

# New Barnet Town Centre Framework

Scoping Report

June 2009

Prepared by



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## PREFACE

This report was completed in June 2009, and sets out the evidence base that has informed the draft scenarios/options that the Council is consulting on in February/March 2010.

The planning policy context is set out in this document as at June 2009. In the intervening period (between June 2009 and the publication of the draft options/scenarios for consultation) the planning policy context has changed with the publication of Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth (January 2010); the draft Replacement London Plan (October 2009); and the Barnet Core Strategy Direction of Travel (November 2009). This document has not been revised to reflect this updated policy position, however full account has been taken of the most up to date policy framework (at February 2010) in the preparation of the draft options/scenarios (as set out in the New Barnet Town Centre Framework – Consultation Draft).

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 A consultant team led by GVA Grimley Ltd has been appointed by Barnet Council to prepare a planning framework document for New Barnet Town Centre (the 'New Barnet Town Centre Framework' (NBTCF)). The purpose of the framework is to provide further planning guidance to support future development in the town centre in a well planned and coordinated manner and to bring about wider enhancements to the centre as a whole.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to set out the outputs of a comprehensive evidence gathering process that has been undertaken in order to establish the scope of the key issues and opportunities that the framework document should address, and to establish preliminary development principles and options for the town centre. This represents the first stage in the commission and will be used as the basis for preparing the draft framework document.

### Structure of Report

- 1.3 This report is structured as follows:
- **Section 2** sets out the context and approach being taken to the preparation of the Framework;
  - **Section 3** provides an overview of the planning policy context that will underpin the preparation of the document;
  - **Section 4** provides a brief summary of national trends in town centre uses;
  - **Section 5** considers the role of the centre in the wider hierarchy of centres;
  - **Section 6** sets out the outcomes of a comprehensive review of the centre's existing conditions (history; existing environment; transport and movement; patterns of land ownership; vitality and viability; and socio-economic profile);
  - **Section 7** provides a non-technical summary of assessed levels of retail floorspace need in the northeast of the Borough, and considers potential impacts of development on competing centres;
  - **Section 8** outlines preliminary potential development opportunities that have been identified;
  - **Section 9** draws together the outcomes from earlier sections and analyses the key issues (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the town centre);
  - **Section 10** establishes a draft vision and preliminary development principles for the town centre that seeks to respond to the key issues;
  - **Section 11** concludes the report and sets out next steps.
- 1.4 This report is supported by the following technical appendices:
- **Appendix A** – Comprehensive planning policy review;
  - **Appendix B** – National trends in town centre uses;

- **Appendix C** – Town centre healthcheck;
- **Appendix D** – Census data; and
- **Appendix E** – Quantitative and qualitative need for additional town centre use floorspace and impact scenario testing.



## 2. Context and Approach

### Purpose of the New Barnet Town Centre Framework

- 2.1 'New Barnet Town Centre' is a small District Centre located to the North East of the Borough, focussed along East Barnet Road. The centre suffers from a number of vitality and viability issues and is generally regarded as being in decline. Notwithstanding this, there is significant development pressure on the centre with planning applications being prepared (or recently submitted) for the redevelopment of the former gas works site and the former Optex site for foodstore-led schemes.
- 2.2 The planning policy guidance affecting the centre is somewhat out of date, therefore there is a risk of inappropriate development taking place which could adversely affect its vitality and viability. The purpose of the planning framework is to overcome these risks by establishing further planning guidance to proactively direct future development in a better planned and coordinated manner, and to bring about wider enhancements to the centre as a whole to ensure positive change. The framework will be used as a tool to assist developers in formulating acceptable development proposals and to assist the Council in the determination of future planning applications.

### Status

- 2.3 The Framework will be a non-statutory document, however it is being prepared in a manner that would enable it to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in the future (subject to statutory requirements including sustainability appraisal) should the Council choose to do so.
- 2.4 The framework will not be a Development Plan Document (DPD) therefore it cannot introduce new planning policies – it will provide further guidance on the implementation of development plan policies set out in the London Plan (2008) and Barnet UDP (2006), having regard to the Borough's emerging Core Strategy (and other Local Development Documents).

### The Study Area

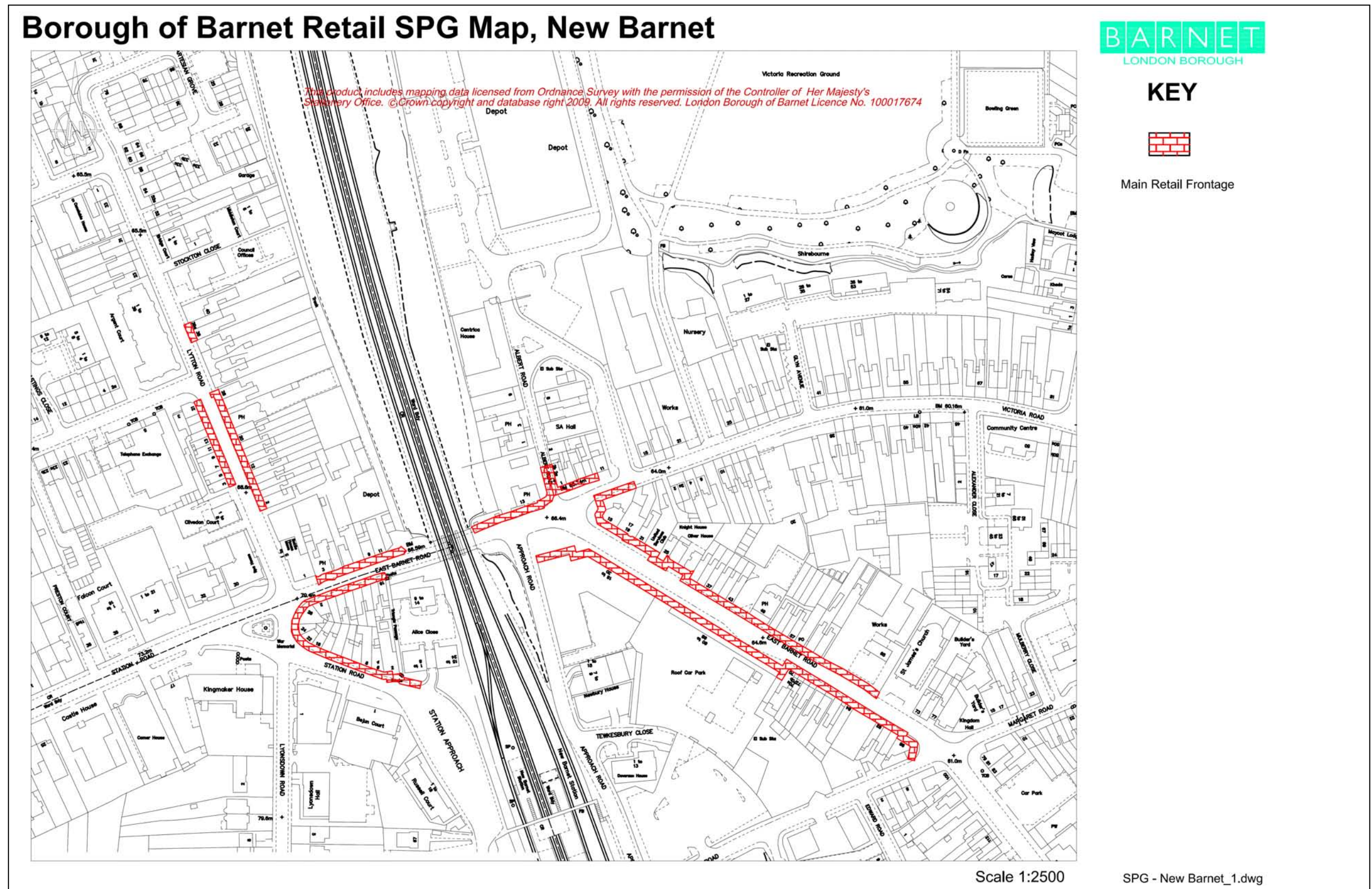
- 2.5 The NBTCF core study area is defined by the main retail frontage (as defined in the Barnet UDP (2006)) and its immediate surroundings, as shown on Figures 2.1 and 2.2, on the following page. It should be noted that the Study Area includes the former New Barnet Gas Works Site on Albert Road which is allocated for development in the Barnet Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (2006).

Figure 2.1 Aerial Photograph Showing Core Study Area and Surroundings





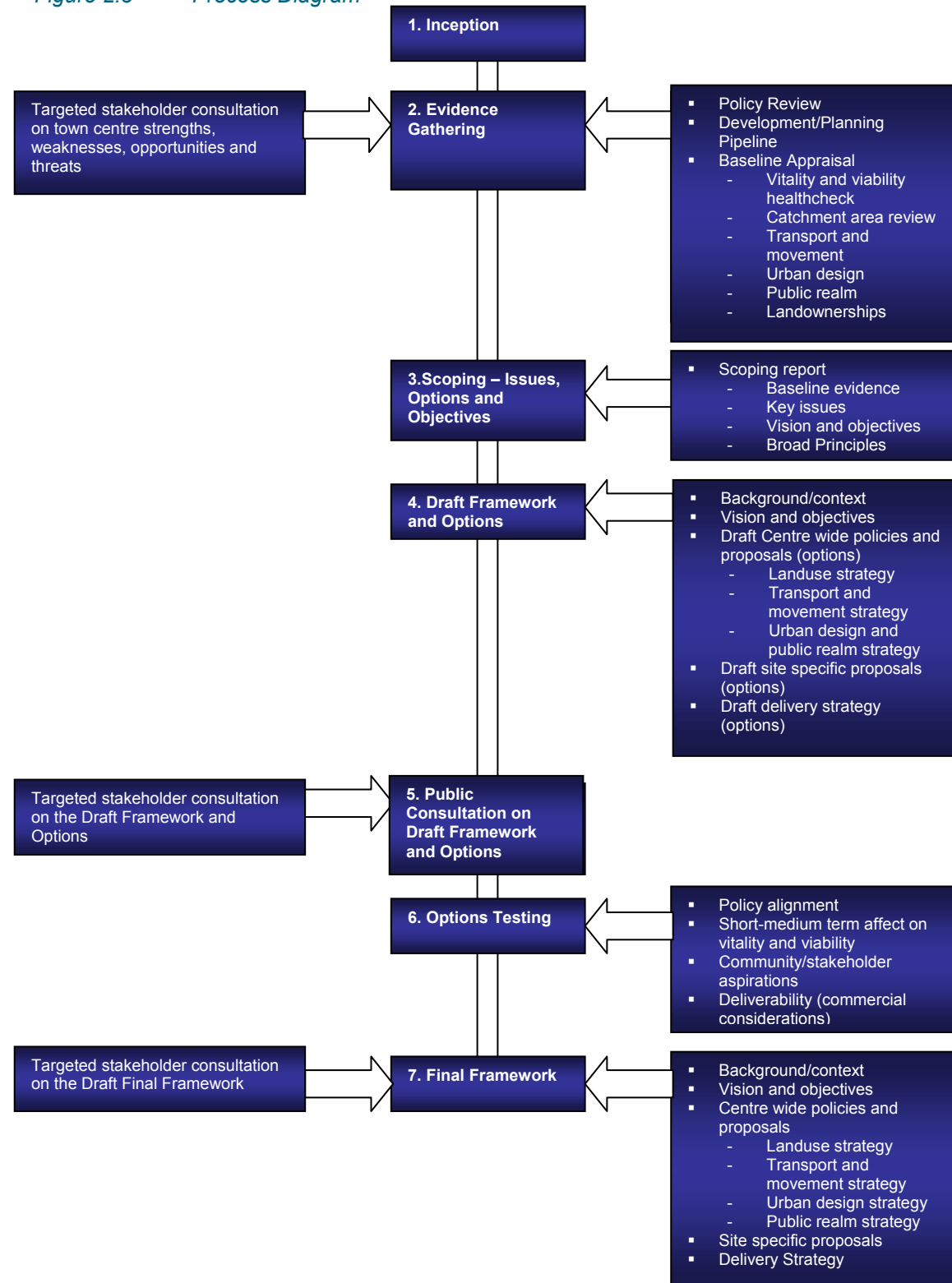
Figure 2.2 Study Area



Preparation Process

2.6 Figure 2.3, below, illustrates the key stages in the preparation of the Framework:

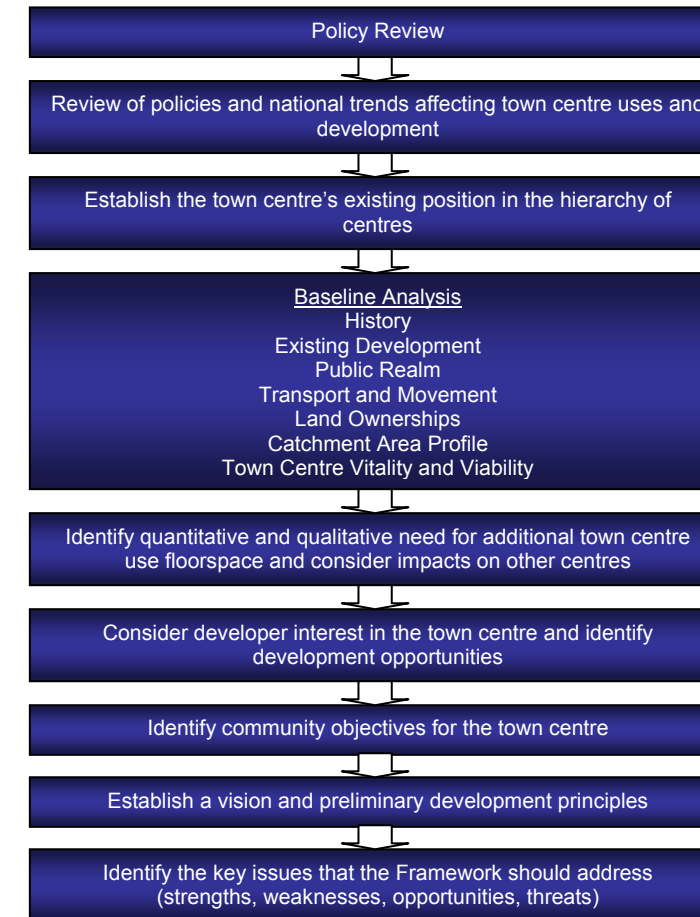
Figure 2.3 Process Diagram



The Scoping Stage

2.7 Figure 2.4, below, illustrates the process/approach taken to the preparation of this Scoping Report:

Figure 2.4 The Scoping Process





### 3. Planning Policy Context (June 2009)

3.1 The Framework document should be underpinned by the provisions of national, regional and local planning policy guidance, as illustrated in Figure 3.1, below:

Figure 3.1 Policy Framework



- The 3 Strands Approach – Protect, Enhance, Grow;
- Town centres first – protect the vitality and viability of town centres;
- The role of a district centre – focus on convenience shopping;
- Enhancement of consumer choice (improved retail/service offer, markets, niche roles);
- Quantitative and qualitative need for new development;
- The scale of development should relate to the size and role of the centre;
- Sequential approach to site selection;
- Impacts of development on existing centres;
- Accessibility to/within centres (including traffic and car parking controls);
- Evening and late night economy;
- More efficient use of land and buildings within existing centres, including higher density development;
- Development site opportunities should be suitable, available and viable;
- Definition of primary/secondary frontages (priority of retail uses in primary frontages);
- Mixed use development (including residential);
- High quality inclusive design;
- Town centre management;
- Use of Compulsory Purchase Orders to achieve change; and
- Use of Planning Obligations to deliver enhancements.

3.2 Reference should be made to Appendix A, which provides a comprehensive review of the policy framework, however a summary of the policy position is set out below:

- The process of local spatial planning should involve producing a vision (that responds to local challenges/opportunities, a sound evidence base, a sense of local distinctiveness, and community derived objectives – within the overall framework of national/regional policy) which should translate into a set of priorities/programmes/policies and land allocations to create a positive framework for investment, regeneration and action on climate change, and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- Sustainable development;
- Tackling climate change (including renewable energy infrastructure);



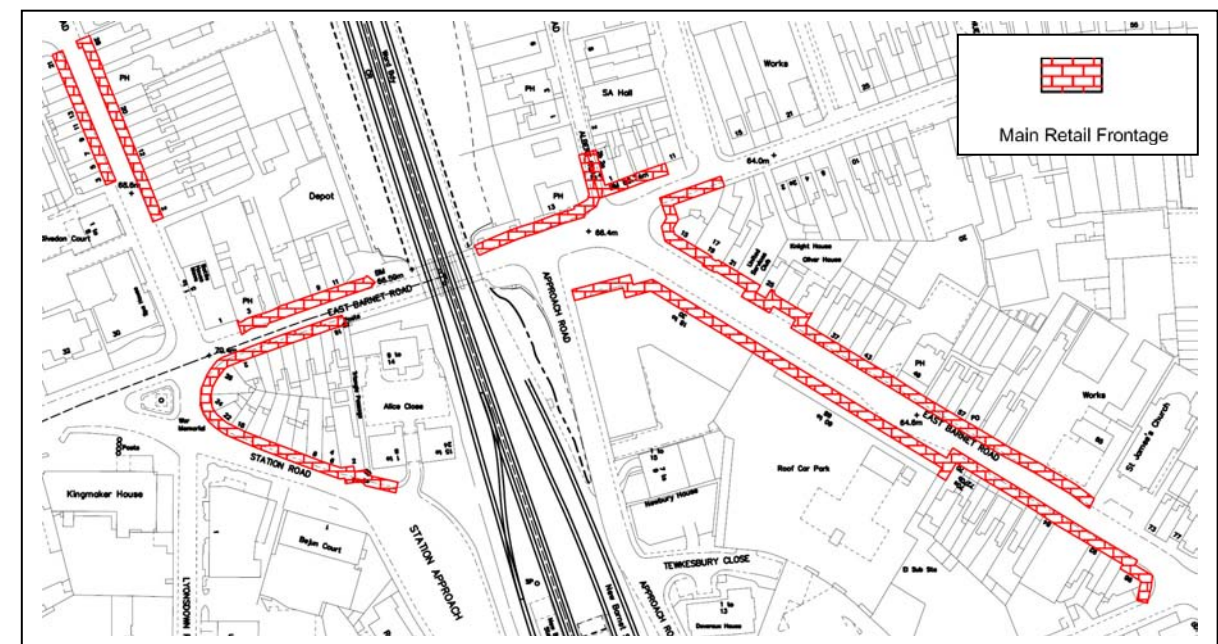
## 4. National Trends in Town Centre Uses

- 4.1 To help ensure deliverability, the preparation of the Framework should have regard to wider national socio-economic trends and drivers for change in the retail industry, which are likely to influence future patterns of retail provision and development proposals in New Barnet.
- 4.2 A comprehensive review of such trends is set out at Appendix B, however a summary of key considerations of most relevance for New Barnet is set below:
- Retail expenditure has grown faster than incomes over the past 20 years;
  - Sales densities have increased over the past 20 years due to higher value space efficiency and longer opening hours;
  - Increased car ownership has increased shopping mobility;
  - Growth in internet shopping looks set to continue;
  - The recession has badly effected the retail sector – falling sales, more value-driven customer base, less customer loyalty, cutting back on ‘big ticket’ purchases;
  - Foodstore operators continue to evolve their formats and offer – including convenience stores and mini-department stores (greater focus on comparison offer) – restrictions on out-of-centre development has led to a return to the high street;
  - Trend of continued polarisation towards larger centres and the provision of larger format stores;
  - Smaller centres that have been unable to diversify their offer or create niche markets have declined; and
  - Expenditure on comparison goods is increasing at a faster rate than for convenience goods.

## 5. Position/Role in the Hierarchy of Centres

- 5.1 New Barnet is defined as a District Centre in the Barnet UDP (2006) and London Plan (2008), and is situated in the north eastern corner of the London Borough of Barnet. The main shopping frontage is defined by the Barnet UDP (2006) and illustrated on Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1 Plan Showing Defined Main Retail Frontage



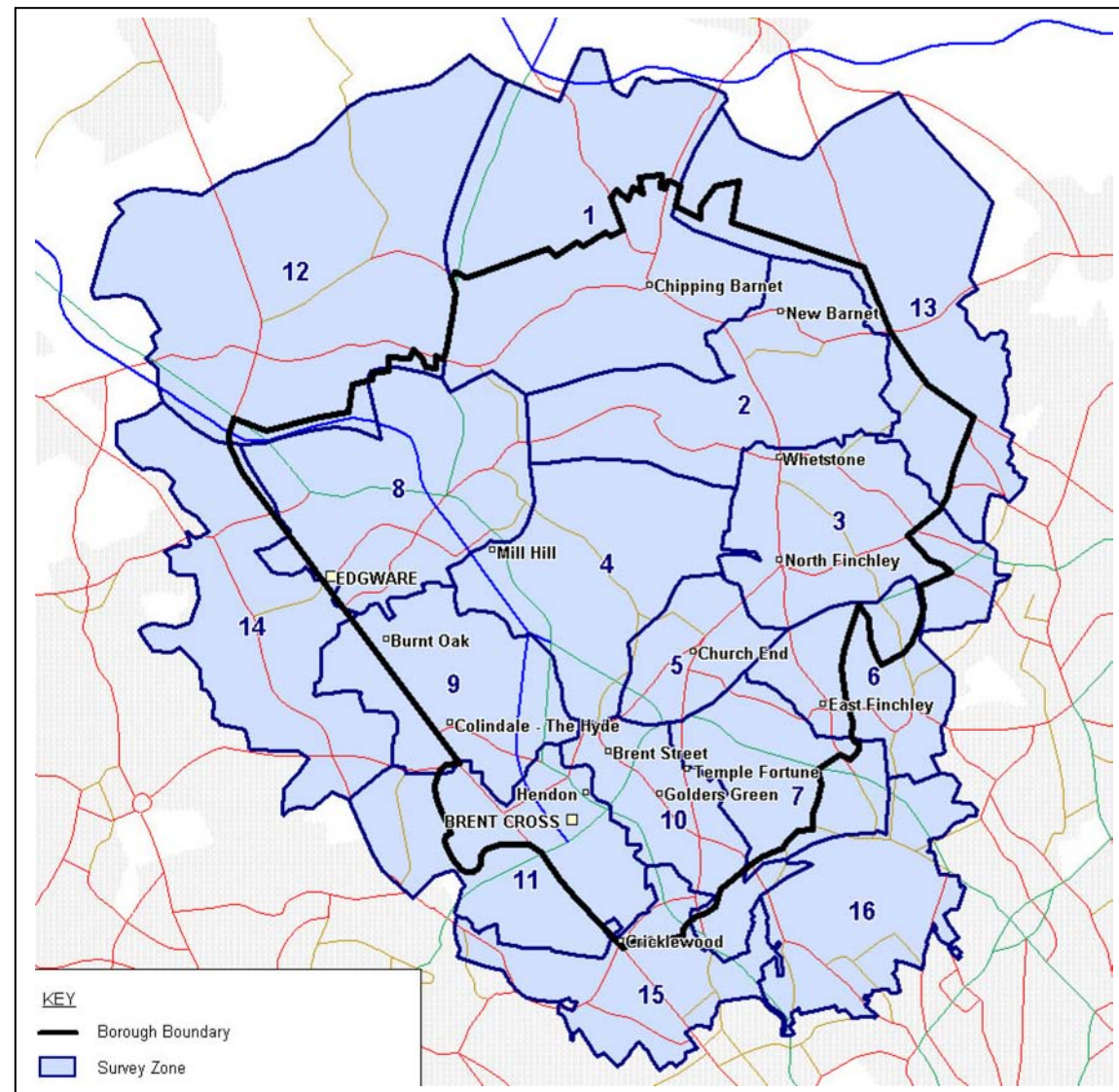
### Role of a District Centre

- 5.2 PPS6: Planning for Town Centres identifies the main characteristics of a ‘District Centre’ as comprising ‘groups of shops often containing at least one supermarket or superstore, and a range of non-retail services, such as banks, building societies and restaurants, as well as local public facilities such as library’. The characteristics of New Barnet are considered to accord well with this ‘category’ of centre.

### Catchment Area

- 5.3 A household survey undertaken for the Barnet Town Centre Floorspace Need Assessment (TCFNA) (2009) revealed a relatively compact catchment area with the centre drawing the majority (84%) of its trade from the immediate surrounding area (postcode areas EN5 1/2/3/4/5, EN4 8/9 and N20 8/9) – Zones 1 and 2, as indicated in Figure 5.2, below:

Figure 5.2 Barnet TCFNA – Survey Zones

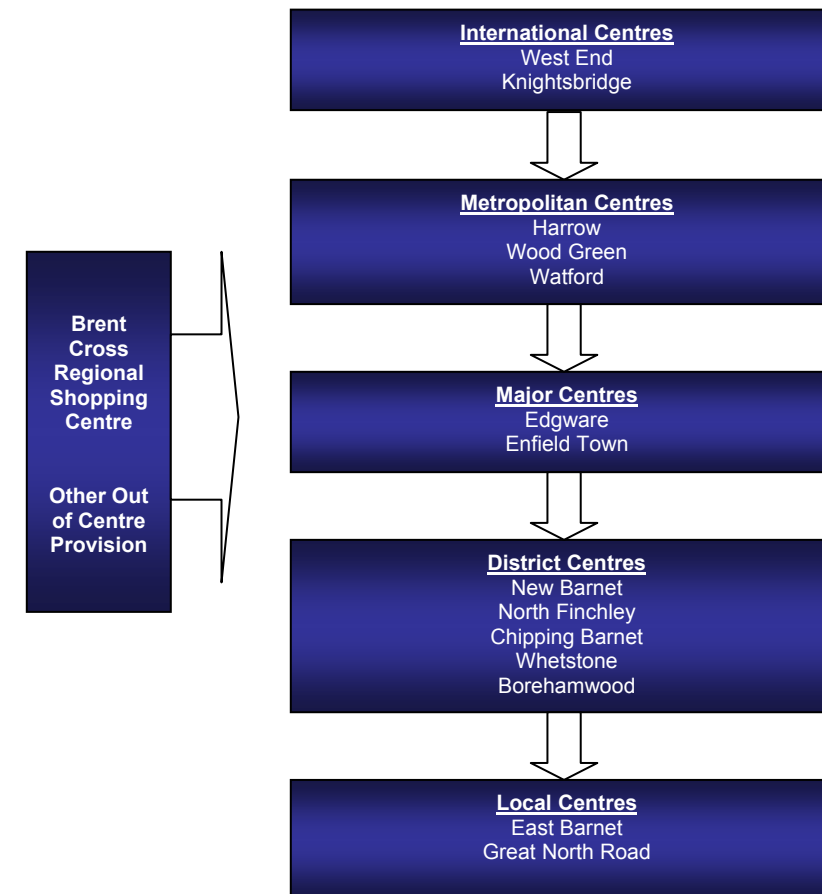


Position in the Borough’s Network and Hierarchy of Retail Centres

5.4 Within the Borough of Barnet, Brent Cross regional shopping centre is positioned at the top of the hierarchy, above the major centre of Edgware. Beneath major centre status there are a total of 14 district centres, of which New Barnet is the smallest in terms of retail floorspace and units. Beneath the district centre level there are five local centres and 10 neighbourhood centres in Barnet. There are two local centres, East Barnet and Great North Road; which are located less than a mile distance from New Barnet. The larger district centre of Chipping Barnet is approximately 1.5 miles to the north west of the New Barnet.

5.5 New Barnet residents are well placed to access centres outside of the Borough, including those in Central London and north into Hertfordshire. The structure of the wider hierarchy of centres in which New Barnet Town Centre sits is illustrated in Figure 5.3, below:

Figure 5.3 Retail Hierarchy Structure



Out of Centre Provision

5.6 Out-of-centre retail provision in the local area includes Tesco Express on East Barnet Road; Waitrose in North Finchley; Tesco Extra at Colney Hatch; Tesco at Brent Cross; and M+S Simply Food in Whetstone. The closest retail warehouse park is at Friern Bridge Retail Park (which is supplemented by a number of standalone units) where the majority of floorspace is in DIY, electronics and furniture (traditional ‘bulky goods’ operators).



## 6. New Barnet Town Centre – Existing Conditions

6.1 In order to identify the key issues that the framework should address, a comprehensive review of the existing conditions (the baseline position) in New Barnet Town Centre which has been undertaken, having regard to the following topics:

- Location;
- History;
- Built Environment (landuses, scale and massing, architecture, public realm);
- Transport and movement;
- Patterns of Land ownership;
- Vitality and Viability (the ‘health’ of the town centre); and
- Socio-economic conditions of the catchment area.

6.2 The purpose of this section is to set out the outcomes of this work, as follows:

### Location

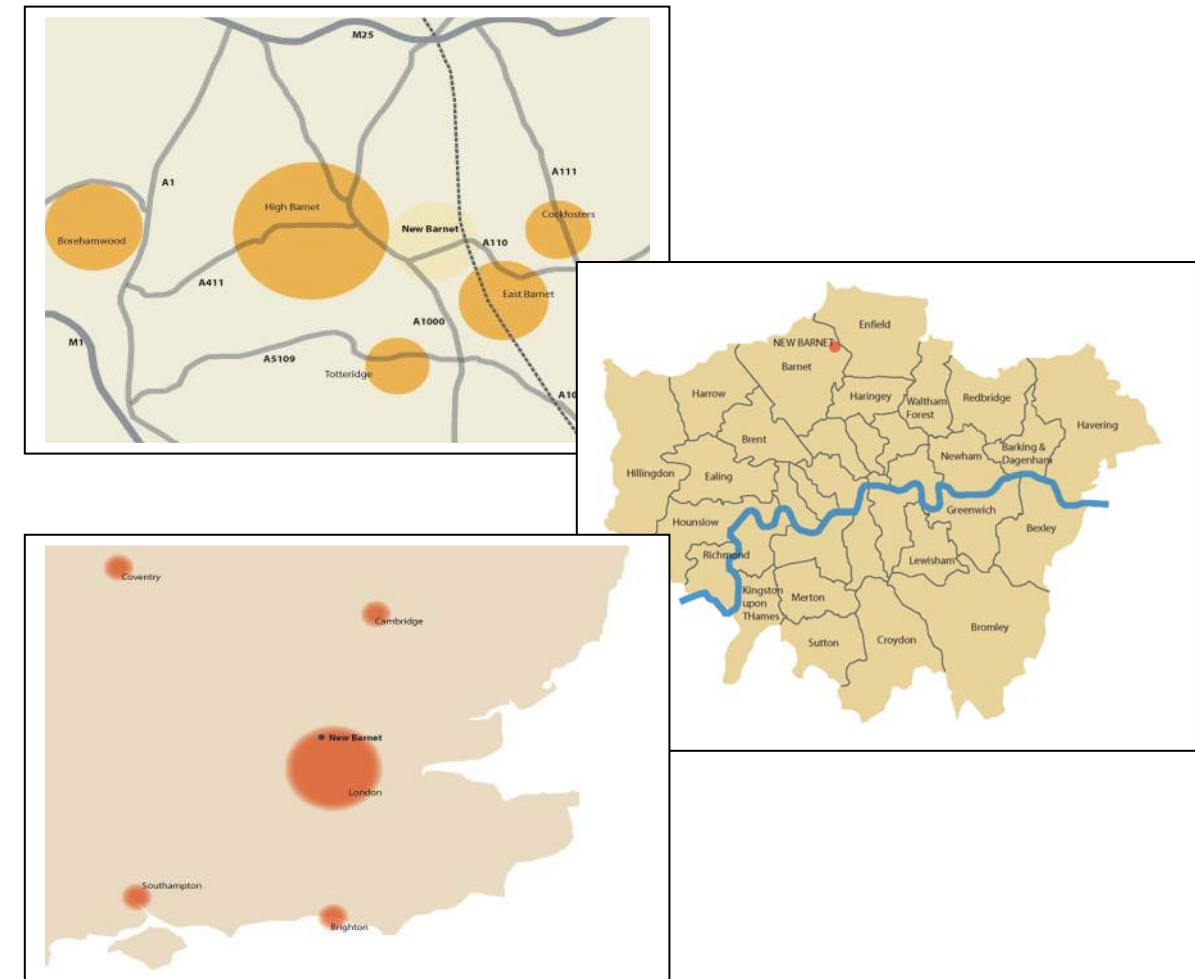
6.3 New Barnet is located in the London Borough of Barnet. Barnet borders Hertfordshire to the north and five other London boroughs: Harrow and Brent to the west, Camden and Haringey to the south-east and Enfield to the east, as illustrated in Figure 6.1, opposite:

### History

6.4 New Barnet was developed from 1867 onwards following the construction of the Great Northern Railway Line. The town centre’s development was initially slow and it was not until after World War I that New Barnet started to take the form we know today. The town centre was originally focussed around the war memorial located at the junction of East Barnet Road and Station Approach and the key building was the Post Office to the west of the railway.

6.5 The focus of the centre shifted to the east of the railway line (East Barnet Road) in the post war period to reflect the importance of the A110 road network and to benefit from the resulting increase in trade. Other key developments around this time include the construction of a new rail station where it stands today and the Gas-o-meter was built at the Albert Road Gas Works.

Figure 6.1 National, Regional and local Context Maps





## Built Environment

6.6 The series of plans/diagrams set out on the following pages provide an overview of the existing built environment in the town centre, having regard to the mix of landuses; scale and massing; architectural styles; and the public realm:

### *Landuses (refer to Figure 6.2)*

6.7 Landuses currently present in the study area are typical for a district centre of this size, and include:

- Large Sainsbury's grocery store on East Barnet Road;
- Small-scale independent shops with residential or office space above along East Barnet Road and Lytton Road;
- Industrial uses, builders merchants, and mechanics garages interspersed within the main commercial area and in the surrounding streets;
- Predominantly residential uses on the surrounding street network with ad-hoc community uses (schools, community centre, and so on);
- Church (within the main commercial area);
- Cafes and pubs;
- Significant office space around the northern junction with Victoria Road and in tower blocks on Station Approach (to the west of the railway line);
- Leisure (private gym) at the East Barnet Road and Approach Road junction;
- Dentist; and
- Post office.

### *Scale and Massing (refer to Figure 6.3)*

6.8 The scale and massing (physical bulk of buildings) of existing development is somewhat haphazard and reflects the embryonic development of the centre. In the main commercial frontage on East Barnet Road, building heights generally range from 2 to 4 storeys with small building footprints and narrow frontages (with the exception of the Sainsbury's store and church which are much more bulky buildings). Massing is significantly higher to the west of the railway bridge on Station Road and Station Approach with a number of large blocks extending up to 8 storeys in height. Beyond the main retail area (including the retail units along Lytton Road), the scale and massing of development is more domestic, with typical building heights of 2-3 storeys. There are a number of low rise (single storey) warehouse style industrial buildings with larger footprints in some of the surrounding streets (Margaret Road and Victoria Road).

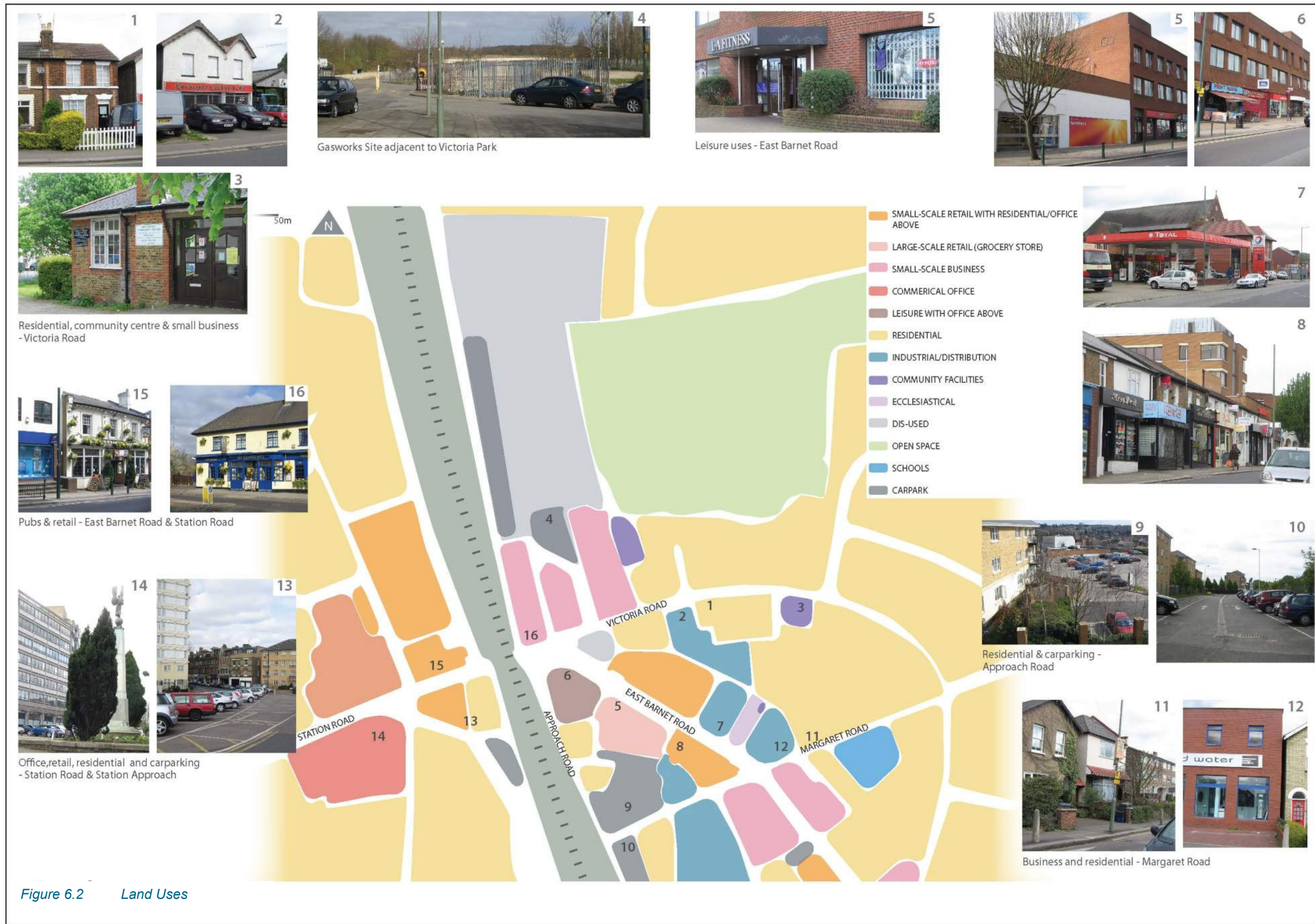
### *Architecture (refer to Figure 6.4)*

6.9 There are a wide range of architectural styles present in the town centre with no dominant style, which reflects its gradual development. Examples of late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century development include the Railway Bell Pub, and the high quality Victorian buildings on Station Road to the West of the railway bridge and in the surrounding residential streets. More modern post-war architectural styles include the large office blocks to the west of the railway bridge, the Sainsbury's store (built in 1980) and industrial sheds. The primary building material is red brick which is used in a variety of building styles including the Sainsbury's building and the church.

### *Public Realm (refer to Figure 6.5)*

6.10 The town centre lacks a coordinated approach to its public realm. It benefits from wide pavements along its High Street, but lacks wayfinding, signage and a palette of materials for the street furniture. Key points include:

- No open space within the town centre for civic or social activity and poor linkages to the open space available at Victoria Park;
- Wide footpaths along parts of the High Street;
- Hostile public realm on account of car dominated environment and lack of surveillance over public spaces (non-active/blank frontages);
- Lack of security through public lighting;
- Inconsistent treatment and poorly maintained paving materials; and
- Inappropriately located and limited provision of street furniture such as seating, signage and lighting.











Predominant brick buildings along Station Road



Colourful character pub creates focal point at the northern end of East Barnet Road



Poor quality buildings at East Barnet Road/Victoria Road junction



Small-scale buildings along East Barnet Road add architectural character to High Street



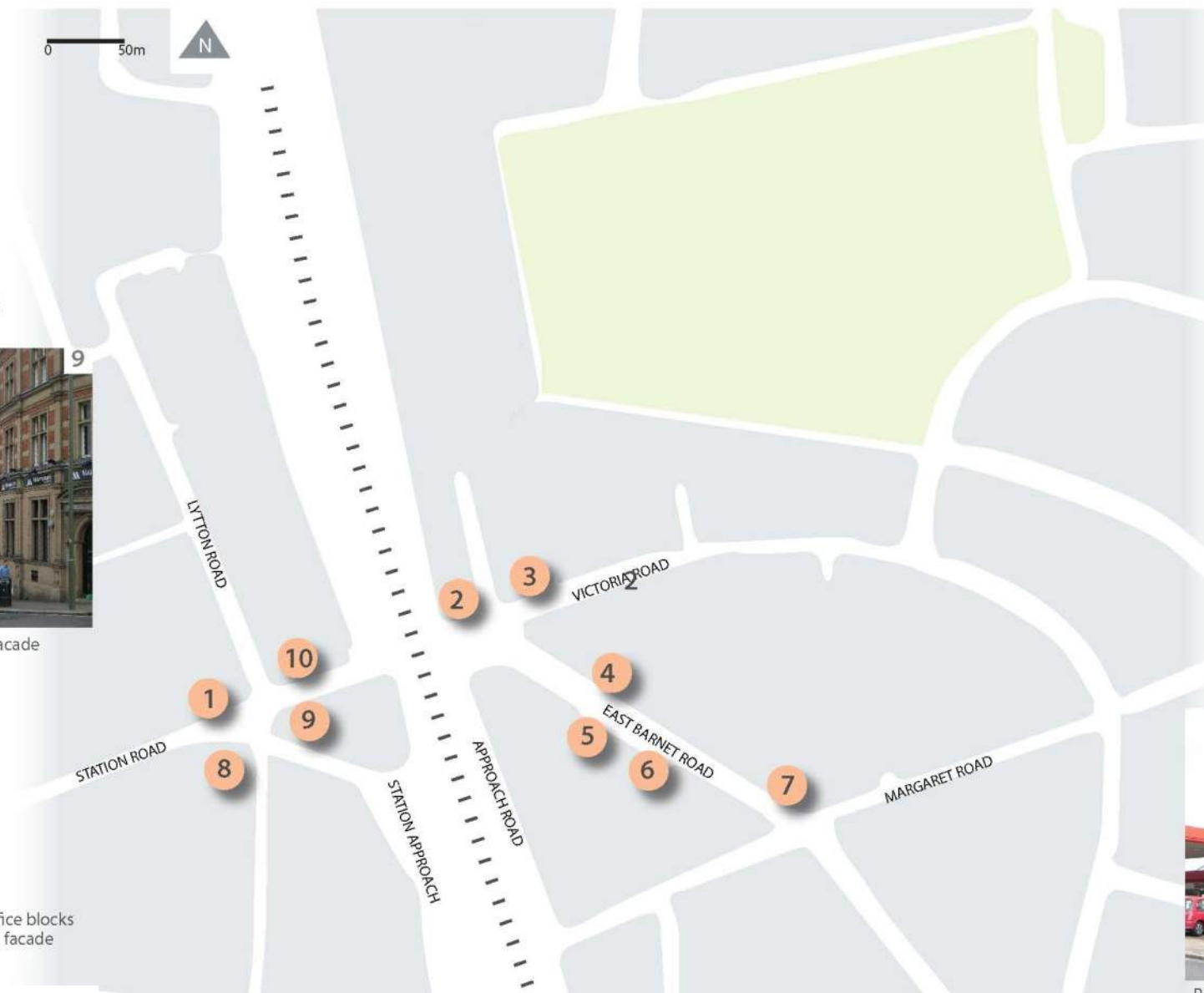
Attractive character pub along Station Road



Old Town Hall with attractive historic brick facade



Collection of office blocks - glass and steel facade



Sainsbury's building has long, continuous along High Street - white arches out of keeping with built form



Low quality buildings along East Barnet Road



Renovation to Church with predominant use of brick

Figure 6.4 Architecture





Car-dominated environment at 'gateway' junction to High Street



Hostile environment for pedestrians, including non-continuous footpaths



Under-utilised paved open space outside leisure centre on East Barnet Road

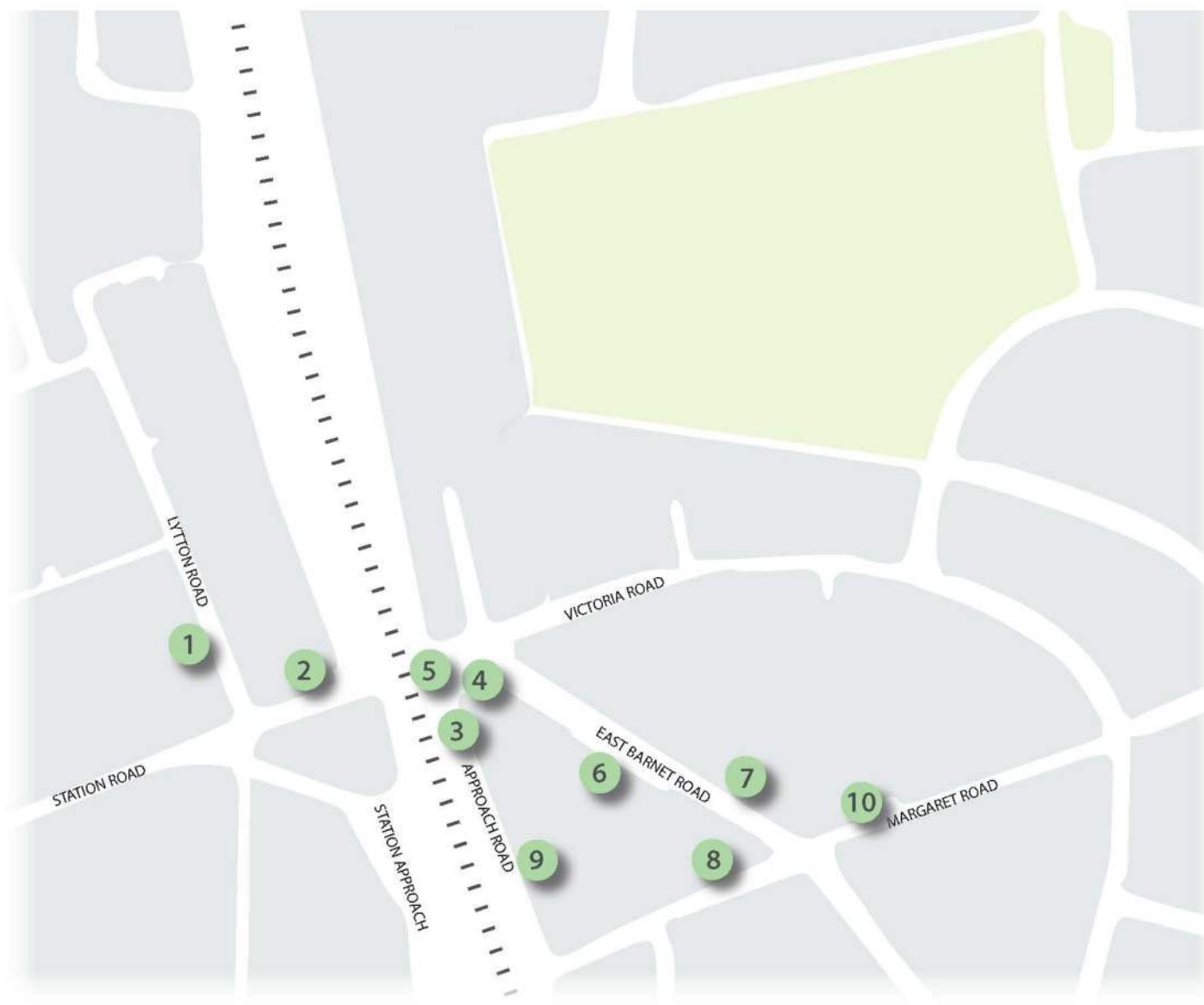


Figure 6.5 Public Realm

## Access and Movement

6.11 Ease of access and movement are key factors influencing the underlying success and attraction of town centres for customers, businesses and visitors, and therefore should be a key consideration in drawing up the framework. Accordingly, a review of the existing conditions for pedestrians, cyclists, rail passengers, bus passengers and car users has been undertaken, as set out below:

### Pedestrians

6.12 The centre has a significant walk-in catchment which benefits from strong pedestrian connections from the north, south and east, although the railway line acts as a physical barrier against pedestrian access from the west (severance). Key pedestrian-only routes include the footbridge over the railway (at the station) and connections through the residential areas between Victoria Road and Margaret Road.

6.13 Pedestrians benefit from footways that are at least consistent with minimum recommended widths – considerably wider along parts of East Barnet Road. This principal road, and therefore associated footway, benefits from street lighting and is in a reasonable state of repair. It features a number of zebra crossings and signalled crossing points giving pedestrians priority over vehicles in some locations (although there are notable deficiencies – particularly at the junction of East Barnet Road and Victoria Road).

6.14 In terms of movement within the town centre, pedestrian accessibility suffers from the following key weaknesses:

- The station is physically separated from the principal commercial area on East Barnet Road. There is an informal route through the Sainsbury's supermarket car park/store but this is only available during trading hours. Of the two available pedestrian routes, to the east of the railway line, Approach Road offers the shortest route to the principal commercial area on East Barnet Road – this route will be all the more significant if the Gas Works regeneration site is redeveloped. At the present time a footway only exists on the eastern side of the road with parked cars lining a large section of the western side of the road (given the availability of private parking for all residences and commercial properties on Approach Road it is assumed that these cars are rail users avoiding the car park charges);
- There are poor pedestrian connections between Park Road/Barking Road and the main commercial area on East Barnet Road (a desire line through the Optex site);
- Pedestrian linkages between the main retail area and Victoria Park (through to JCoss) are poor;
- At its northern end Approach Road joins East Barnet Road immediately east of the railway underpass and west of the roundabout junction with Victoria Road. In this location East Barnet Road is particularly intimidating to pedestrians due to the crossing width and restricted visibility

beneath the railway bridge. These factors are considered to lead to a sense of severance across East Barnet Road in this location (it is noted that any increases in road space in this location through widening the roundabout would exacerbate severance);

- East Barnet Road is generally wide and straight which is at odds with pedestrian amenity by encouraging high road speeds; and
- At the southern end of the commercial area East Barnet Road's footway has numerous vehicular crossovers (mainly unmarked) which creates conflicts between vehicles and pedestrian;

### Cycle

6.15 With the notable exception of East Barnet Road the majority of roads in the area are identified as recommended cycle routes in Transport for London's Local Cycling Guide 2. These recommended routes link New Barnet to East Barnet, Oakleigh Park, and Cockfosters. Further east cyclists benefit from a separate route from Cockfosters towards Enfield. The London Cycle Network is accessed to the south, towards Oakleigh Park, via Dollis Brook. The only specific provision for cyclists within New Barnet is cycle parking at the train station.

### Rail

6.16 The station is located on the edge of the town centre with pedestrian access provided to both the west and east. Commuter car parking is available on and off street on Approach Road with further provision on Station Approach.

6.17 The station lies on the Welwyn Garden City branch of the Great Northern Route and is currently operated by First Capital Connect. The station offers 3 services per hour between London Kings Cross and Welwyn Garden City. The New Barnet to Kings Cross journey takes 26 minutes by train. The wider rail network is accessed at Kings Cross St Pancras as is London's underground network (connections can also be made at Finsbury Park). Alternatively the underground network can be accessed at High Barnet, Cockfosters or Totteridge and Whetstone, each being approximately 2Km from New Barnet (i.e. beyond walking distance).

6.18 The centre has a Transport for London PTAL (Public Transport Accessibility Level) of 3 (good).

### Bus

6.19 A number of high frequency bus services serve the centre. All services stop at one of the three stops on Station Road or Station approach, to the west of the railway line. The next significant bus access point lies outside the entrance to Sainsbury's supermarket on East Barnet Road where all but service 84 and 107 stop. Table 6.1, on the following page, details the local bus services.



Table 6.1 Local Bus Services

Bus Number	Origin/ Destination	One – Way Peak Hour Frequency
84	New Barnet to Potters Bar via High Barnet	3/hr
107	New Barnet to Edgware via High Barnet	4/hr
184	Barnet to Turnpike Lane via Arnos Grove	6/hr
307	Barnet to Brimsdown via Enfield	6/hr
326	Barnet to Brent Cross Shopping Centre via Hendon	6/hr
383	Barnet to Woodside Park via Oakleigh Park	2/hr
384	Barnet to Cockfosters via High Barnet	4/hr

## Car

- 6.20 New Barnet is positioned along the A110 which links the A111 to the east to the A1000 to the west. The A111 and A1000 are key arterial routes with connections to the M25 motorway, at J23 and J24 respectively, situated approximately 4 miles north of the centre.
- 6.21 Vehicles are accommodated on single carriageways which typically comprise standard lane widths of 3.65m. In many cases this equates to widths of 9m or more of carriageway, when on street car parking is taken account of. Roads in the area are lit and subject to a national 30mph speed limit, although the excessive width of key roads (notably East Barnet Road) encourage higher speeds.
- 6.22 In peak periods, the town centre suffers from traffic congestion, particularly on East Barnet Road in the vicinity of the junction with Victoria Road. Such circumstances are not unusual for the Greater London distributor network during peak periods and there is not felt to be any particular capacity issue that requires addressing, although any future development would have to give due consideration to highway impacts and take appropriate mitigation measures as necessary.
- 6.23 There are several car parks serving the centre. To the west of the railway line the car park is reserved for permit holders only, however to the east there is a Pay and Display car park providing c.80 spaces (this charges on a daily rather than hourly basis and is aimed at those using the station as opposed to the centre). Sainsbury's has the largest car park in the centre with c.200 spaces located above and to the rear of the store (these spaces are reserved for customer use only and limited to 2 hours). There are further Pay and Display car parks located on East Barnet Road (to the south of the main retail area) which apply charges by the hour between 09:00am and 5:00pm Monday to Friday. There is also provision for on-street parking along East Barnet Road and surrounding streets. There is limited control/management of on-street parking – parking on pavements is common, and there are no controlled parking zones (CPZs) on residential streets.



Figure 6.6 Access and Movement



## Patterns of Land Ownership

- 6.24 Land within the study area is under multiple ownership, comprising a complex pattern of freeholds and leaseholds. Major landowners include Asda (the former East Barnet Gas Works Site), Tesco Stores Ltd (the Former Optex Site and surrounding landholdings, 7-11 Victoria Road, and 15 East Barnet Road), and Sainsbury's (the existing store).

## Vitality and Viability (The Health of the Centre)

- 6.25 Reference should be made to Appendix C which reports on a comprehensive 'healthcheck' of the town centre against key vitality and viability indicators (as set out in PPS6), using data from Experian and Barnet Council which has been supplemented by survey work. A summary of the outcomes of this assessment are set out below:
- In terms of the amount of floorspace, it is a relatively small centre but performs the role of a District Centre;
  - The centre has a below-average comparison goods offer (in terms of the % of units and % of floorspace) when compared to all UK centres;
  - The centre has a below average convenience goods offer in terms of the % of units, but an above average offer in terms of % of floorspace. This is largely attributable to the dominance of the Sainsbury's store which acts as the key attractor to the town centre (and is trading strongly);
  - A high proportion of retail units are occupied by service operators, and there is a historic trend of change of use from comparison goods retail to service uses. There are no banks of building societies in the centre (with the exception of ATM facilities), although the centre does benefit from a post office;
  - The centre competes with extensive out-of-centre retail provision;
  - There is a poor representation by convenience and comparison goods multiple retailers, which is offset by a varied independent offer;
  - In terms of the number of units, the centre has an above average vacancy rate (17.5%) (the national average is 10.3%). However, the vacancy rate in terms of the proportion of total floorspace is below average at 7.2% (the national average rate is 8.5%) (vacancy rates are a key indicator of the economic health of a centre);
  - Due to the relatively small size of the centre, there is no published data indicating retailer requirements for space in the centre, nonetheless we are aware of strong interest from both Asda and Tesco to open stores in this location;
  - Due to the relatively small size of the centre (and lack of recent transactional activity), robust data on typical rental values and yields is not available. However, consultation with retail agents (GVA Grimley) indicates that Zone A rental values of around £30/sqft at yields of around 10%.

Floorspace in competing centres such as Chipping Barnet and North Finchley would be expected to achieve higher values and lower yields;

- Observational evidence suggests that East Barnet Road has the highest levels of pedestrian activity, focussed around the Sainsbury's and bus stops. Pedestrian activity is noticeably lower away from these areas of concentration; and
  - Levels of recorded crime within the town centre are slightly higher than the surrounding residential areas, however levels are categorised as 'average' by the Metropolitan Police (the same category of the rest of the Borough) therefore these statistics are not considered to represent an adverse indicator of vitality and viability.
- 6.26 The healthcheck included a review of research undertaken by Barnet Council into customer/residents views in 2007 (Citizens Panel 24) which identified some clear messages of relevance to the preparation of the Framework:
- Satisfaction ratings (under a series of key indicators) for New Barnet were below the average for all of the Borough's town centres (ranked 13<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> out of 17 centres) – the centre's 'attractions' were rated particularly poorly;
  - The rate of car use as a the preferred means of transport to travel to the centre was well above the average for all centres; and
  - In terms of aspirations for change, respondents prioritised more shops (particularly comparison goods retailers), later opening hours, events/festivals, farmers markets, and more restaurants in New Barnet. Support for more bars, clubs, cinemas and health/fitness centres was limited.
- 6.27 Overall, the 'health' of the centre is considered to be reasonable, with significant opportunities for improvement. For the purposes of comparison, the healthcheck also considers the 'health' of Chipping Barnet and Whetstone District Centres and East Barnet Local Centre, and concludes that these centres are generally performing well.
- ## Socio-economic Profile of Catchment
- 6.28 In order to gain an understanding of the centre's main customer base, a high level review of Census data has been undertaken to build a profile of the immediate catchment area. Full details of this are set out in Appendix D, however a summary of the key messages is set out below:
- Slightly older age profile than the Borough average;
  - Higher proportion of Christians and lower proportions of Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, and Sikhs than the Borough average, although the religious profile is still more mixed/diverse than the national average figure;
  - The proportion of residents in social classes ABC1 in the local area is slightly higher than the Borough average and significantly higher than the national average;
  - A greater proportion of local residents were born in the UK when compared to the average of all Borough residents, although the figure is lower than the national average. Immigrants were

most commonly born in Asian, other European, or African countries – Cyprus, India, Kenya, and the Republic of Ireland are the most common;

- The local area has a higher proportion of single person households than the Borough and national averages;
- A significantly higher proportion of owner-occupiers (with or without mortgages) in the local area than the Borough and national averages;
- On average local residents have a lower educational attainment than the Borough-wide profile, although higher than the national average; and
- There is a higher than average economic activity rate among local residents.

## 7. Town Centre Floorspace Need and Impact

- 7.1 GVA Grimley were appointed by Barnet Council in 2008 to undertake a Town Centre Use Floorspace Need Assessment in order to establish a sound evidence base for the Borough's Local Development Framework (LDF). The purpose of this section is firstly to summarise the conclusions of the study with specific respect to levels of quantitative and qualitative need for additional town centre use floorspace in the New Barnet area, and secondly to consider potential impacts on competing centres of new development in New Barnet (town centre uses comprise retail, leisure, offices, and arts/culture/tourism uses). Reference should be made to Appendix E which sets out the technical outputs which underpin the high level summary set out below.

### Floorspace Capacity/Need

- 7.2 The study estimates that there is significant residual expenditure capacity (quantitative need) in the local area (defined as Zones 1 and 2 in Figure 5.2, which includes Chipping Barnet) to support additional convenience and comparison goods floorspace (convenience goods expenditure capacity is estimated at £13.4m in 2011, rising to £19.6m by 2026 – sufficient to support a further small supermarket). This is supported by evidence of qualitative need for additional retail floorspace to improve consumer choice in convenience goods and to address the limited comparison goods offer in New Barnet Town Centre. In addition to the demonstrable need for further retail floorspace, the assessment identifies clear capacity/need to enhance/broaden the centre's food/drink and evening economy offer.

### Impact on Competing Centres

- 7.3 In order to establish the appropriate scale/quantum of additional retail floorspace that should be directed towards New Barnet Town Centre (if any), regard should be had to the potential impacts of such development on the 'health' of competing centres from such development. Accordingly, the impacts of various development scenarios have been tested (refer to Appendix E), which concludes that significant new floorspace in New Barnet could risk adversely affecting the vitality and viability of other centres, notably Chipping Barnet. Accordingly, the appropriate scale of development (and acceptable 'impacts') should be carefully considered in drawing up the Framework.



## 8. Development Opportunities

8.1 A key consideration in the preparation of the Framework will be to identify and take account of potential development opportunities within the study area. Accordingly, a review of the development pipeline/planning history of the centre has been undertaken, alongside survey work to identify potential development sites and areas of change. The outcomes of this work is set out below:

### Development Pipeline

#### Major Development Proposals

##### *Former East Barnet Gas Works Site, Albert Road*

8.2 A planning application for the comprehensive redevelopment of the former East Barnet Gas Works site was submitted to LBB in February 2009. Permission was sought for the demolition of existing buildings and the erection of a mixed use development comprising 211 residential units, a supermarket (10,526sqm gross/3,975sqm net sales area) and 1,893sqm (gross) of further non-residential floorspace comprising A1 (shops), A2 (financial and professional services), A3 (restaurants and cafes) and D1 (non-residential institutions), public space, car parking, access and related highways works, and associated works. The sales area within the Asda unit was proposed to be split between convenience goods (60% of floorspace) and comparison goods (40%).

8.3 The application was withdrawn by Asda in July 2009 following an officer recommendation for refusal on a number of grounds.

8.4 It should be noted that Asda have indicated that they remain committed to bringing forward this site for development. It is understood that Asda own the freehold to this site.

##### *Former Optex Site, East Barnet Road*

8.5 Tesco Stores Ltd are preparing redevelopment proposals for the former Optex site on New Barnet Road. Tesco have indicated that their emerging proposals comprise a 30,000sqft (net) Tesco store with associated car parking and ancillary retail units. Tesco have not yet submitted a planning application and are still in the process of assembling the site, nonetheless they however expressed a firm commitment to take forward their emerging proposals.

##### *7-11 Victoria Road Site*

8.6 Tesco Stores Ltd were granted planning permission at appeal for the demolition of existing buildings and the erection of a new 3-storey building comprising 392sqm (gross) (241sqm net) of class A1 floorspace at ground floor and basement level and 2 residential flats at first and second storey level, on April 2009. The planning application (submitted in February 2008) was appealed on the grounds of non-determination with the prescribed period – if the Council had of determined the application it subsequently determined that it would have refused it on the grounds of insufficient car parking and adverse visual impacts on the character and appearance of the local area.

8.7 It is not clear (at the time of writing) whether Tesco intend to implement this consent.

##### *JCoss Site, Westbrook Avenue*

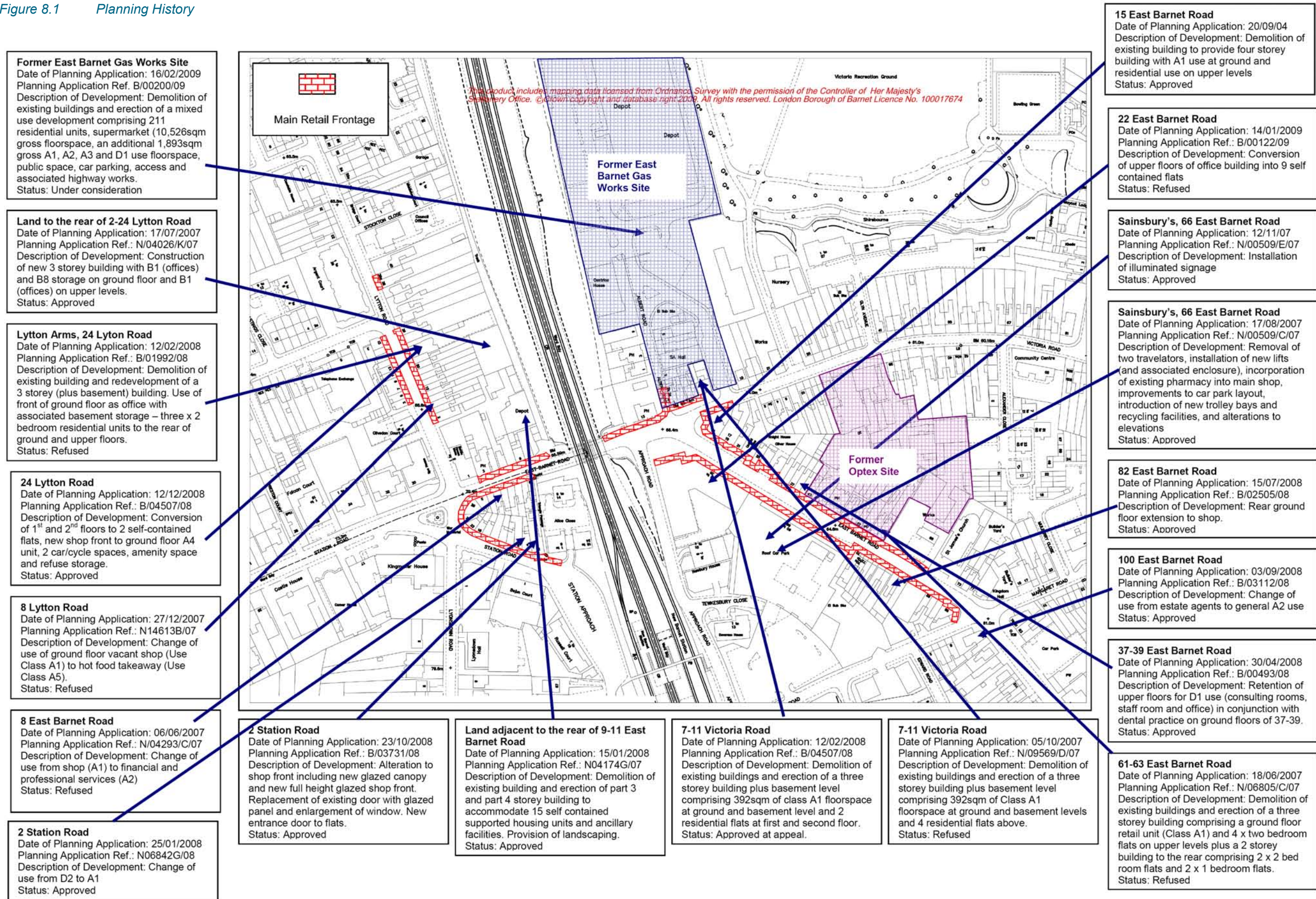
8.8 Construction work has recently commenced on a new Jewish-faith Secondary school on land to the north of the town centre on Westbrook Avenue. When fully operational the school will provide 1,310 school places for girls and boys aged 11-19 years. It is understood that the majority of pupils are to be bussed to school, with pupils set-down and collected from bus stops adjacent to New Barnet Station from/to which pupils will walk to the school site (this will also be the car drop-off point).

#### Minor Planning Proposals

8.9 Figure 8.1, overleaf, provides an overview of the recent planning history (dating back 3 years from June 2009) in the town centre:



Figure 8.1 Planning History





## Potential Development Sites

8.10 Table 8.1 sets out potential development sites that have been identified in the town centre (identified on Figure 8.2 on the following page) at the scoping stage (the development potential of these sites will be explored in more detail at the Options stage). It should be noted that the Framework will not have Development Plan Status and therefore cannot allocate new sites for development – it can, however, set out guidance on how the Council would apply existing development plan policies should these non-allocated sites become available for development.

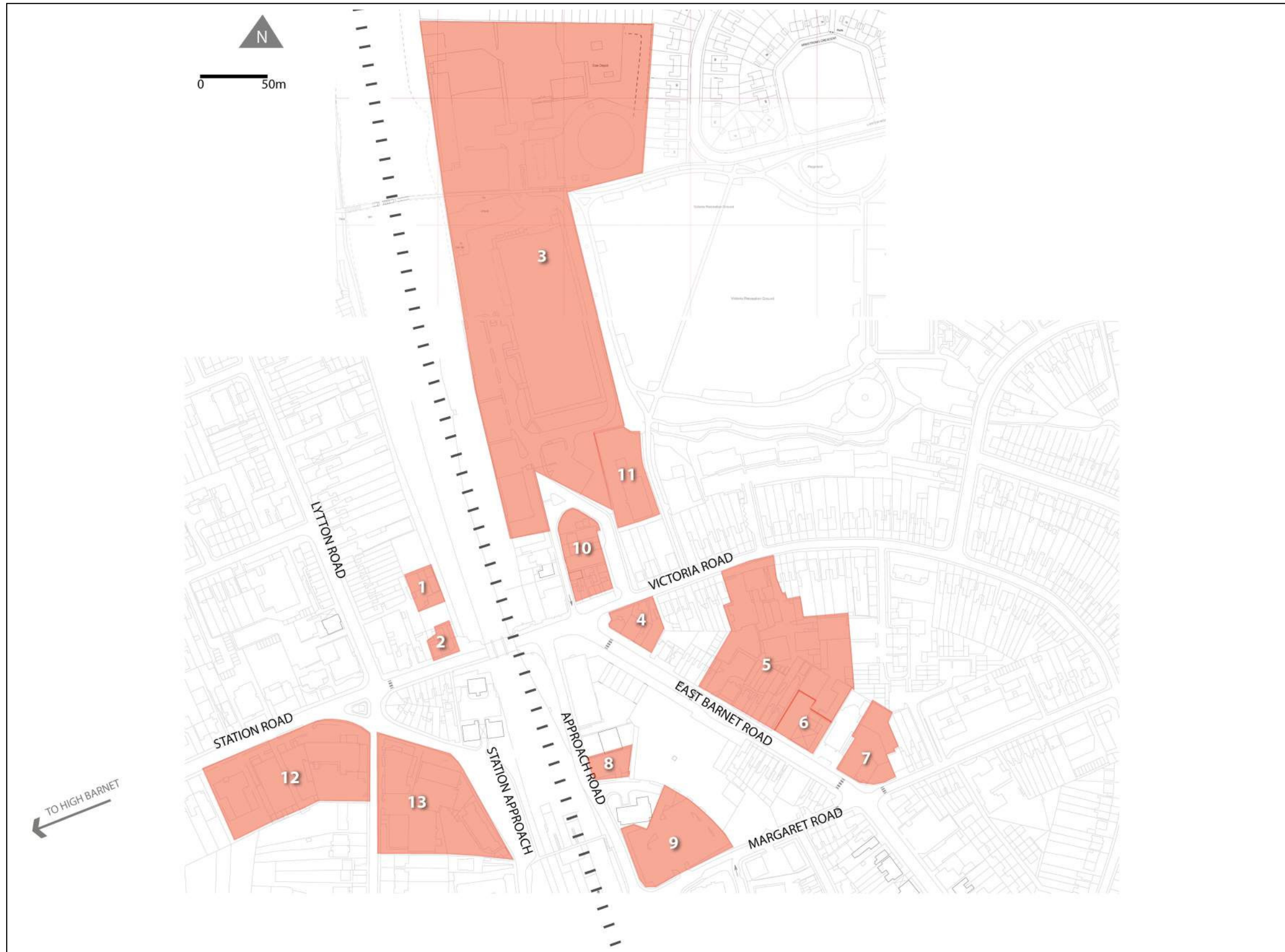
Table 8.1 Potential Development Sites

Ref.	Address	Site Description/Development Potential	Planning Status
1	Rear of 2-24 Lytton Road	Site Area: 0.07ha Underused backland with vehicle access from Lytton Road. Physically constrained by surrounding development and the railway line – could be combined with site ref. 2.	Planning permission for B1/B8 development
2	Depot site to the Rear of 9-11 East Barnet Road	Site Area: 0.04ha Underused former depot site. Could be combined with site ref.1. Opportunity to reinforce active frontage on East Barnet Road.	Planning permission for residential development (supported housing)
3	Former East Barnet Gas Works site and adjacent land to the south	Site Area: 4.9ha Large vacant site suitable for comprehensive redevelopment. Edge of centre location.	Allocated in UDP for mixed use development (Residential, Retail, Offices, Leisure)
4	Corner of East Barnet Road and Victoria Road (derelict building)	Site Area: 0.11 Derelict building suitable for demolition and redevelopment. Prominent site – opportunity for landmark development.	Planning permission (affecting part of site) for mixed use redevelopment (retail at ground with 4 x residential units above)
5	Former Optex site and adjacent land (former industrial sheds and retail units with mix of uses above)	Site Area: 0.94ha Backland underused industrial site plus adjacent low quality existing retail units fronting East Barnet Road. Offers a significant opportunity to unlock a major development site within the core of the centre and enhance the main retail frontage.	-
6	East Barnet Road Petrol Station	Site Area: 0.12ha Total petrol station (in use). Flat site with extensive 'high street' frontage. Potential for redevelopment for a use more compatible for a town centre location, which makes a more effective and efficient use of this prominent site and enhances the retail frontage.	-

Ref.	Address	Site Description/Development Potential	Planning Status
7	Fayers Building Yard (adjacent to church hall)	Site Area: 0.18ha Existing business remains in use. Extensive 'high street' frontage. Offers potential for redevelopment for a use more compatible for a town centre and which makes a more effective and efficient use of this prominent site.	-
8	Approach Road	Site Area: 0.06ha Underused semi/derelict car wash site adjacent to modern residential flatted developments on Approach Road. Redevelopment would have a significant beneficial impact on the quality of the built environment in this area.	-
9	Corner of Margaret Road and Approach Road	Site Area: 0.36ha Western part of Sainsbury's car park – may offer potential for redevelopment to make a more effective and efficient use of land, and to enhance the quality of the built environment in this area.	-
10	Victoria Road/Albert Road Site	Site Area:1.9ha Part of site is subject to planning permission (Tesco Express). Offers potential for wider redevelopment of existing low quality development – key opportunity to enhance this highly visible part of the centre.	Planning permission for retail/re4sidential development on part of site
11	Warehouse Site, Albert Road	Site Area: 0.25ha Underused site which would offer redevelopment potential, and which would contribute to the wider regeneration of this part of the study area.	-
12	Existing Office Blocks on Station Road	Site Area: 0.76ha Longer term development opportunity for the refurbishment/reuse or redevelopment of the existing buildings.	-
13	Existing blocks on Station Approach	Site Area: 0.67ha Longer term development opportunity for the refurbishment/reuse or redevelopment of the existing buildings.	-

8.11 In addition to the site specific opportunities identified in Table 8.1 above, the centre's existing building stock is considered to offer potential for renovation and reuse.

Figure 8.2 Plan of Identified Potential Development Sites





## 9. Key Issues

9.1 The purpose of this section is to draw together the key considerations identified in the preceding sections and to establish the centre's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, which the Framework should respond to, and which should underpin the vision, objectives and development principles set out in the following section.

Table 9.1 SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local walk-in catchment</li> <li>Performs the role of a District Centre – serving the day to day convenience retail needs of local residents.</li> <li>Sainsbury's anchor store</li> <li>Good accessibility via public transport</li> <li>Good car parking provision</li> <li>Mix of town centre uses</li> <li>Diverse catchment area population with an above average proportion ABC1 social classes</li> <li>High pedestrian footfall due to station.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor convenience retail choice</li> <li>Poor comparison retail choice</li> <li>High occurrence of hot food takeaway uses within main retail frontage</li> <li>No banks or building societies</li> <li>Poor provision for cyclists</li> <li>High number of vacant units</li> <li>Poor quality built form and public realm</li> <li>Limited multiple/higher quality operator interest other than from supermarkets</li> <li>Car/vehicle dominated environment (poor pedestrian environment)</li> <li>Disjointed retail frontage due to severance caused by railway line</li> <li>Extensive blank/non-active frontages within main retail frontage</li> <li>Lack of gateways or sense of place</li> <li>Hostile public realm</li> <li>Poor legibility</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expenditure capacity (quantitative need) for additional retail floorspace (convenience and comparison goods in the local area.</li> <li>Qualitative 'need' for an enhanced convenience and comparison offer</li> <li>Developer pressure/interest for additional town centre use floorspace</li> <li>Available/suitable in-centre and out-of-centre development sites</li> <li>Enhanced leisure/food/drink/evening economy offer</li> <li>Increase resident population and employees in town centre</li> <li>Attract multiple retailers</li> <li>Niche/specialist role</li> <li>Increased footfall in town centre due to JCoss</li> <li>Establish a focal 'heart' for the centre.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Edge of centre retail development could adversely affect the vitality and viability of the main retail area.</li> <li>Impact of recession on consumer retail expenditure in the short term</li> <li>Increased market share of competing centres</li> <li>Change of use from A1 (retail) to other 'A' use classes</li> <li>Development in competing centres</li> <li>Growing prevalence of A5 uses in centre</li> </ul>

Figure 9.1 Strengths Plan

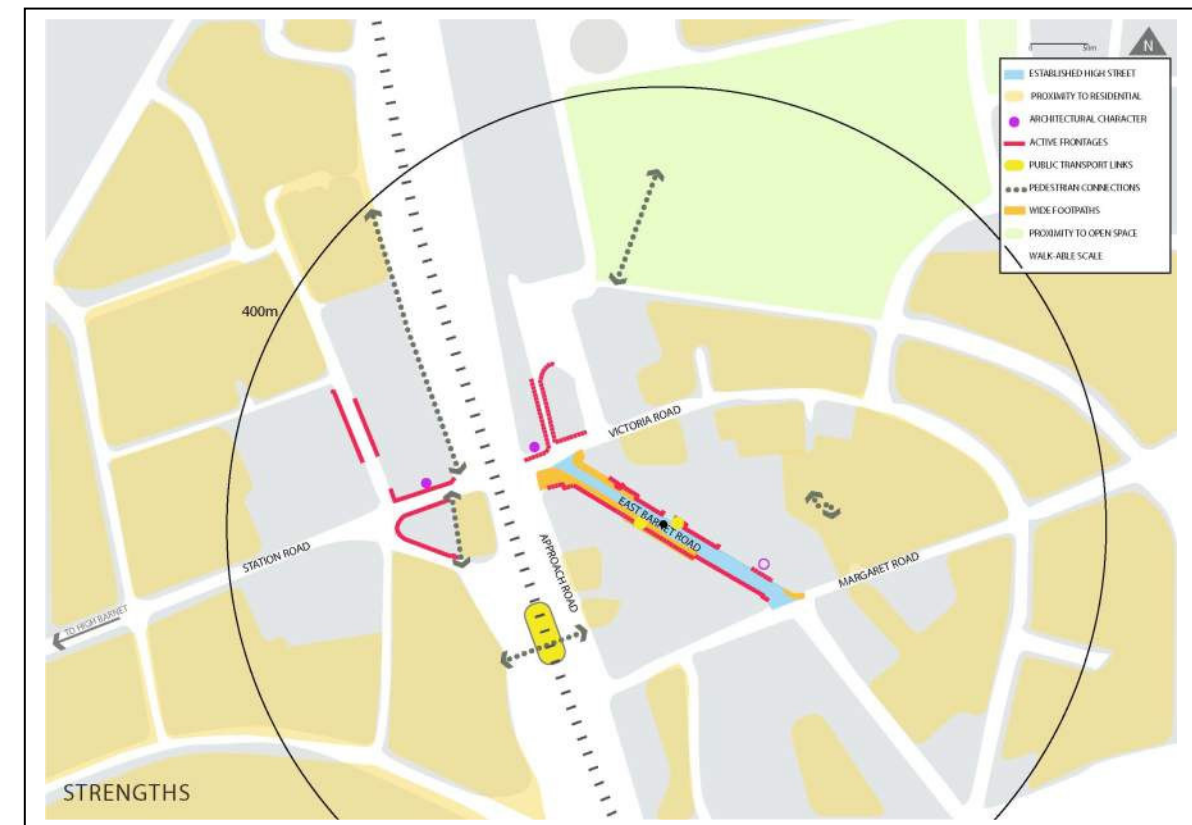
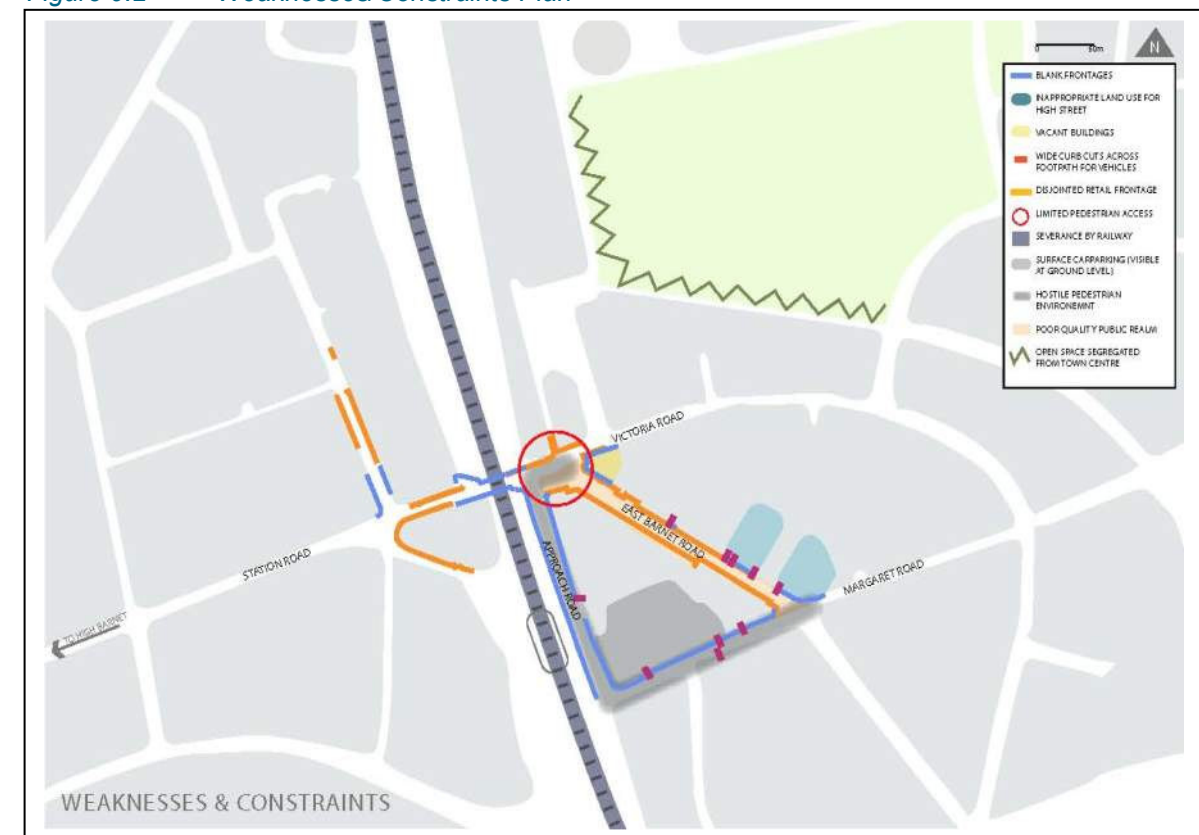


Figure 9.2 Weaknesses/Constraints Plan



## 10. Vision, Objectives, and Preliminary Development

### Principles

#### Vision

For New Barnet Town Centre to be a vital, viable, and sustainable centre that is recognised for its attractive, safe, accessible, and welcoming environment; and range of quality shops, services and leisure offer that meet the day-to-day needs of the local community

### Objectives and Development Principles

- 10.1 The purpose of this sub-section is to identify key overarching objectives/principles which it is recommended should underpin the guidance set out in the draft Framework.
- 10.2 The key objective of the Framework will be to promote the vitality and viability of the town centre by:
- Pro-actively planning to improve the centre;
  - Ensuring an appropriate scale of development;
  - Focussing development within the centre (the sequential approach);
  - Enhancing consumer choice;
  - Enhancing the environment;
  - Enhancing accessibility for all;
  - Ensuring development is sustainable;
  - Identifying suitable, available, and viable sites for development; and
  - Ensuring that the provisions of the Framework are deliverable.

#### Principle 1: Plan for Improvement

- 10.3 As a fundamental principle the Framework should plan for the improvement of the centre. Key considerations for the Framework include:
- Establishing clear development control guidance to control inappropriate development and provide a clear view on what is appropriate where; and
  - Growth and/or managed change of all/parts of the centre.

#### Principle 2: Ensure an Appropriate Scale of Development

- 10.4 There is demonstrable evidence of quantitative and qualitative need for additional convenience and comparison retail and leisure use floorspace in the North Sub-area of the Borough, supported by clear developer pressure. Key considerations/options for the framework include:
- How much convenience/comparison retail and leisure floorspace should be directed to New Barnet (as opposed to other centres) having regard to identified needs and potential impacts on New Barnet itself and other competing centres?
  - Should the Framework seek to control the size of individual units (for example by resisting larger format stores)?
  - Should the Framework seek to control the scale and massing of potential future developments?

#### Principle 3: Focus Development in the Town Centre

- 10.5 Development of additional town centre use floorspace should be directed to sites (or within buildings) located within the defined Main Retail Frontage. Key considerations/options for the framework include:
- The Framework should incorporate clear and detailed guidance on how the sequential approach to site selection should be applied; and
  - A requirement for developers to be flexible and innovative, and to explore fully the possibility of fitting development onto more central sites before considering edge or out of centre locations.

#### Principle 4: Enhance Consumer Choice

- 10.6 The Framework should aim to enhance consumer choice by aiming to attract a broader and higher quality convenience, comparison and leisure (food and drink) offer in the centre, which would attract a broad range of people, for a broad range of purposes throughout the day and evening. Key considerations/options for the framework include:
- Enhance consumer choice and address the needs of the community;
  - Identifying suitable, available and viable sites for different retail/leisure uses formats;
  - Divide the defined Main Retail Frontage into primary and secondary frontages with different planning guidance for each (and perhaps 'fringe' areas – where decline could be managed);
  - Consider identifying character areas which would have specific use focus;
  - Encourage mixed use development including residential, employment, and community use;
  - Pro-actively promote the expansion of the evening economy, while ensuring appropriate management controls are in place;
  - Maintaining A Class ground floor frontages;
  - Promote the independent sector as well as multiples;
  - Farmers markets; and



- Niche roles.

### Principle 5: Enhance the Town Centre Environment

10.7 A high quality environment should aim to create a sense of place that will be welcoming and provide public space that will promote and encourage civic life and instil a sense of pride, thus supporting the centre's economic well-being and helping it to fulfil its role and function as a district centre. Key considerations/options for the framework include

- Creating new public and civic space as part of a higher quality and well connected public realm;
- Address crime and personal safety considerations;
- Create an identity for the centre ('urban village');
- Enhance the quality of the streetscape through a set palette of materials, uniform shop frontages/signage/canopies/awnings etc;
- De-cluttering of streets (removal of redundant street furniture) and introduction of street furniture that enhances the High Street's identity and provides resting places;
- Promote local distinctiveness;
- Enhanced street lighting;
- Planting strategy;
- Public art;
- Lighting;
- Add vibrancy to the street scene by encouraging more active frontages, al fresco dining, street markets, street activity (including events);

### Principle 6: Improve Accessibility to and within the Town Centre

10.8 The Framework should establish an accessibility/movement strategy for the town centre. Key considerations/options for the Framework include:

- Pedestrian favoured environment over the car;
- Pedestrian safety;
- Enhancement of provision for cyclists;
- Inclusive access (physically disabled, visually impaired, old/frail);
- Maintaining existing number of car parking spaces;
- Improvements to on-street car parking arrangements including parking management; and
- Improved signage.

### Principle 7: Promote Sustainability

10.9 As an overarching principle, it is important that the town centre evolves in a manner that minimises its contribution to climate change and which addresses the effects of climate change. This is

considered critical for the centre's long term social, economic and environmental success. Key considerations/options for the Framework include:

- Exploring the opportunities for decentralised energy generation, use of renewable fuels and a district heating network;
- Sustainable design and construction standards (BREEAM ,CFSH);
- Reducing the need to travel and promoting viable alternatives to carbon fuelled motor vehicles;
- Minimising water usage and addressing the effects of changing rainfall patterns;
- Appropriate landscaping (shade and cooling);
- Encourage retrofitting of the existing building stock;
- Reuse of land and buildings

### Principle 8: Identify Suitable, Available, Viable Sites for Development

10.10 The Framework will identify a series of potential development sites that are suitable, available and viable and define appropriate uses and parameters for the scale of development for each. Key considerations/options for the Framework include:

- Reuse of existing buildings;
- Gas works site;
- Optex Site; and
- Smaller sites (as identified in Section 8).

### Principle 9: A Deliverable Framework

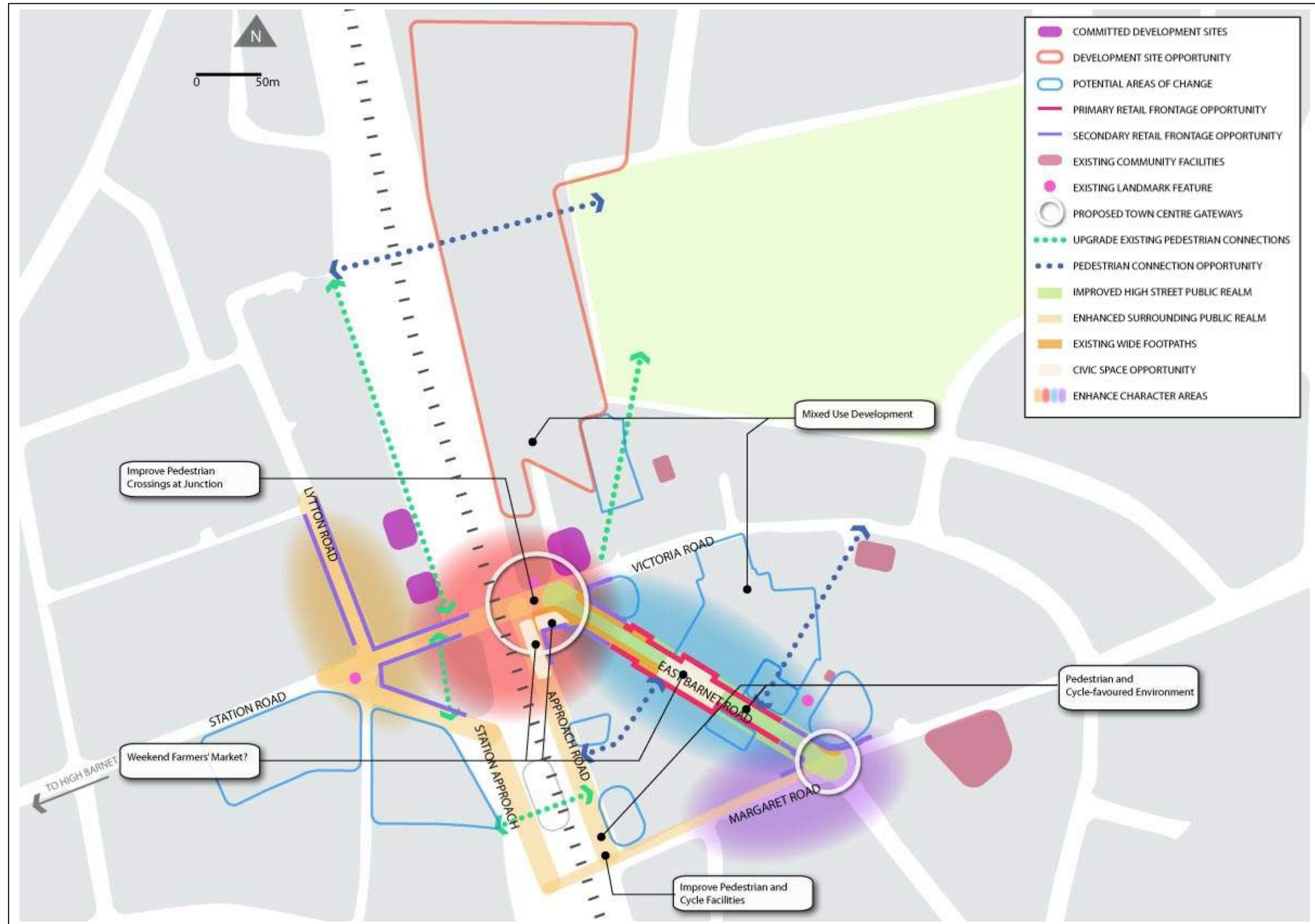
10.11 Consideration should be given to the use of the following mechanisms in order to achieve the Framework objectives:

- The Framework should establish clear development control guidance to control inappropriate development and provide a clear view on what is appropriate where;
- The use of pooled s.106 contributions to fund public realm improvements;
- Use of CPO to create suitable development sites; and
- The appropriate use of conditions.

### Preliminary Opportunities Plan

10.12 Having regard to the above development principles and potential options, reference should be made to Figure 10.1 which illustrates preliminary opportunities.

Table 10.1 Preliminary Opportunities Plan





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## 11. Conclusions and Next Steps

- 11.1 This report has demonstrated that New Barnet Town Centre offers significant scope for development that could bring about positive change to the local area. The key aim of the Framework document will be to ensure that any development is controlled/guided in the most appropriate manner that positively responds to planning policies, community aspirations, and the existing centre-specific issues outlined in this report.
- 11.2 Going forward, the key objectives and development principles set out in Section 10 will be used as the starting point for the preparation of Framework Options over Summer/Autumn 2009, which will then be the subject of detailed community and stakeholder consultation.