

Planning Brief

# Victoria Recreation Ground

## New Barnet

June 2015

# Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Objectives Of Planning Brief</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3. The Site And Surrounding Context</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>4. Scope Of Development</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>5. Planning Strategy</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>6. Planning Policy Context</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>7. Planning Application and Supporting Documents</b>	<b>37</b>

# 1. Introduction

## Purpose of Brief

- 1.1. The purpose of this draft Planning Brief is to provide planning guidance in relation to the potential development of part of Victoria Recreation Ground, New Barnet for a new leisure facility, as a replacement to the existing Church Farm Swimming Centre. A similar planning brief has been prepared for the possible use of Danegrove Playing Field, East Barnet as an alternative location.
- 1.2. This draft Brief also importantly provides a means of engaging with the local community and key stakeholders on this option. It will be subject to comprehensive public consultation as part of the Sports and Physical Activities (SPA) consultation exercise in Summer 2015 to ensure that the views of the community are considered and the most appropriate location and type of leisure facility is brought forward.
- 1.3. The Brief has been produced in accordance with planning and wider corporate policy objectives and emerging strategies. Should this particular alternative site be chosen as an option following consultation, the Brief will be endorsed by the Council and assist in the preparation of a detailed planning application for submission early next year.

## Background

- 1.4. In February 2015 the Council endorsed a feasibility study into the future of the Council's portfolio of five leisure centres was undertaken in parallel with a broader Sport and Physical Activity Review (SPA). The study was underpinned by the Council's need to:
  - provide fit for purpose facilities for its residents
  - improve public health outcomes
  - deliver a service that is as close to revenue neutral as possible
- 1.5. The Feasibility Study ultimately sought to establish what facilities the Council requires; where they might be located; how much they would cost to build and run (where new developments are required); and how much they would generate in revenue. The Study provides a framework through which a procurement exercise can be undertaken for the replacement Church farm and Copthall Leisure Centres and a new management operator. The existing management contract with Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) is due to expire in December 2017.
- 1.6. The Study was carried out in consultation with other local authorities, national governing bodies of sport, including Sport England and key sports clubs at the existing centres. It followed an earlier public consultation exercise undertaken seeking the views of the Boroughs residents as to the approach being adopted and a range of national and local data sources were used to collate appropriate supporting evidence.

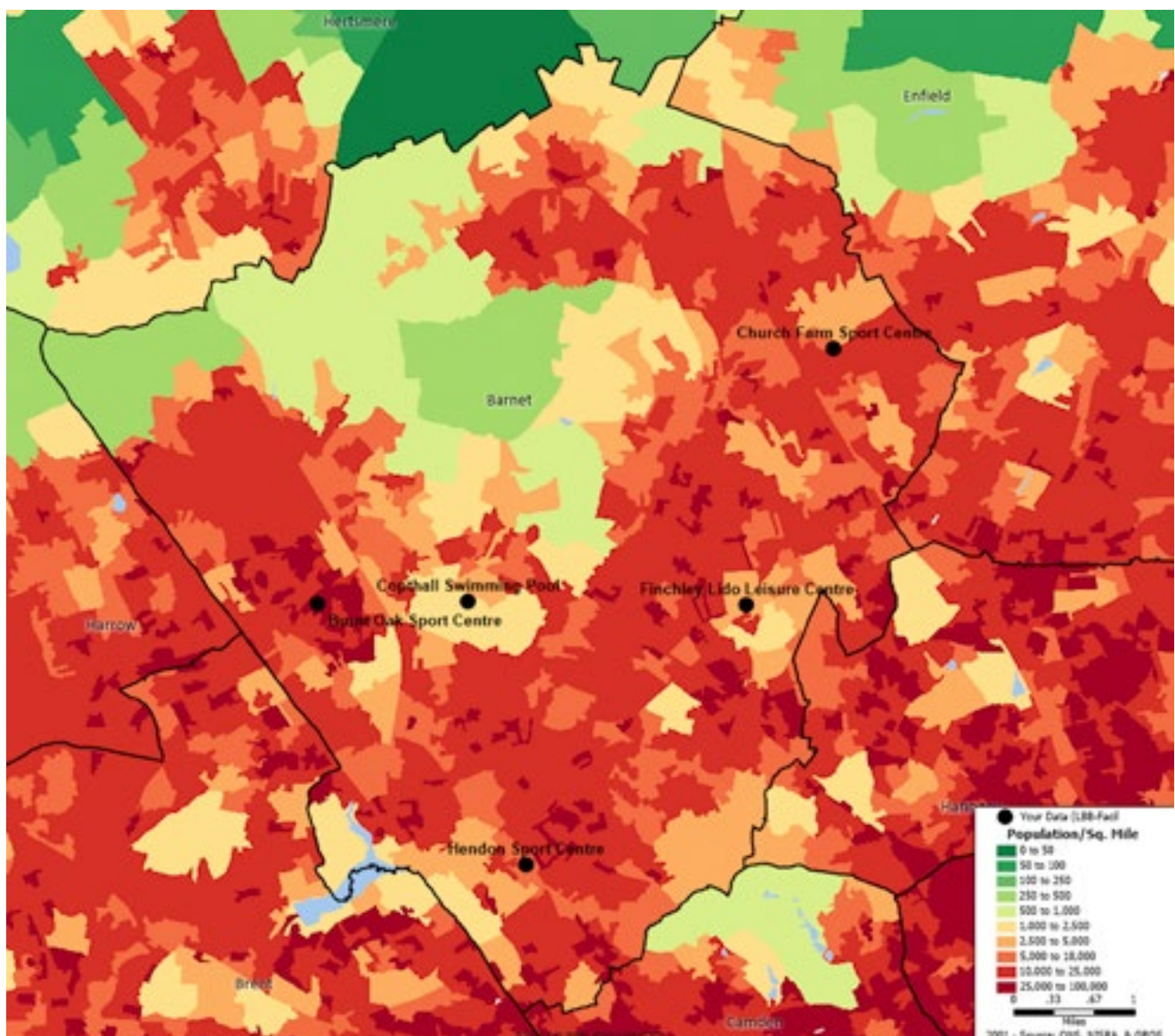
## Context

- 1.7. Barnet is an outer borough located in the north of the Greater London area. It has a total population of 357,500, making it the 14th most populated authority in England and Wales and the

second highest in London. This population is unevenly distributed with greater density in the southern and western areas of the borough (Finchley, Colindale and Hendon) and lower density in the north as the edge of London and a greater proportion of open space is approached.

- 1.8. The Borough is generally relatively affluent with half of the wards in the top half (i.e. less deprived) of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). However, there are areas of greater deprivation in the more populated south of the Borough, including six wards in the bottom 10% and a further 19 in the bottom 20% compared to England and Wales as a whole.
- 1.9. As an attractive and successful place, Barnet is experiencing significant growth pressures and rising demand for services driven by an increasing population, particularly young and older residents. The Borough will shortly become London's most populous, with over 400,000 residents in the next 20-30 years.

### Location of the Council's Key Leisure Facilities



1.10. The Council currently has five leisure centres as shown in the map above:

- **Barnet Copthall** (built in 1975): 25m, 8 lane swimming pool, 25m, 6 lane swimming pool, diving pool with a moveable floor, 97 station health and fitness gym, dance studio and café
- **Church Farm** (built in 1960): 19m, 3 lane swimming pool and activity hall
- **Finchley** (built in 1996): 25m, 6 lane swimming pool, leisure water, 100-station health and fitness gym, dance studios, café and lido (circa 25m, 2 lane)
- **Hendon** (built in 1995): 4-court sports hall, gymnastics hall, 60-station health and fitness gym and dance studio.
- **Burnt Oak** (built in 2003): 4-court sports hall, 100-station health and fitness gym, dance studios, 2 outdoor grass pitches and 1 synthetic turf pitch (not full size).

1.11. Barnet's Corporate Plan 2015-20 aspires to Barnet's residents being some of the most active and healthy in London, benefitting from improved leisure facilities and making use of the borough's parks and open spaces. It commits the Council to investing in new, modern leisure centres to replace older centres and to work with local sports clubs and community groups to increase participation in sport and leisure and stresses that Public Health will be integrated as a priority theme across all services.

1.12. In seeking to provide fit for purpose facilities in the future a review of the condition of the existing centres and needs assessment was undertaken as part of the Feasibility Study. The needs assessment set out the future facility requirements across the Borough, with a particular focus on swimming pools, sports halls and health and fitness facilities. Building on previous research undertaken by the Council (Sport and Physical Activity Needs Assessment report - September 2012), and using Sport England's Facility Planning Model and fitness latent demand reports for the borough, the needs assessment has established that:

- there is a need to maintain the current level of swimming pools – with consideration required on the provision of additional water space in the south of the borough.
- there is no additional need for sports halls but increased access to provision currently located at school sites should be explored to ensure demand can be met.
- there is demand for a 10%–20% increase in the number of health and fitness stations at Copthall, Finchley, Hendon and Burnt Oak and the provision of approximately 75 stations in the Church Farm area.

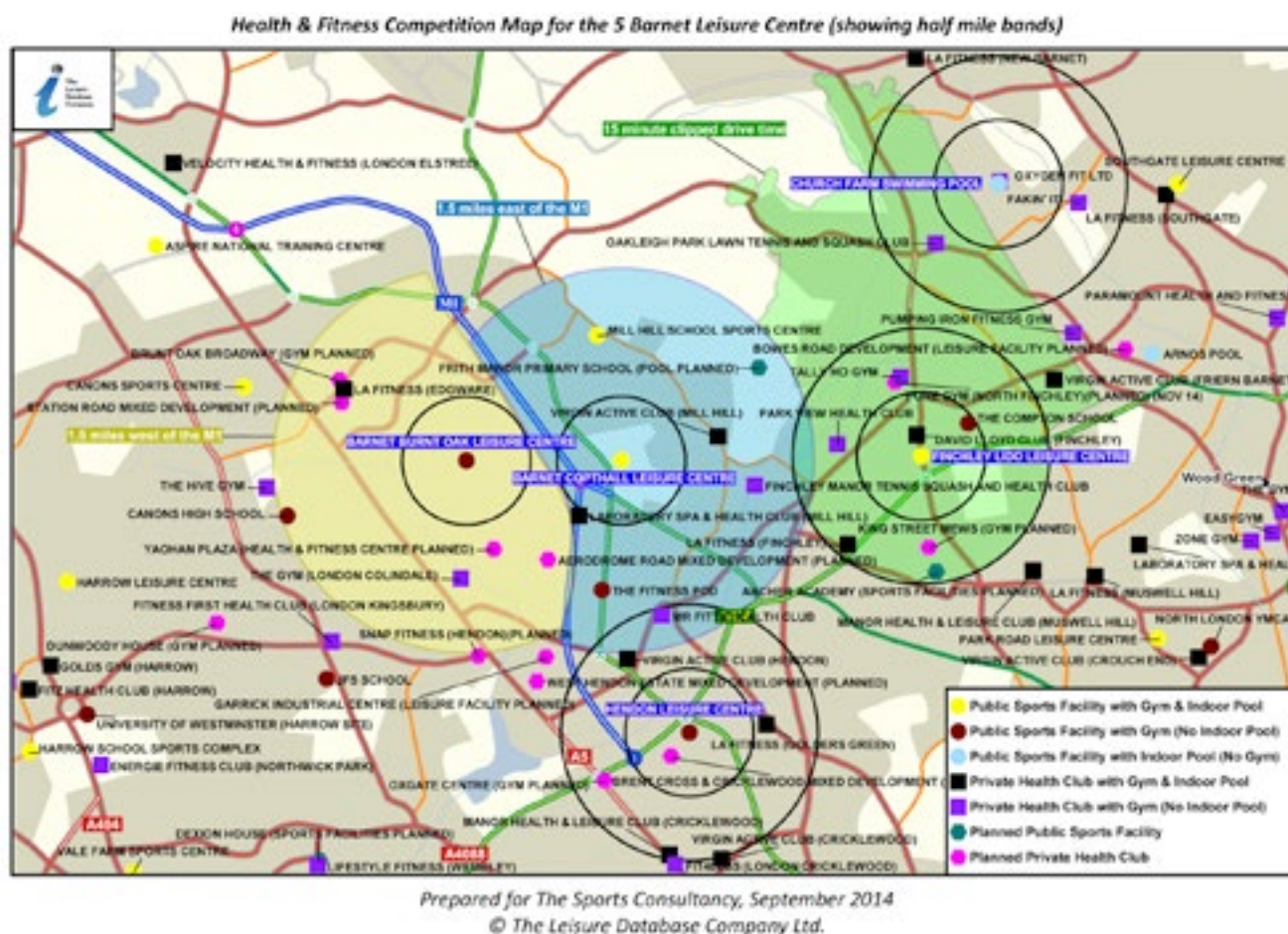
1.13. The latent demand reports were commissioned from The Leisure Database Company. These reports provide a detailed analysis of consumer demographics for a defined catchment area. Catchment areas in areas of London tend to be between one and two miles due to population density and the amount of competition.

1.14. The reports identify the profile of consumers on a postcode basis and their propensity to join a health and fitness club. They also identify competing facilities within the catchment area and current membership numbers. This enables a detailed estimate of latent demand for health and fitness facilities within an area to be deduced.



- 1.15. These reports are used by most major commercial health and fitness operators when making decisions on the location for new gym developments and, as such, they provide a robust and realistic estimate of the potential for additional memberships.
- 1.16. Overall, the latent demand for health and fitness memberships indicates that there is scope for moderate increases to the health and fitness provision at the five Council sites and in relation to Church Farm 60-70 stations based on 25 members per station.
- 1.17. The map below shows the catchment areas used for this analysis and the key competing facilities.

## Health and Fitness Catchment Areas



- 1.18. Based on this analysis and a conditions survey, the SPA study concluded that of the five facilities, investment is needed as a priority at Church Farm Swimming Pool and Barnet Copthall.
- 1.19. Constructed in 1960, Church Farm Swimming Pool only accommodates a non-standard 18m, 3 lane swimming pool and has a limited sports offer. It is dated and generally in a very poor condition with significant and costly defects likely to become more commonplace. Allied to this, financial performance is weak and it is unlikely to improve given the condition and the limited facility mix. Critically it is accepted that the centre does not provide the facilities and services to cater for and support current and future local need.
- 1.20. The site of Church Farm itself is also not ideal as it is significantly constrained and secluded from the main road. It offers no possibility for expansion or major re-development and car parking on-site is very restrictive which impacts on usage.

## Church Farm Swimming Pool



1.21. In looking at future investment opportunities whilst maintaining service continuity locally, the Feasibility Study considered possible alternative sites for a replacement Church Farm facility. A site options appraisal was undertaken to establish appropriate locations based on a series of factors including catchment area, planning context, site availability, nature of location and accessibility.

## Church Farm Swimming Pool



- 1.22. The exercise identified two preferred locations namely Danegrove Playing Field, East Barnet and Victoria Recreation Ground, New Barnet.
- 1.23. Victoria Recreation Ground is a 6.5 hectare public park on the edge of New Barnet town centre. Reflecting its provision of football pitches, tennis and basketball courts as well as a bowling green with an associated pavilion the Recreation Ground was once in 2005 designated by the Council as a Premier Park on the basis of its usage for sport rather than its function as a Local or District Park. A total of 16 Premier Parks were once identified as the Council's primary green space assets and Victoria Recreation Ground was one of only 4 sports sites to have been given Premier Park status.
- 1.24. New Barnet is a small District Centre which sits within a complex network of centres having overlapping catchment areas on account of their different roles and functions. New Barnet has been performing relatively poorly against key economic and environmental indicators. This decline within a relatively affluent area has coincided with a number of significant development opportunities coming forward recently and has led to the Council focussing its approach in collaboration with the community to seek ways of enhancing the town centre. In doing so the Council prepared a Town Centre Framework in 2010 outlining a strategy for improvement and change in New Barnet. The Framework also provides guidance in relation to inward investment and development opportunities and reflects the aspirations of the local community for delivering long-term and sustainable benefit.

#### The Vision of the Town Centre Framework is:

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

- 1.25. A number of key brownfield site development opportunities have now come forward locally which will shape the nature and appearance of the town centre and surrounding area. At the former East Barnet Gas Works a residential-led, mixed-use development comprising the erection of 306 new homes, new retail and flexible commercial floorspace along with new public open space and new pedestrian routes was recently approved. This proposal is expected to be delivered by 2019. Further residential-led opportunities in Victoria Road will be completed shortly bringing derelict sites back into use whilst office conversions along East Barnet Road are expected to deliver approximately 150 new homes over the next few years. These new developments will act as an initial catalyst for delivering town centre-wide benefits and attracting further investment.
- 1.26. As shown in the New Barnet Town Centre Structure Diagram below, Victoria Recreation Ground has a key role to play in re-invigorating New Barnet as an attractive place catering for existing communities in the surrounding area and incoming residents. New mixed-use development opportunities can add vitality and viability to the town centre, helping to provide a much improved offer for New Barnet. Such development can also assist in forming an element of investment



in the public realm and enhance connections between the Recreation Ground, New Barnet station and the changing High Street.

### New Barnet Town Centre Structure Diagram



- 1.27. With good accessibility Victoria Recreation Ground is a key public asset and element in the changing face of New Barnet. Re-integrating the park with the town centre and new and existing residential areas in addition to improving its recreational/sporting offer and amenity will help it to become an attractive and vibrant community facility. In becoming an important focus locally, it will have significant benefits for New Barnet as a destination centre.

## 2. Objectives Of Planning Brief

- 2.1. One of the Council's key aspirations concerns ensuring its leisure facility stock is fit for purpose, meets customers' expectations and supports the improvement of the health of the Borough. However, associated with this, there is an imperative to deliver a service that is as close to neutral revenue cost as possible. The potential relocation of Church Farm Swimming Pool offers a significant opportunity for an integrated sports and leisure provision locally and supports the Council's strategic objective of delivering increased participation in sport, promoting active lifestyles amongst the Borough's residents and improving public health generally.
- 2.2. In proposing a new facility and securing planning permission in a different location it is critical that all relevant requirements, constraints and opportunities are considered carefully and comprehensively. The design of any new facility must cater for need and reflect the corporate

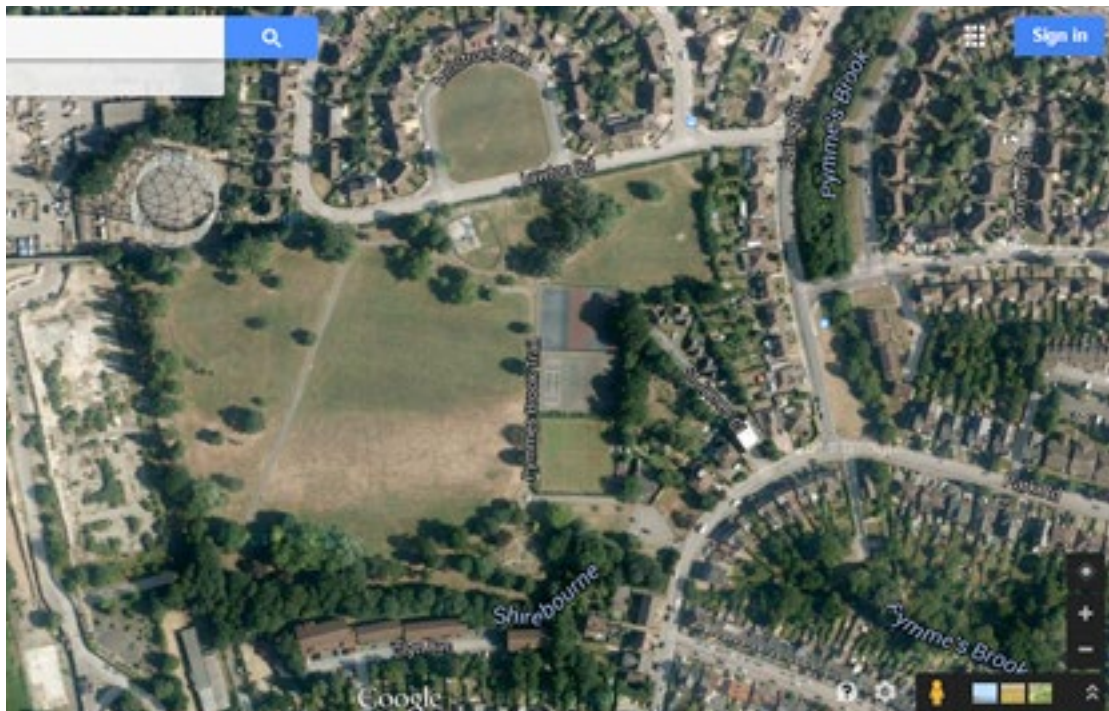
objectives in relation to sports and public health outcomes whilst respecting the nature of its locality and providing appropriate mitigation as necessary.

- 2.3. The Planning Brief for the site at Victoria Recreation Ground provides a framework to guide the design and development of a new leisure and sports facility, ensuring that the character and amenity of the surrounding area is safeguarded. It will also critically serve as a constructive means of engaging and consulting with the local community in the process of ensuring that the most appropriate location is chosen and development delivered.
- 2.4. Should the site at Victoria Recreation Ground be selected as the preferred site for the development of a new leisure centre, the Planning Brief will be formally adopted by the Council as non-statutory planning guidance following public consultation in the Autumn. It will then assist in the preparation of a detailed planning application for the proposed development which will be subject to the statutory planning process.

### 3. The Site And Surrounding Context

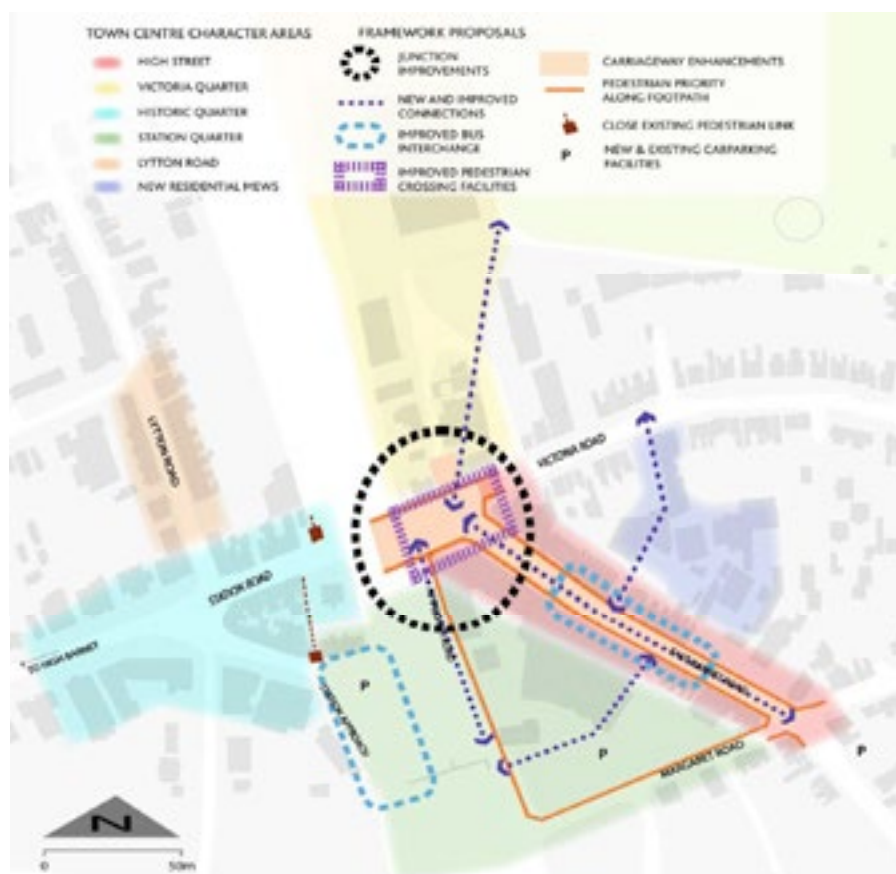
- 3.1. Victoria Recreation Ground is a public park occupying an area of approximately 6.5 hectares on the edge of New Barnet Town Centre, conveniently positioned only a few hundred metres from the 'high street' and station. It is bounded by established residential roads to the north, east and south and a large brownfield development site along its western boundary, formerly gasworks with railway tracks beyond.
- 3.2. Church Farm Swimming Pool is just over a mile away to the south.
- 3.3. The aerial image below shows that the Recreation Ground is of a mainly grassed flat surface. It provides football pitches, tennis and basketball courts as well as a bowling green with associated pavilion and small car park accessed off Park Road in its south-eastern corner. A children's playground sits by its northern boundary adjacent Lawton Road and across the football pitches to the south there is a formal landscaped area known as the Rose Garden. The Pymmes Brook Trail runs through the eastern part of the Recreation Ground.
- 3.4. The East Barnet Shooting Club and Nightingale Day Nursery, both in Council ownership adjoin the Park in its south west corner and by one of its pedestrian entrances.
- 3.5. The Recreation Ground is home to a number of mature trees of a variety of species. These combined with substantial soft landscaping consisting of shrubs and hedgerows largely mark the perimeter of the park separating the public open space from adjacent residential properties. This is most prominent along the Recreation Grounds southern boundary and around the Rose Garden. A number of trees break up the grassed area to the west of the existing playing pitches and a cluster of mature trees separate the children's playground from an informal area of grassland forming the north-east corner of the park.

## Aerial View of Victoria Recreation Ground



- 3.6. The north-west of the Recreation Ground is marked by a small cluster of industrial buildings and a single gas holder is retained by National Grid for low pressure storage in order to cope with the diurnal peak demands on the gas supply system. A major residential-led re-development of the southern section of the former East Barnet gasworks will soon be underway as highlighted above.
- 3.7. New Barnet is a Victorian railway town whose growth commenced with the opening of New Barnet station in 1872. The area around the Recreation Ground is typified by a mixture of Victorian urban terracing to the south and inter-war suburban semi-detached housing to the north and east.
- 3.8. Access to the Recreation Ground is gained from Park Road (vehicular), Victoria Road, Lawton Road, and by a footpath and footbridge from Cromer Road.
- 3.9. Victoria Recreation Ground is not subject to any specific planning designations. The Pymmes Brook Trail runs through the Recreation Ground adjacent to the bowling green. The Trail is classified as a Metropolitan Walk. The 16kms Trail runs alongside the Pymmes Brook from Monken Hadley Common to the north of this site onto Picketts Lock in Enfield. The Trail links with the London LOOP in the north and the Lee Valley Walk in the south, passing through a number of parks, including Oak Hill, Brunswick and Arnos Park.
- 3.10. The Pymmes Brook Green Chain runs from East Barnet to New Southgate along the outside of the Recreation Ground. Green Chains are an element of Green Infrastructure consisting of public and private open space within urban areas. The value of these open spaces to local communities and London as a whole can be enhanced by linking them together by publicly accessible routes.

## New Barnet Town Centre Framework – Character Areas



3.11. The area of New Barnet is changing rapidly with several developments underway. It is attracting inward investment in major mixed use development as well as the conversions of its office blocks to new homes. New Barnet is making a significant contribution to Barnet's housing supply. A number of key opportunity sites were identified in the New Barnet Town Centre Framework in 2010 and those not yet implemented will be promoted through the emerging Local Plan Site Allocations document. According to Barnet's housing trajectory up to 800 new homes are expected to be delivered around the town centre in the next 15 years, one of the highest figures for a town centre in the Borough.

3.12. The Town Centre Framework identifies the Victoria Recreation Ground as part of the Victoria Quarter of New Barnet. The former East Barnet Gas Works forms the main element of the Victoria Quarter. The Framework considered the Recreation Ground to be an under-used asset largely because of its poor connections to New Barnet town centre.

3.13. The New Barnet Town Centre Framework diagram above highlights how new and improved connections directly to the Recreation Ground as well as from New Barnet Station and the improved bus interchange will increase accessibility. In addition a series of infrastructure proposals including carriageway enhancements, junction improvements as well as improved pedestrian crossing facilities between Victoria Road, East Barnet Road, Station Road and Approach Road are required to improve the connectivity of the town centre.



## 4. Scope Of Development

- 4.1. In considering the requirements for a potential new leisure facility, a range of factors have been considered including local need, location and catchment area and facilities mix.
- 4.2. The SPA Needs Assessment specifically made the following observations in relation to the Church Farm facility and catchment area:

Church Farm facility	
Swimming Pools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ageing facility that is not fit for purpose and should be replaced. The pool is a not standard size (18m long)</li> <li>• The east of the borough is generally poorly provided for in terms of facilities</li> <li>• The Facilities Planning Model estimates that there is a need for additional supply to meet current demand</li> <li>• Good swimming pool programme</li> </ul>
Sports Halls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To meet the unmet demand there is significant scope to increase the hours that the educational facilities are available to the community. However, there is a general lack of facilities in the east of the borough so additional provision could be considered here, although not as a priority.</li> </ul>
Health and Fitness Suites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A latent demand of 1,173 members, which equates to circa 60-70 stations based on 25 members per station.</li> </ul>

- 4.3. Based on the comprehensive needs assessment, the SPA Feasibility Study identified a preferred specification and mix of uses for a new facility to replace Church Farm Leisure Centre.
- 4.4. Given a clear need for additional swimming and health and fitness provision in this part of the borough (particularly as a consequence of forecasted population growth), it proposes a new wet and dry centre with the following key facility mix:
- 25m, 6 lane pool
  - Learner pool with moveable floor
  - 70-75 station gym
  - 2 dance studios
  - Café.
- 4.5. In addition, given the lack of provision in the area, the study also considers inclusion of a six-court sports hall.
- 4.6. Indicative space requirements break down the mix further as follows, subject to detailed planning:

Swimming Pool	952 sqm
Wet Changing	345 sqm
Dry Changing	71 sqm
Gym Area	197 sqm
Dance Studio x 2	450 sqm
Café	288 sqm
Reception	113 sqm
Circulation space	272 sqm
Sports Hall	1050 sqm
<b>Internal Spaces total</b>	<b>3794 sqm</b>
<b>Gross floor area (approx)</b>	<b>4000 sqm</b>

- 4.7. Consideration is being given to how the new centre could be designed with the flexibility or intent to incorporate other community facilities which will help serve the East Barnet and New Barnet area.
- 4.8. The Planning Brief examines the nature and potential mix of uses in detail having regard to the characteristics of the site at Victoria Recreation Ground.

## 5. Planning Strategy

- 5.1. In taking forward Victoria Recreation Ground as a location for a replacement to Church Farm a number of opportunities and constraints which will influence the siting, quantum, type and mix of uses need to be addressed.
- 5.2. There are two key matters to consider in determining the acceptability of the development of part of this site in principle; the loss of the existing play facilities and/or open space for and its replacement with a leisure/sports facility. Planning policy as highlighted below provides scope to build on playing fields/open space providing that there is a qualitative improvement in the facilities being introduced and that there are clear demonstrable benefits for the local community.
- 5.3. In considering how any new leisure centre development might be specifically configured in this location, it is critical to gain a full understanding of the opportunities and constraints of the site and an appreciation of local characteristics and surrounding amenity.
- 5.4. In particular, development options for the site should have regard to the following matters:
  - Planning policy and guidance
  - Site topography and existing trees
  - Neighbouring residential amenity
  - Accessibility
  - Access, highway and parking implications
  - Character and form of surrounding area
  - User and service requirements
  - Consultation responses
  - Mitigation measures
- 5.5. It is important that the character, function and uses of the park are respected and enhanced, neighbouring residential amenity safeguarded and appropriate provision is made for access and car parking. Given the nature of the development and its use, careful consideration must also be given to associated matters concerning lighting, servicing, signage and hours of use.

## View of hard court play facility



5.6. Having regard to these issues, the draft Brief identifies two key options for the location of a new leisure facility at Victoria Recreation Ground. As shown in the diagram below the first option (Option A) is to build on the existing hard play courts on the eastern side of the Recreation Ground and the second option (Option B) is located on its northern side currently accommodating the children's playground and informal parkland. Given that these site options sit next to one another it may be that they are partly merged following any detailed design proposals.

5.7. Further rationale for these choices as locations is set out below:

### Option A - utilising existing hard court play area

5.8. This option is located close to the perimeter of the Recreation Ground safeguarding and providing a clear edge to the open space. A new leisure centre would be readily accessible from the park entrances at Park Road, Lawton Road and Victoria Road which would be re-configured and/or enhanced appropriately.

5.9. The hard court play facility is currently under-used and improvements are required to increase its usage. With this option no open space will be lost and the bowling green remains. Opportunities exist to relocate the hard ball courts nearby to the north with no detrimental loss of 'park' space.



## View across front of hard court play area

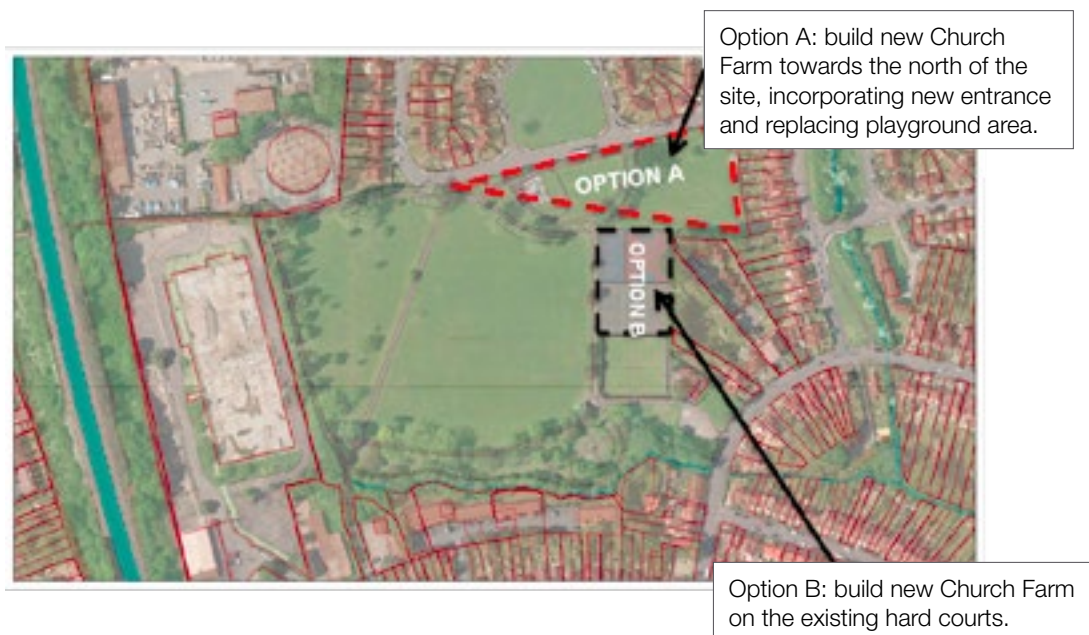


- 5.10. The site backs onto a thick tree screen and the rear garden of one property on St James Close and two substantial gardens belonging to houses on Park Road. Clearly the scale and position of any new leisure facility must have regard to these adjoining residential uses.
- 5.11. This particular location would place the leisure facility in a strategic and accessible location within Victoria Recreation Ground providing opportunities to link in and improve other facilities nearby and serve as a key anchor to the park.

### Option B – utilising informal park land and play space

- 5.12. This option forms land located on the northern side of the Recreation Ground. A new leisure centre here would be readily accessible from the entrances at Lawton Road and Park Road which again would need to be re-configured and/or enhanced.
- 5.13. As with Option A, this area presents a number of opportunities to design a leisure facility which minimises the impact on the general openness of the park and its amenity. It may entail the replacement and improvement of the existing children's playground and/or the loss of some informal park space in the north-east corner of the Recreation Ground generally less used. This site option provides a good frontage to Lawton Road opposite existing suburban housing encircling a large expanse of communal neighbourhood amenity space.

## Victoria Recreation Ground development options



5.14. Careful consideration would need to be given to the impact on surrounding residential and visual amenity and existing park trees. Although this location is furthest away from the town centre and involves the longest walking distance from entrances to the Recreation Ground at Victoria Road and Park Road it presents an opportunity to frame and better connect this end of the park to the wider area.

### View towards north-east corner of park



## Other Options

5.15. The development of more central locations within Victoria Recreation Ground would have more significant implications for its character, appearance and use, both formal and informal. Opportunities for other locations on the perimeter of the Recreation Ground are constrained to the western edge by the relationship with the new development at the former East Barnet Gas Works and the existing Gas Holder which is a Notifiable Installation. To the south residential development and established landscaping of shrubs and trees around the Rose Garden preclude development.

## Opportunities

5.16. Victoria Recreation Ground is considered to be of a sufficient size to accommodate the preferred new build specification. It offers the advantage of being an existing amenity and destination and locational benefits of being close to a district and other local centres. It is also accessible via good public transport with the potential for links to other facilities locally in terms of usage.

5.17. The Recreation Ground is relatively flat, open and spacious and set away or well screened from existing neighbouring residential property. The flatness of the Recreation Ground supports its provision of playing pitches, tennis courts and bowling green. The current range of facilities is generally located around the edge of the park as are most of the mature trees and natural landscaping.

5.18. The Recreation Ground was established in the late nineteenth century on former farmland. Mature trees and vegetation largely mark the boundaries of the Recreation Ground which is generally open in nature and crossed by footpaths.

## View of Victoria Road entrance



- 5.19. A small stream the Shirebourne flows through the Rose Garden towards the Pymmes Brook which it joins in the backgardens of Park Road and Crescent Road. The Pymmes Brook is a small tributary of the River Lea. A ribbon of open land has been retained amongst most of its route supporting designations as a Site of Borough Importance for Nature Conservation. The area around the Shirebourne is within Flood Zone 3a while the eastern parts of Victoria Recreation Ground which are nearer to the Pymme's Brook are within Flood Risk Zone 2. The area around the Shirebourne is likely to share many of the biodiversity characteristics of the Pymmes Brook Site of Nature Conservation Importance (scrubland corridor of oak, hawthorn, blackthorn and elder along the banks of the Brook)
- 5.20. Levels of Public Transport Accessibility (PTAL) vary across the extent of Victoria Recreation Ground. The entrance at Victoria Road has a higher level PTAL at 3 due to access to 6 bus routes (107, 184, 307, 326, 383 and 326) and access to New Barnet station. Bus stops and station are within 5 minutes walking time. The entrance at Park Road has a PTAL rating of 2 which reflects the slighting longer walking time. Park Road also provides access to a small car park. To the north of the Recreation Ground Lawton Road has a lower PTAL of 1a due to its distance from New Barnet Town Centre.
- 5.21. Development proposals must ensure that provision is made for safe and satisfactory vehicular/ pedestrian access and parking having regard to the type and scale of leisure accommodation planned for and local highway/parking conditions. A sustainable approach should be adopted in relation to travel and encouraging users of any potential facility to visit via non-car modes including public transport, cycling and walking. A progressive Travel Plan should be prepared to support any formal proposal. Visitors to the new sports facility should be encouraged to walk or cycle or use public transport and car usage discouraged. Enhancements to the public realm as well as the Pymmes Brook Trail should make walking and cycling more attractive.
- 5.22. New Barnet and its hinterland is changing. The town centre is attracting inward investment in major mixed-use development enabling vacant and derelict sites to be re-generated. A number of key opportunity sites were identified in the New Barnet Town Centre Framework in 2010 and those not yet implemented will be promoted through the emerging Local Plan Site Allocations document. According to Barnet's housing trajectory up to 800 new homes are expected to be delivered around the town centre in the next 15 years, one of the highest figures for a town centre in the Borough. There are opportunities to utilise CIL and S106 funding generated by local housing growth to support public realm enhancements and the enhancement of park infrastructure.
- 5.23. The Town Centre Framework highlighted that Victoria Recreation Ground is an under-used asset and is poorly connected to the town centre. It proposed a number of improvements to the Recreation Ground including community food growing areas; refreshment facilities and toilets; as well as improvements to surfaces. There is a key opportunity to enhance the public realm and improve connectivity between the Recreation Ground and New Barnet town centre.



## View of E.Barnet Rifle Club



- 5.24. Improvements to entrances to the Recreation Ground from the south in particular at Victoria Road and Park Road together with new access points from the new residential development at the former East Barnet Gas Works can help transform the park into an enhanced recreational space and sporting destination within the Borough. There are also opportunities to improve open space provision and facilities (i.e. playgrounds, hard ball courts and bowling green/pavilion) and heritage infrastructure such as the Rose Garden and Drinking Fountain. Further details on improvements will emerge through the Open Spaces Strategy.
- 5.25. The New Barnet Town Centre Framework also highlighted that the regeneration of the former East Barnet gas works site should consider opportunities to bring life and activity to Victoria Recreation Ground and highlighted that this could be 'potentially through new sports or leisure development.'
- 5.26. There will be public health benefits from improvements to way-finding, cycle and pedestrian access on the Pymmes Brook Trail as well as connectivity with the Outer London Orbital route making the new leisure centre a destination for users of the Trail. These improvements have been highlighted as a project in the All London Green Grid. The Finchley Ridge Area Framework identified the Pymmes Brook Trail as a project and highlighted improvements to cycle and pedestrian access with the possibility of extending the shared cycling path along its entire length and way-marking of routes. This might also include improved linkages between Brunswick

Park, Waterfall Walk, Oakhill Park and Victoria Recreation Ground in addition to improvements to the watercourse in conjunction with the Environment Agency. This project is subject to a Feasibility Study.

#### View towards hard court play area



- 5.27. The Council is developing a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) to guide future provision, management and improvement of sports pitches and outdoor sports facilities. The PPS will give an accurate picture of supply and demand of playing pitches and provide a clear understanding of existing levels of provision, in terms of quality, quantity, accessibility, location and management, and how these facilities meet the existing and future needs of the community. It will also provide an evidence base that will allow Barnet to plan, prioritise and schedule future improvement projects. The provision of a leisure facility at Victoria Recreation Ground should have regard to the emerging PPS and complement its approach.
- 5.28. The highest environmental standards for development are expected to deliver exemplary levels of sustainability. Innovative forms of sustainable design and construction should address the loss of open space with the new building and support biodiversity. Opportunities to enhance local biodiversity should be also explored across the Recreation Ground particularly around its perimeter.

## Constraints

- 5.29. The most significant constraints concern the impact on the character, appearance and functionality of the park including trees and other natural features and the potential loss of sports facilities and/or open space. Facilities such as the hard court play areas and/or the children's playground if these are displaced must be re-provided and enhanced.
- 5.30. Safeguarding the residential amenity of the existing neighbouring properties on Park Road, Lawton Road and St James Close is also critical in terms of the pursuit of the preferred options.

### View east of children's playground



- 5.31. Ensuring that disruption and the impact on the park is kept to a minimum throughout construction is similarly important to ensure that regular users of the Recreation Ground continue to visit the park and new residents in the local area are attracted to use the space and facilities.



## 6. Planning Policy Context

### Introduction

- 6.1. Planning policy comprises three levels of adopted and emerging policy – national, regional and local Planning decisions concerning development proposals must be made in accordance with the development plan unless there are material considerations which indicate otherwise. The development plan for Barnet is the London Plan and the Barnet Local Plan. Local planning authorities should also take account of national planning policy, which is currently set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 6.2. There are a number of key strategic and local planning policies set out in the London Plan and Barnet's Core Strategy and Development Management Development Plan Document (DPD) which are relevant to the potential development of the Victoria Recreation Ground for a new leisure facility. These concern in particular meeting the challenges of an increasing population, public health outcomes and participation in sports and leisure activities, reducing inequality and delivering high quality, sustainable design.
- 6.3. This section of the planning brief outlines the relevant planning policy context which would be considered in the determination of any proposal for a leisure facility.

### National Planning Policies

#### National Planning Policy Framework

- 6.4. In March 2012, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published by Communities and Local Government. The NPPF sets out the Government's economic, environmental, and social planning policies; it identifies that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. In terms of development management, the NPPF advises that the primary objective of development management is to foster the delivery of sustainable development, not to hinder or prevent development. The NPPF encourages engagement in pre-application discussions, consultation and generally front-loading the planning application process. It also sets out that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development.



## View across informal park land space



- 6.5. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan as the starting point for decision making. Proposed development that accords with an up-to-date Local Plan should be approved and proposed development that conflicts should be refused unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 6.6. The NPPF sets out Core Planning Principles which include driving and supporting sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs. The NPPF states within the Core Principles that every effort should be made to objectively identify and then meet the development needs of an area.

## View of formal gardens



6.7. Paragraph 17 of the NPPF identifies the core planning principles which should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking; these include:

- Empowering local people to shape their surroundings, with succinct local and neighbourhood plans setting out a positive vision for the future of the area;
- Finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives;
- Proactively driving and supporting sustainable economic development to deliver homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places;
- Seeking to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
- Taking account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of urban areas;
- Supporting the transition to a low carbon future, taking full account of flood risk, and encouraging the reuse of existing resources;
- Contributing to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution;
- Encouraging the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land);
- Promoting mixed use developments;



- Actively managing pattern of growth to make the fullest use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be sustainable; and
- Taking account of and supporting local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and delivering sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.

6.8. The NPPF at section 7 states that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people.

#### View towards Park Road entrance



- 6.9. Of particular relevance the NPPF emphasises that the planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities. To deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments.
- 6.10. In relation to existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land specifically, including playing fields, the NPPF states that this type of land should not be built on unless:
- an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
  - the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or

- the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss

6.11. It also advises on the wider health and well-being agenda and stresses that local planning authorities should work with public health leads and health organisations to understand and take account of the health status and needs of the local population (such as for sports, recreation and places of worship), including expected future changes, and any information about relevant barriers to improving health and well-being.

### View of former gasworks site



## Regional Planning Policy

### The London Plan

6.12. Regional policy is contained in recently updated London Plan. On 10 March 2015 the Mayor published the Further Alterations to the London Plan (FALP) and form part of the development plan for London. As such it provides the spatial strategy and policy context to guide development in London and it sets out a wide range of policies relevant to this planning brief.

6.13. The key challenge identified in the London Plan relates to planning ahead for the enormous growth pressure that the capital is facing and ensuring that adequate housing, employment and support

infrastructure and facilities are provided to accommodate the scale of change and promote strong, healthy and sustainable communities.

6.14. The following review picks up on some of the key messages contained within the latest London Plan pertinent to this planning brief and the development proposal under consideration.

### Health and Well-being

6.15. In seeking to deliver strong and inclusive communities the London Plan will help the Mayor's Health Inequalities Strategy which refers to the development and creation of healthy places and aims to ensure neighbourhoods are planned to promote health and reduce health inequalities, as echoed by London Plan Policy 3.2 – Improving Health and Addressing Health Inequalities.

6.16. In a similar way the Mayors Sports Legacy Plan as stated in Policy 3.19 – Sports Facilities aims to increase participation in and tackle inequality of access to sport and physical activity in London particularly amongst groups/areas with low levels of participation.

### View across Lawton Road



6.17. The London Plan emphasises that sports and recreation facilities are important parts of the social infrastructure, providing for a range of social and health benefits for communities and neighbourhoods.



## Sports Facilities

- 6.18. Policy 3.19 the London Plan goes on to state that development proposals that increase or enhance the provision of sports and recreation facilities will be supported. Proposals that result in a net loss of sports and recreation facilities, including playing fields should be resisted. Wherever possible, multi-use public facilities for sport and recreational activity should be encouraged.
- 6.19. Where sports facility developments are proposed on existing open space, they will need to be considered carefully in light of policies on protecting open space as well as the borough's own assessment of needs and opportunities for both sports facilities and for green multifunctional open space.
- 6.20. In line with the NPPF, the London Plan also states that Boroughs should assess the need for sports and recreation facilities regularly and secure sites for a range of sports facilities.
- 6.21. It highlights that within the next 10 years London will be short of indoor sports/community and it makes reference to Sport England's Facility Planning Model which provides evidence base for strategic sports facilities across London. It goes on to state that in the current climate, refurbishment or modernisation of existing sports facilities as well as rationalisation and replacement of existing sports provision is critical to ensuring that the right mix of facilities are in the right places to meet sporting demand and to increase levels of participation.

### View across park to town centre



- 6.22. The London Plan confirms that the Mayor will work with local authorities, national sports governing bodies, Sport England, sporting foundations and trusts, the private sector and others to provide investment to support the development of new facilities or the refurbishment of existing facilities. The focus will principally be small, community, park or estate-based projects. The Mayor will also support the establishment of multi-sport hub sites on playing fields in London.
- 6.23. It further advises that up-to-date playing pitch strategies provide a robust evidence base to inform consideration of school expansion. Playing field related issues should be discussed with Sport England and playing pitch strategies should take account of Sport England's new methodology
- 6.24. In supporting sport and leisure pursuits Policy 4.6 – Support for and Enhancement of Arts, Culture, Sport & Entertainment states that development should:
- fulfil sequential approach and where necessary complete an impact assessment;
  - be located on sites where there is good existing or planned access by public transport;
  - be accessible to all sections of the community, including disabled and older people
  - address deficiencies in facilities and provide a cultural focus to foster more sustainable local communities.

## Open and Green Space

- 6.25. It is critical that the implications of building on existing recreational green space are fully considered and Policy 7.18 – Protecting Open Space and Addressing Deficiency advises that the loss of protected open spaces must be resisted unless equivalent or better quality provision is made within the local catchment area.

## Energy and Sustainability

- 6.26. In relation to environmental performance Policy 5.3 (Sustainable Design and Construction) emphasises that the highest standards of sustainable design and construction should be achieved in London to improve the environmental performance of new developments and to adapt to the effects of climate change over their lifetime.

## Transport

- 6.27. London Plan Policy 6.1 encourages the integration of transport and development by encouraging development which reduces the need to travel; seeking to improve the capacity and accessibility of public transport, walking, and cycling; and supporting development which generates high trip levels at locations with high public transport accessibility.
- 6.28. The policy seeks to reduce reliance on private vehicles and Table 6.2 provides the maximum car parking standards recommended for London boroughs. No specific standards for leisure centres or sports facilities are set in the London Plan however it does state this should be determined according to the usage of the sports facility concerned and refers to guidance for sports facilities in the Sport England Accessible Sports Facilities 2010 publication. Provision will be assessed on the merits of the individual schemes taking into account the PTAL of the site at Victoria Recreation Ground.

6.29. Minimum standards for cycle parking are set out at 1 space per 8 staff for long stay provision and 1 space per 100 sqm for short stay.

6.30. Policy 6.9 states that the Mayor will work with all relevant partners to bring about a significant increase in cycling in London and Policy 6.10 seeks to improve the quality of the pedestrian and street environment to encourage walking and cycling.

### **Ecology and Trees**

6.31. Policy 7.19 (Biodiversity and Access to Nature) stresses that development proposals should wherever possible, make a positive contribution to the protection, enhancement, creation and management of biodiversity and give sites of borough and local importance for nature conservation the level of protection commensurate with their importance.

6.32. With respect to trees Policy 7.13 (Trees and Woodland) the London plan states that existing trees of value should be retained and any loss as the result of development should be replaced following the principle of 'right place, right tree'. Wherever appropriate, the planting of additional trees should be included in new developments.

### **Flood Risk**

6.33. Policy 5.12 states that the Mayor will work with all relevant agencies to address current and future flood issues and minimise risks in a sustainable and cost effective way.

### **Air Quality**

6.34. London Plan Policy 7.14 requires that development proposals should minimise increased exposure to poor air quality and promote sustainable construction to reduce emissions.

### **Noise**

6.35. London Plan Policy 7.15 requires development proposals to reduce noise by minimising the existing and potential adverse impacts of noise on, from, within, or in the vicinity of development proposals.

### **Supplementary Planning Guidance**

6.36. The Mayor has also published supplementary planning guidance which elaborates on London Plan Policy and are relevant to the potential development being considered as part of this brief.

## Local Planning Policy

### London Borough of Barnet Local Plan

6.37. Local development plan policies for the site are contained within documents of the London Borough of Barnet Local Development Framework. The main documents are the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD, both of which were adopted in September 2012.

#### View towards children's playground



6.38. The Core Strategy recognises the significance of the National Planning Policy Framework; Policy CS NPPF states that when considering development proposals, the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the NPPF. Planning applications that accord with policies in Barnet's Local Plan will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

### Core Strategy

6.39. The Core Strategy states that the Council and its partners have a prominent role in place-shaping and Barnet's spatial development priorities are currently defined in the innovative Three Strands Approach to planning, development and regeneration. The purpose of the Core Strategy is



to guide the significant growth identified in the Borough to ensure that the qualities that make Barnet an attractive place to live are maintained and enhanced.

- 6.40. The Core Strategy emphasises that consolidated growth concentrates new development in the most accessible locations near public transport nodes and town centres where social and physical infrastructure can be improved. This approach should also make the best use of development sites, respect the local character of the built and green environment, provide for a mix of uses, and be safe, attractive and accessible to all users. It can also help adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change.
- 6.41. The Core Strategy recognises the corporate approach as set out in of Barnet's Corporate Plan 2015-20. This key document aspires to Barnet's residents being some of the most active and healthy in London, benefitting from improved leisure facilities and making use of the borough's parks and open spaces. It commits the Council to investing in new, modern leisure centres to replace older centres and to work with local sports clubs and community groups to increase participation in sport and leisure and stresses that Public Health will be integrated as a priority theme across all services.
- 6.42. Policy CS5 (Protecting and enhancing Barnet's character to create high quality places) seeks to ensure that development respects local context and distinctive local character. In particular developments should:
- be safe, attractive and fully accessible
  - provide vibrant, attractive and accessible public spaces
  - respect and enhance the distinctive natural landscapes of Barnet
  - protect and enhance the gardens of residential properties
  - enhance the borough's high quality suburbs and historic areas through the provision of buildings of the highest quality that are sustainable and adaptable.
- 6.43. The Core Strategy refers to Barnet's approach to car parking standards, setting out that standards will be applied carefully and appropriately, reflecting local circumstances. Parking standards in new developments will vary to reflect the existing transport and accessibility of locations.
- 6.44. Policy CS13 (Ensuring the efficient use of natural resources) seeks to minimise Barnet's contribution to climate change and ensure the efficient use of natural resources. All development is expected to be energy efficient and minimise any wasted heat or power in line with the London Plan.
- 6.45. Policy CS7 (Enhancing and protecting Barnet's open spaces) protect existing site ecology and make the fullest contributions to enhancing biodiversity, both through on-site measures and by contribution to local biodiversity improvements.
- 6.46. The Core Strategy similarly states that trees are important in providing habitat, shading, cooling and air filtering in addition to their value historically and aesthetically.
- 6.47. Policy CS10 (Enabling inclusive and integrated community facilities and uses) states that the Council will work with its partners to ensure that community facilities including schools, libraries,

leisure centres and pools, places of worship, arts and cultural facilities, community meeting places and facilities for younger and older people, are provided for Barnet's communities.

## Development Management Policies

6.48. The Development Management Policies DPD was adopted in September 2012 and sets out the more detailed borough-wide planning policies that implement the Core Strategy, together with the policy basis for delivering the long-term spatial vision and strategic place-shaping objectives in Barnet. In particular the following

### View towards former gasworks site



- 6.49. Policy DM01 (Protecting Barnet's character and amenity) states that all developments should represent high quality design which demonstrate high levels of environmental awareness. Developments should be safe, provide good levels of daylight and sunlight and amenity space, not have a harmful impact and should contribute positively to amenity.
- 6.50. Paragraph 2.7.1 states "Schemes which significantly harm the amenity of neighbouring occupiers will be refused planning permission. Protecting amenity helps to protect the well being of the boroughs residents. It is important to ensure that developments do not significantly overshadow neighbouring buildings, block daylight, reduce sunlight, or result in a loss of privacy or outlook."

6.51. Policies DM02 (Development standards), DM03 (Accessibility and inclusive design) and DM04 (Environmental considerations for development) set out how new development should be designed to ensure it meets various requirements relating to environmental performance and energy use, accessibility, security and amenity.

### Planning Obligations

6.52. Planning obligations relate to matters which any development may need to make provision for. It covers matters such as travel plans, training and employment initiatives, public realm improvements, community/education facilities.

## 7. Planning Application and Supporting Documents

7.1. The submission of a formal planning application for the development of a leisure facility should be comprehensive and have regard to planning policy and guidance and stakeholder views. The Council will expect a future application for the site to be for detailed planning permission.

### View of formal gardens



7.2. The supporting information accompanying an application should include, but not be limited to:

- Planning Statement (demonstrating how the development complies with relevant national, regional and local planning policy and guidance)
- Playing Field Assessment
- Design and Access Statement
- Townscape Assessment
- Transport Assessment
- Travel Plan
- Arboricultural Report
- Ecology Report
- Sustainability and Energy Statement
- Air Quality Assessment
- Noise Impact Assessment
- Contaminated land desk top study and site investigation
- Environmental Management Plan
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Waste Strategy
- Sunlight/Daylight analysis (if appropriate)
- Sample materials and potential colour palettes
- Management Plan and Access Strategy
- Planning Obligations

7.3. Further details can be found in Barnet's National and Local Planning Requirements guidance note.

7.4. As advised by policy guidance, it is important that early engagement is undertaken with the Local Planning Authority to seek steer on design options and pre-application public consultation is carried out to inform a submission. This should also entail close engagement with key stakeholders and local interest groups.



---

For more information:  
tel: 020 8359 2859 email: [leisureservicesreview@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:leisureservicesreview@barnet.gov.uk)  
or visit [engage.barnet.gov.uk](http://engage.barnet.gov.uk)