

AGENDA ITEM 1.ii

Shopping Areas Report for Muswell Hill Area Forum

Introduction

The Forum has requested a report on the shops and businesses in the four wards of Alexandra, Fortis Green, Highgate and Muswell Hill, with suggested inclusion: Highgate High Street, Archway Road, Muswell Hill shopping centre (including mews [plural] behind main shops), and shopping parades at Aylmer Parade, Alexandra Park Road, Palace Gates, Park Road/Priory Road junction, Park Road up to Crouch End and those on Fortis Green.

Restrictions on data

It is challenging to provide up to date and comprehensive data on these areas for two reasons:

- the last systematic survey of town centres was conducted in 2012/13 so data is now around two years old
- that survey only covered a selection of our larger town centres, excluding both Highgate and the smaller parades listed (with the exception of Park Road which would have been reviewed as part of the Crouch End study).

Summary of Available Information

The table below summarises the 2012/3 survey outcomes where available:

Town Centre	Vacancy Rate	Audit Score	Strengths	Areas for Improvement
Muswell Hill	5%	68%	Engaged business community and active traders group leading initiatives to promote trade Strong branding	Public Realm Central focal point (now addressed through creation of piazza)
Crouch End	9%	68%	Good quality startups joining in community culture Range of well run independent shops Crouch End Project: strong brand identity	Proactive business/ traders groups Parking provision

Archway Road	17%	61%	Strong cultural offer Active residents' group Majority of units run by independent retailers	Marketing Public Realm Vacant unites
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More recently (BBC News 4th February 2015) Highgate topped a table for Britain's healthiest high street measured by vacancy rates, having no vacant shops.

Current Activity

The Council's work on high streets and shopping parades falls broadly into five categories:

- licensing and enforcement
- planning
- support for and engagement with businesses
- physical regeneration
- as landowners (for particular shops or parades)

Licensing and enforcement:

Licensing and Regulatory Services work with traders to enable them to be compliant with the various legislations that we administer. This ranges from alcohol licensing to food safety and trading standards and also street trading. The licensing process requires traders to work with the local community they wish to operate in and be aware of their impact on those living nearby. Trading Standards carries out checks to protect retailers and customers alike: this maybe product safety checks or underage test purchasing checks. The Food Safety Team work with businesses to offer food hygiene training and raise awareness of the raft of changes brought in by Government that affect food businesses such as the new labeling regulations on allergens.

Planning:

The planning team both oversee specific applications to alter buildings or change their use and help protect the character of particular areas or streest through designation in the local plan. The parades mentioned are recognised in policy SP10 of the Haringey Local Plan as 3rd tier local centres "important in providing for the 'day-to-day needs of people living, working and staying nearby". More detailed development management policies are found in TCR4 – saved from the old Unitary Development Plan. These are soon to be replaced by DM53 part B and C in the new Development Management policies DPD, currently out for consultation.

In essence the council recognises the parades' importance as local amenities and if threatened by development (both from residential conversion or from out of town retail development such as a big Sainsbury's) we will look to the policies above. The recent introduction of paid for pre-application advice provides for an exemption from pre-application charges for small enterprises including retail and town centre uses.

The forthcoming review of the Council community infrastructure levy (late 2015/early 2016) and the current work on the infrastructure delivery plan provides an opportunity for dialogue and potential future funding via the S106/CIL programme to help support vibrant town centres with public realm and associated amenity improvements. Whilst such funds are modest, their use for match funding within mainstream London wide/UK programmes does offer scope for locally driven improvement where resources permit.

Support for and engagement with businesses:

The council already engages with businesses both as individuals and through associations such as the Muswell Hill Traders Group. As part of our new Economic Development and Growth strategy the economic development team are keen to pursue more work in this area, within the constraints of our limited budgets. Work is likely to involve signposting to support and advice services, working with traders on proposals to secure external private sector or Mayoral/GLA investment in improving town centres, and ensuring that other council services operate in as business-friendly a manner as possible.

Physical Regeneration:

A number of regeneration schemes including road junction improvements and shop front schemes totaling around £13m borough-wide were costed as part of the 2012/3 report. However the recommendations weren't implemented because of financial constraints. Schemes and plans are being taken forward elsewhere in the borough (Tottenham and Wood Green) because these were identified as the two areas of greatest concern and opportunity. These interventions are being funded in large part through the Mayor of London and (in Wood Green) through private sector leverage. In negotiating planning outcomes associated with high street/edge of high street sites, there are opportunities for greater dialogue with officers to help try and secure complementary outcomes.

As Landowners:

The parade on Park Road up to Crouch End is council owned. Managing small parades of this nature is costly and the Council will be considering a paper at Cabinet in the summer, as part of a review of the whole commercial portfolio, to review the opportunities that this parade offers for either selling the freehold or long-leasehold to reduce our management costs or instigating a more active management role.

Going Forward

Cllr Raj Sahota has recently been appointed as Cabinet Advisor on High Streets and the Economic Development team are supporting him as he develops a programme of work. This may include work to explore the feasibility of developing Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in a number of our high streets. If businesses vote for their area to become a bid additional funds are collected alongside business rates to fund additional services and improvements to improve trading conditions.