

APPENDIX 1 – PENGE TOWN CENTRE DRAFT RENEWAL STRATEGY

TECHNICAL SUMMARY

PENGE TOWN CENTRE

Penge Town Centre serves a populated catchment area in the north west of the borough and residents need a thriving Town Centre. It is recognised as being a district Town Centre and whilst attention is given to Town Centre development at Bromley, Orpington and Beckenham it is important that Penge remains firmly in the Council's radar for economic development.

Character

Conservation areas protect a range of historic development, including the large Victorian villas, smaller workers' cottages (Alexandra Cottages) and almshouses (Watermans Square), the majority of the large Victorian properties have been converted into flats, resulting in the area being densely populated. Parts of Penge also include distinct social housing estate developments which have been developed at some of the highest densities in the Borough (up to 65 units per hectare). Access to off street parking and to private garden space is limited. Property prices average at around £200,000 for a two-bedroom terraced house.

The historic reliance upon local facilities has produced a series of lengthy local parades extending to the boundary of Crystal Palace Park. However, the tight urban development is interspersed by only small recreation grounds, allotments and school playing fields. Significant areas of Penge lack public open space.

Demography & Community

The 2001 census indicated that proportion of lone parents was high and the number of one person households was approximately double the Borough average, whereas the proportion of retired people and couples with children was relatively low. It is hard to determine the extent to which the slowing of the housing market has influenced the makeup of households the area over the last decade however there were a relatively high proportion of households living in unsuitable accommodation in 2009.

The area includes higher proportions of ethnic minority groups and non Christian populations than elsewhere in the Borough. The area exhibits relatively high levels of multiple deprivation particularly in respect of health, education, crime and income. Some areas fall within the 20% most deprived areas of the country, therefore it is designated as an "Area for Regeneration" in the London Plan. The area has an unemployment rate higher than the sub-regional average, more akin to inner London.

Over 25 community venues exist including many church halls which provide important facilities, 'outreach' uses and resources for local communities. There is a library in Penge on Maple Road and several very active local community groups in the area. There has been a significant loss of public houses in the area over the past decade.

Business and Employment

Penge High Street (A234) remains quite busy, although much of the public realm areas are run down and cluttered. Maple Road has declined in recent years, the former market having ceased to operate. Yeoman House in Croydon Road is currently undergoing conversion into a 89 bedroom Travelodge Hotel.

PENGE TOWN CENTRE – Commercial Profile

Classification Mix				
Classification	Total	%	National Total	National %
+ COMPARISON	33	32.35	164,707	35.94
+ LEISURE	26	25.49	105,087	22.93
+ SERVICE	23	22.55	95,507	20.84
+ CONVENIENCE	13	12.75	53,466	11.67
+ MISCELLANEOUS	7	6.86	39,498	8.62

A recent (2011) Local Data Company Town Centre Intelligence report has indicated that the existing business infrastructure consists of a high concentration of retail uses comprising 104 premises, comprising 73 retailers of which 65 are independents. There is 1 enclosed shopping centre and 4 supermarkets. Leisure uses comprise of 20 restaurants, and 6 bars, pubs and clubs. The latest information has also indicated that there are 6 vacant units.

Community Safety

Crime is tackled locally by Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs). These are a partnership of the police, local authorities and other organisations whose aim is to tackle crime and disorder on a local level.

Local authority's crime rate measured against the national average.

	BROMLEY COUNCIL	AVERAGE
Population	310,200	-
Households	133,800	-
Burglary	9.7	9.6
Criminal damage	9.1	12.7
Drug offences	3.5	4.2
Fraud and forgery	4.9	2.7
Offences against vehicles	10.0	8.2
Other offences	0.8	1.2
Other theft offences	14.6	19.3
Robbery	2.1	1.4
Sexual offences	0.8	1.0
Violence against the person	15.6	14.8
Ambulance Assaults	4.3	-

Data is supplied by the Home Office based on data collected by police forces in England and Wales between 2010 and 2011.

Crime statistics are per 1,000 of the population within the local authority area

The Draft Renewal Strategy

1. Introduction

In considering the options for the future of Penge Town Centre, initial analysis has indicated that a regeneration/renewal strategy would be the preferred approach. Such a strategy would strengthen and improve the offer for local residents by identifying interventions and improvements across a broad range of areas that will help to realise the full potential of the centre as a focus for retail, services and community facility provision for local residents and businesses as well as guide development opportunities and future investment decisions for the area.

2. The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Strengths: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low rents for start up businesses and independent retailers• Close proximity to Central London• Good Transport links• Low vacancy rates• Healthy retail trade in spite of recession• Many historic buildings	Weaknesses: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poorly defined high street• Lack of image• Perceived poor Community safety• Poorly planned public realm and tired streetscape• Poor maintenance• Limited leisure offer with poor youth and night time economy• In need of de-cluttering and cleaning
Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Library to be relocated into larger more central premises.• The gentrification of the Crystal Palace area nearby• Potential for strengthening of the residential market in outer London suburbs	Threats: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Perception of being ignored, whilst other town centres are undergoing improvement plans

3. Previous Regeneration Work

Previous regeneration work was carried out at Penge between 1997 and 2003 funded by the Crystal Palace Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) Challenge Fund. This work focused on job creation, skill levels/training, fear of crime and environmental improvement projects. There have also been a number of other projects carried out by the Highways Department in 2008.

Area	Previous Regeneration Work	Current condition
Penge Triangle	Canopy, with a clock and plaque. New paving and up lighters.	Clock and up lighters are not functioning
Blenheim Centre	Canopies, lighting and seating.	Canopies poorly maintained, benches damaged
Waterman's Square	Colonnades refurbished, paving	Currently in good condition
Empire Square	New paving, up lighters and street features	Lighting not functioning
Parking	Improved high street parking.	
High Street Paving	Repaving of the High Street around Maple Road and Green Lane, undertaken at £50,000	Generally in good condition but would need to be maintained
Shop front refurbishments	Council discussed committing £160,000 to help businesses upgrade their shop fronts under the Streatham Dip Shop front Improvement Scheme	The Council was not prepared to meet match funding for the scheme therefore nothing was progressed
Blenheim Centre Car Park	The Car Park had recently been refurbished to a high standard and is well lit. It also has regular security patrols	It is still fairly underused due to perceptions of poor safety.

4. The Vision for Penge Town Centre

The Vision for Penge Town Centre will set out the basic objective of a Renewal Strategy. It is the measure by which the future success of the Renewal Strategy will be assessed. In short, we can summarise the potential of Penge Town Centre Town Centre in the following succinct statement:

“Unlocking the future by developing the present - a contemporary, vibrant town centre for local people and visitors alike”

In practice, this means that Penge Town Centre will aspire to fulfil the following Vision statement over the next 10-15 years:

“A vibrant and distinctive town, Penge is a destination of choice complementing the wider commercial offer in the Borough. The local people are proud of their town and regularly visit the centre to enjoy the wide range of shops, services, cafés, restaurants and leisure facilities provided in a high quality, attractive and user-friendly environment.

The town centre is known for its selection of local and independent retailers. It has a reputation for being a welcoming and friendly town, providing customers with a retail-leisure experience that is on par with the best that the borough has to offer.”

In order to achieve this strategic aim, we have identified the following objectives that will work together to ensure that the vision outlined above will be achieved.

- Creating a diverse Town Centre with a rich mix of uses and a balanced provision of activities and opportunities.
- Expand the evening economy sensitively, bringing life to Penge Town Centre throughout the day, and into the night. Looking into opportunities for improved leisure provision in the area.
- A business improvement strategy for the area for the area. Redefining the length of the Penge High Street concentrating the vibrancy within a smaller area.
- Improving the ‘Quality of Place’ by making the most of the built heritage and high quality townscape in Penge. Implementing public realm improvements leading to clean, safe open spaces that are pedestrian friendly. Protecting and enhancing the valuable heritage aspects of the area such as Watermen’s Square and Penge Recreation Ground.
- Regeneration of deprived areas through rejuvenated housing projects with a high standard of design. Deriving benefits from the gentrification of the Crystal Palace area in the form of a social and economic uplift of the Town Centre.
- Consideration of development options of the potential opportunity sites within the town centre for example the old police station and the Blenheim Shopping Centre. Re-examining new options for the regeneration of Maple Road.
- Ensure accessibility, making Penge Town Centre pedestrian and cyclist friendly, reduce congestion, with good public transport links and adequate, accessible parking provision. The physical environment should strike the right balance between the needs of vehicles buses and pedestrians
- Over-arching branding and promotions, providing Penge Town Centre with effective promotion and marketing, and an exciting programme of events throughout the year, managed in a partnership approach.

This strategy will focus on a deliverable ‘vision’ for the town centre, establishing a framework for the improvement of this district centre will ensure that any development options are identified and assessed for maximum benefit with new buildings and facilities planned and designed in a coordinated manner so as to improve the existing townscape, environmental quality of the public realm and preserve the historical sense of place. The concept of a renewal strategy for Penge Town Centre would involve the setting out the strategic policy objectives for the town centre, which will focus on adopting a comprehensive approach to the enhancement of the area. New development will need to enhance the character of the area and there will be a focus on improving shop fronts and gentrification of the area.

The plan will comprise of a number of short, medium and long term interventions addressing issues affecting the town centre’s attraction and vitality. A scheme of

environmental improvements designed to address the imperative issues of the High Street have already been undertaken as part of the short-term strategy. For the development of a long-term strategy, the Council will be undertaking a stakeholder consultation on this draft renewal strategy to identify the challenges and opportunities that Penge Town Centre faces.

The aim is to transform the town centre into a more sustainable, attractive, vibrant and safe place where people want to, and are able to live, work and have good access to public transport, shopping and leisure facilities.

5. Elements of the Strategy and Process

In order to deliver this vision, it is essential that the Council has a clear strategy to guide work streams across the Renewal and Recreation Department and the wider Council, to ensure that work is not duplicated and is complementary. A preliminary review of the projects that are undertaken to deliver the Outer London Fund, reveal that the Renewal and Recreation (RR) department will play a leading role. Therefore, within RR sections such as Planning, Recreation and Town Centre Development, there has to be clear understanding of the direction of travel in relation to the emerging strategy. There are already a series of short, medium and long term actions that are being developed and the point of this report is to set out the framework of this renewal strategy for stakeholder consultation and ensure that work priorities across all sections are aligned to the achievement of key objectives to deliver the vision.

6. Business

Penge needs to develop its own unique business brand, ideally based on its built heritage and linked to its Conservation Area status. It needs to be able to differentiate its offer from the main town and other competing centres and communicate effectively with its potential customers locally. This marketing and promotional initiative needs to be based on consultation with the local business community identifying local business needs. Town Centre Management will need to build on liaisons with the local business community through a programme of events, forums and activities. There is a need to emphasise Penge's differentiating offer from other competing centres and improve communications with potential local customers. A business strategy would involve the offering free or subsidised business training, the setting up and implementation of a shop front improvement grant scheme and the application of vinyl graphics to improve appearance of empty shop fronts in partnership with the Penge Traders Association using match funding. These schemes aim to encourage investment and improve the visual impact of the town centre. The various options regarding the relocation of Market stalls on the High Street will also need to be considered.

7. Access, Connectivity and Parking

The High Street is a significant transport corridor;

- it is an A-road (A234) as well as providing spaces for parking/deliveries
- it is a bus route for 5 services which travel along at least one section of the High Street and another 2 services cross it. There is also bus lane for eastbound buses between Parkside Close and Penge Lane

- it provides pedestrian access to the local shops and amenities,
- it is part of the London Cycle Network (route 27) and is currently planned (subject to consultation) to be the possible end point of Cycle Superhighway route 6 in 2012.

This mixture of transport uses sometimes creates conflicts, which need to be properly understood to ensure that any changes improve how the area functions, and informs the public realm design accordingly.

Penge West and Penge East stations offer a range of routes to Victoria and East Croydon, as well as the new East London London. The Mayor has proposed a Cycle Superhighway Route from Penge to 'The City' via Elephant & Castle.

There are 240 parking spaces available at the Blenheim centre car park. The Car Park has been completely refurbished with CCTV surveillance and is patrolled by security personnel between the hours of 7.00am and 7.00pm and is locked at night. Payment at the Car Park is by pay-and-display with civil penalty notices issued to those in default. Penge Town Centre has a high volume of on-street parking which local traders welcomed given that a significant amount of custom is car borne. The amount, location and restrictions on parking and loading are also important considerations.

8. **Public Realm**

The Public Realm consists of public squares and parks that give Penge its character and make it an attractive place to live, work and visit. There is a potential opportunity to engage "Living Streets" to conduct a community street audit to inform on public realm improvements for the area. This could involve the examining of the following focal points around the town centre:

Empire Square

Situated at the front entrance of the Blenheim Shopping Centre, it is the largest of the public square in Penge Town Centre. It is often used by Town Centre Management for community activities and specialist markets. The square is partially sheltered by a white fibreglass canopy which covers the middle of the square. There are cycle stands and a bench located beneath the canopy near the mouth of the square and there is a brass memorial plaque embedded in the pavement. The canopy itself is lit up by up-lighters and floodlights from the surrounding buildings illuminate the square by night. There is access to the back of the shops fronting Penge high street from the rear of the square on both sides. A mural with street art graces one of the walls to the rear of the square and there is a war memorial plaque embedded in the pavement to the front of it. There are CCTV cameras situated on the wall of the Blenheim Shopping Centre and one along the High Street in front of the square providing adequate surveillance for the square. The square occasionally serves as an events location for Town Centre Management activities.

Empire Square is functional and provides an excellent focal point for the town centre, but would benefit from updating and redesign. Improvements to the space would reinvigorate the town, acting as a location for events, festivals and a specialist market, as well as a becoming a well-known and pleasant space for people to meet and spend time.

Arpley Square

Located beside MacDonalds, it is the relatively smaller square on the high street. To the rear of the square are public toilets and an access gate to the Blenheim car park which is decorated with a mural. There are two trees planted in the square and some decorative sculptures based on the Crystal Palace Dinosaur Park. The square is illuminated by floodlights from the building on both sides. Currently two market stalls operate in the square three days a week.

Maple Road

Maple Road is a key location in Penge and was formerly home to a street market operation. The street market was established after the First World War although the market is no longer thriving. Various projects designed to revitalise the Market were unsuccessful and it was felt that the current Maple Road was not suitable as a market location as it was in a peripheral location and that the best opportunity for the market to trade successfully was through relocation to the High Street. The barrier at Maple Road was erected to protect and facilitate the Market. However it has remained in place though the Market has moved, to prevent the amenity of local residents being adversely affected if it were to become a through route once again.

9. Policy

Penge High Street currently extends from Kent House Road in the South to Parkside Close in the North towards Crystal Palace Park. The retail layout is linear in nature, predominantly contained along the identified Primary Shopping Frontage of the High Street which has a good distribution of units including multiple retailers. The strategy could potentially review what constitutes the actual primary shopping frontage of the High Street and whether the vibrancy of the town centre would benefit from a redefining of its length.

10. Managing Delivery

One of the keys to the effective delivery of the vision is the need to identify key interventions, resources and effectively manage and co-ordinate activities. Further work is needed in refining the Renewal Strategy and identifying potential project interventions. An internal officer group has been established to co-ordinate projects under the management of the Renewal team and a programme of consultation involving a stakeholder workshop will be held in late October. This will comprise of two half day sessions held in Penge where the challenges, issues and options will be examined. There will be discussion on the short-term improvements, business initiatives, planning policy, transport and environmental improvements for Penge Town Centre. The outcomes of the workshop will provide support and direction for the development and implementation of the Strategy.

PENGE TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENT AREA

