f017f76929d>

## How can we activate Meanwhile Uses?

Brent supports meanwhile use through its Local Plan policies, and regeneration and town centre strategies and activities.

Brent's track record of delivering successful meanwhile projects includes using Council assets, leveraging GLA funding, and brokering partnerships between landowners, landlords and meanwhile providers, and tenants. To increase meanwhile uses, and extend their reach and application to realise their full potential across the borough, including in vacant retail units in town centres, the Council proposes to take a more coordinated and interventionist approach.

The following 10 actions aim to deliver an ambitious programme of meanwhile uses across the borough, but will require a joined up approach, building of new and better relations between the Council, landowners, meanwhile providers and local communities (a more detailed Action Plan is included in Appendix 1).



**Action 1:** Establish Meanwhile Provider guidance and a preferred list.

**Action 2:** Raise awareness and promote meanwhile uses to owners of vacant land and property, landlords, developers, start-ups, existing micro and SME businesses, business associations, ward members, town teams and community groups, across the borough.

**Action 3:** Consider a discretionary business rates relief for meanwhile uses.

**Action 4:** Coordinate Town Centre Manager networks and intelligence, together with National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) data, to target meanwhile uses in vacant properties in priority town centres and on the high street.

**Action 5:** Implement draft Local Plan policy and require robust meanwhile use feasibility studies for phased major developments. Proactively engage with owners of vacant development sites to facilitate and realise meanwhile uses to test out commercial uses.

**Action 6:** Mitigate risks of meanwhile use through effective pre and post project planning.

**Action 7:** Inform and direct meanwhile use projects in Council assets and developments.

**Action 8:** Create and facilitate meanwhile projects that focus on creative, enterprise and workspace uses to fill vacant properties in priority town centres and on the high street.

**Action 9:** Work with Council licencing to activate temporary pop ups and spaces in town centres and high streets (in private and Council owned assets).

**Action 10:** Explore options for strategic area based partnerships where providers are selected to take on multiple units on a sub-borough or borough wide basis.



## Meanwhile Use in the UK: Policy Context

### National

National policy focus on meanwhile uses in part reflects the challenges facing high streets, whose decline has resulted in empty units and abandoned spaces peppering town centres.

The decline of the high street is well-documented. In 1950 there were 600,000 retail stores across the UK, in 2012 there were 290,000<sup>5</sup> and today there are less than 210,000.<sup>6</sup> In the first half of 2019, there were 2,868 store closures across the UK, equivalent to 16 per day and the highest for 5 years<sup>7</sup>. Changing consumer demands and individual leisure consumption patterns, as well as the success of out of town retail centres and rise in online shopping, have all challenged traditional conceptions of town centres and high streets. The coronavirus pandemic is now expected to accelerate decline in failing areas. Future footfall will depend on high streets adapting, diversifying and remaining relevant to people's everyday lives – but barriers to such a new identity have to date included high entry costs for start-up businesses, fragmentation of ownership, and regulatory constraints on new uses.

Over the past 10 years, government has published a series of reports,<sup>8</sup> setting out the ambition for more flexible use of town centres and high street, and launched pilot initiatives and funding schemes,<sup>9</sup> to encourage the use of vacant shops for community, creative and workspace uses to reinvigorate town centres and high streets. More recently, in July 2020 central government introduced changes to the planning use classes order and new permitted development rights, with the stated intention to provide flexibility and support the recovery and re-imagination of high streets and towns. The new legislation will take effect September 2020 and provide for three new use classes: Class E (Commercial, business and service), Class F.1 (Learning and non-residential institutions) and F.2 (Local community). The changes will combine: Shops (A1), financial/professional services (A2), cafés/restaurants (A3), indoor sports/fitness (D2 part), medical

health facilities (D1 part), crèches/nurseries and office/business uses (B1) will be subsumed into a new single Use Class E. The changes should allow more flexibility between uses,

#### **Case Study: Platform Project, Loughborough Junction Arches**



Loughborough Junction, Meanwhile Space CIC

Meanwhile Space CIC collaborated with Network Rail to bring the arches at Loughborough Junction back into use. Since 2015, the arches provide workspace, workshop and event space at affordable rates. The arches situated within the Loughborough Junction masterplan area, facilitated collaboration between Meanwhile Space CIC, the local community, the local development steering group and Lambeth Council and has led to LJ works, which will provide 1,750 sq.m. or 18,837 sq.m. of affordable employment space<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Centre for Future Studies (2017) Older generation to rescue the high street

<sup>6</sup> Retail Economics (2020) UK Retail Stats & Facts; Accessed: <https://www.retailereconomics.co.uk/library-retail-stats-and-facts>

<sup>7</sup> PwC (2019) Store Openings and Closures: January – June 2019; Accessed: <https://www.pwc.co.uk/industries/retail-consumer/insights/store-openings-and-closures.html>

<sup>8</sup> DLG (2009) Looking after our town centres; Portas (2011) The Portas review; DCLG (2012) Meanwhile use lease and guidance; Timpson (2018) The High Street Report

<sup>9</sup> DLG (2012) High Street Innovation Fund; DCLG (2013) High Streets renewal Award; MHCLG (2018) Open Doors; MHCLG (2018) Future High Street Fund

particularly in town centres and high streets, easing restrictions and planning processes with the aim of encouraging diversification through a wide range of schemes including meanwhile uses. However, potential unintended consequences include a rise in out of town retail, and it is not precisely clear where some existing uses (e.g. hairdressers, nail bars, restaurants and drinking establishments) will sit in the new order.

Meanwhile projects can benefit from these new freedoms in their efforts to allow places to experiment and test new uses, without pre-empting how lifestyles and demand will change, supporting the emergence of new uses and vitality of places, particularly in town centres and high streets<sup>10</sup>.

## London

The Greater London Authority (GLA) provides a framework of policy, funding and support for meanwhile uses across London. The number of meanwhile use projects has increased rapidly under City Hall's interventions, with for example leading provider Meanwhile Space CIC seeing a 61% year on year increase in floorspace managed between 2009 and 2019<sup>11</sup>.

The GLA recognises the crucial role meanwhile uses can play in delivering affordable workspace and supporting London's cultural and creative industries. The Mayor of London's Economic Development Strategy is to ensure adequate business space at competitive rents across London, recognising the competing demands for space and pressure on scarce land supply. Meanwhile spaces are highlighted as ways of offering affordable workspaces alongside permanent spaces<sup>12</sup>. The London

Plan (Intend to Publish version) recognises meanwhile uses as appropriate for vacant town centre properties and spaces, not only for workspace, but alternative cultural day time and night time economy uses, for example arts venues, nightclubs, bars and restaurants<sup>13</sup>. Such meanwhile uses or 'pop-ups' can stimulate vibrancy, vitality and viability in town centre by creating social and economic value from vacant properties<sup>14</sup> where traditional uses may be in decline or recovering from the impacts of the coronavirus. Development proposals should also identify opportunities for meanwhile uses of sites in early phase of development to create temporary public realm, and parameters for longevity and associated obligations be agreed at the outset by all parties.<sup>15</sup>

The GLA typically provide some funding support to make meanwhile uses happen, with the £70m Good Growth Fund (2016-2020) the latest in a long line of grant funding schemes to

### **Case Study: Wembley Park**

Quintain have developed a comprehensive programme of events along Olympic Way and Wembley Park Blvd. Collaborating with Appear Hear, Quintain advertise regular pop-up spaces on event days and non-event days. In 2019, Wembley Park hosted Winterfest<sup>1</sup> – an immersive winter lights trail that was free to explore but acted as a way to draw people to the area and use the surrounding facilities.



Winterfest, Wembley Park

<sup>10</sup> Centre for London (2018) Meanwhile in London: Making Use of London's Empty Spaces

<sup>11</sup> Palaiologou, G. (2019) Meanwhile Space: 10 Years in Practice

<sup>12</sup> Mayor of London (2018) Economic Development Strategy

<sup>13</sup> GLA (2019) Intend to Publish London Plan: Policy HC6: Supporting the night-time economy

<sup>14</sup> GLA (2019) Intend to Publish London Plan: Policy HC5: Supporting London's culture and creative industries

<sup>15</sup> GLA (2019) Intend to Publish London Plan: Policy D8: Public realm

have funded meanwhile projects, most recently in the London Boroughs of Redbridge, Haringey and Barking & Dagenham<sup>16</sup>.

### Local

London Boroughs host and facilitate meanwhile projects to promote placemaking and economic development in areas prior to longer term regeneration, and adopt policies and strategies to encourage meanwhile uses. 18 out of the 32 London Boroughs now reference meanwhile use in their adopted or emerging Local Plans, to inform policies for creative spaces, town centres and community spaces. Only Enfield and Islington, however, have dedicated Local Plan meanwhile use policies. London Boroughs also support meanwhile uses through business rates reliefs, town centre and economic development strategies, and finance and grant schemes.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/regeneration/funding-opportunities/good-growth-fund-supporting-regeneration-london/good-growth-fund-supported-projects#acc-i-58479>

## Meanwhile in Practice: Opportunities & Constraints

Policy and plans for meanwhile uses at a national, regional and local level highlight the broad based support and potential reach of meanwhile uses. Meanwhile uses can capitalise on urban sites allocated or awaiting redevelopment, breathe new life into declining areas, and could be instrumental in reinventing town centres and high streets. In declining areas the opportunity is for new temporary creative and workspace uses to accommodate local businesses and pre-empt future change, particularly during the recovery of the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. In more derelict locations, the potential is to create vibrant local hubs that can accelerate the process of commercialising urban places<sup>17</sup>.

Brent's adopted Local Plan policy promotes and supports meanwhile uses for creative and community uses under the Wembley Area Action Plan (WEM 28 & 29) and to stimulate local economic activity under the South Kilburn SPD (policy 7.13). Brent's Draft Local Plan supports meanwhile uses within vacant and under-utilised sites and buildings for the benefit of town centres and growth areas' viability and vitality. All phased major developments within town centres or growth areas are proposed to submit Meanwhile Feasibility Studies and, if viable, Meanwhile Strategies. Meanwhile proposals for workspace, markets, entertainment, leisure and cultural uses are all encouraged and supported<sup>18</sup>.

### Opportunities

Evidence shows meanwhile activities across London tend to be located in areas with good transport connectivity<sup>19</sup>, which indicates the suitability of town centres and growth areas for meanwhile activities.

Meanwhile uses can provide valuable affordable workspace to accommodate start-ups, microbusinesses and SMEs and thereby support local employment, whilst at the same time helping landlords/landowners reduce the costs associated with vacant properties and test out new uses on sites prior to redevelopment.

#### Meanwhile Use Projects : Applications & Benefits:

- Addressing urban decline by activating vacant and under-utilised buildings and spaces;
- Creating new affordable workspace, creative, cultural and community spaces;
- Diversifying high streets and town centres where traditional uses may be lost or in temporary decline;
- Creating new local enterprise and employment;
- Providing blue/green infrastructure and public realm;
- Increasing footfall and spend in targeted areas;
- Improving security through onsite presence to prevent squatting and vandalism;
- Placemaking;
- Supporting local start-ups, micro and SME businesses and employment;
- Testing new ideas in temporary locations prior to long term redevelopment

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<sup>17</sup> Palaologou, G. (2019) Meanwhile Space: 10 Years in Practice

<sup>18</sup> Brent (2019) Draft Local Plan: Policy BE4: Support Strong Centres Diversity of Uses

<sup>19</sup> Centre for London (2018) Meanwhile in London: Making Use of London's Empty Spaces

## Town Centre Vacancy

Consultants Regeneris<sup>20</sup> recommend establishing meanwhile or test spaces within Brent's town centres, particularly in areas with higher vacancy rates where it is harder to attract permanent investment. Amongst Brent's 9 priority town centres, Church End has the highest vacancy rate, followed by Willesden Green. Between 2015 and 2019, the biggest changes in vacancy rates were in Harlesden, decreasing from 14% to 6% vacancy, and Neasden, decreasing from 16% to 7% vacancy. Over the same period, Wembley Park Drive saw a clearly increasing vacancy rate from 4% to 7%. Non-priority town centres tend to have lower vacancy rates, with 6 out of 7 having vacancy rates lower than the London average of 6.1%.

Overall vacancy rates in Brent's town centres have decreased over the past 4 years, and 9 out of 17 town centres have lower vacancy rates than the London average. Despite the trend of decreasing vacancy rates, the high street is anticipated to continue to face challenges moving forward, including the fallout from the coronavirus pandemic, and change and diversification is viewed as necessary in order for the high street to survive<sup>21</sup>.

Table 1: Vacancy rates in priority town centres<sup>22</sup>

Town Centre (Priority)	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	Trend between 2015-19
Church End	N/A	N/A	16%	12%	Decreasing
Willesden Green	11%	16%	11%	11%	No Change
Kilburn	14%	11%	7%	9%	Decreasing
Colindale	12%	10%	7%	8%	Decreasing
Neasden	16%	14%	12%	7%	Decreasing
Wembley Park	4%	2%	2%	7%	Increasing
Wembley Central	15%	16%	10%	7%	Decreasing
Harlesden	14%	9%	10%	6%	Decreasing
Burnt Oak	9%	14%	5%	5%	Decreasing
Ealing Road	2%	7%	5%	3%	Increasing

Table 2: Vacancy rates in non-priority town centres<sup>23</sup>

Town Centre (Non-Priority)	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	Reporting period change between 2015-2019
Kenton	8%	4%	5%	7%	Decreasing
Cricklewood	7%	11%	7%	6%	Decreasing
Sudbury	N/A	N/A	8%	4%	Decreasing
Queens Park	N/A	N/A	2%	4%	Increasing
Kensal Rise	N/A	N/A	5%	2%	Decreasing
Preston Road	9%	7%	4%	2%	Decreasing
Kingsbury	5%	5%	3%	0%	Decreasing

<sup>20</sup> Regeneris (2018) Brent Retail, Leisure and Town Centres Evidence Based – Strategy & Recommendations

<sup>21</sup> London First <https://www.londonfirst.co.uk/news-publications/news/london-first-unveils-8-point-plan-to-save-our-high-streets>

<sup>22</sup> Brent Council (2020) Annual Monitoring Report 2018/19

<sup>23</sup> Brent Council (2020) Annual Monitoring Report 2018/19



Politicians of all stripes recognise there is now too much retail space on most high streets and town centres compared to demand<sup>24</sup>, which is a key driver of vacancies in town centres. Long term vacancies are potential roots of urban decay, not only a symptom of a struggling high street but also a cause that negatively impacts the local economy and environment,<sup>25</sup> and can lead to spiral of decline<sup>26</sup>. There is concern that COVID-19 restrictions will accelerate decay in already struggling town centres. Meanwhile uses provide opportunities to fill the gaps vacancy creates, and play a revitalising role and start to adapt and diversify town centres to ensure they maintain their critical functions as economic and community hubs into the future.

### Growth Areas

Brent's growth areas of Alperton, Burnt Oak/Colindale, Church End, Neasden, Northwick Park, South Kilburn, Staples Corner and Wembley have high levels of employment, benefit from good transport links, and are expected to deliver the majority of new development that will accommodate growth. Local Plan allocations and brownfield sites in growth areas offer an important potential supply of meanwhile uses to test creative and cultural uses, support local employment, and contribute to the longer terms regeneration and placemaking of these areas.

### Workspace Demand

Brent's business base of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) has grown from around 10,000 SMEs in 2010 to over 15,000 SMEs today, 93% of which are microbusinesses employing between 0-9 employees<sup>27</sup>. The majority of SMEs need affordable workspace<sup>28</sup>. Brent's Affordable Workspace Strategy however identifies businesses operating in Brent with lower annual turnovers find it difficult to find workspace that they can afford without paying more than 20% of their turnover<sup>29</sup>.

Demand from business has exceeded the supply of physical spaces, which are observed to have diminished. Commercial rents in Brent have risen at above the London average, with the availability of affordable workspace low<sup>30</sup>. From 2010 to 2018, commercial rents increased 5.3% year-on-year in Brent, with some businesses unable to keep up with rent increases. Brent lost over 100,000 sq.m industrial floor space between 2001 and 2016 (including area covered by the OPDC),<sup>31</sup> and the introduction of Permitted Development Rights (PDR) saw a further c.120,000 sq.m. of office space converted to residential use between 2013 and 2018<sup>32</sup>.

#### **Case Study: South Leytonstone Pop-Up**

London Borough of Waltham Forest funded the pop-up shop programme in South Leytonstone as part of the wider high street regeneration. The space was let free to 6 start-up businesses for 4 weeks at a time. 3 out of 6 participants took move on spaces in Waltham Forest<sup>1</sup>.



South Leytonstone Pop-up, Meanwhile Space CIC

<sup>24</sup> Housing Communities & Local Government Select Committee (2019) 11<sup>th</sup> Report of Session 2017-19: Inquiry into High Streets & Town Centres in 2030

<sup>25</sup> London Councils (2018) Written evidence HST0071

<sup>26</sup> RTT White Paper (2009) What impact do shop vacancies have on towns and cities across the UK and what can be done to address the problem?

<sup>27</sup> NOMIS (06/04/2020)

<sup>28</sup> Institute of Public Policy Research (2016) Start me up. Accessed: <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/valueofworkspace-ippr2016.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> Brent Council (2020) Affordable Workspace Strategy and Action Plan

<sup>30</sup> GL Hearn (2019) West London Employment Land Evidence

<sup>31</sup> GL Hearn (2019) West London Employment Land Evidence

<sup>32</sup> London Development Database (04/06/2019)

The effects of COVID-19 on the economy may result in a short term rise in commercial vacancies, however social distancing measures have placed a new constraint on intensity of use of commercial spaces, and in any case we see the squeeze on the supply of commercial space in Brent has been going on for much longer.

Meanwhile uses due to their short flexible terms offer spaces that are accessible to local start-ups and microbusinesses, keeping costs manageable and creating business incubator space<sup>33</sup>. As well as meeting workspace demand from local business, there is also the opportunity for meanwhile spaces to tap into demand and attract business from elsewhere, for example businesses in Inner London seeking to re-locate to more affordable premises.

### Supporting Landlords

To deliver meanwhile uses the Council must reach out, explain and promote the benefits of meanwhile uses to build mutually beneficial partnerships with private landlords. Meanwhile uses can be attractive to landlords with vacant premises who may not want to commit to a 25+ year lease, or where medium and longer terms plans are unclear due to market uncertainty.

Meanwhile leases can be developed in partnership with the Council and meanwhile providers and allow for much shorter term lease and occupation of vacant premises over 1-2+ years. Benefits for landlords include reduced risks and holding costs associated with vacant premises, on development sites the opportunity to test out commercial uses prior to longer term redevelopment, and in cases reduce business rates liabilities and/or rental income.

### Local Survey on Meanwhile Uses

An online survey of local businesses and residents was conducted November 2019.

69 responses were received, with the majority of respondents identifying Willesden High Road as the high street they used, followed by Wembley High Road and Kilburn High Road. Headline statistics outline the positive perception meanwhile use has with respondents

- 90% respondents thought vacancies have an impact on the high street/town centre.
- 75% respondents thought meanwhile use could benefit a local area.
- 60% respondents were aware of vacancies on the high streets/town centres they used.
- 24% respondents thought start-ups could benefit from meanwhile use spaces.
- 24% respondents thought residents could benefit from meanwhile use spaces.
- 20% respondents thought community groups could benefit from meanwhile use spaces.

Respondents were invited to comment on how vacancies affect the high street, a selection below outline the perceived impact:

"Vacant shops give an impression of a high street that is going down rather than improving. They give a poor impression to people wanting to buy/rent in the area and do not encourage new businesses to set up. A busy, buzzing high street works in a virtuous circle." [Respondent 26]
"Vacant premises often look neglected and in need of paint. If there are many vacancies, people feel that there is less reason to go to the High Road." [Respondent 69]
"I think it discourages other new businesses from opening as the high street appears to be failing. It gives the impression of the area not being a nice place to live, and that the high street is slowly dying." [Respondent 17]
"Any use of space will attract more footfall than a vacancy, making a high street more vibrant, and often giving local people an opportunity for a business." [Respondent 37]

<sup>33</sup> Centre for London (2018) Meanwhile in London: Making Use of London's Empty Spaces

## Constraints

Meanwhile uses can carry financial costs and risks to the landlords who host them, operators who run them, and local authorities who facilitate them. Misaligned perceptions between landlords and tenants planning, licensing and leasing, meanwhile market immaturity, and property taxation (e.g. business rates) are standard hurdles to meanwhile uses<sup>34</sup>. Individual projects can face many and different challenges throughout their lifecycles: at start up, across operational activities, and as they reach their conclusion.

## Start Up

Meanwhile providers' immediate challenges at start-up are to find and secure premises on legally and commercially viable terms. Local authorities have a leadership role in identifying, promoting and publicising vacant properties which they know about in their areas. Local authorities also set the planning policy framework and economic development strategy for their areas, and with their local knowledge and connections are well-placed to broker deals between local landlords and prospective tenants, and make meanwhile uses happen.

Meanwhile projects vary in cost, depending on size and scale, lease and service charge terms, start-up costs, building condition, refurbishment costs, intensity and income generation potential, the location and type of the site or property. Affordability is an essential draw to meanwhile tenants, and operational costs must be kept in line with revenue generation.

Table 3: Example project cost of 4 meanwhile use spaces run by Meanwhile Space CIC<sup>35</sup>

Project	Length	Cost	Project Type
Central Parade Walthamstow, E17	July 2016- July 2021	£430,000	<i>Creative mixed use workspace</i> <b>Pricing:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• retail spaces (£19 - £22 per m2)</li><li>• studios / offices ground floor (£28 - £31 per m2)</li><li>• studios / offices basement, some used as makerspace (£6.50 - £10 per m2)</li><li>• co-working desks (£13 per m2) - this takes into account not just usable desk area but portion of whole co-working area including communal spaces</li></ul>
Rock House Hastings, TN34	July 2014- no end date	£940,000	<i>Mixed use 9 storey building with residential, workspace and community space</i> <b>Pricing:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Co working desks cost £133 a month</li><li>• Office Space (approx. £4- £7 pcm per sq.m)</li></ul>
Loughborough Junction Lambeth, SW9	August 2014- August 2020	£2,200,000	<i>Railway arches used as maker spaces, event spaces, workspaces, offices almost all of them single occupancy by one business one arch divided into 5 individual workspaces (pods) at very affordable rate</i> <b>Size:</b> around 60m2 each <b>Pricing:</b> £350 - £450 + VAT pcm
Tripod Brixton Brixton, SW2 1RW	2018 – 2022	£50,000	<i>Creative workspace within Lambeth Town Hall. Tripod has 9 medium-sized office spaces and three office pods</i> <b>Pricing:</b> £36 per sq. m per month.

*A range of meanwhile providers from major players with portfolios of projects, to smaller and emerging providers with few projects, were contacted to better understand best practice and requirements for meanwhile uses.*

<sup>34</sup> Centre for London (2018) Meanwhile in London: Making Use of London's Empty Spaces

<sup>35</sup> Palaologou, G. (2019) Meanwhile Space: 10 Years in Practice

## Business Rates

Business rates are a major disincentive and often the main operational costs to meanwhile projects and are identified by the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) as the single biggest issue for microbusinesses and SMEs<sup>36</sup>. The existing business rates regime in cases incentivises landlords to either demolish a building to stop paying business rates rather than occupy it with a meanwhile use, or install property guardians to pay lower council taxes<sup>37</sup>.

Meanwhile use providers often hold charitable status which helps reduce costs, including through statutory business rates and other tax reliefs, and compartmentalise spaces to qualify for small business rates reliefs. Providers work with local authorities to reduce rates<sup>38</sup> and can also tend to favour larger spaces over 10,000 sq.ft. to spread operational costs and generate efficiencies.

Local authorities can award discretionary rates relief to businesses under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988: where *“it is satisfied that it would be reasonable for it to do so, having the regard to the interests of persons liable to pay council tax set by it”*. Calls for local authorities to use discretionary rates to support small businesses have increased, particularly post the COVID-19 pandemic. Although foregone business rates is a consideration, discretionary reliefs add value to the local economy through increased employment, local footfall, spend and gross value added.

LB Haringey and Waltham Forest have introduced discretionary reliefs for ‘Open Workspaces’ and meanwhile uses in pre-development sites. Since 2018, LB Waltham Forest have offered ‘Targeted Relief’<sup>39</sup> for workspace providers who are not-for-profit, reinvest surpluses into affordable workspace within the borough, and can prove that they will achieve ‘local social, economic and cultural benefits’. On successful application, a workspace provider will receive rates relief until 2023, starting at full relief in year one and tapering down annually by 15%.

## Community Consultation

Meanwhile uses must be based on serious engagement to build trust with communities and would-be stakeholders in the formative stages of strategy development and design. When this does not happen, existing communities can feel disenfranchised and forgotten, ‘It’s not for us’ is a sentiment often expressed<sup>40</sup>. Community consultation and buy-in is essential for prospective meanwhile projects to ensure they resonate with local character and neighbourhood needs. This also ensures projects do not conflict

### **Case Study: Haringey Council Business Rates<sup>1</sup>**

London Borough of Haringey introduced business rates relief for businesses that occupy either new and converted office or workspace or meanwhile use spaces in new developments or identified sites in 2016. The new development or site would be in a development framework or an area action plan, have received planning permission, or identified by local traders forums and Haringey Council as suitable for meanwhile activities. Haringey Council assess the social value contribution the meanwhile activity will have for the local area, for example – if the initiative would contribute to improve local high streets or economic regeneration.



<sup>36</sup> Ramidus (2018) The Business Rates Revolution in London : A report for FSB Greater London Region

<sup>37</sup> Centre for London (2018) Meanwhile in London: Making Use of London's Empty Spaces

<sup>38</sup> Providers were contacted and with 6 responses

<sup>39</sup> London Borough of Waltham Forest (2019) Discretionary Rate Relief Policy

<sup>40</sup> Public Practice (2019) Pop Down: How can local authorities facilitate meanwhile use for long-term community benefit?



or undercut local businesses and can also help to contribute to the management and maintenance of a scheme once established. Meanwhile use projects should be created with comprehensive evaluation and monitoring to measure project outputs and outcomes versus original stated goals.

### Nuisance

Bad planning and management of meanwhile use can lead to nuisance complaints or disrupt an area and create friction with existing communities. There should therefore be a commitment from meanwhile space tenants to create social and economic value through their work, for example by running community events, workshops and projects that engage the local community.



Meanwhile use if not managed effectively can also undermine longer-term plans for sites. It is important to be clear that meanwhile uses are temporary, and have a move-on strategy to ensure tenants maximise the opportunity that meanwhile spaces provide, allowing them to sustain momentum in their work and the social value that is created. An agreement between the Council and the meanwhile provider that clearly sets out socioeconomic deliverables, as well as a move-on strategy, needs to be agreed at the beginning of the project, so the temporality of the use is clear and the project benefits local residents and businesses. More detailed steps on how this would work are outlined in actions 6 and 8 in Appendix 1.

### Meanwhile spaces are by definition temporary

Landlords are often unaware of the benefits of meanwhile projects and the new planning rules in place to facilitate them. There are many misconceptions around the implementation of such projects. Some landlords are weary of requests for temporary uses to become permanent by local communities, underlining the importance of clear communications, pre-project planning and move-on strategies (as discussed in the Action Plan).

Regeneration and placemaking plans should set out a longer-term vision of what will happen when meanwhile spaces come to an end, and those plans and vision communicated to communities in order to manage expectations and avoid communities feeling isolated. When meanwhile uses are badly planned, seen as a short term fix or insufficient regard is paid to the longer-term regeneration of an area or site, meanwhile uses compromise the longer-term opportunity<sup>41</sup>.

#### **Case Study: Start Here, Harrow**



With the support of Harrow Council, Start Here aimed to seed and nurture Harrow's enterprising spirit by enabling opportunities from vacant and underused commercial spaces. The Start Here project provided local entrepreneurs access to rent free space between October 2015 and December 2016.

<sup>41</sup> Public Practice (2019) Pop Down: How can local authorities facilitate meanwhile use for long-term community benefit?

## Meanwhile in Brent: Past, Present & Future

The Council established the Meanwhile Foundation with Meanwhile Space CIC and Locality in 2012, and has a track record of delivering successful meanwhile projects and partnerships in Wembley, Willesden, South Kilburn and elsewhere. Brent currently has the largest BOXPARK UK location, Troubadour Theatre, and Yellow Pavilion, all large-scale, longer-term meanwhile projects delivered on privately owned land around Wembley Stadium. The former Willesden Green Police Station and Wembley Point have both operated as makerspaces run by Create Space London. Other meanwhile use projects delivered by or in partnership with Brent Council are listed below:

Table 4: Meanwhile use projects delivery by or in partnership with Brent Council

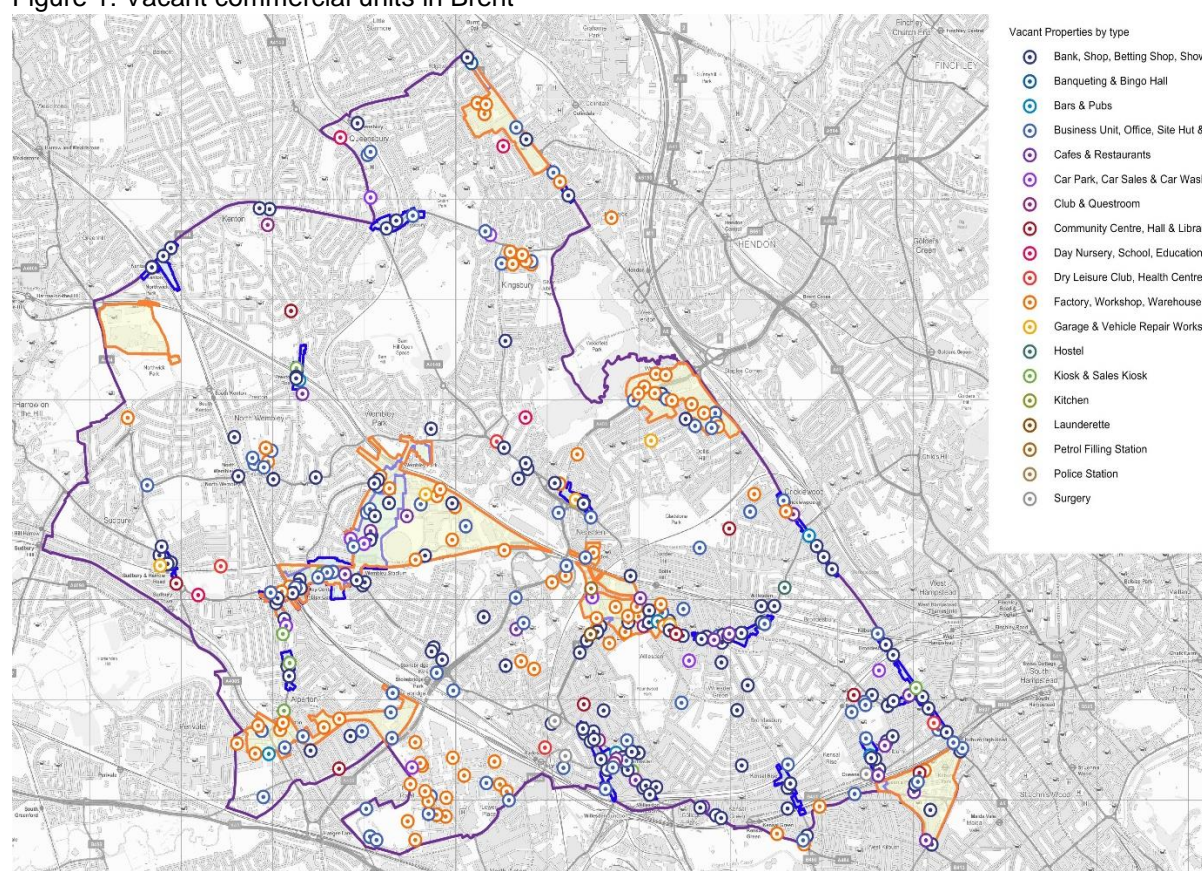
Project	Delivery	How	Use
South Kilburn Studios	2011-2013	Converted disused porta cabins	Transformed into a series of creative studio spaces
Queens Parade, Willesden Green	Jan 2012 – Present	Site allocation / planning permission for redevelopment	Parade of 5 vacant shops for retail and workspace
Coming Soon Club, Borough wide	Jan 2012 – Sept 2014	Vacant council-owned buildings, retail and garage space at Cottrell House	Capacity building programme in 3 vacant buildings
Electric House, Willesden Green	Oct 2012 – Jun 2013	Former vacant electric goods showroom and development site converted into meanwhile space	Short term workspace
The Albert, Queens Park	2013	Vacant property prior to development	Community space (pop-up café, restaurant, and venue space for cycle training, choir, dancing, gardening & cooking).
Carlton Kitchen, South Kilburn	Aug 2013 – Aug 2014	Re-use of a conventional building not serving the community	Food incubator space
Chesterfield House, Wembley	Jan 2015 – Mar 2016	Former Council-owned office building awaiting redevelopment	Creative mixed-use workspace
Nomadic Garden, Queens Park	June 2017 – Feb 2018	Vacant land owned by the Council awaiting redevelopment	Community gardening and arts space
The Granville, South Kilburn	May 2018 – Present	Council-owned building, Site allocation in South Kilburn regeneration programme	Mixed-use enterprise hub
Ujima House, Wembley	May 2018 – Present	Council-owned office building awaiting redevelopment	Mixed-use workspace
Picture Palace, Harlesden	Proposed for 2020	Council acquired former cinema with proposed 5-10 year community / cultural / workspace lease of site whilst development options assessed	Community space

Vacant buildings, site allocations and development sites are all important sources of space for meanwhile use and taken together represent a significant potential pipeline of supply. The London Development Database (LDD) indicates that in 2018 - 72%, and in 2019 64%, of planning permissions on development sites were not yet started. Centre for London also in 2018 roughly calculated unimplemented planning permissions to represent 2,700 ha vacant

space, including around 400 ha vacant space suitable for meanwhile use, and around 66 ha of vacant space in close proximity to town centres<sup>42</sup>.

September 2020 National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) records showed 1,124 vacant commercial units in Brent<sup>43</sup> including buildings undergoing reconstruction, under-utilised public spaces and development sites (see Figure 1 below). The majority of vacant units are in private ownership, with 29% office space, 25.5% shops, 12% buildings under reconstruction and 11.6% warehouses. Some vacancies are unsuitable for meanwhile uses (e.g. ATMs, advertising spaces, communications stations, dilapidated buildings). Long term vacant units are generally considered more obviously suitable for meanwhile uses, whilst other short term vacant units can be part of the normal churn of the high street and expected to be re-occupied by new businesses on standard leases relatively quickly.

Figure 1: Vacant commercial units in Brent<sup>44</sup>



<sup>42</sup> Centre for London (2018) Meanwhile in London: Making Use of London's Empty Spaces

<sup>43</sup> National Non-Domestic Rates (September 2020)

<sup>44</sup> National Non-Domestic Rates (September 2020)



The table below highlights vacant commercial sites in the borough that have been identified with potential for meanwhile use.

Table 5: Vacant Sites in the borough with the potential for meanwhile use

Vacant Sites in LBB	Area	Size (sq.m)	Potential Use
Abbey Estate Community Centre	Alperton	340	Council-owned community centre could be used as makerspace or artist studios. Within walking distance from Alperton station and ASC Studios
Units at Neasden Studios	Neasden	1,508	Potential for industrial makerspace
Offices at 11-13 Brondesbury Road	Kilburn	10,446	Council-owned premises; potential for IAC or creative workspace
Restaurant premises at 3-7 Lincoln Parade, Preston Road	Preston Road	275	Council owned retail units. Potential for kitchen workspace or makerspace (there is large car park which could be utilised by both options – kitchen delivery or makerspace market)
Retail units along Wembley High Road	Wembley	21 vacant retail units in town centre boundary	-Cluster of artist studios or makerspace workshops, can be used as gallery space and point of sale for artists (create creative hub along high street) -Could be used as a cluster of IAC spaces
Retail units on Willesden High Road / Walm Lane	Willesden	10 vacant retail units in town centre boundary	Use a cluster of units - extend Queens Parade offering and diversify with makerspace, artist studio space shop, gallery
9 Willesden High Road	Willesden	978	Vacant restaurant could be used as kitchen workspace, pop-up restaurant for local food social enterprises
271 Abbeydale Road	Wembley	1,441	Warehouse, potential makerspace, artist studios, creative hub or large IAC space with café, pop-ups
100 Beresford Avenue	Alperton	2,144	Warehouse, potential makerspace, artist studios, creative hub or large IAC space with café, pop-ups
Vacant retail units on Neasden Lane	Neasden	9 retail units in town centre boundary	-Cluster of makerspaces, artist studios (also acting as shop, workshop, events, gallery space) -Or work with the Grange to have meanwhile IAC space – which could potentially link to 60 Neasden Lane too
Vacant retail units on Church Road	Church End	9 retail units in town centre boundary	-Cluster of makerspaces, artist studios / shop / gallery space -Retail pop-up (e.g.: Queens Parade) -Option to have a cluster of diversified uses (retail unit, café, gallery/workshop)
Vacant retail units on Kilburn High Road	Kilburn	12 vacant units in town centre boundary	-Cluster of IAC space (potential to connect to the Granville/SKT) -Retail pop-up (e.g.: Queens Parade)
202 Ealing Road	Wembley	61.7	-Jewellery workshop space -Makerspace studio/shop/gallery -Next to Post Office surrounded by two vacant units, could activate frontage along three units too
198 Ealing Road	Wembley	73.5	-Jewellery workshop -Makerspace studio/shop/gallery

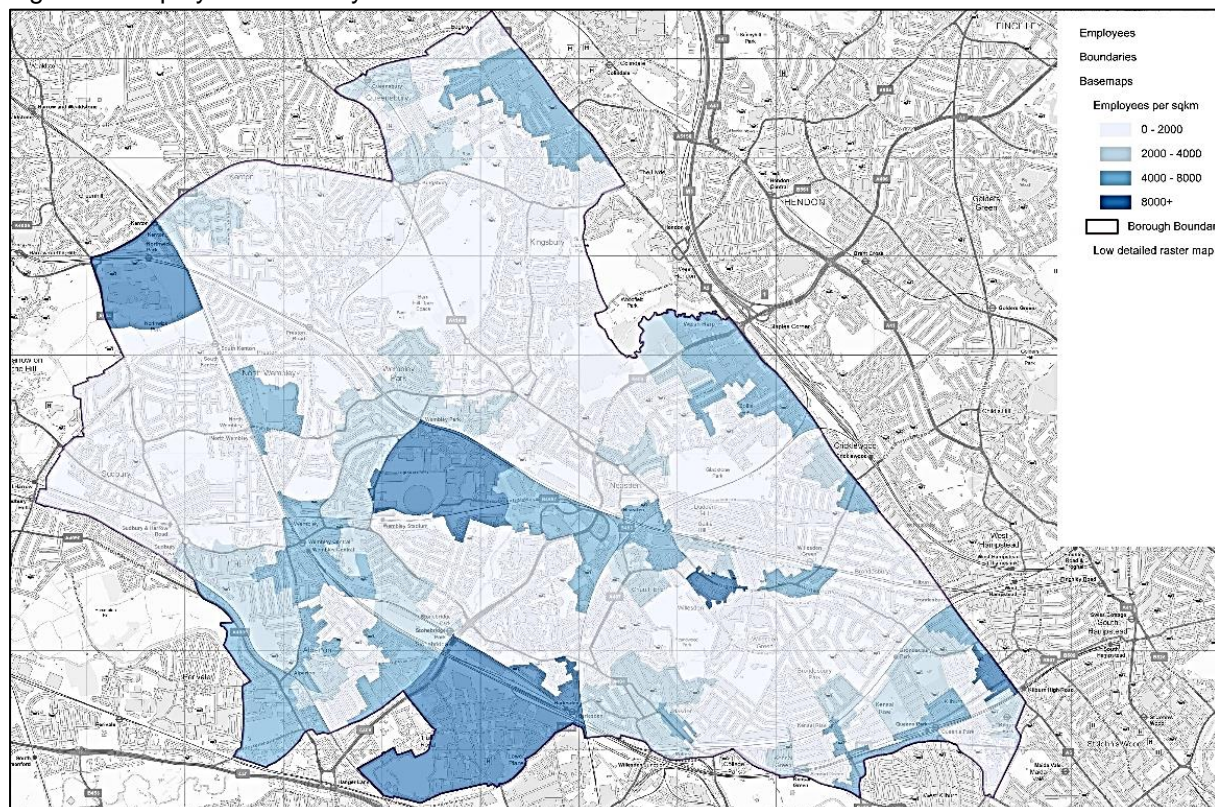


			-Next to Post Office surrounded by two vacant units, could activate frontage along three units too
252 High Street	Harlesden	243.2	-Previous use was a club, potential recording studio, music community space (events space, radio pop-up, workshop and rehearsal space) (e.g.: Total Refreshment Centre in Hackney)
Apollo Club, 375 Willesden High Road	Willesden	239	Previously a nightclub for 40+ years hosting. -Option to turn it into a community space with recording/rehearsal facilities to maintain music heritage of the site. -Could turn it into makerspace, creative workspace

## Brent's Economy, Growth Areas & Development Sites

Brent is home to a diverse population and economy. Park Royal, Wembley and Northwick Park Hospital have the highest employment density in the borough. Other growth areas have high levels of employment, good transport links and accommodate industrial estates and town centres. Town centres represent approximately 20% of the borough's local economy.

Figure 2: Employment Density in Brent



Brent's Affordable Workspace Strategy (AWS) identifies priority sectors that underpin Brent's existing business base and can support future economic growth and prosperity, which align with the growth ambitions set out in Brent's Inclusive Growth Strategy and the Mayor's Economic Development Strategy. Brent's economy is diverse. Significant industrial activity is located in the south west and east, major office and retail activity in the centre, and low density in the residential north. Town Centres, Strategic Industrial Locations (SIL) and Locally Significant Industrial Sites (LSIS) drive economic activity in the borough. Brent's economy comprises c.126,500 jobs and c. 15,890 businesses, which have grown by 9% and 41% respectively since 2013. Total GVA is around £8.5 billion<sup>45</sup>. Brent's economy has strengths in lower value activities and is relatively over-represented by sectors at higher risk of automation. The largest employment sectors are Health and Social Care; Retail; Hospitality, Leisure and Recreation; Financial and Professional Services; and, Business Support Services, accounting for 55% of total employment in Brent. The largest sectors by number of businesses are Financial and Professional Services; ICT, Media and Creative Activities; and, Construction, making up 52% of the business base.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Nomis (2020) Inter Departmental Business Register (ONS), ONS annual population survey

<sup>46</sup> Brent Council (2020) Affordable Workspace Strategy and Action Plan

The Affordable Workspace Strategy (AWS) considers type of space, facilities and location for each priority sector. The analysis is summarised in table 6. Priority sectors are a guide to what works or could work economically in an area, and should not limit the types of meanwhile use projects put forward in any area. To note, all priority sectors require strong public transport connections.

#### Case Study: Camden Collective, Camden Town Unlimited

Camden Collective is a registered charity offering free and affordable workspace in Camden Town. Camden Collective, run by Camden Town Unlimited, the Business Improvement District for Camden Town, has occupied 18 spaces. The spaces have had many iterations including pop-up retail, hot-desking, studios and gallery space. C159 was a 3,000 sq.ft. or 278 sq.m. market place that supported retailers and had co-working space on the upper floors.



Camden, C159, Camden Collective

Table 6: Priority sector requirements identified in the Affordable Workspace Strategy<sup>47</sup>

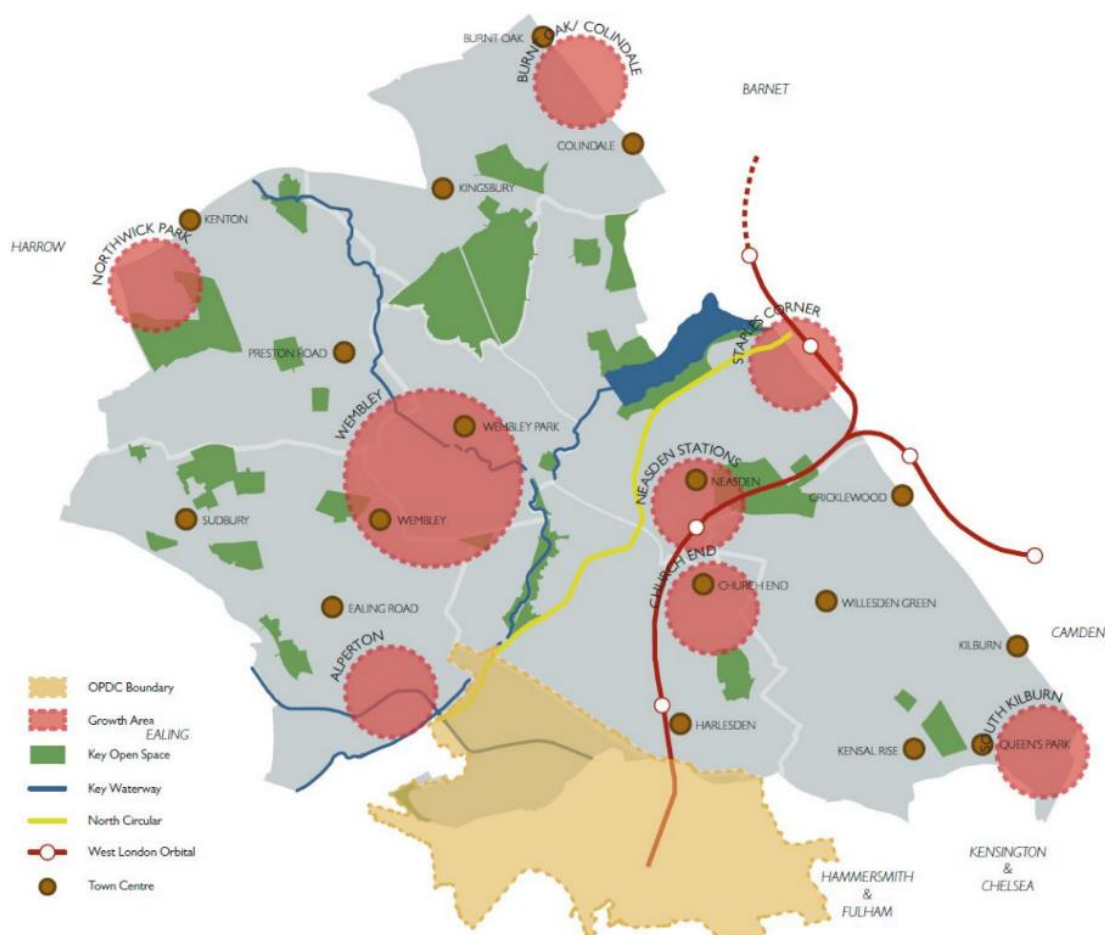
Priority sector	General requirement	Premises needs	Opportunity areas
ICT, digital & creative	Proximity to skilled workforce, supply chain businesses, customers and markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Small, flexible workspace</li> <li>-Studios and makerspace</li> <li>-Office and co-working</li> <li>-Town centre locations</li> <li>-Creative and dynamic feel</li> <li>-Flexible lease terms</li> </ul>	Wembley; Staples Corner; Neasden; Willesden Green; Kilburn; Harlesden; Alperton
Life sciences	Proximity to similar businesses, highly skilled workforce, leading tech and innovative environments, universities, hospitals and researches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-High quality private offices</li> <li>-Flexible workspaces</li> <li>-Lab space facilities</li> <li>-Town centre locations off main roads</li> <li>-Business parks</li> </ul>	Wembley; Staples Corner; Alperton
Financial, professional services & knowledge economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-High quality facilities in prestigious locations</li> <li>-Proximity to workforce, customer, markets and institutions and collaborators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-High quality private offices</li> <li>-Flexible workspaces</li> <li>-Town centre locations</li> <li>-Business parks</li> </ul>	Wembley; Staples Corner; Neasden; Willesden Green; Harlesden; Alperton
Artists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Access to cultural infrastructure and facilities</li> <li>-Adaptable space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Flexible lease terms</li> <li>-Town centre locations</li> <li>-Creative and dynamic feel</li> </ul>	Wembley; Neasden; Willesden Green; Kilburn; Harlesden
Food preparation and consumption	-Access to customer base, local suppliers and labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Short-term leases</li> <li>-Town centre locations</li> <li>-Adaptable space</li> </ul>	All priority town centres
Manufacturing, construction & wholesale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Flexible, adaptable space</li> <li>-Proximity to workforce and supply chain companies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Light industrial or storage space</li> <li>-Edge of town centre locations</li> <li>-Business/industrial parks</li> </ul>	Burnt Oak; Colindale; Northwick Park; Alperton; Staples Corner

<sup>47</sup> Brent Council (2020) Affordable Workspace Strategy and Action Plan



Brent's draft Local Plan designates 8 growth areas in the borough: Alperton, Burnt Oak/Colindale, Church End, Neasden, Northwick Park, South Kilburn, Staples Corner and Wembley. Growth areas are planned to deliver the majority of new development that will accommodate the growing population moving forward, and are carefully selected by their potential for mixed-use regeneration, public transport accessibility, and to meet the requirements for supporting physical, social & environmental infrastructure to ensure growth is sustainable. As regeneration and new development comes forward, new places and neighbourhoods are created, which includes additional uses for local communities.

Figure 3: Brent's Growth Areas



Development sites often lay vacant for months, sometimes years, before construction starts. For the phased development of larger sites, land can remain vacant for long periods of time. Since 2015, in Brent 75 planning permissions were granted for major developments of 10 or more new homes, occupying a total of c75 hectares of land. Whilst not all sites or buildings are suitable for meanwhile use, development sites offer opportunities to utilise vacant space to create test beds for new enterprise prior to redevelopment and to provide employment, creative and community spaces whilst longer-term plans are developed and realised.

Local and Neighbourhood Plan site allocations that are vacant or underutilised represent an important potential source for meanwhile space. Site allocations can host meanwhile uses whilst a landowner draws up their permanent plans for the site, seeks planning permission, works up detailed designs and mobilises prior to construction.



The draft Local Plan only explicitly identifies 3 site allocations either suitable for future meanwhile uses or already hosting meanwhile uses – all of which are in the Wembley Park masterplan area. However, the draft Local Plan more generally stipulates that all phased major developments are required to submit a meanwhile feasibility study. Table 7 outlines identified site allocations that could accommodate meanwhile uses. Site allocations have been selected by their high indicative capacity, by size, and by provision of commercial, employment or community space in their existing or proposed land use. Site allocations that have existing meanwhile use projects (see table 4) are excluded from this list.

Table 7: Site allocations with the potential for meanwhile use

Reference	Site Name	Size (sq.m)	Potential
BCSA9	First Way	44,200	Larger site, probably phased redevelopment
BEGA2	Staples Corner Growth Area	427,000	Growth area, multiple sites
BNSA1	Capitol Way Valley	126,100	Larger site, multiple commercial units, probably phased redevelopment
BNSA2	Colindale Retail Park	40,200	Larger site, probably phased redevelopment
BNSA4	Former Mecca Bingo site	1,590	Vacant listed building
BSSA3	Church End Local Centre	31,400	Includes council-owned car park and retail units
BSESA1	Austen	3,500	South Kilburn estate regeneration
BSESA14	William Dunbar House	6,000	South Kilburn estate regeneration
BSESA17	Cricklewood Broadway retail park	23,000	Larger site, probably phased redevelopment
BSESA19	Gaumont State Cinema	7,000	Underutilised / vacant property
BSWSA1	Alperton Industrial sites	Alperton House (21,900) Bridgewater Road (14,500) Wharfside (11,000) – total 46,400	Potential for IAC, makerspaces / artist studio
BSWSA3	Atlip Road	11,600	Vacant warehouse, potential for makerspace, creative hub, artist studios
BSWSA5	Abbey Industrial Estate	26,300	Larger site, probably phased redevelopment
BCSA2	Stadium Retail Park and Fountain Studios	16,700	Troubadour Theatre occupying former Fountain Studios ; potential for further meanwhile uses in retail park as leases expire moving forward
BEGA1	Neasden Stations Growth Area	115,000	Growth area, multiple sites, including c4 hectare CNWL site

Figure 4: Draft Local Plan

Local Plan Planning Policies Map 2019 - Development Areas

**LEGEND**

 Brent borough boundary


**Development Areas**

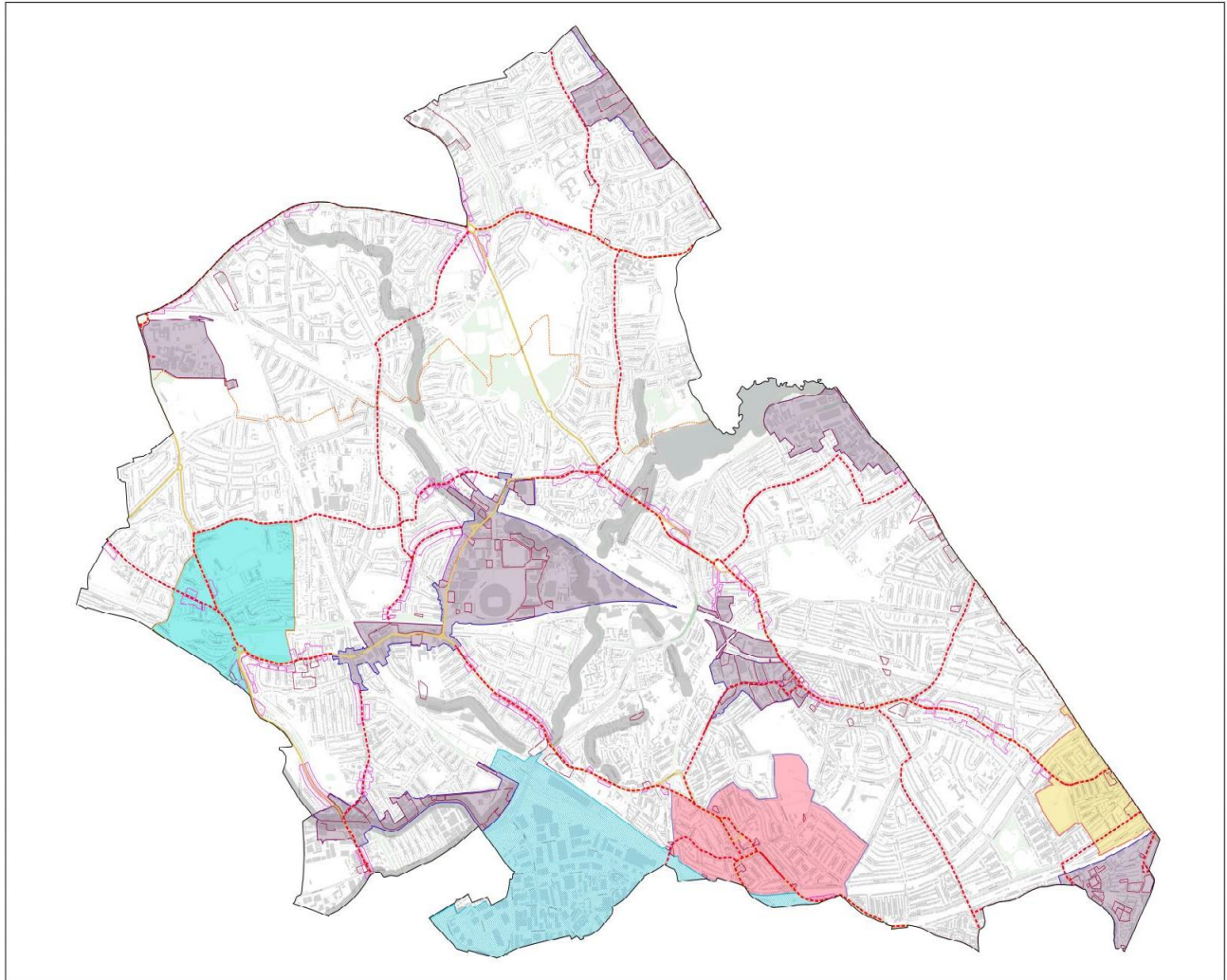
-  Site Allocations
-  Growth Areas
-  Intensification Corridors

**Local Boundaries**

-  OPDC
- Neighbourhood Forums**
-  Harlesden
-  Kilburn
-  Sudbury Town

**Movement Networks**

-  Capital Ring (Metropolitan Walk)
-  TRL Road Network
-  London Distributor Road Network



## Brent's Town Centres

Nine town centres have been identified for focused investment and development - Wembley, Neasden, Willesden Green, Harlesden, Colindale, Burnt Oak, Kilburn, Church End and Ealing Road. They account for approximately a fifth of business and employment activity in the borough, but face many challenges to retain their vital function as economic and community hubs, particularly given the social and economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic and the rise in online shopping. In June 2020, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported that the proportion of online spending had reached 31.8%, a considerable increase from the 20.0% reported in February 2020.<sup>48</sup>

Meanwhile uses have the potential to not only fill and activate vacant retail units on the high street and thereby support footfall and local spend, but to test new workspace, leisure, creative and cultural uses, and shape the diversification viewed as necessary as high streets seek to adapt to new technologies, lifestyle choices and consumption patterns, and thereby redefine their future identity.

It is essential that any meanwhile projects are designed with a thorough understanding of the existing local area, communities and demands they will serve. Appendix 2 analyses the neighbourhood profiles for each of the priority town centres that are viewed as having the greatest potential to accommodate meanwhile uses.



<sup>48</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/retailindustry/bulletins/retailsales/june2020>



## Appendix 1: Detailed Meanwhile Action Plan

**Action 1:** Establish Meanwhile Provider guidance and a preferred list.

Brent Council established a preferred Affordable Workspace Provider list in 2017. Provider lists help promote activities and projects, match operators with spaces, and establish quality standards.

The creation of a new preferred Meanwhile Provider list would provide a recognised framework of providers, set quality standards, build landowner/landlord confidence in meanwhile uses, seek to maximise local socioeconomic outputs, and be used to promote meanwhile uses to fill vacant spaces across the borough.

- Develop an application process and form for a preferred Meanwhile Provider list and publish it on the Council's website. Review potential to combine with Brent Council Preferred Affordable Workspace Operator List.
- Engage with established Meanwhile Providers that operate within the borough, and encourage new ones who operate outside it to join the preferred list, to provide for a range of quality providers able to deliver different types/scale of meanwhile projects.
- Promote the preferred Meanwhile Provider list together with guidance, benefits and supporting collateral (e.g. meanwhile leases) to landowners/landlords to increase responsible and beneficial meanwhile uses in vacant property across the borough.

### Case Study: Opportunity Sutton

The London Borough of Sutton's Opportunity Sutton programme launched in 2012. Pop Up Sutton, one of the programmes set up by the economic development service and run by the business improvement district Successful Sutton, gave entrepreneurs a first opportunity to set up their business in the area. The programme included business support and workshops as well as once a month a free pop-up stall was provided to give entrepreneurs a platform to showcase their products or services<sup>1</sup>.



Sutton, Pop-Up Sutton

**Action 2:** Raise awareness and promote meanwhile uses to owners of vacant properties, landowners, landlords, developers, start-ups, existing micro and SME businesses, business associations, ward members, town teams and community groups, across the borough.

The Centre for London<sup>49</sup> identifies that landowners can overestimate the risks of meanwhile use. Brent can provide confidence and assurance to landowners/landlords, through guidance and collateral that debunks myths, and promote pathways and the benefits of meanwhile uses.

- Promote the new preferred Meanwhile Provider list.
- Publish guidance and a set of FAQs that explains how meanwhile uses work and their benefits.
- Signpost resources such as government meanwhile use lease templates and guidance for property owners, as well as the Meanwhile Foundation toolkit.

<sup>49</sup> Centre for London (2018) Meanwhile in London: Making Use of London's Empty Spaces



- Create online content promoting meanwhile use, including successful case studies, best practice and positive news stories.
- Promote meanwhile use opportunities at events in the Brent for Business programme.
  - Invite meanwhile providers to host stalls and networking opportunities to expand local knowledge and increase meanwhile opportunities.
  - Advertise national organisations such as Appear Here to businesses that may want to let property on a temporary basis.
- Set up a register for start-ups, SMEs, arts organisations and community groups looking for short term lets.
  - Request prospective tenants to identify spaces that may be suitable including location, uses, rent expectations, size requirements and length of occupancy.
- Set up a register for landowners/landlords interested in making vacant sites and premises available for meanwhile use.

### **Action 3:** Consider a discretionary business rates relief for meanwhile uses

Business rates represent a major cost and disincentive to activating vacant spaces to deliver meanwhile uses. A specific discretionary business rates relief scheme could encourage meanwhile uses that deliver local socioeconomic benefits on a greater number of sites across the borough.

- Working closely with economic development and finance colleagues, build a business case for rates relief that supports start-ups, micro and SME businesses within meanwhile uses, with reference to precedent policies on rates relief in other London Boroughs.
- Identify priority socio-economic outcomes for a meanwhile uses rates relief policy (e.g. local employment outputs, re-occupation of vacant premises) and assess potential costs in terms of lost income to the council.
- Based on mapping exercises and turnover analysis, plus current/forecast economic context, identify priority locations and sectors (including at risk sectors) to target for discretionary business relief to stimulate economic growth in particular locations/sectors.
- Assess options for pilot schemes for particular geographies, sectors or to deliver specific priority socio-economic outcomes, versus a blanket whole borough rollout
- Agree recommended criteria for the application process for a business or operator to receive discretionary rates relief.
- Agree recommended termination policy should the organisation cease to meet the eligibility criteria or cease trading.
- Secure relevant approvals and implement and promote discretionary business rates relief policy to meanwhile providers.
- Monitor successful relief applications against agreed criteria and creation of new meanwhile uses within the borough.

#### **Case Study: BOXPARK**



Shoreditch, First BOXPARK

BOXPARK was conceived as a way of delivering meanwhile uses on brownfield or under-utilised sites pending permanent redevelopment<sup>1</sup>.

BOXPARK Wembley opened on Quintain's Wembley Park site in 2018. The first BOXPARK in Bishopsgate Goods Yard, Shoreditch opened in 2011, and another site in Croydon opened in 2016.

**Action 4:** Coordinate Town Centre Manager networks and intelligence, together with National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) data, to target meanwhile uses at vacant properties in priority town centres and on the high street.

- Use Town Centre Managers (TCMs) knowledge and on the ground contacts to facilitate and support the delivery of meanwhile use projects.
- TCMs to develop and flex networks to put individuals and businesses interested in meanwhile use in touch with each other and the owners of vacant properties.
- TCMs to regularly report changes and new vacancies on the high street.
- Use TCM intelligence, NNDR data and GIS to record and map accurate and up to date vacancy data across Brent.
- Analyse data and identify priority vacant property to be proactively targeted for meanwhile uses, including properties with larger floorplates and clusters of vacant shop units.
- Consolidate NNDR descriptors to better understand typologies that are vacant – taking a similar approach to the Annual Monitoring Report Town Centre Health Checks.
- Work closely with TCMs and the Revenue team to contact landowners/landlords of target properties, to understand the reasons for vacancy, building condition, current and long-term plans, and gauge appetite for meanwhile uses.
- Quarterly review NNDR empty property records and Town Centre Manager intelligence in each priority town centre, update property mapping and target property list.
- Publish an interactive map of vacant properties online to encourage engagement between property owners and meanwhile providers and an increase meanwhile uses.

**Case Study: Montrose Crescent, Wembley**



The planning application for the major mixed use redevelopment of Montrose Crescent car park next to Wembley High Road in LB Brent submitted a retail demand study to understand the likelihood of attracting occupants.

Despite identified potential for relatively high take up levels, a meanwhile strategy was devised in the event the space remained vacant and to allow for alternative uses.

**Action 5:** Implement proposed draft Local Plan policy and require robust meanwhile use feasibility studies for phased major developments. Proactively engage with owners of vacant development sites to facilitate and realise meanwhile uses to test out commercial uses.

*Local Planning Authorities do in cases require a Vacant Unit Management Strategy (VUMS) for larger mixed-use schemes under planning conditions, such that in the event a unit becomes vacant and no replacement tenant is secured, the applicant must dress the frontage and, after an agreed timeframe, make the unit available for meanwhile use whilst searching for a longer term tenant. This is an effective tool in reducing medium and long terms vacancy levels<sup>50</sup>.*

- Create a developer information pack with meanwhile uses guidance, including a standard template for meanwhile use feasibility studies.
- Signpost meanwhile guidance and the preferred Meanwhile Provider list to developers on sites required to submit meanwhile use feasibility studies.
- Work with developers to identify suitable meanwhile uses and providers. Facilitate the promotion of opportunities and procurement of providers in collaboration with developers.

<sup>50</sup> London First (2020) Planning Manifesto for High Streets and Town Centres

- On large multi-phased regeneration schemes incorporate meanwhile uses, and as part of wider masterplans for Alperton, Church End, Neasden Station and Staples Corner growth areas. Projects with single ownership would be favourable for such meanwhile projects.
- For the largest site allocations, regeneration areas, and multi phased developments, draw up meanwhile briefs including preferred sectorial uses, potential Meanwhile Providers and links to local business, community and resident groups.

### Increasing delivery of Meanwhile Uses

There would be little meanwhile space in London without local authorities. Local authorities lead by example and work in partnership to deliver meanwhile uses in vacant Council-owned buildings and sites, and by brokering arrangements between private land and property owners and meanwhile providers. Post the coronavirus pandemic, a rise in vacant commercial property is anticipated across the borough, including shut smaller retail units in town centres that will not re-open. Meanwhile uses provide an opportunity to help re-activate these vacant spaces and prevent decline, but the Council needs to intensify and co-ordinate its efforts and explore new delivery models and partnerships if that opportunity is to be realised.

**Action 6:** Mitigate risks of meanwhile use through effective pre and post project planning.

Meanwhile use projects by definition are interim and time limited. Proper planning must be given to the impacts that these projects will have upon places, and transparent engagement made with the people that will use them in order to secure essential community buy in, in advance of their set up and delivery.

- Undertake outreach to Town Teams, Neighbourhood Forums, Business Associations and Community groups, pre-planning of meanwhile use; in order to ensure proposals are robust and secure stakeholder buy-in, prior to implementation.
- Clearly agree, communicate and record the agreed timescale of proposed meanwhile uses upfront and throughout the project lifecycles, in order to manage community expectations, and in anticipation of potential challenge when the meanwhile use is extinguished.
- Where possible develop 'exit-strategies' for meanwhile uses, including move-on solutions for meanwhile spaces or links to permanent spaces created in new developments.
- Where meanwhile use is implemented in high street units, then seek to attract occupiers interested in testing out business proposals, prior to more permanent arrangements, including commitment from the start to staggered

#### **Case Study: Northfields / Grand Union, Alperton**

St George are developing over 3,000 homes on the former 20 acre Northfields Industrial Estate with their multi-phased 20-year housing led mixed use regeneration adjacent the Grand Union Canal. Whilst the scheme will also provide for an estimated 180,000sqft light industrial 'Generator' building, there will be significant employment space lost and unavailable over the construction period.

To mitigate for the loss of employment space, s106 planning obligations require temporary provision of light industrial uses in a creative quarter, during the second phase of the development.



Former Northfields Industrial Estate, Alperton

increases in rents for successful businesses to normalise to commercial costs.

- Monitor meanwhile uses to track supply and demand in the borough for different types of space and sectors, and feed this intelligence into S106 planning obligations to shape permanent work and/or community space requirements and allocations.
- Market commercial spaces to meanwhile use tenants to encourage permanent relocation.
- Encourage meanwhile use tenants to take up business support available from Brent Council or through the Meanwhile Providers through outreach, advertisement and events.

**Action 7:** Inform and direct meanwhile use projects in Council assets and developments.

Brent maintains a commercial property portfolio including offices, retail, industrial and community units. Council-owned and controlled vacant and underutilised assets within this portfolio have the potential for immediately deliverable opportunities for meanwhile uses.

- Working with Property, review all vacant and underutilised Council buildings for suitable opportunities for meanwhile uses.
- Working with TCMs, review all highways/public realm land within town centres for potential pop up uses, such as markets, kiosks, static or performance art installations.
- Working with the South Kilburn Estate Regeneration team, explore the potential for meanwhile uses on Council sites awaiting redevelopment.

**Action 8:** Create and facilitate meanwhile projects that focus on creative, enterprise and workspace uses to fill vacant properties in priority town centres and on the high street.

- Review and develop different approaches, models and solutions for meanwhile uses to fill gaps on high streets where traditional uses may be in temporary or permanent decline.
- Survey meanwhile and affordable workspace providers to review potential suitable end business users to fill town centre vacancies, including creative, cultural and maker uses with point of sale needs, and business enterprise uses, then location, minimum floor space, and end user needs, as well as financial and other requirements.
- Build a database of suitable sites that could accommodate creative and workspace uses short to mid-term based on survey of operator requirements, including pre-development sites, vacant properties with larger floorplates, and clusters of vacant shop units or gaps on high streets where traditional uses may be in temporary decline post COVID-19.
- Review finance options, including any available incentives such as business rates reliefs, grants or loans, and develop a series of pilot competition schemes for priority locations.
- Engage with owners/developers to understand the reasons for vacancy and gauge interest in

#### Case Study: Blue House Yard



Blue House Yard, Wood Green, is a mix of affordable workspace, commercial units and community space developed in partnership between LB Haringey, Meanwhile Space CIC and Jan Kattein Architects. Blue House Yard forms part of the cultural quarter in with three other meanwhile uses in the vicinity including Green Rooms and Collage Arts in the Chocolate Factory.

Blue House Yard has hosted over 80 tenants and employed over 10 people in its first year of operation<sup>1</sup>.



- meanwhile projects to fill vacant space or test out commercial uses prior to development.
- Work with interested owners/developers to procure affordable workspaces/meanwhile operators for the selected priority pilot properties/sites.
- Work with selected operators and owners/developers, to facilitate and deliver the pilot projects, and monitor impact over the duration.
- Consider options to scale up, including strategic partnership models where preferred operators would be selected to cover geographic patches and engage directly with owners/developers within agreed parameters specifically to deliver creative and enterprise uses.
- Assess options for the Council to acquire vacant high street units for workspace use.

**Action 9:** Work with Council licencing to activate temporary pop ups and spaces in town centres and high streets (in private and Council owned assets).

- Working with TCMs and Highways, review town centres for publicly and privately owned sites that are most suitable for temporary pop up uses and installations
- Undertake risk assessments to increase the number of permanent and temporary street trading licences in the borough in town centres suitable for street trading.
- Using risk assessment outcomes, identify sites suitable for kiosks and markets. Advertise opportunities to start-ups and SMEs to test their business ideas for a short period of time.
- Work with landowners and council highways and environment colleagues to bring forward pop up place making interventions on larger public plazas and spaces. Initial interventions could prioritise the Wembley Central public square, as well as areas where traditional retail uses have been lost on high streets.
- Review existing Council licensing regulations and consider whether changes, including “meanwhile zones”, are needed to better support meanwhile and temporary uses.

**Case Study: Streatham Investment and Growth Strategy<sup>1</sup>**

London Borough of Lambeth created the Streatham Investment and Growth Strategy 2019-2030. The strategy identifies key actions that the Council can take to make the town centre and businesses more resilient. Actions to support the diversification and strengthening of the town centre include the acquisition of vacant unit leases by the Council in partnership with an operator on a meanwhile use basis to test out new businesses or entrepreneurs. Actions also support acquiring vacant units to provide additional workspace.

**Action 10:** Explore options for strategic area based partnerships where providers are selected to take on multiple units on a sub-borough or borough wide basis.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government launched the Open Doors Pilot in 2018, working closely with Meanwhile Foundation. The pilot gave vacant property owners, an opportunity to bring their vacant units back into use, and benefit local community groups. There was a notional limit of £25,000 costs for each property (to pay for legal fees, programme officer costs, business rates, utility bills and remediation costs). The 5 pilot sites chosen are located in *Bradford, Fenton (Stoke-on-Trent), Kettering, Rochford and Slough* and are activated for a period of up to 12 months – each space has been refurbished to provide a bright welcoming environment<sup>51</sup>.

- Soft market test meanwhile and affordable workspace providers to gauge appetite, understand requirements, and determine fit with Brent’s vision and strategic objectives.

<sup>51</sup> Meanwhile Foundation Accessed: <https://www.meanwhile.org.uk/pages/25-open-doors>

- Procure a strategic provider partner(s) to deliver meanwhile projects in priority town centres with vacancy levels above the London average.
- Agree geographical patches and target number of units to be activated, as well as benefits for property owner(s), funding available, socioeconomic outputs, and length of the project.
- Develop application process and shortlisting criteria to prioritise prospective spaces including size, use class, length of vacancy, and rationale for applying.
- Advertise to property owners of known vacant properties within priority town centres with vacancy levels above the London average. Assess applications based on agreed criteria. Assess applications and provider to enter leases for the set period.
- Partners to provide updates on progress of meanwhile projects.

## Appendix 2: Town Centre Analysis

### Church End



Church End is a local centre, with a smaller neighbourhood offer that is characterised by an unbalanced amount of betting and takeaway shops, and with generally smaller sized retail units. Church End has the highest vacancy rate out of the 9 priority Town Centres (12%)<sup>52</sup>.

The town centre is identified for partial redevelopment with plans to create a new market square and new housing to catalyse regeneration. Church End has

relatively low PTAL (2 to 3) compared to other town centres in Brent, but is expected to benefit from growth and in the future from the West London Orbital.

Brent Council owns two units in Church Road (205 & 235). Both assets are part of the proposed redevelopment of the car park to the rear of Church Road, and are in poor condition.

Vacant retail units in Church End are in fragmented ownership, although Catalyst Housing own 2 units. Most vacant units have been vacant for over 2 years, which suggests longer-term decline and is symptomatic of a struggling high street. The majority of vacant units are in A1 use class (shops). A1 use class allows for flexible change of use to other A use classes, as well as B1 (office) and D (community) on sites smaller than 150sq.m, (with other restrictions). The vacant units are small with an average footprint of just over 1,000 sq.ft. or 92.9 sq.m.

Some respondents to the online survey felt meanwhile uses should be prioritised in Church End, but interest was significantly lower than other town centres and high streets.

The draft Local Plan identifies the need for new space for an employment, community and health hub in the Church End growth area, and it is home to a number of smaller locally significant industrial estates allocated for mixed use redevelopment. The town centre itself would benefit from diversification. There is currently limited leisure space within the town centre; and, whilst there are community spaces, they cater for very specific ethnic groups e.g. Afghan Cultural Centre.

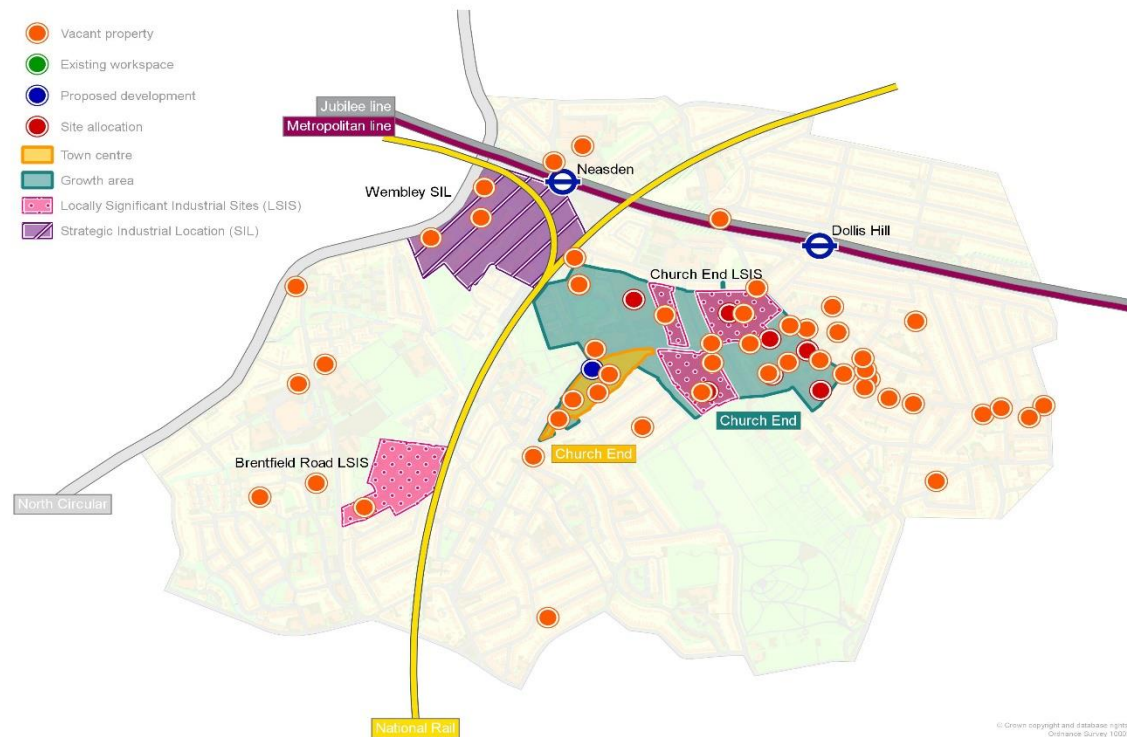
With the wider regeneration of the Church End growth area, meanwhile uses could create new spaces that may suit future resident businesses or provide temporary decant space for existing smaller and lighter businesses in industrial sites allocated for redevelopment, including those directly north and east of the town centre. The draft Local Plan also identifies the Church End growth area as suitable for additional enterprise space.

Priority sectors <sup>53</sup> :	Food preparation & consumption
	IAC for small businesses
	Creative spaces

<sup>52</sup> Brent Council (2020) Annual Monitoring Report 2018/19

<sup>53</sup> Brent Council (2020) Affordable Workspace Strategy and Action Plan

Figure 5 Church End



Vacant units in town centre boundary<sup>54</sup>

134 CHURCH ROAD
164-166 CHURCH ROAD
181 CHURCH ROAD
200 CHURCH ROAD
205 CHURCH ROAD
215 CHURCH ROAD
222 CHURCH ROAD
235 CHURCH ROAD
217 CHURCH ROAD
224 CHURCH ROAD

<sup>54</sup> NNDR data (September 2020)



## Neasden

Neasden town centre is a District Centre which has a vacancy rate (7%)<sup>55</sup> higher than the London average but that has reduced significantly between 2017 and 2019, with a number of new small businesses locating into the area, providing additional servicing offer, including a launderette. Vacant units are small and in fragmented ownership; however, there are stretches of adjacent vacant properties that may lend themselves to providing meanwhile use across larger floor space. The majority of vacant units are in A1 use class, which allows for some flexible change of use. The vacant units are small, with an average footprint of 1,150 sq.ft. or 106.8 sq.m., and the largest is just over 2,400 sq.ft. or 223 sq.m.



21% of survey respondents felt meanwhile uses should be prioritised in Neasden town centre. One unit 251-253 Neasden Lane was identified as a priority for bringing back into use; this unit is more recently vacant but significant, as it was a former national high street chain.

Many of Neasden's challenges relate to surrounding road infrastructure. The North Circular Road divides the town centre in two, and the A4088 dual carriageway runs along its western edge. Neasden Lane is composed of predominantly smaller independent traders made up of takeaway restaurants and is struggling with vitality<sup>56</sup>. Neasden has relatively low PTAL (2 to 3) compared to other town centres in Brent, but will benefit from local growth and in the future from the West London Orbital.

Neasden town centre is the only town centre explicitly identified in the emerging Local Plan for meanwhile use. In particular, Neasden is identified as suitable for diversification to support the existing offer through flexibility of uses, focused on low cost workspaces or small retail units<sup>57</sup>. Workspace in the core town centre would complement the existing workspace at the Grange Business Hub. The Grange is currently at 95% capacity, however enquiries for spaces have increased in 2020<sup>58</sup>, and they are looking to expand through additional outbuildings on their existing site. The project is called the Barn and is scheduled to be complete by and will increase the Grange's capacity by mid-2021. The new site will increase by Grange's capacity by approximately 100 tenants, providing a desk-based shared workspace and events space.

<sup>55</sup> Brent Council (2020) Annual Monitoring Report 2018/19

<sup>56</sup> Brent (2019) Draft Local Plan

<sup>57</sup> Brent (2019) Draft Local Plan

<sup>58</sup> Information provided by ABi Associates CIC, 4<sup>th</sup> February 2020

Brent Council does have some assets in Neasden town centre however the majority are car parking spaces, as well as freehold interest in The Grange Business Hub.

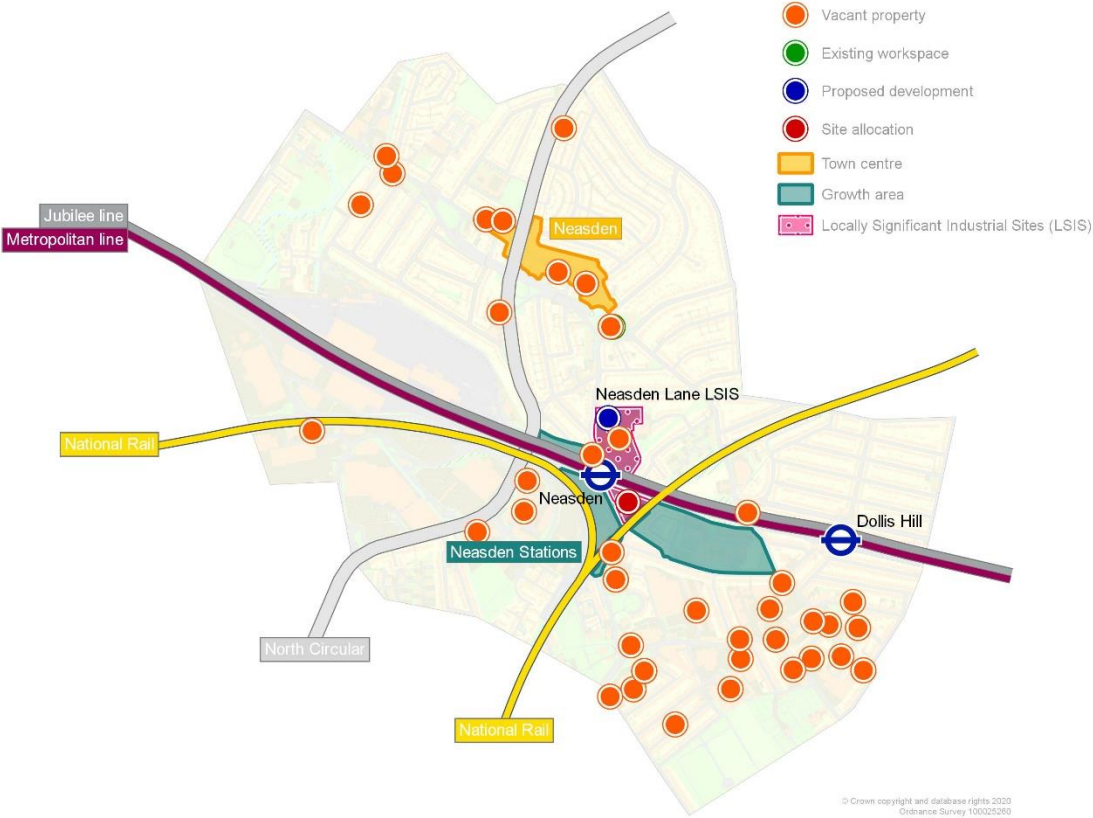
The draft Local Plan also identifies Church End growth area as suitable for additional enterprise space. Due to the close proximity, Church End or Neasden town centre could facilitate a meanwhile use pilot prior to long-term redevelopment or provide temporary decant space for smaller businesses in industrial sites allocated for redevelopment.

Priority sectors <sup>59</sup> :	Food preparation & consumption
	Artists
	Financial, professional services & knowledge economy
	ICT, digital & creative

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<sup>59</sup> Brent Council (2020) Affordable Workspace Strategy and Action Plan

Figure 6: Neasden



Vacant units in town centre boundary<sup>60</sup>

243 NEASDEN LANE
251-253 NEASDEN LANE
GARAGE R/O 285 NEASDEN LANE
KENNY HOUSE 38 BIRSE CRESCENT
263 NEASDEN LANE
271-273 NEASDEN LANE
277 NEASDEN LANE
238-242 NEASDEN LANE

<sup>60</sup> NNDR data (September 2020)

## Willesden High Road



Willesden High Road is the largest District Centre in Brent<sup>61</sup>. Willesden High Road is characterised by independent shops, cafés and restaurants<sup>62</sup>. There is a much higher concentration of micro and small businesses within the South East of the borough, and specifically in Willesden<sup>63</sup>. Willesden High Road is one of the longest stretches of high street within the borough, which lends itself to increased risk of vacancy and competition for businesses across the core and periphery of the high street. Willesden High Road has higher PTAL towards the Walm Lane eastern end of the high street, with a stronger shopping offer within the better maintained late Victorian built environment of the designated Willesden Green conservation area.

Brent's Future High Street Fund bid (2019) proposed to strengthen the higher performing core retail area and diversify the declining western fringe for new uses including workspace and housing.

Willesden High Road has the second highest vacancy rate (11%)<sup>64</sup> in Brent, and is comparatively high compared to the London average. The majority of vacant units are A1, followed by A3 (restaurants and cafes). Like A1, A3 use class allows for flexible change of use to other A use class as well as B1 and D at sites smaller than 150 sq.m (with other restrictions). Longer-term vacancy is present in Willesden, especially toward the fringes; however, vacancy in the core has increased more recently. As per most of Brent's town centres, the vacant units are relatively small, with an averaging footprint of 1,506 sq.ft or 140 sq.m. However, there are 3 units with over 2,000 sq.ft. or 185 sq.m. of space.

Existing meanwhile use projects within Willesden High Road have added to the vibrancy of the town centre and supported placemaking. Examples include Queen's Parade and the former Willesden Green Police station operated by Meanwhile Space and Create Space. Queen's Parade is a parade of 5 retail units within single ownership which functioned as an Incubator, Accelerator and Co-working (IAC) space in its infancy, and now provides affordable workspace to small businesses, in a similar vein, the former Willesden Green police station offers makerspaces through a mix of studio and co-working.

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<sup>61</sup> Regeneris Consulting Ltd (2017) Brent Workspace Study

<sup>62</sup> Brent (2019) Draft Local Plan

<sup>63</sup> Regeneris Consulting Ltd (2017) Brent Workspace Study

<sup>64</sup> Brent Council (2020) Annual Monitoring Report 2018/19



Brent Council owned assets in Willesden High Road are predominantly residential or identified for residential redevelopment (Learie Constantine Centre); however, the Willesden Green Library is an anchor community and cultural offer for the high street. The Council do own land in the core of the town centre – Ellis Close, which links through to the Sainsbury's superstore. The space is currently the site of a mural, organised by the Town Centre Manager; however, the centrality and size of the space may allow for additional temporary uses, such as pop-up markets, static or performance art installations.

Over 45 survey respondents, higher than any other area, identified Willesden High Road for meanwhile uses. The presence of existing meanwhile uses here may be a factor for this interest. Vacant units identified as priorities for meanwhile use were concentrated in the core high street closer to Willesden Green station (21 Walm Lane and 60 Walm Lane).

The draft Local Plan identifies Willesden High Road as an area to secure new retail space as well as an opportunity for new homes along the peripheral fringes<sup>65</sup>. Site allocations within Willesden High Road include the large Sainsbury's supermarket. The existing cluster of creative workspace identified in Willesden would support additional creative use. Securing permanent tenants on the high street should be the priority, however, pop-up spaces could be utilised to create a new draw and provide an opportunity for placemaking. Allowing flexibility in use class will enable a variety of pop-ups including retail and gallery spaces.

In 2018, Brent Council commissioned Jan Kattein Architects (JKA) to undertake detailed analysis of Willesden High Road. JKA identified 110-124 High Street, a terraced strip peppered with vacant units, as suitable for trial pop-up shops, micro workspaces and alternative high street units. Willesden High Road also has a number of slack or underutilised spaces. The JKA study identified two car parks towards the eastern fringe of the high road that could host meanwhile projects whilst awaiting development; however, both are in private ownership.

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<sup>65</sup> Brent (2019) Draft Local Plan

Figure 7: Slack spaces identified in Willesden High Road



Right – Left, Rear of 282 High Road; Ellis Close entrance

Priority sectors <sup>66</sup> :	Food preparation & consumption
	Artists
	Financial, professional services & knowledge economy
	ICT, digital & creative

<sup>66</sup> Brent Council (2020) Affordable Workspace Strategy and Action Plan

Figure 8: Willesden Green



Vacant Units in the town centre boundary<sup>67</sup>

54 HIGH ROAD
78 HIGH ROAD
91-93 HIGH ROAD
115 HIGH ROAD
117 HIGH ROAD
149-151 PT (GND FLR) HIGH ROAD
21 WALM LANE
27 WALM LANE
78 WALM LANE
35 WALM LANE
27 HIGH ROAD
51-55 HIGH ROAD
71 HIGH ROAD
100 HIGH ROAD
GND FLR 100C HIGH ROAD

<sup>67</sup> NNDR data (September 2020)

## Wembley



Wembley is home to one of Brent's two Major Town Centres, with ambitions to be designated a Metropolitan Centre in the new London Plan. Wembley has excellent transport links (particularly around Wembley Triangle), with three stations and a high PTAL of between 4 to 6a.

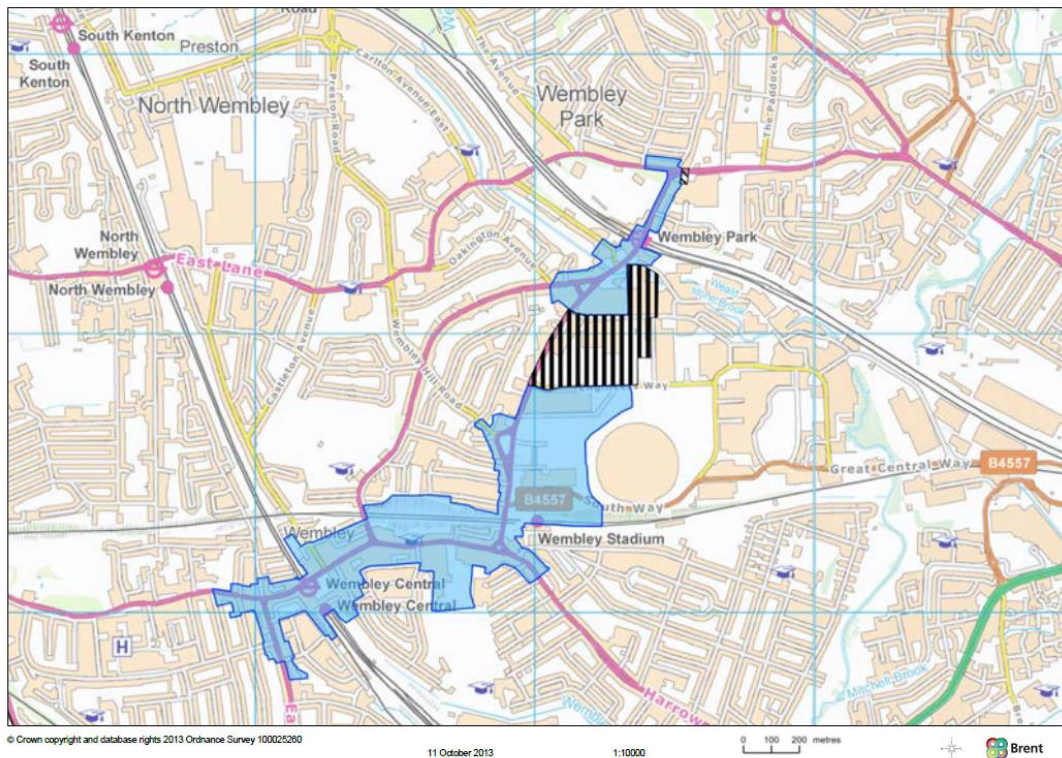
The London Plan and Brent's Local Plan both recognise the importance of Wembley's night time economy, which provides potential scope for additional

meanwhile uses.

Wembley Major Town Centre takes in the traditional established High Street, running west to east from Wembley Central Station to Wembley Triangle / Wembley Stadium Station, plus new retail uses coming forward as part of the major regeneration around Wembley Stadium.

Smaller Wembley Park District Centre located north of Wembley Stadium, running up to Wembley Park Underground Station, prior to 2018-19 had a lower vacancy rate than Wembley Major Town Centre (c. 2% 2015-2017). However, in 2018-19 vacancy levels were recorded as equalised in both Town Centres (7%), suggesting a recent decline in Wembley Park and concurrent reduced vacancy in Wembley Central (see table 2). Larger units becoming vacant on the Wembley Stadium Retail Park in 2018, including the former Maplin store, are viewed as having driven the increase in vacancy levels in Wembley Park District Centre.





Map 21.1 Wembley Major Town Centre extension (vertical lines) and Wembley Park District Centre extension (diagonal lines)

Vacant units are split between A1 and A3 units along Wembley High Road, with some A2 and B1. In comparison, the majority of units in Wembley Park District Centre are A2 use (professional and financial services). Wembley High Road has a higher quantum of vacant space, averaging c.3,314 sq.ft. or c.307 sq.m., with the largest being 9100 sq.ft. or 845 sq.m. (A3 use) and 6 other units over 2,000 sq.ft or 185 sq.m. This also includes 3 units in the London Designer Outlet, 2 units in BOXPARK and 4 commercial units in 2 new developments.

Some survey respondents identified Wembley High Road for meanwhile uses. 2 vacant office units were prioritised for meanwhile use (328-330 High Road, Fairgate House) and are situated in the Wembley Housing Zone.

Wembley High Road is undergoing massive transformation with increased housing along the whole stretch of the high road: at Montrose Crescent near Wembley Central Station, at Chesterfield House on the Park Lane junction and a number of new blocks at Wembley Triangle, as part of the Wembley Housing Zone transformation. New housing will accommodate a growing local population and boost footfall on the High Road.

The Council has leased Ujima House to meanwhile provider, Meanwhile Space CIC, prior to redevelopment. This follows meanwhile uses in Chesterfield House and Cottrell House in the Wembley area, in a partnership between Meanwhile Foundation and Brent Council. Meanwhile uses have helped diversify peripheral fringes to provide additional workspace and active frontages whilst these sites have prepared for redevelopment.

The significant public square outside of Wembley Central is under-utilised, with a limited number of temporary events, such as Wembley Christmas Market, hosted there. As a central gateway to the borough, the space could deliver an alternative to Wembley Park with a distinct

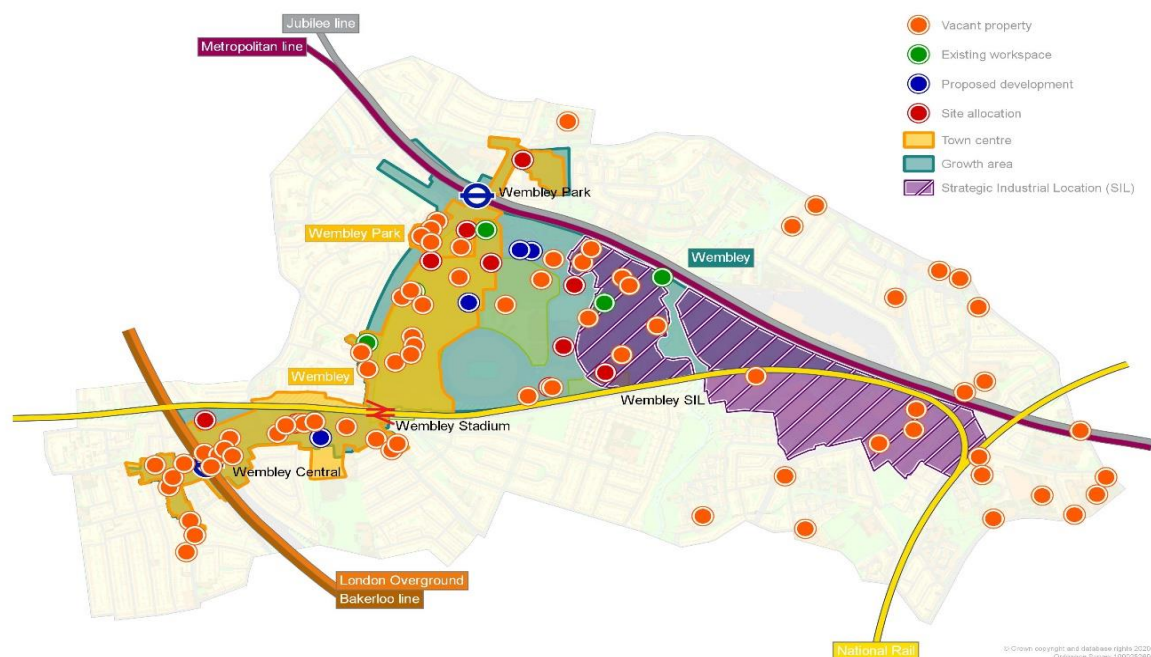
and more localised offer. Working with the landowner, a programme of events could be developed and a number of kiosks given permission throughout the year. In addition, the space could be utilised for pop up installations and events throughout the year, increasing dwell time to support the high street. Talisker Realty Corporation purchased Wembley Central from St Modwen in 2018, with Fidum PM as management agents. Discussions about increasing the use of the square are ongoing.

Priority sectors <sup>68</sup> :	Manufacturing, construction & wholesale
	Food preparation & consumption
	Artists
	Financial, professional services & knowledge economy
	ICT, digital & creative
	Life sciences

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<sup>68</sup> Brent Council (2020) Affordable Workspace Strategy and Action Plan

Figure 9: Wembley



#### Vacant Units<sup>69</sup>

17 CENTRAL SQUARE HIGH ROAD	1ST FLOOR 328-330 HIGH ROAD	32 EALING ROAD	32 EALING ROAD
1ST F 472 HIGH ROAD	1ST FLR UJIMA HOUSE	10 LONDON DESIGNER OUTLET	6 CORONET PARADE EALING ROAD
404 HIGH ROAD	2ND FLOOR 328-330 HIGH ROAD	106 LONDON DESIGNER OUTLET	UNITS 1-2 52 EALING ROAD
406 HIGH ROAD	308 HARROW ROAD	11 LONDON DESIGNER OUTLET	TURTON ROAD DEPOT MARKET WAY
412-444 HIGH ROAD	348A HIGH ROAD	18 OLYMPIC WAY	293 HARROW ROAD
444C HIGH ROAD	453A-453B HIGH ROAD	19 FULTON ROAD	UNIT 2 FORUM HOUSE
444D HIGH ROAD	87 WEMBLEY HILL ROAD	293 HARROW ROAD	PT 8TH FL NORTH
453C HIGH ROAD	FAIRGATE HOUSE	319 HARROW ROAD	319 HARROW ROAD
486-488 HIGH ROAD	GRD FLOOR 328-330 HIGH ROAD	6 CORONET PARADE EALING ROAD	19 FULTON ROAD
490 HIGH ROAD	NORMAN HOUSE 65-67 WEMBLEY HILL ROAD	68-70 LONDON DESIGNER OUTLET	10 LONDON DESIGNER OUTLET
511 HIGH ROAD	PT 10TH FL SOUTH	FR32 & 33 BOXPARK	11 LONDON DESIGNER OUTLET
544-546 HIGH ROAD	PT 10TH FL SOUTH	PT 8TH FL NORTH	68-70 LONDON DESIGNER OUTLET
550 HIGH ROAD	PT 2ND FLRS.FRONT AND PT 2ND FLR N.	TURTON ROAD DEPOT MARKET WAY	106 LONDON DESIGNER OUTLET
554-556 HIGH ROAD	YORK HOUSE	UNIT 2 FORUM HOUSE	FR32 & 33 BOXPARK
570-572 HIGH ROAD	4 WEAVER WALK	UNITS 1-2 52 EALING ROAD	18 OLYMPIC WAY
574 HIGH ROAD	7 WEAVER WALK	10TH FLOOR SOUTH	104 LONDON DESIGNER OUTLET WEMBLEY PARK
594 HIGH ROAD	1 WEAVER WALK	PT 14 FL NORTH EMPIRE WAY	3 LAKESIDE WAY
			26 EALING ROAD

<sup>69</sup> NNDR data (September 2020)

## Kilburn High Road



Kilburn is one of two Major Town Centres in Brent with a lively night-time offer including restaurants, pubs and the Kiln Theatre<sup>70</sup>. Within Kilburn High Road there is limited diversity in terms of retail offer. Similar to Willesden High Road, there is a higher concentration of micro and small businesses. Kilburn High Road has one of the highest PTAL in Brent, with 4 stations located along the length of the road, plus bus routes taking traffic into Central London. Kilburn High Road marks the boundary of the London Boroughs of Brent and of Camden, which complicates the ability

to co-ordinate action and intervention to improve the environment of the High Road.

Kilburn High Road has the third highest vacancy rate in Brent (11%), increasing by 4% in the last year. Anecdotally the high street has a relatively high churn for businesses, with the number of long-term vacant premises much lower than those vacant for a 1-2 year period. The majority of vacant units are A1 use class. The largest is c.6,300 sq.ft. or 585 sq.m. and a former government building. Vacant units are relatively small, with an average footprint of just over 1,000 sq.ft. or 93 sq.m. It is notable that the footprints of the retail stock are larger on the north side of Kilburn High Road in Camden, and smaller on the south side of Kilburn High Road in Brent. Footways are narrow on both sides of Kilburn High Road.

Some survey respondents identified Kilburn High Road for meanwhile uses. Predominantly temporary uses on a public square were prioritised and making better use of the Gaumont State Cinema. Engagement with the local Neighbourhood Forum identified a retail gap along the High Road that pop-ups could fill in the interim whilst a long-term draw is established. The Council own three assets on the Kilburn High Road frontage (Brondesbury Medical Centre, 41-43 and 379-383 High Road) as well as residential units behind the high street.

Brent's draft Local Plan identifies future development of Kilburn Market Square for a new public plaza to act as a focal point for the centre – providing an opportunity for temporary activities and uses on the square itself. Gaumont State Cinema is also identified as an underutilised asset to be brought back into full use to contribute to the vibrancy of the area. The London Borough of Culture (LBOC) and Metroland Studios have created 10 artist residencies for a 1 year meanwhile use in a disused office building adjacent Kilburn High Road. The opportunity should be taken to encourage busking, performances, cultural celebrations, and events, to add excitement and vitality to the area and increase footfall from nearby and further afield<sup>71</sup>, with ways to increase such activities to be reviewed as part of a proposed Kilburn Strategy to be developed with neighbouring LB Camden.

Priority sectors <sup>72</sup> :	Food preparation & consumption
	Artists
	Financial, professional services & knowledge economy
	ICT, digital & creative

<sup>70</sup> Regeneris Consulting Ltd (2017) Brent Workspace Study

<sup>71</sup> Mary Portas (2011) The Portas Review: An independent review into the future of our high streets

<sup>72</sup> Brent Council (2020) Affordable Workspace Strategy and Action Plan



Figure 10: Kilburn



### Vacant Units<sup>73</sup>

1ST FLR 4 EXETER PARADE EXETER ROAD	94 WILLESDEN LANE
41 KILBURN HIGH ROAD	47 KILBURN HIGH ROAD
101 KILBURN HIGH ROAD	8A-10A KILBURN BRIDGE
167-169 KILBURN HIGH ROAD	81 KILBURN HIGH ROAD
221 KILBURN HIGH ROAD	87 KILBURN HIGH ROAD
385 KILBURN HIGH ROAD	STORE R/O 343 KILBURN HIGH ROAD
2 PRIORY PARK ROAD	401 KILBURN HIGH ROAD
26 WILLESDEN LANE	BUILDERS YARD & PREMISES 7 WILLESDEN LANE
28 WILLESDEN LANE	73 WILLESDEN LANE
40-42 WILLESDEN LANE	1 KILBURN BRIDGE
75 WILLESDEN LANE	88 WILLESDEN LANE
85 WILLESDEN LANE	

<sup>73</sup> NNDR data (September 2020)

## Burnt Oak and Colindale



Burnt Oak and Colindale high streets are part of the wider Burnt Oak and Colindale growth area. Burnt Oak (also located within the London Boroughs of Barnet and of Harrow) and Colindale (also located within Barnet) is situated on the A5, a major transport corridor, struggle with their identity, and have relatively low PTAL (2 to 4) compared to other town centres in Brent. Burnt Oak and Colindale is a designated GLA

Opportunity Area in the new London Plan.

Brent has no assets along Burnt Oak or Colindale high streets. Vacancy levels in both town centres are broadly in line with the London average (Burnt Oak, 5% and Colindale, 8%). There are some long term vacant across both High Streets (1 Burnt Oak Broadway, 235, 223 and 291 Edgware Road) however, there is more recent vacancy over the past year. The majority of vacant units in Burnt Oak are A1, in Colindale vacant units are across A1, A2 and A3 use.

Burnt Oak has slightly larger vacant units, with an average footprint of c.2,500 sq.ft. or 232 sq. m, which includes the 18,000 sq.ft. or 1,672 sq.m. former Savoy Cinema (1 Burnt Oak Broadway aka Mecca Bingo). Vacant units in Colindale are much smaller, with an average footprint of only c. 800 sq.ft. or 74 sq.m.

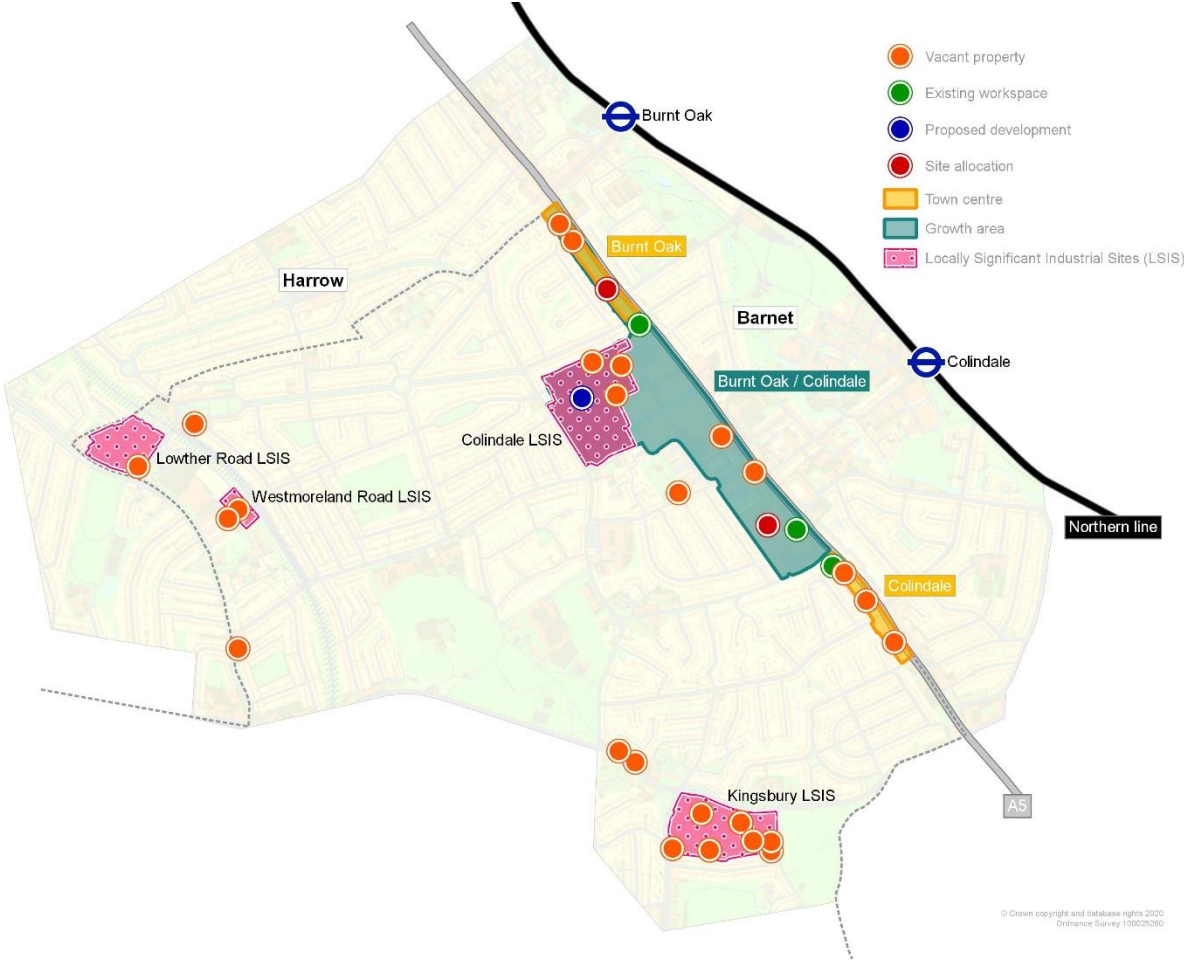
The former Savoy Cinema is a site allocation in the emerging Local Plan but also promotes enhancing the heritage asset through bringing it back into use. Targeted intervention could be used to help develop the identity of the area and provide new social infrastructure. Brent Council in 2020 engaged with the owner of the property regarding potential meanwhile use, however discussions paused at the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

Recent development has provided large convenience stores and created a new retail park. The draft Local Plan promotes increasing A3 and A4 floorspace, as well as securing sufficient physical and social infrastructure for population increases. There are high levels of self-employment in the north of the borough – providing additional flexible co-working space may create new draw to the high street, especially with the close proximity to Colindale Locally Significant Industrial Sites (LSIS) and due to the limited amount of workspace currently in the vicinity. Meanwhile intervention could be prioritised on sites coming forward rather than on retail units.

Priority sectors <sup>74</sup> :	Food preparation & consumption IAC Creative workspace
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<sup>74</sup> Brent Council (2020) Affordable Workspace Strategy and Action Plan

Figure 11: Burnt Oak & Colindale



Vacant Units<sup>75</sup>

Burnt Oak

1 BURNT OAK BROADWAY
45 BURNT OAK BROADWAY
R/O 45 BURNT OAK BROADWAY

Colindale

223 EDGWARE ROAD
235 EDGWARE ROAD
GND FLR & 1ST FLR R/O 243-247 EDGWARE ROAD
OFFICE 434 3RD FLR UNIT 4 WATLING GATE

<sup>75</sup> NNDR data (September 2020)

## Ealing Road



Ealing Road has one of the lowest vacancy rate out of the 9 priority town centres, and also lower than 4 out of 7 of the non-priority town centres (3%). Ealing Road has a specialist offer and is a unique local centre in Brent. The Council own some assets in Ealing Road, including Ealing Road Library, which has commercial space let. There was limited interest in bringing forward meanwhile uses in Ealing Road through the online survey or targeted engagement.

Crate UK in partnership with a local developer have however submitted a planning application for a 10-year meanwhile use project at 85, 87 and 89 Ealing Road. The project would bring forward 839 sq.m. or 9,030 sq.ft. of flexible retail, leisure and community space. The significant amount of space will provide job opportunities and new business space. To ensure the project succeeds, conventional thinking is that additional competition should not be encouraged.

## Harlesden



Harlesden is a District Centre and has a vacancy rate (6%) in line with the London average, and which has decreased by 4% from 2017-18. Similar to Neasden, an increase in smaller independents has driven the decline in vacancies. Harlesden is one of the most deprived areas in the borough, but the town centre has a rich cultural heritage and a number of Brent Council owned assets. Plans for the regeneration of town centre are underway, including through the recent Council acquisition of the Picture Palace, proposed

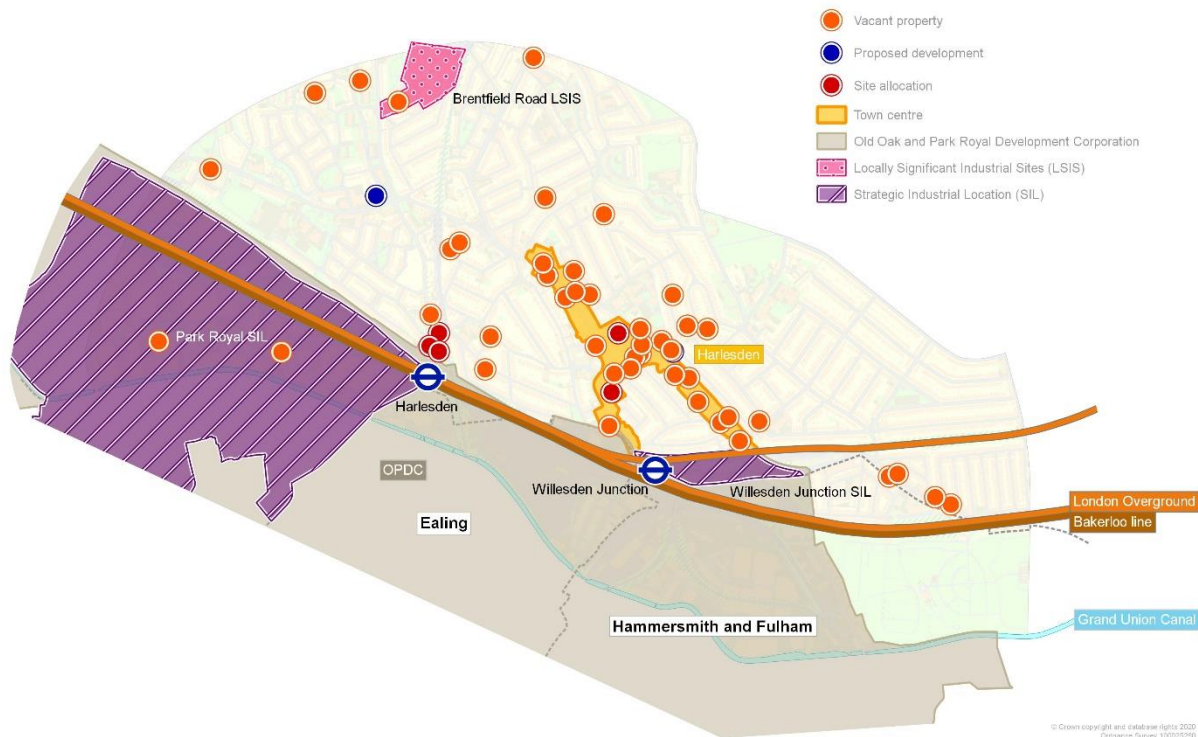
redevelopment of the Council-owned Designworks office building, and a local radio station acquisition of the former HSBC bank building.

The majority of vacant units are A1 use. The largest vacant unit is the Council-owned Picture Place at 4,300 sq.ft. or 399 sq.m. which was a former cinema, more recently used as a public house. The average vacant unit size is just under c.1,700 sq.ft. or c.157 sq.m. Other assets identified include the former HSBC Bank, Harlesden Methodist Church and Harlesden Plaza. Regeneration proposals are to increase capacity in the town centre for community, CVS, and commercial uses. The Picture Palace represents a significant short term meanwhile use opportunity which can be worked into the longer-term development of the town centre moving forward. Similar to Kilburn, Brent's year as London Borough of Culture will celebrate Harlesden's rich reggae heritage and the town centre regeneration plans aim to continue this.



Priority sectors <sup>76</sup> :	Food preparation & consumption
	Artists
	Financial, professional services & knowledge economy
	ICT, digital & creative

Figure 12: Harlesden



#### Vacant Units<sup>77</sup>

16 CRAVEN PARK ROAD	UNITS 1-2 AT 3 LIBRARY PARADE CRAVEN PARK ROAD
UNIT 4 AT 3 LIBRARY PARADE CRAVEN PARK ROAD	4 BANK BUILDINGS HIGH STREET
UNIT 5 AT 3 LIBRARY PARADE CRAVEN PARK ROAD	1ST & 2ND FLR 56 HIGH STREET
1ST FLR 3 LIBRARY PARADE CRAVEN PARK ROAD	60-62 HIGH STREET
UNIT 5 AT 81 HIGH STREET	1ST-2ND FLS 71-73 HIGH STREET
UNIT 7 AT 81 HIGH STREET	1ST & 2ND FLRS 74 HIGH STREET
170-172 HIGH STREET	UNIT 3 AT 113 HIGH STREET
212 HIGH STREET	UNIT 7 GND FLR ELM TREE
PARK KITCHEN PARK HOUSE 1 MANOR PARK ROAD	150 (PT BST) HIGH STREET
R/O 17 PARK PARADE	189A HIGH STREET
50 STATION ROAD	189B HIGH STREET

<sup>76</sup> Brent Council (2020) Affordable Workspace Strategy and Action Plan

<sup>77</sup> NNDR data (September 2020)

60-66 STATION ROAD	236 HIGH STREET
23B CRAVEN PARK ROAD	250 HIGH STREET
31B CRAVEN PARK ROAD	170-172 HIGH STREET
86 CRAVEN PARK ROAD	GND F & BST 5-6 PARK PARADE