

Summary of Stage 2 Engagement Activity

Over the course of July 2024, the team undertook further consultation in relation to the Watling Car Park proposal.

The consultation website was updated with the latest design material and a dedicated feedback form for respondents to comment on the material. 1,300 leaflets were posted by first class Royal Mail to local addresses to advertise the consultation and in person events.

Overall, 34 additional online feedback forms have been submitted with 18 paper feedback forms and 3 emails, totalling 55 responses during Stage 2.

Two separate public drop-in events were held at Burnt Oak Library (Saturday 20th July and Friday 26th July). The team engaged with over 40 local people at the two events, discussing their experiences of living in Barnet and thoughts around the updated design proposals. The designs and proposals were shown on a series of banners, and paper surveys were available for people to provide feedback. The design team and client group attended the sessions to answer questions.

Following the event on Friday 26th July, the team stood outside Burnt Oak tube station during rush hour 5.15pm – 7pm, handing out over 60 additional leaflets that signposted to the project website and shared more information on the scheme.

To date, the stage 1 and stage 2 of the consultation has included:

- Publishing a dedicated consultation website with email/phone contact details: www.wcp-consultation.co.uk
- Attending monthly Burnt Oak Partnership Board meetings
- Posting leaflets to local homes and businesses via First Class Royal Mail to advertise the consultation (circa 650 addresses in Stage 1 and 1,300 address in Stage 2)
- Placing leaflets and/ or posters in local venues, including on the noticeboard outside the library
- Reaching out to local community groups, schools and local organisations directly through emails
- Including a consultation advert in Barnet First e-news, posters in shop windows and social media advert targeted at Barnet residents
- Developing a section on Engage Barnet website, linking to the dedicated website
- Retaining a railing banner with website address outside library over the consultation period

- Preparing online and paper copies of feedback forms at consultation events
- Offering paper copies of full consultation material to those who requested
- 4 in-person drop-ins with materials on display at the Library in between the events
- 'Hands on' sketch workshop with over 25 young people at Unitas
- Dedicated leaflet drop by hand to local businesses on the High Street, speaking with over 40 business owners
- Leafleting outside the tube station twice during rush hour

The team requested feedback for Stage 2 by the 9th of August 2024 but given the holiday period, accepted responses after this period.

Feedback Form Responses

The team have analysed the feedback forms received to date and the top three comments received during Stage 2 are noted below:

- **Height and Scale:** This was the most common theme and included ongoing opposition to the proposed building heights, particularly the belief that buildings taller than three storeys are inappropriate for the area, given the conservation area status.
- **Overcrowding and Population Density:** This theme reflected concerns around the already dense population in the area and fears that additional housing would lead to overcrowding and a strain on local infrastructure such as GPS and schools.
- **Parking and Traffic Issues:** This theme covered concerns around the loss of car parking spaces and the potential for increased traffic congestion as a result of the proposed development.

Beyond the three main themes, additional concerns were voiced regarding the environmental impact of the scheme (flood area) and concerns over safety in the area.

- Suggestions to improve the sustainability of the development included the inclusion of **solar panels** on the roofs and a climbing green wall to benefit cooling, wildlife and wellbeing.
- Ensuring the new park is maintained effectively was also suggested as well as advocating for **improved safety features** such as CCTV and lighting.

Profile of Responses From Feedback Forms

- There were 55 feedback forms, 34 online and 18 hard copies.
- Of the online feedback form responses 51.3% of the responses were from females and 48.7% were from males.
- The online survey results indicate that respondents' age distribution is as follows:
 - > 25% aged 35-44
 - > 20% aged 45-54
 - > 17.5% aged 25-34
 - > 12.5% aged 55-64
 - > 12.5% aged 65-74
 - > 7.5% aged 75+
 - > 5% preferred not to disclose their age.
 - > 0% aged under 24
- The majority of respondents, comprising 95.3%, identified as Barnet respondents, individuals working in the London Borough of Barnet area (9.3%), Barnet business owners (2.3%), representing voluntary/community organizations (2.3%), 2.3% marking the "Other" category and public-sector organizations (0%) – this totals over 100% as you could pick more than one option).

A Summary of Key Themes from Question 1: Do You Have Any Comments on Site 1 – the Riverside Approach Development on Watling Avenue Car Park?

Height and Scale Concerns

There was opposition to the proposed building heights, particularly mentioning that buildings taller than 3 storeys are not appropriate for the area. In total, this point was raised 16 times.

"This is far too tall for a conservation area"

Overcrowding and Population Density

Concerns about the area already being densely populated and that adding more housing would lead to overcrowding was mentioned 9 times.

"Lessons need to be learned and the scale of development needs to be limited to ensure congestion, pollution and overcrowding doesn't occur"

Parking and Traffic Issues

The loss of parking spaces and potential increase in traffic congestion was raised 8 times.

"The car park should remain because a lot of businesses would be affected because people would have no places to park and won't come and do business here"

Conservation Area Compatibility

There were 7 comments that mentioned the proposed development being incompatible with the existing conservation area guidelines and character of the neighbourhood.

"The designs for sites 1 and 2 do not complement the immediate conservation area surroundings"

Flood Risk

There were 5 mentions of the site being located in a flood zone, raising concerns about the suitability and legality of building in this location.

"It's worth noting that insurance for people in high risk flood zones is steep or non-existent"

Local Services are Already Stretched

The impact on local services was mentioned 4 times, with particular reference to GPs and schools.

"There's inadequate infrastructure for the increased population in our overcrowded ward"

Supportive of the Design

4 respondents said they support the design of the development.

"I like the design of the building"

Other Common Themes Mentioned Under This Question Included:

- There were comments specifically mentioning the Library and a preference for maintaining it in its current form.
- Recognising and supporting the need for new homes was mentioned by several respondents.

Question 2:

Do You Have Any Comments on Site 2 – the New Homes and Commercial Space on the Existing Library Site?

Historical and Community Significance of the Library

There were 11 comments that expressed strong attachment to the existing library, which is seen as a historic and vital community resource.

Concerns were raised about the inconvenience caused by relocating the library, which has served the community for a long time.

"The library is a vital place for the public to learn and moving it is very inconvenient for us because it's been here for a very long period of time and is very historic to the residents"

Architectural Compatibility and Design

Some respondents focus on the design of the development not fitting well with the existing character of the neighbourhood, particularly in a conservation area. This was mentioned 6 times overall.

Specific concerns include the size, height, and style of the new building, which some perceive as imposing and out of place.

However, there were 4 comments that wrote in favour of the design.

"The demolition will lose us the historic glass panels inside the building, and the concrete modern architectural design had more natural light than contemporary library developments"

Infrastructure and Community Impact

Concerns were raised about the strain on local infrastructure, including parking, access to amenities, and traffic safety were raised 5 times.

Residents expressed worry about the loss of community amenities like public toilets and green spaces, as well as potential disruptions caused by increased population density.

"The new homes and commercial space will worsen parking issues, disrupt access to the library, and strain the already inadequate local infrastructure"

Environmental and Climate Considerations

Concerns highlight the environmental impact of demolishing the current building and constructing new residential spaces was raised 4 times.

Concerns were raised about sustainability and the building's contribution to carbon emissions, contrasting with local climate emergency declarations.

"[The proposal] will contribute unnecessarily to more carbon emissions, which will exacerbate climate change, which will increase the risks of flooding, which will undermine the safety of the developments"

Accessibility and Inclusivity

Issues regarding accessibility were mentioned, with criticisms that the new flats are not wheelchair accessible, which conflicts with equality legislation. Other accessibility concerns include inadequate cycle provision and potential risks related to parking and road safety. This was mentioned 4 times.

"Any new residential developments should be fully accessible, conducive of human health"

Question 3:

Do You Have Any Comments on Site 3 – the New Library on the Builders Merchant Site?

Parking and Traffic Impact

6 comments highlighted the potential for parking problems, including insufficient spaces for library staff, visitors and cyclists.

Concerns were also raised about the impact on Barnfield Road, with worries about congestion, difficulties in dropping off children and potentially dangerous levels of traffic.

"Barnfield Road is going to become very busy with a lot more through traffic. You need to consider traffic lights at the top."

Environmental and Community

There were 6 comments that discussed the possible environmental impact and suggestions for sustainable design features like solar panels and green walls.

There is also a desire for the new library to contribute positively to the community by providing spaces for cultural activities, enhancing community cohesion and preserving the natural character of the nearby stream.

Location and Accessibility

There were 5 mentions that the new site for the library is not ideal due to the narrowness of the road and the perceived hidden location.

There were concerns about increased traffic, parking issues and the impact on residents of Barnfield Road, which is seen as a quiet residential area that may struggle to accommodate the library's footfall.

"Not a good location for the library because it's very narrow and the streets will have to be demolished and it's hidden"

Relocation

There were 4 comments that expressed support for the relocation of the Library, whereas 3 residents questioned the rationale behind relocating the library, asking what benefits the new location will provide that the current one does not.

There was some scepticism about whether the move is justified or necessary, with suggestions that the library could remain in its current location or that the new site could be used for other community services instead.

"I think library in that place is a good choice"

"Make sure the new library facility has tangible benefit from relocation, not relocation for relocation's sake"

Design

Concerns that the design of the new library does not fit well with the existing architectural style of the area was mentioned 3 times. However, 2 comments expressed positive opinions about the design within this answer.

Suggestions are made for improvements, such as adding green walls to enhance the building's appearance and eco-friendliness, and ensuring the design includes solar panels.

"This is a nice building. It doesn't match the style of the estate but at least some thought has gone into the design"

Question 4: Do You Have Any Comments on the Overall Design Approach?

Concern Over Building Height and Scale

There were 18 comments that expressed concerns about the height and scale of the proposed buildings, which they perceived as too tall and out of character with the surrounding area.

There was a concern that a large-scale development will create an eyesore, overshadow existing buildings and negatively impact the local community.

However a few comments recognise the need for housing in the borough -this was mentioned 3 times.

"Development is of course needed and good, but must not be at this enormous scale"

Design

5 comments highlighted that the proposed modern design does not align with the existing architectural style, which has a 1930s feel.

There is a desire for the design to respect and integrate with the historical and aesthetic character of Burnt Oak, particularly considering its conservation area status.

However, 3 comments were supportive of the design.

"It's too modern as the area has a 30s feel, it would look to futuristic"

"The photos look amazing, let's hope the actual building design reflects this and the new library has all the facilities that the local community desperately desires."

Social Infrastructure

The need to thoughtfully integrate with the surrounding area and community needs, including concerns about the separation of affordable and market-rate housing, the lack of amenities like public toilets and community spaces, and insufficient consideration for parking and traffic was raised 5 times.

There was also criticism that the design prioritizes quantity over quality, leading to overcrowded and potentially unsafe conditions.

However there were 3 comments which expressed importance of a modern library and recognised the need for new facilities.

"We need more study spaces and proper desks and learning materials and the children area needs proper shelving to fit in large books rather than the boxes the have currently"

Environmental and Flooding Concerns

There were 3 comments that raised concerns about the environmental impact of the development, particularly related to flood risk due to the site's proximity to the Silkstream.

Comments emphasize the need for thorough drainage, water management and flood defence planning to mitigate potential risks.

"Drainage, water and environment management need to be considered at every step. How the drainage into silkstream is impacted needs to be modelled and considered to minimise risk of flooding"

Transparency and Community Need

There were 3 comments that questioned whether the designs will meet the needs of the community. There is also a sense that the design process has not be transparent enough, with some residents suggesting their concerns from Stage 1 have not been considered.

"People need to start preparing for the future and the continued lack of transparency does not help"

Question 5:

Do You Have Any Comments on the New Park and Approach to Green Space?

Accessibility and Inclusivity

There were 4 comments highlight the need for the park to be accessible to all members of the community, not just residents of the new flats.

There was also a desire for the park to include amenities that cater to a diverse group of people, such as play areas for children, fitness equipment for adults and seating areas for the elderly.

There were 4 supportive comments about the park.

"The park idea is very nice and to be encouraged. I hope all people will be able to use it and it's not just going to be accessible for the people who live in the flats"

Uncertainty about the Park's Necessity and Impact

Some residents question the need for a new park, given the proximity of existing green spaces like Montrose Playing Fields and Watling Park. This was mentioned 4 times.

Others express doubt around whether the new park will be a meaningful improvement or merely a “grass verge” with little real benefit to the community.

“This park in no benefit to locals or local shops, we do not need that park”

Green Space Maintenance

There was an emphasis on the importance of proper maintenance of the park and green spaces. This was mentioned 3 times.

Some residents cited examples of nearby parks that have become overgrown or neglected, stressing the need for regular upkeep to keep the new park inviting and functional.

“It is important to have green space but also it’s important to maintain the parks”

Environmental Considerations and Green Design

3 comments touched on the importance of integrating green design elements, such as preserving existing trees, using sustainable materials and creating habitats for wildlife.

There was also mention of the need for comprehensive landscaping plans and flood mitigation strategies to ensure the park is environmentally friendly and resilient.

“There should be lots of bushes and places for wildlife to hide”

Concerns About Safety and Security

2 comments expressed concern around the potential for the park to become a space for criminal activities, such as drug use, loitering by gangs, or rough sleeping.

Residents are concerned about how the park will be maintained and secured to prevent these issues and ensure it remains a safe environment for everyone.

“This could encourage loitering and anti-social behaviour which is a shame”

Question 6: Do You Have Any Questions For the Team, or Comments Overall?

Concerns About Infrastructure and Community Amenities

In the responses to this question there were concerns about how the development will impact local infrastructure, particularly public transport, schools and healthcare facilities. Residents are worried that the area’s current infrastructure cannot handle the additional population, leading to overcrowding and reduced access to essential services.

Need for Wider Public Consultation

Some respondents talked about the importance of broader public consultation, including the need for face-to-face meetings, wider distribution of information, and ensuring that all residents, including those who cannot use online services, are informed and have the opportunity to provide feedback.

Flood Risk and Environmental Sustainability

Some expressed concerns about flood risks associated with the development, particularly in light of past issues with flooding in the area. There is also a strong demand for clarity on how the development will address environmental sustainability and climate resilience.

Building Quality and Design Concerns

Comments reflect worries about the quality and durability of the new buildings, drawing on negative experiences with previous developments. There were also concerns about how the new design will fit within the existing conservation area and whether it will respect the character of the neighbourhood.

Next Steps

This feedback together with ongoing and future feedback received will be recorded fully as part of a Statement of Community Involvement that will accompany a future planning application.