

Church End Finchley Town Centre Planning Strategy

Issues and Opportunities Report | February 2010





Contents

1.	Introduction	4
1.1	Document structure	4
1.2	Finchley Church End	4
1.3	Study area	4
1.4	Vision	4
2.	Understanding the issues	5
2.1	Local context	5
2.2	Demographic profile	6
2.3	Town centre character appraisal	7
2.4	Urban design and built environment analysis	11
2.5	The local property market	15
2.6	Transport and movement	16
2.7	Key emerging issues	20
3.	Opportunities	21
3.1	Introduction	21
3.2	Major opportunity sites	22
3.3	Public realm and building enhancements	23
4.	Next steps	26



1. Introduction

1.1 Document structure

This document sets out an analysis of Finchley Church End district centre. The aim of the document is to examine the key issues which influence Church End's competitiveness and attractiveness, generate debate on the issues and identify opportunities for further enhancement. Following this introduction, section 2 provides a summary of the context and issues affecting Church End. Section 3 then sets out the main opportunities identified for Church End district centre so far, with the next steps of the process detailed at section 4. The results of this work will inform a strategy for the town centre.

1.2 Finchley Church End

Church End is a district level centre, and is one of the most visited centres in the London Borough of Barnet. It is the most popular 'top-up' food destination in the Borough. The centre is essentially linear in form, and mostly comprises of Victorian and Edwardian buildings. The centre contains a variety of small independent shops and a relatively small number of national retailers (which include a Tesco). Church End also has a significant concentration of employment uses and is served by Finchley Central tube station on the Northern Line of the London Underground.

Church End is located in the centre of the London Borough of Barnet. The district centre of North Finchley is located to the north

east, with the district centres of East Finchley to the east, Brent Street and Hendon Central to the south west and Temple Fortune and Golders Green to the south. Church End is well located in relation to the strategic road network, with the North Circular (A406) and A1 easily accessible to the south of the centre via Regents Park Road or Hendon Lane, and the M1 motorway approximately two miles to the west.

Much of the southern part of Church End town centre is designated as a Conservation Area. The surrounding residential areas predominantly comprise family homes developed largely between the 1870s and 1930s.

1.3 Study area

The study area includes the central and peripheral shopping parades of Church End along Ballards Lane and Hendon Lane / Regents Park Road which is surrounded by residential suburbs. This stretches from Victoria Park in the north to approximately Gravel Hill in the south.

1.4 Vision

The vision that is emerging for Church End is:

To build on Church End's existing assets and strengths and develop as a thriving, vibrant and sustainable district centre with good links to the London underground network, which caters for the local and wider population of the Borough. The existing range of independent and niche retailers, convenience retail outlets, and local employment provision will be supported and enhanced. The centre will be easy to access and move around. The historic fabric will be protected, and the quality of the town centre environment improved for all. Through the formation of a public-private sector partnership it will be ensured that change is coordinated and benefits are maximised.



Figure 1.2 - Study area

2. Understanding the issues

2.1 Local context

Church End is one of fourteen district centres located within the London Borough of Barnet and is broadly comparable in size to North Finchley, Burnt Oak and Chipping Barnet .

Church End is focused along Ballards Lane, Hendon Lane and Regents Park Road (A598 and A504). These roads are lined with a variety of small independent shops, restaurants and cafes, offices, and a relatively small number of national comparison retailers. Church End caters well for convenience and service customers, and has a medium sized Tesco supermarket located within the heart of the retail area on Ballards Lane. This acts as the key anchor attracting visitors into the centre. Church End is the fourth most visited centre in the Borough, and the most popular destination for top-up food shopping (Creating Vibrant Suburban Town Centres in Barnet, Dec 2007).

Church End has an important cluster of employment uses, mainly concentrated in purpose built office accommodation to the south of the core retail area. These uses play an important economic role, providing local employment and supporting a wide range of other businesses in the centre, particularly through lunchtime trade.

Church End is served by the Northern Line of the London Underground (High Barnet branch), with Finchley Central Station located within the centre close to the Ballards Lane / Nether Street junction. As a result, the area is often referred to as 'Finchley Central' after the station. Church End is well served by buses with six services running through the area, serving a variety of destinations including Archway, West Finchley, Victoria, Cricklewood, New Southgate, Barnet and Brent Cross.

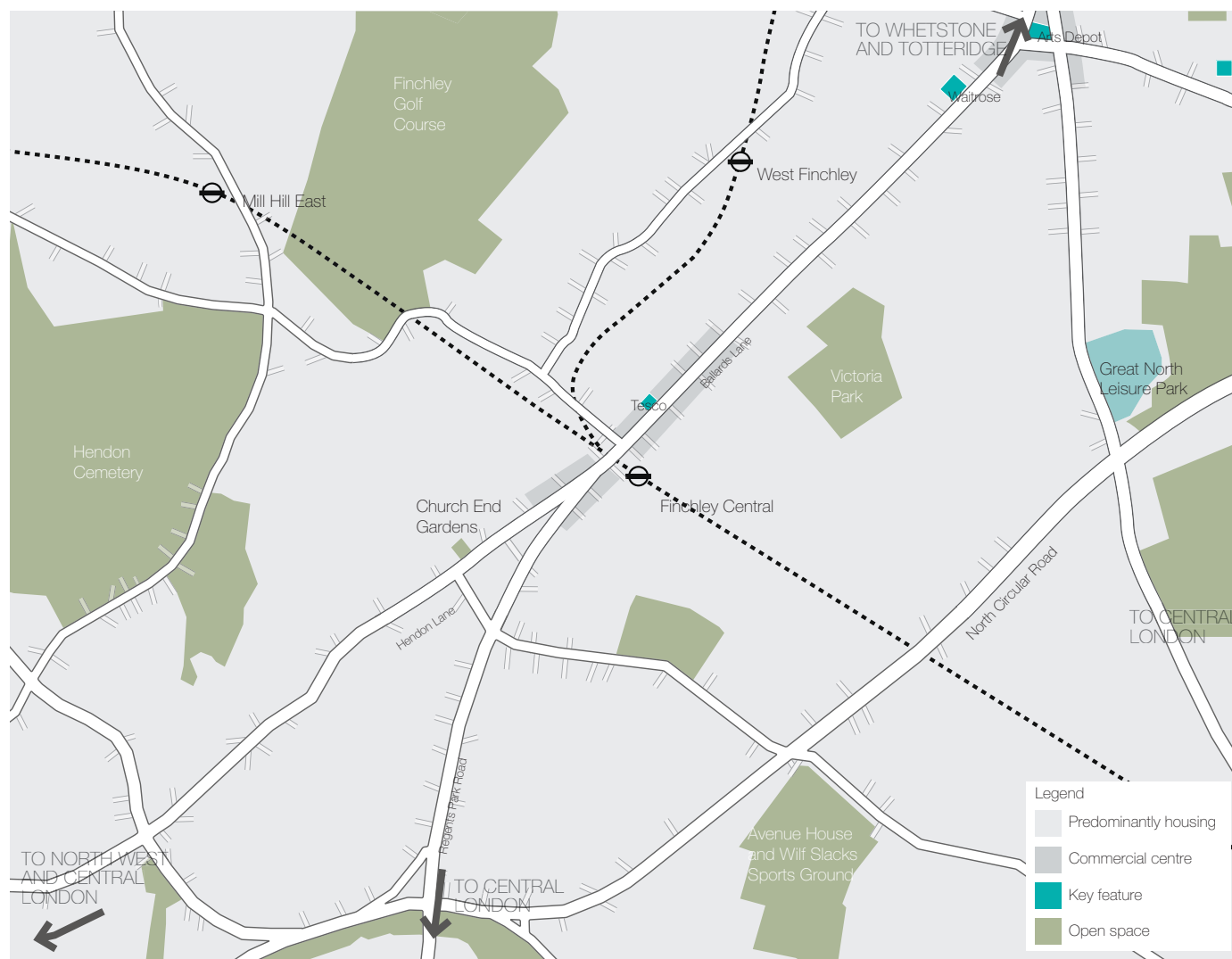


Figure 2.1 - Finchley Church End local context

Two main areas of open space exist at either end of the centre. Victoria Park is located at the northern end of the study area to the east of Ballards Lane, and includes playgrounds, gardens, playing fields, a bowling club, tennis courts and a cafe. The park is a formal Victorian park which opened in 1902. At the southern end of the study area to the east of Regents Park Road are the grounds of Avenue House (a Grade II listed Victorian mansion), which are designated as a site of local importance for nature conservation. To the east of Avenue House is Wilf Slacks Sports Ground. A smaller area of open space exists to the north of St Mary's Church (on Hendon Lane) in the form of Church End Gardens and an adjacent cemetery.

To the south of the tube station, Finchley Church End Conservation Area encompasses much of the historic environment surrounding St Mary's Church, and includes several listed buildings. As well as St Mary's Church, other significant buildings in Church End include Pades House Grammar School and Church End Library.

2.2 Demographic profile

The Church End study area incorporates two wards; Finchley Church End and West Finchley. The data for these wards provides a profile of the local population. The key findings are as follows:

- The total population of Church End and West Finchley wards in 2009 is 30,384. (From London Borough of Barnet).
- The age structure of Church End ward is generally reflective of both the rest of the Borough and the UK. However, 22% of the wards' population is aged 60 and above, compared to the Barnet average of 18% (Ward Profiles, London Borough of Barnet, 2009). Compared to the rest of the Borough, there is a slight over-representation of those aged 15-39, and under-representation of those aged 0-14 in West Finchley. The population of both wards is not expected to grow significantly over the next decade (Ward Profiles, London Borough of Barnet, 2009).
- The study area is ethnically diverse. Approximately 59% in Church End and 51% in West Finchley are 'white British', which is significantly lower than the national average of 92%.
- Church End has a rich mix of different religions. Christianity represents the single largest group at 33% in Church End ward and 43% in West Finchley ward; however this is closely followed by Judaism which makes up 29% of the population in Church End ward and 9% in West Finchley ward, very substantially higher than the UK average (0.5%). There is also

a strong representation of Hindus, Muslims, and Buddhists.

- The population density of Church End is greater than the borough average – Finchley Church End has an average of 21 dwellings per hectare, and West Finchley has 28 dwellings per hectare, which is significantly greater than the borough average of 15 dwellings per hectare (Census, 2001).
- Levels of health vary throughout the study area. The average life expectancy is slightly lower in West Finchley ward compared to Barnet, whereas the average life expectancy for Church End ward is 1.5 years above the average Barnet level (Ward Profiles, London Borough of Barnet, 2009).
- There is a low unemployment rate in Church End. In 2008, 2% of residents in Church End ward (December 2008) and 2.6% in West Finchley (November 2008) were claiming Jobseeker's Allowance, compared to an average of 2.9% of residents in Barnet and 3.8% nationally (November 2008) (Ward Profiles, London Borough of Barnet, 2009).
- Church End has a low level of deprivation. Finchley Church End ward is the third least deprived within Barnet, and has an average household income, which is 12% higher than the Barnet average. Household income in West Finchley is also above the borough average, with a comparable level of deprivation to the rest of Barnet (Ward Profiles, London Borough of Barnet, 2009).
- Compared to the Borough average Finchley Church End Ward has a greater number of people working in professional roles. West Finchley Ward has a substantially higher proportion of households which fall within the educated, young and single category, compared to the Borough average (Mosaic 2007).

2.3 Town centre character appraisal

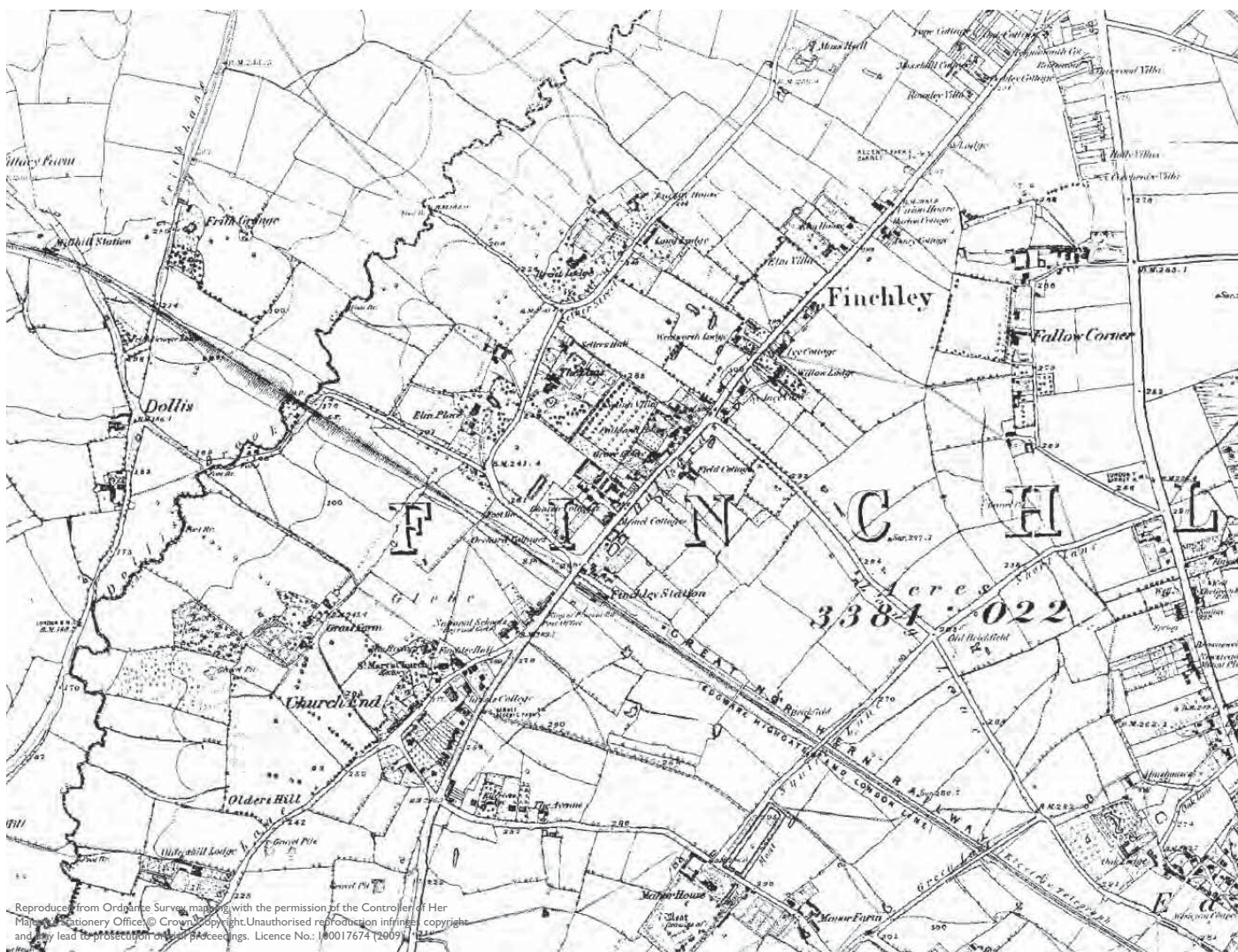
This section examines the character of Church End through an analysis of its historic development and identification of character areas.

Historical context

In 1872, Church End was still a small collection of dwellings focused on the triangle of Hendon Lane, Regents Park Road and Gravel Hill (see Figure 2.2). Only a handful of the buildings that existed at that time remain today including St. Mary's Church, Christ Church School (now Pardes House Grammar School) with its distinctive tower, built in 1860, a fine Georgian House at the north end of Gravel Hill and isolated buildings facing Regents Park Road.

By 1920, the Edwardian era had left a significant mark on Church End, with numerous large houses and gardens having been built. Almost all the land on the west side of Church End village centre had been either developed or laid out for development. However, Church End was not yet joined to other settlements.

By 1935, after 15 years of rapid development, all the streets that make up Church End today, were in place, with the exception of cul-de-sacs that would be built later in the century in the grounds of large houses. By 1935, the North Circular Road had been completed, bringing with it a southwards expansion of Church End.



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Figure 2.2 - 1872 OS Map (source: London Borough of Barnet Archives Online)

Character area analysis

The following section identifies four character areas which Church End district centre can be divided into. These character areas each have a clearly identifiable collective identity or role. The shading on Figure 2.3 provides an indication of the extent of the character areas, however in reality some overlapping and mixing of areas occurs. There are also a number of key buildings and uses which fall outside of the areas identified, for example Central House and Winston House, and other parts of the centre which are not identified as they do not have distinct homogenous character. All the major opportunity sites are identified in Figure 3.1.



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Figure 2.3 - Church End character analysis

Area 1: Core Retail Area

The retail core on Ballards Lane is characterised by long terraces of commercial buildings with varied retail and commercial uses at ground floor. Blocks of development become progressively more modern to the north, and buildings reduce in height towards Victoria Park marking the extent of Church End's shopping core. The southern extent of the character area is dominated by the busy junction of Nether Street and Ballards Lane, and the nine storey Central House office block. The area includes several independent and niche shops, popular restaurants and cafes.

Area 2: Transport Hub

Church End is well served by public transport with Finchley Central Northern Line Station located within the Centre, close to the Ballards / Nether Street junction, and a good network of bus services. However, there are a number of significant issues related to the quality of the station, the interchange between the station and bus services, traffic congestion within the town centre, poor quality temporary buildings and the quality of the wider pedestrian environment which will need to be addressed to ensure that Church End continues to be a thriving centre which serves the needs of the local area. The severance of the historic southern end of the town centre and the business area from the main shopping area to the north, by the railway bridge south of the Ballards Lane/ Nether Street junction, is a particular issue for Finchley Church End.



Area 1 - Ballards Lane north



Area 2 - Finchley Central station



Area 1 - Victoria Park approach



Area 2 - Railway bridge south of Ballards Ln/Nether St junction

Area 3: Business Area

Church End has an important cluster of employment uses, mainly concentrated in purpose built office accommodation to the south of the centre. These employment uses play an important economic role, providing local jobs and supporting a wide range of other businesses in the centre, particularly through lunchtime trade. It is important that this aspect of Church End's economic role is nurtured and supported. A number of other significant sites play a similar role although they fall outside the defined 'Business Area'. These include Winston House and Central House.

Area 4: Historic Village Core

The south west of the town centre includes the original Church End village and historic core of the town. The historic village core character area incorporates much of the Church End Conservation Area.

St Mary's Church and the Pardes House Grammar School on Hendon Lane provide key landmarks, along with King Edwards Hall on Regents Park Road. The historic village core also incorporates several niche and independent shops, and Church End library.



Area 3 - Regents Park Road north (Gateway House)



Area 4 - St Mary's Church



Area 3 - Regents Park Road east - modern offices



Area 4 - Church End Village

2.4 Urban design and built environment analysis

Good urban design is at the core of making attractive, vibrant and thriving places. It is important to understand Church End's key strengths and weaknesses from a placemaking perspective, and an urban design analysis is set out in this section.

This urban design analysis is based on understanding the built environment of Church End and appraising its qualities against the principles of good urban design and place making set out in 'By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System - Towards Better Practice' (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions and Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, 2000):

Character: A place with its own identity

The individual buildings and public spaces in Church End combine to provide a number of characteristics and qualities that give Church End as a whole a distinctive identity. Four character areas have been identified: Core Retail Area, Transport Hub, Business Area and Historic Village Core, all of which have a distinctive sense of place. The Historic Village Core includes much of the Church End Conservation Area.

The character areas provide a framework for identifying key strengths and opportunities for improvement. Church End is a vibrant linear 'High Street' which has grown north from its historic village core to serve an expanding residential hinterland. The area is, in general, architecturally cohesive but some larger and more modern buildings dominate the townscape and have a negative impact on urban design quality.

The southern part of Church End is made up of two distinct areas. Church End South West has developed around the village core and has a wealth of historic buildings, including King Edwards Hall and Pardes House Grammar School, which are key local landmarks. Church End South East is a focus for employment uses, and includes some large modern buildings, one of which rises to ten storeys. The two southern character areas are separated from the Core Retail character area by a sharp break in the built fabric caused by the railway, road bridge and the centre's junction with Nether Street.

The Northern character area is the core retail zone of Church End, characterised by wide pavements, continuous street frontage and building heights of predominantly three to four storeys. There is a notable lack of mature trees and other planting in this area. The Tesco store, whilst well positioned on the high street and adding

vitality to the centre, suffers from a lack of active frontage and could make a better contribution in urban design terms than it does at present.

Further north in this area, the street becomes narrower and a continuous built frontage of pre- and inter-war buildings present a vibrant and cohesive 'high street' character. Towards Victoria Park the prominent height of buildings reduces to two storeys marking the northern end of Church End's retail core. Whilst there are examples of good quality shop fronts within Church End, in general shop front alterations and modern fascias are not sympathetic to the historic character of the area.

In parts of the centre long, smart, pre-war terraces provide a strong linear character allowing long views, and a consistent high quality. These are occasionally punctuated by modern buildings, some of which are of poor quality.

Continuity and Enclosure: A place where public and private spaces are clearly distinguished

Most of Church End benefits from a clear distinction between public and private space along the main retail frontage, stemming from its traditional street and block structure. Strong, actively fronted blocks face outwards, almost without exception, animating the street, while private space is located to the rear. This pattern has given Church End a successful and generally highly legible public realm.

In a small number of places continuity and enclosure breaks down giving rise to leftover spaces, poorly fronted public areas, and poor definition of public and private space, front and back. Examples of this include Albert Place and the rear of Tesco on the west side of Ballards Lane and the route from Nether Street to the Station.

Quality of the Public Realm: A place with attractive and successful outdoor spaces

The main streets in Church End are generally successful and attractive, and this success is evident in the concentration of small independent and niche businesses and shops, low vacancy rates and high footfall.

The centre also benefits from excellent green spaces in Victoria Park and the grounds of Avenue House, although the accessibility of these spaces could be improved.

are a number of opportunities for improvement. Key issues include proliferation of street clutter and advertising hoardings, underutilised areas of public space, and some areas where there are few mature trees or other planting.

Church End has no clear public square or gathering place, however enclosures of buildings in a number of locations lend themselves to creating more formal, small scale public spaces which can encourage people to linger in the centre.

Ease of Movement: A place that is easy to get to and move through

One of the major weaknesses of Church End in terms of movement, is the design of the highways that make up the vast majority of public space in the area. Key junctions are highly engineered, complicating vehicular and pedestrian movement, while at the same time paying little regard to urban design. Church End's streets have the potential to be safer and more attractive by removing railings and clutter, prioritising pedestrian movement at key junctions and addressing the severance caused by the railway bridge.

Legibility: A place that has a clear image and is easy to understand

Successful places need to be easy to understand and navigate. Landmark buildings, spaces and trees, simple clear streets with good visibility, views to destinations or landmarks, and signage that can be understood by everyone all help to make an area legible.

Church End has a relatively simple linear structure, however, there are some weaknesses in legibility, and opportunities for improvement. These include reducing street clutter to improve views along the street, a simpler public signage system, improving views to landmark buildings and maintaining the highly legible qualities of traditional buildings such as strong corners and memorable landmark detailing.

In addition, some of Church End's key landmarks, including Central House, Gateway House, Tesco and Winston House do not make a positive contribution to the townscape. There is opportunity for this to be addressed through refurbishment or redevelopment.

Adaptability: A place that can change easily

Church End's pre- and inter-war buildings are inherently flexible. They can be adapted to accommodate new uses in response to the market, while still largely preserving their architectural integrity.

Some of Church End's current challenges have arisen where more modern and larger buildings have been introduced. These tend to be single use, less versatile and have not been able to adapt to changing needs. For example, the building occupied by Tesco has created a number of weak spaces to the rear which are challenging to address.

Diversity: A place with variety and choice

As a district centre, Church End fulfils a range of functions, and includes a variety of services and facilities. The range of small independent and niche shops and businesses provide a wide choice to users of the town centre and represent a particular asset. Church End plays a key role in Barnet's evening economy, with a number of well regarded, independent restaurants. The concentration of offices and large residential catchment area also add to Church End's variety and choice.

Streetscape

The streetscape in Church End has a healthy variety, with many examples of fine historic buildings and terraces on the main through routes and surrounding residential streets, areas of high quality landscaping and trees. However, the quality of some buildings and spaces has been eroded over time as a result of the proliferation of street clutter, including street furniture and signage. In addition, inappropriate oversized shop fascia boards and PVC window frames have had a cumulative negative impact on historic character.

The photographs on this page illustrate examples of positive streetscape features within Church End.



St Mary's Church - Hendon Lane



Upper level to historic terraces - Ballards Lane



Georgian house - Hendon Lane



Landscaping and tree planting - Ballards Lane

The photographs on this page illustrate examples of negative streetscape features within Church End.



Poor environment at Nether Street Junction



Street clutter and informal signage - Ballards Lane



Street clutter, signage and advertising hoardings - Chaville Way



Street clutter and air vents - Ballards Lane

2.5 The local property market

A property market review has been undertaken to explore Church End's key commercial strengths and weaknesses. The main findings of this review are as follows:

- Church End provides key facilities for local residents. The retail offer is dominated by small, independent convenience and specialist shops providing vital services to the local residential community. Tesco is the main national multiple anchor to the centre.
- Church End's independent retailers and restaurateurs are a key asset, providing a distinctive offer which avoids a 'clone town' syndrome.
- Church End enjoys good transport links which provide access to Central London as well as the rest of the South of England via the M25 and M1.
- There is limited retailer demand for Church End from national multiples, which could be due to the relatively small size of the retail units and also the current economic climate. There is also a significant lack of comparison retail provision (e.g. clothing retailers) in the town centre, which means that there may be potential to claw back some of the comparison retail expenditure which currently leaks out to surrounding centres such as North Finchley and Brent Cross. However, it is important to note that the vacancy level of retail units stood at 9.65% at the date of our inspection. This is considerably lower than the national average of 17.1% (April 2009) and suggests that vacant units are not frequently available.
- The office market in Church End is surprisingly strong considering the size of the town centre. Although supply is currently meeting demand, there could be potential for further office development particularly given the centres proximity to Finchley Central underground station. Due to the limited parking around the main office centres in Church End it is likely that the majority of those employed in these buildings access the area by foot or public transport, which has sustainability benefits. We noted upon our inspection of the centre, which was carried out during the middle of the day, that local employees appeared to be using the retail facilities of the town centre, highlighting the importance of the office sector for the wider health of the town centre.
- The residential market in the area surrounding and including the centre is dominated by semi-detached/ terraced housing and primarily high end flats/apartments. The average overall house price in Church End ward has declined by

approximately 11% between March and September 2009 from £562,959 to £498,899 (Hometrack December 2009).

- Church End has a number of potential development sites. These could become strong, high quality local landmarks.



Town centre offices - Gateway House

2.6 Transport and movement

This section summarises the key transport and movement issues in Church End, in relation to the local street network, car parking, the Underground, buses, cycling and walking.

Local street network

Within Church End there is a network of primary, secondary and tertiary routes. The hierarchy of routes reflects their relative importance in terms of the distribution of traffic. Primary routes distribute traffic between the main centres across the Borough. Secondary routes also connect centres but carry lower levels of traffic. Tertiary routes provide access to residential and commercial properties and therefore accommodate relatively low traffic flows.

The main route in Church End is the A598 Ballards Lane which is strategically important in connecting Church End with North Finchley and Whetstone in the north and Hendon, Temple Fortune, Golders Green, the A406 and A1 in the south. The M1 motorway is also only two miles to the west and can be reached from the A1. There are frequent junctions on both sides of Ballards Lane with surrounding Victorian and Edwardian residential streets.

Car parking - off street provision

A large car park of 260 parking spaces is located at Finchley Central Underground Station and is well used by commuters travelling to and from central London. Staff only parking is provided directly outside the underground station on the approach road. A small multi-storey car park (around 100 spaces) is provided behind the shops on Ballards Lane although this is owned and operated by the Tesco store that has a frontage onto Ballards Lane. Access to this car park is from The Grove and Popes Drive. There are no Council operated off street car parks in Church End.

Car parking - on street provision

The Church End area is entirely within a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) and ample on street parking is provided. Use is made of the generous carriageway width of Ballards Lane with many short stay pay and display bays provided. Most of the residential side streets also have short stay pay and display bays located within the first 30 metres length from Ballards Lane. From observation it is apparent that the demand for pay and display spaces is high and it is therefore difficult to find an unoccupied parking space during the day. Residential side streets contain general use parking bays although these are restricted between 2pm and 3pm to resident permit parking only. The on street parking facilities within the centre are well used throughout the day.

The Underground

Finchley Central Underground Station lies within travel zone 4 and is on the High Barnet branch of the Northern line giving the area excellent access to Central London. The main pedestrian and vehicle approach to Finchley Central station is from the Ballards Lane/Nether Street junction. The approach to the station is poor, with just a single footway provided for pedestrians on the south side of the road. The footway is narrow and at times of high flow this can result in pedestrians walking in the carriageway. A secondary pedestrian only entrance is located on Station Road to the south of the underground lines. The station itself is Victorian and due to the topography the facilities are split over two levels. Within the last two years new lifts have been installed to provide step free access to and from the platforms. However, access to the station entrances and platforms from the town centre remains relatively poor. The scale of the facilities reflect the Victorian origins and the station generally does not cope well with the volumes of passengers during peak times.

Cycling

The Church End area has a number of routes identified for cyclists within Transport for London's Local Cycle Guide. These include roads that are signed for cycling that may be on busier roads and routes on quieter roads that have been recommended by cyclists. Ballards Lane is a signed route that is of strategic importance to cyclists but lacks obvious cycle parking facilities. The busy traffic dominated environment and the physical pinch-points around the Ballards Lane/Nether Street junction may also be off-putting for cyclists.

Buses

The Church End area is well served by buses with six services running through the area. These services interchange and connect with underground and rail services at stations including Archway, West Finchley, Cricklewood Broadway, New Southgate, Brent Cross and New Barnet. All the services pass through the Ballards Lane/Nether Street junction and therefore get caught up in the congestion that occurs in Finchley during peak hours. There is no bus station in Church End. The nearest bus stops to the underground station are located on both side of Ballards Lane between Hervey Close and Redbourne Avenue. These stops are some distance from the station and pedestrians have to negotiate narrow footways and the Ballards Lane/Nether Street junction to change between modes. The quality of interchange between bus and underground services in Finchley is extremely poor. The opportunity for improving interchange should be investigated although it must be recognised that an increase in the current available street space will be required to achieve this.

Walking

Figure 2.4 identifies the key junctions and nodes within the town centre, which act as gateways to the centre. These include:

- the junction of Ballards Lane and Long Lane;
- the junction of Ballards Lane and Nether Street;
- the junction of Regents Park Road and Hendon Lane; and
- the junction of Regents Park Road and East End Road.

However, these points are presently something of a weakness in terms of accessibility and the character of the public realm. The opportunity therefore exists to enhance the public realm and accessibility at these key locations.

Pedestrian crossing facilities are currently provided at the Ballards Lane/Nether Street junction. This junction has been improved in the last few years with tactile paving and dropped kerbs provided. However, the junction is still unwelcoming, complicated and detracts from the overall quality and experience of the public realm. The abundance of cars parked along the streets, high traffic flows and carriageway width can make it difficult for pedestrians to cross Ballards Lane. In general this results in most pedestrians crossing Ballards Lane at designated points only. The surrounding residential streets offer a more pleasant walking environment with plenty of trees and gardens along the routes.

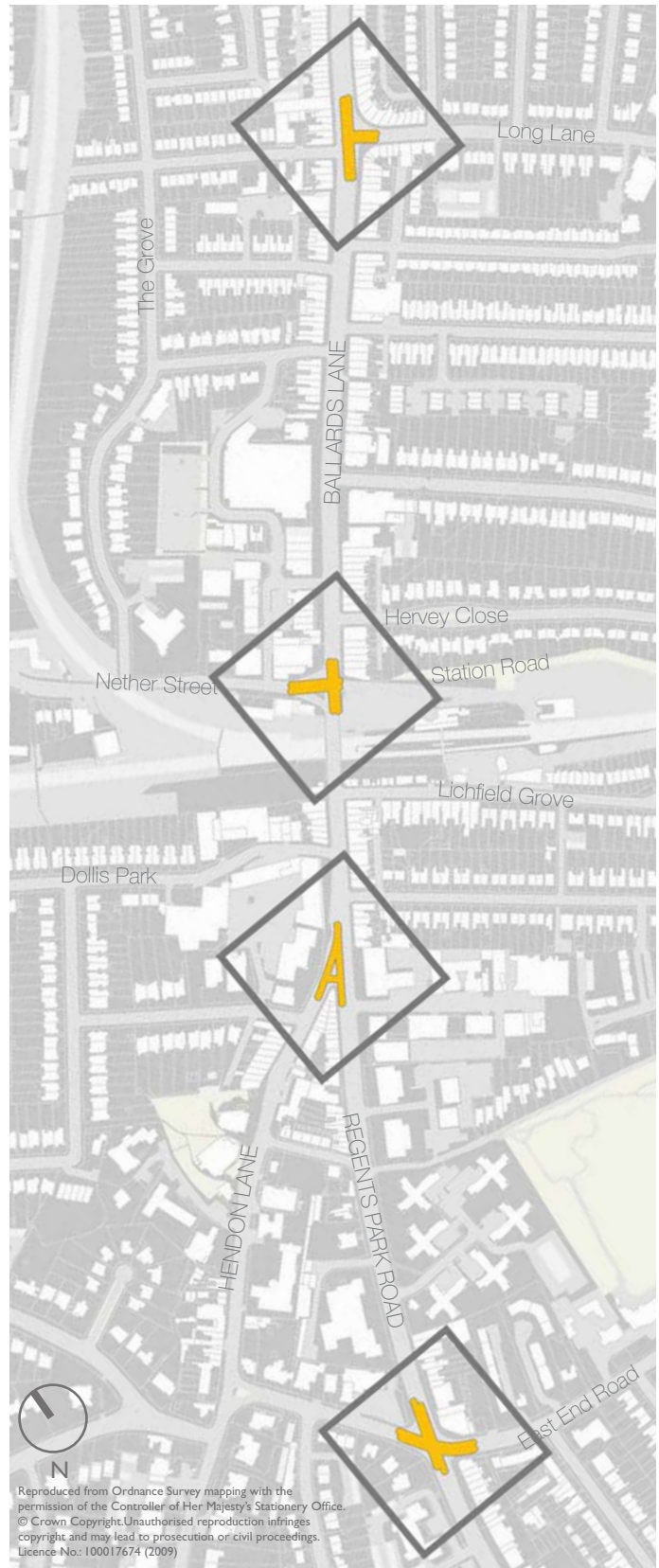


Figure 2.4 - Key junctions and nodes



Figure 2.5 - Pedestrian movement

Transport and movement summary

Strengths

A significant number of residents in Church End live within a ten minute walking distance of Ballards Lane as well as Finchley Central underground station and the various bus routes that run through the area (see Figure 2.5). Ballards Lane and Regents Park Road are the main walking routes through the area. These offer a mixed walking environment with some narrow pavements, given the intensity of pedestrian usage. The footways on the bridge across the underground lines are particularly narrow, and are only just sufficient for two people to walk side by side in the same direction and to allow two people to pass each other in opposing directions. The footways on the bridge are not adequate for pedestrians or for those with push chairs or wheel chairs as people need to give way to one another or step into the carriageway. The wider stretches of footway on Ballards Lane allow for local shops to display their produce outside the shop fronts which adds some richness and activity to the street.

- Good connections via the underground to the West End and City
- Good connections via the underground to national rail stations
- Comprehensive bus network providing connections to surrounding areas of north London
- Excellent road connections to surrounding areas of north London
- Excellent road connections to the national strategic road network
- Controlled parking that provides for on street short stay and prevents long stay in side streets other than for residents

Weaknesses

- Regular traffic congestion and queuing on Ballards Lane
- Poor interchange between bus and underground services
- Underground station is away from the focus of activity and lacks visibility
- Poor arrival and departure experience for underground passengers
- Victorian station facilities that do not cope well with present day passenger numbers
- Buses caught up in congestion and queuing on Ballards Lane
- A general lack of facilities for cyclists
- Poor accessibility at certain key junctions and nodes
- The bridge over the underground lines presents a particularly poor quality environment for pedestrians

Opportunities

- Creation of a Ballards Lane entrance to the underground station
- Improve interchange between bus and underground services by moving bus stops closer to a new station entrance.
- Improving the bridge over the underground lines to create additional pedestrian space or creating a supplementary pedestrian bridge
- Potential to improve pedestrian facilities and ease congestion at the Ballards Lane/Nether Street junction

2.7 Key emerging issues

The main issues to be considered and taken forward through the Town Centre Strategy for Church End are set out below.

Emerging key issues for Church End:

- Ensuring an accessible and integrated Town Centre and maximising the potential of the existing transport hub* - Church End is a highly accessible centre as a result of the presence of a tube station and proximity to the strategic road network. However, there is a major opportunity to create a better, more integrated transport hub for the Borough specifically and Outer London more generally by working with TfL and other stakeholders. Particular opportunities include:
 - improving the station environment;
 - developing better linkages between the underground station and bus services;
 - improving pedestrian access and environment across the rail bridge;
 - improving pedestrian crossing facilities; and
 - improving the quality of the public realm at key junctions.
- Enhancing the Character of the Town Centre* - Church End has retained much of its historic character. However, the character of terraces along Ballards Lane and Regents Park Road is being progressively eroded by inappropriately sited advertising hoardings, street clutter, inappropriate signage and insensitive shop fronts. Future development and refurbishment opportunities must be undertaken carefully to ensure that they enhance the historic character of the town centre. There are also opportunities to declutter the public realm.
- Developing Church End's role as a sustainable, modern employment centre* - Church End is already a successful employment centre. Office workers are key to supporting a range of town centre businesses, and an improved pedestrian environment would encourage them to make fuller use of the centre. A significant employment area exists to the east of Regents Park Road. However, at present this is poorly integrated with the town centre. There is scope to improve connections between employment areas and town centre facilities for the benefit of local employees and businesses.
- Strengthening the existing range of independent retail provision within Church End* – Church End has a large number of independent retail and service providers, including a number of good quality ethnic restaurants, which meet the needs of the diverse local population. There is an opportunity to build on this distinctive characteristic of the area but also to strengthen the retail core through attracting additional high street retail provision. There is also an opportunity to work with existing traders to encourage more collaboration and promotion of the town centre to enhance trade and capture the spending power of the surrounding residential community and the large number of office workers located at the southern end of the town centre.
- Greening the public realm* - Parts of Church End benefit from mature street trees and other planting, and the quality of the environment in these areas is noticeably better than in areas where planting is absent. There are opportunities, particularly along Ballards Lane, to plant mature trees which will also help to provide shade and evaporative cooling in the context of climate change.
- Creating a Public/Private Sector Partnership to deliver coordinated change within the Town Centre* – The presence of a number of significant redevelopment opportunities within the Town Centre including Winston House, Gateway House and Central House, plus the opportunity to bring major landowners together to support the delivery of the Town Centre Strategy and focus contributions from developers and other benefits generated through development on the delivery of wider improvements - particularly to the public realm and integration of public transport.

3. Opportunities

3.1 Introduction

This section sets out the main opportunities identified so far through a review of the current conditions in Church End and informed by an understanding of the main issues facing the town centre. The potential opportunities that have been identified have been classified either as:

- Major opportunity sites; or
- Public realm improvements and building enhancements.

The major opportunity sites represent longer term opportunities to deliver major new development or refurbishment to provide new services, facilities and economic opportunities whilst making a positive contribution to the townscape.

The public realm improvements and building enhancement opportunities have the potential to enhance the town centre through the cumulative impact of small scale projects in areas such as historic fabric, streetscape, public realm, accessibility and local facilities.



Opportunity site - Central House



Opportunity site - Winston House

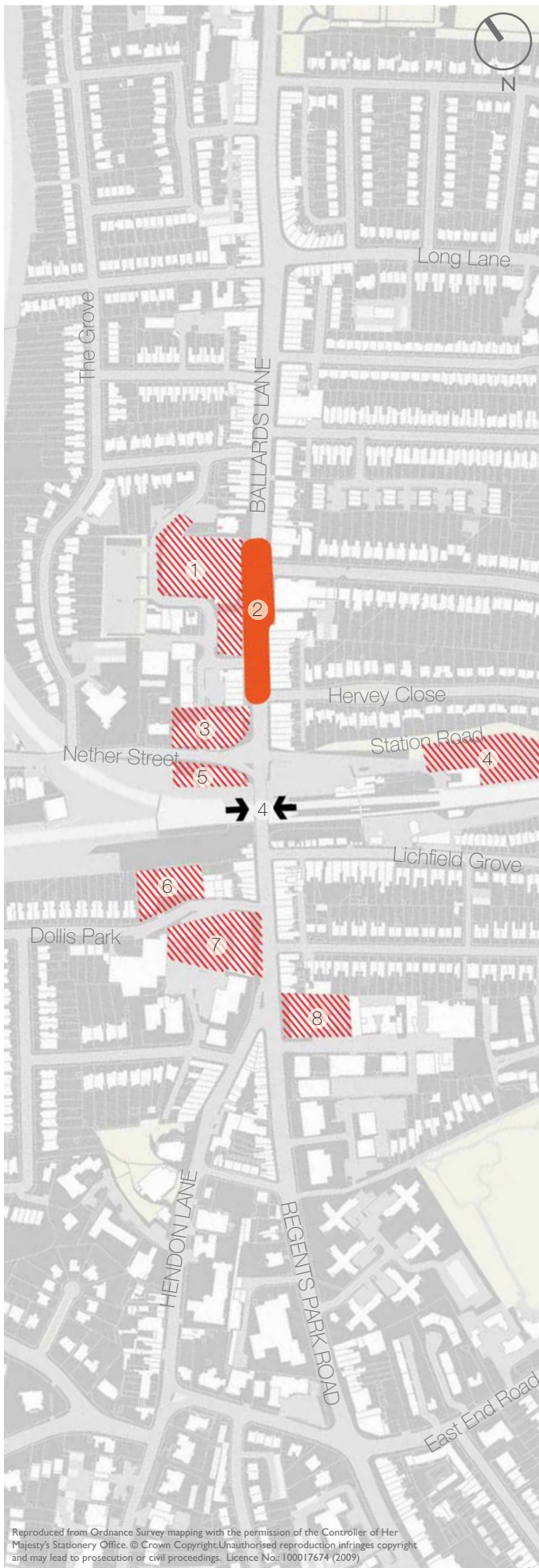


Opportunity site - Gateway House



Opportunity site - Finchley Central Station (car parking reprovided)

Figure 3.1 - Major opportunity sites



3.2 Major opportunity sites

1. *Tesco buildings and surroundings* - potential exists to enhance or redevelop the existing building(s) to provide an improved foodstore and offer greater permeability through the site and to the rear of the store.
2. *Ballards Lane public realm* - potential exists to provide a new public space on Ballards Lane, to provide a 'heart' for Church End and to improve the pedestrian environment.
3. *Central House and 401 - 405 Nether Street* - buildings are outdated and provide a significant development opportunity at a prominent town centre location. It is important that these sites are considered together in order to maximise the opportunity.
4. *Station and land to east* - enhancement of station and local parking facilities and complete re-provision of all parking spaces as part of a combined mixed use redevelopment that contributes to the town centres economic prosperity and parking strategy. Additionally, enhancements could be made to the pedestrian bridge over the railway as part of any wider station redevelopment, subject to discussion with Transport for London. Improving pedestrian accessibility across the railway would positively impact on the town centre and encourage greater footfall from the 'Business Area' through to the 'Core Retail Area'.
5. *290 - 298 Nether Street* - potential exists to redevelop the buildings to the south west of the junction of Nether Street and Ballards Lane.
6. *Royal Mail Sorting Office* - potential exists to redevelop the sorting office for employment and residential uses.
7. *Winston House* - potential exists to refurbish Winston House to provide a mix of uses which could include improved offices, residential units and new community and hotel uses.
8. *Gateway House* - potential exists to refurbish to provide a mix of uses which may include improved offices, residential units and new community and hotel uses.



Major opportunity site



Improvements to pedestrian access across bridge

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Figure 3.2 - Opportunities plan



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3.3 Public realm and building enhancements










Enhancing the character of the town centre

The opportunity exists to protect the high quality historic building frontages and shopfronts which add to the character of the town centre through improved coordination and enforcement. Additionally, opportunities exist to reduce street clutter and poorly designed and sited advertising hoardings, windows and satellite dishes.

The opportunity exists to potentially create new public spaces at the front of Finchley Central Station on Chaville Way, and in front of Tesco on Ballard's Lane. Furthermore, street frontages could be enhanced to the rear of Tesco and west of Ballard's Lane (Popes Drive and Albert Place).

Ensuring an accessible and integrated centre and maximising the potential of the existing transport hub

The opportunity exists to further utilise the central location of the underground station within Church End, by improving pedestrian accessibility throughout the town centre, including from the station to bus stops, open spaces, and nearby employment areas to the benefit of local businesses and employees. Enhancements to the public realm and accessibility around the key junctions and nodes within the town centre, including at the junction of Nether Street and Ballard's Lane, would help to achieve this (see Figure 2.4). Potential exists to make major improvements to the bridge over the railway, including widening the pedestrian walkways. The potential for better interchange between buses and the tube station should also be explored.

-  Open space enhancement opportunity
-  Opportunity for improved public realm
-  Protect high quality shop fronts and encourage good design in new shop fronts
-  Improve pedestrian accessibility and enhance public realm at key junctions
-  Enhance accessibility between employment areas and town centre facilities
-  Improve pedestrian links across railway
-  Improvements to pedestrian access across bridge
-  Landmark tree or group to be enhanced and used to inform further tree planting
-  Enhance linkages between station and bus services

Developing Church End's role as a sustainable, modern employment centre

Church End is already a significant employment centre within the Borough. However, the opportunity exists to improve the town centre's office accommodation offer in a number of ways, for example, by working with existing landowners to identify opportunities for refurbishment or redevelopment of employment sites to provide a better range of more modern office accommodation, by improving the quality of the public realm and town centre offer in order to make the centre more attractive to employers and employees, and by working to improve accessibility for pedestrians and a better interchange between buses and the tube station.

Strengthening the existing range of independent retail provision

Church End benefits from having a wide range of independent retail provision. Local independent and niche shops, restaurants and other businesses should be protected and enhanced through improvements to the public realm and the accessibility of the centre. It may also be possible to attract further multiple retailers to the centre as improvements are introduced over time.

Greening the public realm

Opportunities exist to enhance the existing public realm within Church End, and to create new public spaces. Landscaping and tree coverage could be improved throughout the centre, and existing public spaces, such as Church End Gardens would benefit from further investment. Enhancing the public realm at the key junctions and nodes would improve these gateway locations (see Figure 2.4). Opportunities to enhance the public realm throughout the Conservation Area should also be investigated.

The following pages include photographic examples of some of the emerging public realm and building enhancement opportunities in Church End.



Protect historic building frontages - *King Edwards Hall*



Protect historic shopfronts - *Hendon Lane*



Reduce street clutter - *Regents Park Road*



Improve pedestrian accessibility - *railway bridge*



Improve pedestrian environment - *Ballards Lane and Nether St*



Enhance key junctions - *Regents Pk Rd / Hendon Ln*



Improve pedestrian accessibility - *to and from station*



Enhance public spaces - *Ballards Lane*



Refurbish or redevelop office accommodation - *Central House*



Enhance public spaces - *Finchley Central station main entrance*



Support local independent and niche businesses - *Ballards Lane*



Enhance public spaces - *Church End Gardens, Hendon Lane*

4. Next steps

Public consultation on the Issues and Opportunities will help to inform the preparation of a Town Centre Strategy for Church End later in 2010. Further consultation will then be held on the draft Strategy.

The consultation process provides an opportunity for stakeholders and local people to comment on:

- The issues identified through the analysis; and
- The emerging opportunities for Finchley Church End.

This consultation runs from 13th February to 7th March 2010 and will include a number of exhibitions. For further details of the exhibitions or for any other queries please call 0208 359 3138 or email towncentreplanning@barnet.gov.uk.

Responses to the consultation can be provided by filling in the online questionnaire at www.barnet.gov.uk/planning-consultations, by emailing responses to towncentreplanning@barnet.gov.uk or by sending responses through the post to:

Finchley Church End - Issues and Opportunities Consultation
Major Developments Team
Building 2
North London Business Park
Oakleigh Road South
N11 1NP.

The closing date for providing responses is Monday 8th March 2010.



King Edward Hall, Regents Park Road



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