



LBB DRAFT LONG TERM TRANSPORT STRATEGY 2020-41

Response of the Barnet Society

10 May 2020

INTRODUCTION

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

Our comments refer to <Appendix A – DRAFT – Barnet Long Term Transport Strategy v6.0 (Final Draft)> dated December 2019. The page numbering of this document is confusing, reverting to Page 2 after Page 15, and inconsistent with the Contents numbering. We follow the sequence of the document rather than the page numbers.

OVERVIEW OF THE DRAFT STRATEGY

The draft Strategy concentrates, understandably, on the south and middle parts of the Borough, where housing densities are, and planned to be, greater than in the northern parts. We believe it underestimates the transport challenges special to neighbourhoods like Chipping Barnet on the edge of the Metropolitan area.

The report should refer to the possible implications for transport in Barnet of the Coronavirus epidemic. We believe some changes will be inevitable. While it is too early to be definitive, some could benefit local town centres, if properly handled. For example, a sustained increase in home working would lead to an increase in suburban daytime population, with more demand for local goods and services. On the other hand, reductions in general traffic and local bus use during the crisis could lead to a sustained loss of demand for buses in Outer London and an increase in daytime car use.

Recent and future changes in travel habits may help prepare us for climate change, and even marginally delay it. Barnet's Long Term Strategy should reinforce them.

DETAILED COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT STRATEGY

2 Barnet in context

Transport in Barnet today

This fails to note the growth in Chipping Barnet, at least, of commuting eastwards, northwards and westwards at the expense of Central London.

Major planned transport improvements

This section merely reports briefly on items which are already committed or proposed. As a result, there is little to comment on.

It would help to have cross-referencing to allied details in the **public transport** section.

3 Vision

Objectives

We support **Objectives 1-5**, but would like to see more explicit commitment to sustainability.

4 Proposals

Figure 4.1: Proposals summary map

The graphics present an over-simplified picture of Chipping Barnet:

- New Barnet appears to be mainly a low-traffic neighbourhood, which would surprise many of its residents.
- Its eastern circle of on-demand bus service should be extended west beyond the main line (which already has a hail-and-ride section).
- Potential cycling connections should radiate to all compass points from High Barnet. (See also below, **C2**.)
- The local cycle network around High Barnet Station is optimistic, given its topography and limited road-space. (See also below, **C3**.)
- We hope that rail improvements are planned for the Great Northern main line.

Walking

Proposal W1: Healthier routes to schools

We strongly support School Streets and other measures to promote safe pupil travel.

We hope that the Council will take maximum advantage of the Government's recently-announced Walking Investment Strategy.

Proposal W4: Active route – the Barnet Loop

We support extension of the Dollis Valley Greenwalk subject to safeguards to pedestrians and the natural ecosystem, particularly the narrow and fragile linear woodland through Finchley.

Cycling

We welcome the draft Strategy's aim to support cycling and the proposals in the Cycling Action Plan. But they are not matched by meaningful investment in infrastructure. **Table 4.3** identifies only £100k per annum for cycle parking, an indeterminate sum on the cycle network, and none for cycle provision in densely populated areas and new developments except what might be contributed by (unspecified) private sector providers.

Frankly, for a Borough with historically low provision for cyclists, that is feeble.

We hope that the Council will take maximum advantage of the Government's recently-announced Cycling Investment Strategy.

Proposal C2: Cycle network

We support extension of the Dollis Valley Greenwalk.

High Barnet already sees quantities of leisure cyclists, and there is potential for a rather more diverse network of cycle routes than is shown on the map.

Proposal C3: Cycle provision

We are pleased that the draft Strategy recognises Barnet's topographical challenges. These are particularly acute around Barnet Hill.

Public transport

Proposal PT1: Express and orbital bus routes

This should be considered in part with the proposed West London fixed rail link. This orbital service will touch the south-west of the Borough, and as well as being important to the Brent Cross development it will help to provide an alternative to the western end of the crowded North Circular Road.

If continuation of the West London fixed rail link from Hendon to Finchley Central and beyond is not practicable, then a guided busway must offer very easy interchange with it. The flexibility of guided busways is that the vehicles can run on normal roads at either end of the reserved track to maximise residential penetration and linkage to transport/town centre hubs.

Arguably, a more appropriate comparison with the needs of Barnet than the Cambridge busway mentioned in the draft is the more modest Luton-Dunstable guided busway.

To the north of the Borough, conventional buses can achieve fast running times where they cross the Green Belt to achieve desired orbital links between transport hubs, town centres, hospitals, etc. TfL schooltime bus routes currently use such links now, and it may be worth expanding the scope of such provision to provide all-day connections. (See also below, **PT2**.)

Proposal PT2: Improve the existing bus network

There are gaps in the draft's coverage of this subject, some of which are especially relevant to outer parts of the Borough and need to be recognised.

Since the end of the 1970s, Outer London bus frequencies and network densities have greatly improved, as have reliability and ticketing practices. However outside Greater London, on non-TfL routes, long-term reductions in use have generally continued. This affects Chipping Barnet's connection with nearby Potters Bar and London Colney, where daytime frequencies have now generally halved in recent years, from four to two buses per hour, and minimal evening and Sunday service. This contrasts with connections to Potters Bar from both Enfield and Southgate, which have been maintained by TfL routes on unchanged frequencies of three buses per hour for many years. This promotes greater use of private cars between Barnet and Potters Bar/London Colney, which conflicts with the Mayor of London's responsibilities to consider connections to nearby centres outside Greater London.

There are very few opportunities for bus lanes north of North Finchley. Bus peak and between-peak frequencies generally do not vary; indeed in local centres congestion is more concentrated in shopping hours. Lack of parking restrictions on both sides of the road make passing in both directions impossible if one of the vehicles is wider than a standard motor car. Each small delay builds up over the length of a bus route and leads to running times being increased. On low-frequency services this means adopting widened headways, so for example a 15-minute clock-face frequency becomes one of 16 or 17 minutes – hardly easy to remember! Sections of the A109, A110, Friern Barnet Lane, Meadway, Potters Road, Manor Road are particularly problematic.

The draft Strategy makes no mention of school buses/coaches. Barnet is well supplied with schooltime TfL buses, most in the 6xx series, but with ‘extras’ on a few regular routes. There are also a number of contract coaches organised by schools. The demand is for journeys both within Greater London and across Borough and County boundaries, and in both directions. Some of the TfL-provided 6xx services travel quite long distances and cross the Borough orbitally. The new Ark Pioneer Academy at Underhill will undoubtedly attract some pupils from the west of the Borough, as indeed The Totteridge Academy already does. The feasibility of adapting some of these orbital connections into all-day orbital services would be worth exploring.

Conversely, middle-of-day routes such as the 399 route between Barnet town centre and Hadley Station should be considered for expansion to rush-hours, and should be extended to High Barnet Station.

No mention is made of shuttle or hopper buses. Their scope should be investigated, particularly between High Barnet Station (ideally its forecourt), Barnet Hospital and the town centre.

Bus routes to/from stations should be designed to minimise car travel. The recently-announced axeing of outlying residential areas from the 384 between High Barnet and Cockfosters Stations is a perverse incentive to drivers. We ask the Council to strongly oppose it.

Proposal PT3: Improve the existing rail and Underground services

It would be useful to list the areas where large housing development is taking place or proposed in the shorter term and nearby rail/tube stations, existing or proposed.

Similarly, it would be helpful to list proposed improvements to rail/tube (frequencies, investments, etc) on each branch of the Northern Line, the Thameslink line and the Great Northern local Welwyn line, as well as the latter’s absorption within TfL’s Overground network. These will necessitate station improvements, especially at New Barnet and New Southgate, and new slow line platforms at the North London Business Park site to serve the major housing development being built there.

While Crossrail 2 is a long way off, it may be worth floating the idea of its extension from New Southgate to Welwyn to boost the potential capacity of this line through Barnet to Hertfordshire and to parts of Central and South-West London.

Proposal PT4: On-Demand Services

It should not be forgotten that the first, and successful, on-demand service in London was in Barnet, between Golders Green and Hampstead Garden Suburb in 1974 (Dial-a-Bus). Most demand was to or from Golders Green, with deviations on request within the

residential part of the suburb. After a year or two of operation, when detailed demand was clear, the route became fixed, and has operated (and expanded) ever since.

We understand that the ArrivaClick Sittingbourne service, referred to in the draft, has now been withdrawn. A new ArrivaClick service was planned to be introduced in Watford at the end of March 2020.

On-demand services are notoriously difficult to design and operate successfully. Unlike Edgware, the Chipping Barnet and Whetstone area does not have suburban black cabs, but does have several minicab companies which serve local needs. Use of the developed TfL-controlled Dial-a-Ride system is restricted to the mobility-impaired and their carers, and is not available for outpatient hospital appointments.

There may be opportunities for on-demand services in areas indicated in the draft, but it is important that they do not lead to the withdrawal or collapse of existing provision and then themselves fail to be successful.

Proposal PT5: Gateways

We support high-density developments at transport hubs – but only if the stations themselves benefit from enhanced modal interchange and accessibility within and outside. We deplore TfL's failure to grasp this opportunity at High Barnet Station.

Car

None of the proposals in this section address the issue of car parking at edge-of-London tube and mainline rail stations such as High Barnet and New Barnet.

Hertfordshire commuters to London are drawn to High Barnet and New Barnet Stations because over recent decades bus services in Hertfordshire have atrophied or disappeared altogether. This has created extra demand for car use and parking at and around those stations, and the need to accommodate or mitigate this must be recognised in the Strategy.

Freight and logistics

Proposal F2: Consolidation

We would welcome micro-consolidation of deliveries in High Barnet town centre, as part of a suite of regeneration proposals being developed for Chipping Barnet Community Plan.