



## **Barnes Community Association Response to Draft Richmond Local Plan 'The best for our borough'**

23 January 2022

The Barnes Community Association (BCA) was founded by its members over forty years ago, with an aim to bring residents together to support the social life of the village and to promote the preservation, development and improvement, for the public benefit, of the character and amenities of the neighbourhood. We now have over 1200 members locally. We are delighted to respond to this consultation and our comments are as follows:

### **General points:**

We fully support the idea of the 20-minute neighbourhood and believe that Barnes perfectly epitomises this concept. With the closure of Hammersmith Bridge, and the reduction in through traffic locally, we have seen an increase in cycling and walking locally and a greater use of our shopping parades.

The Urban Design Strategy highlights the need to conserve and preserve the character and uniqueness of all areas of Barnes and to enhance the historic functionality around the centre of Barnes through better prioritising pedestrian use and accessibility. Our priority is to improve Barnes High Street for the benefit of all residents and we have been working with the Council to this end.

### **On the specific points in the Place-based strategy for Barnes we make the following comments –**

**Strengthen the role and function of the area's distinctive Barnes local centre and encourage independent shops, and support the neighbourhood centre of Castelnau to ensure day-to-day facilities are accessible, in accordance with Policy 1 Living Locally.**

We support this ambition with a particular focus on the Castelnau shopping parade. We applied to the Community Fund in 2020 for a grant to improve the area and were unsuccessful for a number of reasons. Obstacles to improvement in the area have so far been unsurmountable so we would welcome the Council's support to implement positive changes to uplift the neighbourhood and to improve the vibrancy of the shopping parade.

**Enable future pedestrianisation of A3003 in Barnes centre to make the area more permeable and reduce the prominence of traffic. This will present an opportunity to create public realm for dwelling as opposed to the existing, narrow and transient pavements along Barnes High Street.**

We fully support this sentiment and, following the successful application to the Community Fund in 2019, we have been working with Council Officers to implement a scheme to deliver improvements to Barnes High Street. This scheme aims to reduce the dominance of traffic in the area and is an opportunity to deliver improvements to the public realm with wider pavements, re-allocation of parking bays to reduce traffic congestion and a new east-bound bus stop.

We have long had an ambition to see the closure of Barnes High Street on key dates in the Barnes calendar. With the temporary diversion of buses down Nassau Road now possible, we would welcome the opportunity to work with the Council on a full road closure on event days.

**Consider opportunities to improve connectivity including the High Street to Barnes Green and to the Riverside and Thames Path route.**

The desire to improve connectivity between Barnes Green and the river, the green and the blue, was a key theme of the Big Barnes Ponder of 2013 when residents came together to describe their vision for the future of Barnes. The aim was to draw people from the Green, down the High Street to the river.

A key feature of our discussion at the Ponder was the fact that Barnes is a village on the river, and as such this should be the focus of our community, and yet it is impossible to get onto the water and very difficult to see it as the view is obstructed by an unattractive, concrete flood defence.

An ambition of the Ponder was to remove a section of concrete flood defence at the end of the High Street and to replace it with glass so that the eye is drawn down the High Street to a view of the water. This is an entirely achievable ambition and with the Council's support we could start a conversation with the Environment Agency and make it a reality.

**Improve the public realm to enhance the sense of arrival at Barnes Station, and reanimate streets as a local hub for shops, cafés, and small businesses, including around Priest's Bridge.**

We identified the need to improve the sense of arrival at Barnes Station several years ago and applied for a Civic Pride grant for wayfinding maps in the area. Clearly more investment is needed to achieve our aim and we have been working with Friends of Barnes Common to ensure that the passage between the station and the village is as safe as possible. We have also had discussions with Council Officers about ensuring a safer crossing both at Station Road and at Mill Hill for pedestrians walking from the station to the village. We would welcome some support from the Council with this work.

We have also been in discussion with Council officers about the need to review parking arrangements on Station Road which must be one of very few streets in the borough that are close to a station where you can park without restriction. This will help to prioritise local residents over out of borough commuters and eliminate the common occurrence of long-term parking of abandoned cars along this stretch.

We agree that there is a need to improve the shopping area at Priest's Bridge and improvements are also needed to support the businesses in White Hart Lane. We have been working with Council officers on a new parking scheme for the area which should enable businesses to attract customers from further afield. White Hart Lane is a destination shopping area with a number of businesses that necessitate customer parking for between 1 and 2 hours yet the area has very little parking within restricted hours.

The Castelnau shopping parade needs support with reanimation. We have been trying to support local businesses with public realm improvements but have had little success (see above).

**Consider opportunities to enhance Barnes Riverside, preserving views along the Thames, and to maintain a sense of activity and vibrancy, with potential for temporary pedestrianisation of The Terrace to create café/restaurant seating or more width to improve pedestrian experience, reduce the perceived dominance of vehicles and better connect the townscape with the Dock Gardens and Thames Path.**

An ambition of the Big Barnes Ponder was to open up Barnes Riverside to water sports and recreational activities fitting to a village sited on a river frontage. This year we will be embarking on a project to enhance the area around Small Profits Dock and to encourage the use of the dock for water sports such as paddle boarding and rowing. We have already been in discussion with the PLA about the possibility of creating a river pool at the dock area, as this stretch of river is used in the summer months by a river swimming group. The PLA is receptive to a buoyed area for swimming and we will be pursuing this as part of our ideas for regeneration of the area. We would very much like the support and assistance of the Council with this project.

Clearly to make this project a success we will need infrastructure and we have had positive conversations with Barnes Sports Club about the use of their facilities. We would like to see amenities such as a temporary coffee pop-up with outside seating for water sports users and for walkers along the towpath which is busy particularly at weekends.

There is also an urgent need to resurface some sections of the Barnes towpath. In particular the stretches from Small Profit Dock to Ferry Lane and between Queen Elizabeth Walk and Beverly Brook need attention. Both stretches of towpath are busy with recreational walkers as well as commuters and school children.

**The Council will support through partnership working proposals to investigate the feasibility to restore a green walkway along Barnes Bridge with step-free access at Barnes Bridge station.**

We welcome the Council's support for project which will see a redundant Thames crossing restored to community use and will result in a major attraction for the borough, not just for Barnes. We look forward to working together to make this project a reality.