

North Finchley Town Centre

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Updated March 2022

Introduction

Barnet has more town centres than any other London borough, and with a growing population, the council is committed to supporting our town centres to be 'fit for the future'. In recent years, trends such as the growth of online purchasing have seen a move away from 'in shop' retail, while high streets are becoming better known for leisure experiences – meeting with friends, family, or business contacts. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly accelerated these trends. The council is responding to this by working with businesses, residents and other partners to both address challenges in the short-term and to make plans for the future.

North Finchley Town Centre is no exception to these national trends. Barnet Council is committed to supporting the town centre to adapt and diversify to become a thriving place; fit to serve its community both today and tomorrow.

This FAQ document provides answers to commonly asked questions relating to North Finchley Town Centre and, specifically, the work Barnet Council is leading with the community and partners to support regeneration.

The council will review and update this FAQ document as the project progresses to ensure answers remain up-to-date and that any new questions are answered. If you have additional questions you would like answered, please do not hesitate to contact us by emailing towncentres@barnet.gov.uk.

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North Finchley Town Centre Frequently Asked Questions

1. What has the council done, or is the council doing, to support North Finchley Town Centre to recover and thrive?

Across the country, the future of town centres and high streets has long been a matter of concern. It is, therefore, essential to note that most challenges presently faced by North Finchley Town Centre are not unique. This briefing paper on [Town Centre Regeneration](#) (December 2021) for the House of Commons sets out the key trends.

As the government report states, these issues also present opportunities and require bespoke and local solutions to ensure that we support our town centres. To shape a shared local vision for the North Finchley, in 2018 the council adopted the [North Finchley Town Centre SPD \(Feb 2018\)](#). This important planning policy tool engaged businesses, community organisations, residents, and visitors through a series of workshops to identify issues and develop place-specific opportunities and development principles. The council is now working with partners to realise the vision and ambitions set out in the SPD.

2. What is the remit of the North Finchley Town Centre Framework Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)?

The [North Finchley Town Centre SPD \(Feb 2018\)](#) provides guidance on interpreting and implementing Barnet's Local Plan policies, including environmental, social, design, and economic objectives, in a way that is specific to the town centre.

This document acts as 'supplementary guidance' and does not determine the use, scale, or height of any development brought forward in North Finchley. This remains the remit of the council's statutory Planning process, which must assess applications on a case-by-case basis. That said, all Planning applications requiring statutory approval for sites within the boundary of the SPD must demonstrate how proposed development aligns with and supports the vision, strategy and principles set out in the SPD.

3. What has the council done since the adoption of the North Finchley SPD?

In the run-up to and following the formal adoption of the SPD, the council has engaged with numerous stakeholders to identify ways to start realising the document's vision. Key to this was identifying a pathway to enable the comprehensive regeneration of Key Opportunity sites.

To this end, the council has been working with development partners to progress plans. On 27 November 2018, the council's Housing and Growth Committee agreed to enter into Site and Land Assembly Agreements with Future High Street (North Finchley) Ltd, a partnership between Joseph Partners and U+I (Projects) Limited. Unfortunately, U+I later pulled out of the partnership due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Under the terms of the arrangement, Joseph Partners had the right to identify and partner with another organisation and to prepare a Planning application for submission by 31 December 2021 (this deadline was later extended due to the unparalleled circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic).

In October 2021, the council agreed to enter into updated Site Assembly and Land Agreements with the development partner, Regal JP North Finchley Ltd, a joint-venture established by Joseph Partners and Regal London. The obligations of Regal JP North Finchley

Ltd are guaranteed by Regal Holdco Ltd, which is a group company of Regal London. As part of the due diligence process, the council undertook a financial audit of the development partners prior to the decision.

4. Is the council undertaking other initiatives to ensure that other challenges identified within North Finchley are addressed?

Alongside the partnership with developers, the council has initiated several complementary programmes to ensure that the future of North Finchley Town Centre is shaped in alignment with the vision established in the SPD. These include:

1. Undertaking a Cultural Placemaking, Wayfinding and Graphic Identity project. This project will be developed in collaboration with the community, as well as local makers and artists. The project will develop new signage, branding, art and cultural interventions to be installed in locations across the town centre.
2. Developing a North Finchley Public Realm Design Framework. The council is taking a design-led approach to improving public realm across the town centre in line with the SPD. The adoption of a Design Framework will enable the council to guide future investment in the public realm, ensuring that it is coherent across the town centre, of a suitably high quality and that it is maintainable in the future.
3. Commissioning a package of support for North Finchley businesses. This programme will provide an opportunity for existing local businesses to access one-on-one advice and guidance on issues such as visual presentation, merchandising standards and customer service. It will support businesses to diversify and adapt their offer as they emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic. This commission will also support local businesses to develop a town centre business network to ensure that their voices are heard as regeneration plans take shape.

5. What is the council doing to ensure the community's voice continues to be heard and inform work being undertaken?

Underpinning all of the council's work is a commitment to supporting meaningful opportunities for the community to engage at a mix of levels of involvement, to ensure that everyone who wishes to is able to participate and help shape the future of North Finchley Town Centre. The council launched a call-out in summer 2021 to invite residents, businesses and others in the area to join the North Finchley Partnership Board. The Board currently comprises 18 members from across the community (see Question 7 for more information). Going forward, all opportunities to participate in council-led engagement activities will be advertised via the dedicated website: www.northfinchleytowncentre.co.uk .

Additional engagement activities undertaken by Regal JP North Finchley Ltd and their representatives will be advertised here: <https://northfinchley.commonplace.is/news>.

6. How will the council ensure that those who are harder to reach are actively engaged throughout the process?

On all council-led initiatives, community engagement will be undertaken in a variety of forms and formats, including in-person and online, to ensure that there is a diversity of opportunities to participate. The council will monitor participation to ensure that it is reflective of the demographic in North Finchley. Should there be any clear gaps among certain parts of the community, then the council will take a more bespoke and targeted

approach to engagement. Recruitment to the North Finchley Partnership Board has also sought to be as inclusive as possible to reflect the diversity of the area.

7. What is the North Finchley Partnership Board?

The purpose of the North Finchley Partnership Board is to ensure that there is a representative group of community members to oversee, monitor, scrutinise and hold to account the management of the town centre regeneration programme and to ensure that implementation of the SPD vision is upheld. The establishment of the Board was agreed when the Policy and Resources Committee adopted the North Finchley SPD. The council has taken numerous steps to launch the Board but its formation was delayed as a result of changes to the developer team. In August 2021, the council launched a six-week public call out to invite community representatives to apply to join the Board. This resulted in 18 members joining. The Board had its first meeting in November 2021 and will continue to meet quarterly. To read more, please visit the council website [here](#). The council will publish all Partnership Board minutes and any associated documents on the website.

8. Why was there a need for a further council decision in October 2021?

In October 2021, Full Council took the decision to enter into the Site Assembly and Land Agreements with Regal JP North Finchley Ltd. This positions the development partner to progress comprehensive proposals for the revitalisation of North Finchley Town Centre in line with the council and community's vision, as set out in the [North Finchley Town Centre SPD \(Feb 2018\)](#). The agreements require the development partner to obtain statutory approval for a first phase of development. Further information can be found in the relevant [committee report here](#).

9. Who is Regal JP North Finchley Ltd?

Regal JP North Finchley Ltd is a joint venture established between Joseph Partners and Regal London. Regal London is experienced in designing and delivering complex mixed-use development schemes across London, including in Brent, Camden, Hackney and Kensington. For more information visit the Regal London website [here](#). Joseph Partners has more than forty years' experience in the field of urban regeneration, including landmark developments such as Atlantic Quay Glasgow, Leith Waterfront Edinburgh, Fulham Broadway, and the conceptual and planning stages of the West Hendon and Brent Cross Cricklewood regeneration schemes. For more information visit the Joseph Partners website [here](#).)

10. How do the Site Assembly and Land Agreements encourage the development partner to undertake comprehensive redevelopment?

The Site Assembly Agreement requires the development partner to pursue a planning application for the land and buildings identified within the defined SPD area. The Land Agreement allows the development partner to bring forward the regeneration of all these sites in manageable phases. The Land Agreement stipulates a timeline for the development partner to bring forward a comprehensive planning application by June 2023 for an identified phase 1. The agreements define the site area, and these were published as an appendix within the legal summary and approved by Full Committee in October 2022. For clarity, the agreements do allow the development partner to subsequently terminate their involvement in phases where they do not consider, acting reasonably, that the scheme is viable, or market conditions have significantly deteriorated. For further clarity, it is

stipulated that the development partner cannot withdraw from sites where the council has made a compulsory purchase order resolution or concerning sites where the conditions have been satisfied.

11. What are the pre-conditions protecting the inclusion of council land in the scheme?

Nothing in the Land Agreement nor Site Assembly Agreement fetters the council's duties, obligations, powers or rights in the discharge of its functions as a statutory authority, including on decisions relating to (a) the grant of planning permission (b) any resolution to make a compulsory purchase order and (c) to dispose of council land for not less than the best consideration reasonably obtainable. The Land agreement requires that prior to the sale of any council land or the start of any development the following conditions must be met:

- The grant of planning permission and all necessary statutory and other consents to allow development to proceed for each site. The associated costs will be met by the development partner.
- In respect of council land, the council must obtain the necessary committee authority to dispose of council land by long lease at its open market value (i.e., not less than the best consideration reasonably obtainable), which will be determined by an independent professional valuer.
- In respect of land not in council ownership, before the council takes any decision to make a Compulsory Purchase Order, the council must be satisfied that there is a compelling case in the public interest, there are no material impediments to the development going ahead and all CPO costs will be met by the development partner.

For a more comprehensive summary refer to legal summary appended to the [Housing and Growth Committee report Sep 2021](#).

12. What are the council's intentions regarding the land it owns within North Finchley Town Centre and have any parameters already been set?

The council has not been asked or required to decide on the sale or disposal of any land or to implement any compulsory purchase order powers to acquire any third-party land. In entering the legal agreements, the council's intention is to grant a long lease. As established in the summary document attached to the [Housing and Growth Committee paper of September 2021](#), the Land Assembly Agreement sets out that if a sale is undertaken, it 'will be by a 250-year lease of the council land and a freehold sale of any Third-Party Property, in return for the purchase price.' Furthermore, it is important to note that in entering into the Land and Site Assembly Agreements, the council is obliged only to sell its land if the development partner has first satisfied all conditions (see question 11 above).

13. What is envisaged for development of the 'Phase 1 Property Lands', which sites will be developed first and what is the timescale?

As set out in the Housing and Growth Committee paper of September 2021, the council and the development partner have identified the 'Phase 1 Property' comprising sites for potential development in the first phase. These can be viewed [here](#). However, it is important to clarify at this early stage that this remains indicative only and will be subject to detailed design and viability assessments. The full extent of Phase 1 will be confirmed only once the council and the development partner have agreed the extent of Phase 1 and its proposed phasing and no development will be started before statutory Planning approval is given by the council and the conditions have been satisfied (see question 11 above). An application is currently expected to be submitted in 2023.

14. What implications does the agreement with Regal JP North Finchley Ltd have regarding additional costs to the council?

All council costs resulting from proposals for the redevelopment of any sites identified within the Land and Site Assembly Agreements will be funded in their entirety by the development partner, Regal JP North Finchley Ltd. Furthermore, the Site Assembly Agreement ensures that procedures are in place to allow the council to recover any agreed additional costs resulting from work associated with progressing the outcomes set out within these agreements.

15. What is the council's plan for North Finchley Library?

The council is committed to the ongoing provision of North Finchley Library as a valuable community facility. The library is a key asset within the town centre and provides many services for the community's benefit. The council is also aware of the challenges facing the library at its present site, particularly the need to improve the facility. Therefore, the council is committed through this regeneration work to identify opportunities to improve the library offer, capacity and accessibility to better serve the community and those visiting North Finchley. This approach is in line the recommendations made by the independent evaluation of the Library Service conducted by The Activist Group, which members approved in March 2020.

At this stage, there are currently no specific plans developed for this site nor any other across the town centre. It is important to note that any future development proposals will be subject to public consultation and other requirements as part of the statutory Planning process. It is also essential to stipulate (see question 11) that the decision to dispose of any land in North Finchley would need to be made by the relevant committee.

16. What is the council's plan for the Arts Depot?

The council recognises that the Arts Depot is a valuable community asset for North Finchley and indeed the wider area. To this end, the council has ensured that the Arts Depot is represented on the North Finchley Partnership Board to ensure their voice is front and centre from the outset. As it has done to date, the council will continue to engage with Arts Depot colleagues, whom it considers a key stakeholder, as regeneration proposals for North Finchley Town Centre develop.

At this stage, there are currently no specific plans for this site nor any other across the town centre. It is important to note that any future development proposals will be subject to public consultation and other requirements as part of the statutory planning process. It is also essential to stipulate (see question 11) that the decision to dispose of any land in North Finchley would need to be made by the relevant committee.

17. How is the council ensuring that the proposals will consider impacts on the public realm, highways, active travel and parking

As established within the SPD, which was developed through engagement with the community, there is a desire to improve the pedestrian environment when visiting the high road. This aligns with the Barnet Long-Term Transport Strategy 2020-41 which includes a commitment to ensuring that future investment in transport is considered holistically and that it prioritises a convenient and reliable transport network. The Transport Strategy

prioritises access to safe, healthy, and inclusive travel options, as well as protection and improvement of the natural environment.

Alongside the development proposals, the council is developing a North Finchley Public Realm Design Framework (see question 4). This will set out a balanced approach to different modes of transport in order to create a healthier town centre and ensure that it is accessible to all. The Design Framework will help to ensure that development proposals are future-proofed and coordinated with the broader requirements of public realm, highways, active travel, parking, and servicing of businesses.

18. Is Regal JP North Finchley Ltd also the developer for the Homebase site?

No. The proposals submitted for statutory approval on the site of the former Homebase store (679 High Rd, London N12 0DA) have been developed by developer Taylor Wimpey. The proposals on this site are separate and not related to the partnership arrangement between the council and Regal JP North Finchley Ltd. The council will use its statutory approval rights to consider the suitability of these proposals.

If you would like to review the recent application submitted, please visit the link here:

<https://publicaccess.barnet.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=R4V8T4JI09100> .

19. What is the timeframe for the work being undertaken by the council and Regal JP North Finchley Ltd?

Regal JP North Finchley Ltd is still at a relatively early stage of the project and is developing proposals to submit for statutory Planning approval. The developer is required to submit its planning application for Phase 1 sites on or before 30 June 2023. At this stage, we cannot provide an exact timeline for delivery of Phase 1 as the extent of the recommendations is not known.

It should be noted that the proposed revitalisation of North Finchley is a complex project that will likely take many years to be fully completed.