

A photograph of a town center street, likely Bromley Town Centre, showing a paved pedestrian walkway, shops, and outdoor seating areas with yellow balloons and blue and yellow bunting. The street is lined with brick buildings and has a clear blue sky with some clouds. The text is overlaid on the image.

**Bromley Town Centre  
Outer London Fund Evaluation**

A Final Report by  
Regeneris Consulting

February 2015

## Executive Summary

- i. The London Borough of Bromley was awarded £2.0 million from the Mayor of London's Outer London Fund (OLF) Round 2 in early 2012, to deliver a series of capital and revenue interventions in Bromley town centre over the period 2012-2014.
- ii. This report, prepared by Regeneris Consulting, provides an independent evaluation of the Bromley town centre OLF R2 project, focusing on the performance of the project delivery process, impacts and achievements achieved to date, project legacy and lessons for the future.

## The Bromley Context

- iii. Bromley town centre is classified as one of London's metropolitan centres, reflecting the size of the town centre area and relative importance in London's town centre hierarchy as a retail and leisure destination.
- iv. While the town centre serves a catchment across south east London and north Kent, it faces strong competition from other retail centres in the sub-region, including Croydon town centre and Bluewater shopping centre. In the face of increasing evidence that Bromley has been losing ground to these competitors in recent years (including increasing vacancy rates and declining footfall levels), an area action plan for the town centre was developed in 2010, focused around ambitions to improve the image and perceptions of the town centre and providing a framework to manage development and change in the town centre over the coming decade.

- v. Bromley town centre subsequently secured funding of around £300,000 from Round 1 of the OLF to deliver a number of interventions aimed at working towards the objectives of the Area Action Plan. These interventions were delivered in 2011 and included marketing activities, a programme of events and design and preparatory work for future public realm and shopfront improvement schemes.

## The OLF R2 Project

- vi. The Bromley OLF R2 project was developed following the completion of the OLF Round 1 project. The project was designed with the ultimate purpose of creating a more vibrant and prosperous high street which is economically sustainable into the medium and longer term.
- vii. The project comprised numerous strands of delivery across the town centre area. These strands of delivery can broadly be grouped under four main categories:
  - Public realm interventions – a comprehensive project to renew the public realm in the Bromley North area (extending an existing TfL funded scheme), along with improvements to the public realm between Bromley South and Bromley North
  - Shopfront improvements – a programme of improvements to shopfronts in the Bromley North area, focusing on redesigning and replacing shop frontages
  - Business support – a programme of support for local businesses, focused around one-to-one support and seminars

- Events and marketing – continuation of the ‘Are you Bromley’ campaign developed as part of the OLF R1 project, including delivery of a series of major themed town centre events.
- viii. The project was awarded £2.0m OLF R2 funding from the GLA in spring 2012, making it one of the largest OLF R2 projects across London in funding terms. The total project value was £6.8 million, reflecting match contributions from the council itself and Transport for London (TfL).

## Delivery Performance

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- ix. The Bromley OLF Round 2 project was delivered by the London Borough of Bromley in close partnership with co-financing organisations (the GLA and TfL) and wider stakeholders in the local area.
- x. The project was originally contracted by the GLA to deliver over a two year period from 2012 to March 2014. However, a number of the strands of delivery encountered delays, with delivery continuing through the summer and autumn of 2014. These delays reflected a number of challenges, most notably:
- Project start up – initial start up was later than expected as a result of official GLA sign off of the Grant Agreements
  - Design and planning complexities – the design of a number of elements of the projects (particularly public realm) evolved during the early stages of the project, resulting in delays in delivery start up
  - Construction – a number of construction challenges were faced, most notably a burst water main on Bromley High

Street which resulted in rephrasing of OLF delivery (and delays)

- Resourcing (internal and external) – resource constraints within LB Bromley combined with the complex nature of the project resulted in resources delivery challenges. Further delivery challenges were also faced as a result of the scale of OLF delivery across London resulting in resource challenges at several of the council’s external partners (e.g. design consultants and TfL).

xi. Despite these challenges, at the time of reporting in early 2015, the vast majority of delivery was complete with only the delivery of the Bromley South sign and a number of Legible London interliths (under BROM1d) outstanding.

xii. The project spent its full allocation of OLF resource. However, reflecting the above challenges, this spend was spread over a longer time period than originally anticipated. Aside from OLF spend, the project succeeded in leveraging additional match resource of around £200,000 over the course of the project, largely from TfL but also from the council itself and local businesses.

## Outputs and Emerging Impacts

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xiii. Some of the key project deliverables / outputs are summarised in the table below. In general, these outputs are in line with those originally anticipated at project outset. However, in certain instances, expectations have been exceeded (e.g. number of sop fronts improved).

Table 1 Summary of Project Outputs

Public Realm	Area of public realm improved	4000 sqm
	Road junctions improved	10
	Pocket parks established	1
	Number of street trees planted	18
	New way finding and other signs installed	17
Shopfronts	Shop fronts improved	25
Marketing and Events	Public events delivered	8
Business Support	Number of businesses supported	50
	Business workshops delivered	5

Source: LB Bromley

xiv. The above deliverables have impacted upon a number of different groups of beneficiaries, most notably town centre businesses and town centre users. Survey work undertaken for this evaluation has helped to understand the perceptions and perspectives of these beneficiary groups on the interventions delivered:

- Impacts on town centre businesses – businesses were generally positive about the impact that the projects has had on the quality of Bromley town centre and the image and perceptions of it. The majority of businesses are yet to experience a positive impact as result of the improvements, but many were confident that positive impacts would emerge in coming years. That said, a number of businesses reported negative impacts on their business as a result of disruption caused by project delivery.
- Impacts on Town Centre Users – like the businesses, town centre users were positive about the OLF investments: nearly three-quarters of town centre users reported that the OLF 2 projects made the area more attractive, improved their

perceptions of the area, and enhanced their satisfaction with shopping in the area. Again, however, these improvements have yet to materialise into changes to their spending and visiting patterns. This will partly reflect the fact that survey work has taken place so soon after the end of delivery.

xv. At project inception, the GLA provided all OLF Round 2 projects with a list of ‘economic uplift’ indicators against which performance should be measured. Research suggests that limited impact has been achieved to date in terms of overall town centre performance. However, in some respects this partly reflects this reflects a number of caveats to the target setting and measuring process rather than the performance of the project itself:

- Economic uplift targets – in a number of instances the targets set by LB Bromley were overambitious, immediately impacting on ability to achieve these. This is particularly the case in terms of the jobs secured figure (178 jobs secured – it is thought that this reflected a misunderstanding of the GLA definition of the indicator) and uplift in footfall (10% set against a longer term trend of declining footfall)
- Timing of evaluation – to fit in with GLA requirements, research for this evaluation has been undertaken only shortly after the completion of the delivery of the most significant elements of the public realm projects. In reality, it is at this stage too early to report with any certainty on the impacts of intervention on the performance of local businesses and the behaviour of town centre users.

xvi. With the above caveats in mind, performance against the GLA economic uplift indicators to date is summarised below:

- **Jobs Created and Secured:** A target was set of 43 jobs created and 178 jobs secured – a combined total of 221 job outcomes. There is evidence that good progress has been made towards this with around 86 FTE jobs created. However, progress has been weak against the jobs secured target (partly reflecting the ambition of the target set)
  - **Turnover:** A target was set to increase business turnover in Bromley Town Centre by around £1.3 million. Based on reported employment increases, the 119 town centre businesses surveyed by Regeneris alone generated an additional £4.1m as a result of OLF spend
  - **Visitor Satisfaction:** A target was set to increase visitor satisfaction levels by 5%, from a baseline figure of 88% to around 93%. While the target itself has not been achieved, 90% of visitors now say they are satisfied with the town centre, an extremely strong figure when considered in isolation from the uplift target
  - **Vacancy rate:** there is evidence that the OLF investments are starting to result in positive impacts in terms of vacancy rates. This is particularly the case in Bromley North Village where a large proportion of the OLF funded activity was concentrated. Here, vacancy rates have fallen sharply: in January 2015, for example, the final vacant unit on East Street became occupied. Vacancy rates across the wider town centre area also fell in second half of 2014. That said, there is further room for improvement: vacancy rates across the whole town centre area are currently above the 2012 baseline figure of 9.5%. Ongoing monitoring of vacancy rates will be required to track performance in this respect.
  - **Footfall:** as with vacancy rates, there is evidence of positive impacts emerging: recent survey work by the council suggests a significant increase in footfall in previously peripheral areas of the town centre such as Bromley North Village (areas which were the target by OLF investment). The Intu Centre and the wider town centre area also experienced a strong Christmas 2014 period. Again, however, challenges remain at the town centre level: Springboard data highlights a long term trend of declining town centre footfall (which mirrors trends seen in town centres across the UK) which is yet to be arrested. Again, ongoing monitoring of footfall will be required to track performance in this respect.
- xvii. Aside from these core indicators of economic uplift performance, our research has also identified a number of wider areas of impact:
- Strengthening the leisure offer – the past year has seen a sharp increase in the number of applications for licenses for outdoor seating outside food and drink establishments in the Bromley North Village area. This strengthening of the leisure offer aligns with ambitions to diversify town centre usage and has the potential to result in positive economic outcomes for local businesses now project delivery is complete
  - Property market – discussion with local property agents has suggested a positive impact in the local property market, with an increase in demand for commercial space on the peripheries of the town centre
  - Investment in town centre – there is also some indication that the OLF interventions are resulting in increased confidence in the town centre which in turn has led to increased levels of

investment. This is partly demonstrated by strong performance at the Intu Centre in 2014, which secured lettings for a number of aspirational brands including White Company, White Stuff and Carluccio's.

- xviii. In conclusion, while a number of the uplift targets are yet to be met, the above highlights a number of positive signs / indications regarding footfall and vacancy rates. The survey work also highlighted confidence that stronger project impacts will accrue in the coming years. For example, the town centre survey found that 80% of businesses expect their business performance to improve over the next three years and 58% of these firms attribute this to the OLF 2 investments.

## Project Effectiveness

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- xix. Over and above the economic uplift performance described above, there is evidence that the project has been effective in delivering strategic added value:
- The project has shown **strategic leadership** in helping to identify the challenges facing Bromley town centre and in designing and delivering interventions to respond to these. The shop front improvement project in particular has been identified by the GLA as being a best practice example in the successful delivery of such a scheme. The Bromley North Village project has also been identified as exemplary for the transformation nature of the scheme on the image of the local environment.
  - The project has also demonstrated **strategic influence**, engaging local partners to contribute their time to projects in

Outer London (including cultural and arts organisations as well as retail and leisure businesses). The momentum created by the project has also been one of the influencing factors behind the creation of the Bromley BID Working Group – a new partnership of local businesses aiming to establish a Business Improvement District (BID) in the town centre later by April 2016.

- The project has also succeeded in securing a number of forms of **leverage**, including additional council funds to support delivery (including possible future extension of the public realm scheme), a greater amount of match funding from business owners for shopfront improvements than was originally expected, and additional resource from the Cathedral Group in the form of support for interventions around St Mark's Church.
  - The projects have been extremely successful at securing **engagement** from a wide range of stakeholders, including businesses (including as part of the shopfronts scheme), local community, arts and cultural groups (including the Churchill Theatre, St Mark's Church) and wider town centre stakeholders (such as Network Rail, the Intu Centre and the Cathedral Group). The project has also led to stronger political support to tackle issues within local areas as demonstrated by the support for the new BID Working Group.
- xx. Project effectiveness can be assessed in quantitative terms via consideration of project value for money. Based on the employment impact figures described above, we estimate that the project has the potential to generate lifetime benefits of around £13 million, giving

an overall return on investment of £1.90 for every £ invested. This is a positive finding: while research on the economic benefits of public realm investment is patchy, research in CLG’s “Valuing the Benefits of Regeneration” suggests an average return of around £1 for every £1 invested in public realm projects. That said, these figures should be treated with caution: they are intended as a high level estimate of value for money rather than a full and robust assessment.

Impact Indicator	Value
Total Project Cost	£6.6 million
GVA generated over 15 years	£12.9 million (2014 prices)
GVA per £ invested	£1.90

Source: Regeneris Consulting, 2015

## Project Achievements

- xxi. Our research has highlighted a number of core project achievements, along with lessons for future delivery.
- xxii. Notable project achievements are outlined below:
  - Building on Existing Momentum and Additionality: The project has helped to extend planned investments by TfL and bring forward a number of other public realm improvements along the high street which would not have happened otherwise in the absence of OLF funding.
  - Ambition and Quality of Delivery: A number of the interventions delivered have been described as exemplary, in the context of other delivery across London, most notably the shop front improvement scheme.

- Delivery Flexibility: A number of successful project elements were developed after funding had been awarded. This flexibility has helped the project to work collaboratively with partners and to embrace new ideas as they emerged.
- Diversifying the town centre offer and uses: Consultees highlighted the public realm enhancements around East Street and Market Square, and suggested they are helping to create a ‘European’ style and aspirational ‘café culture’ in that part of the town centre.
- Changing perceptions and increasing confidence: The project has been described as ‘transformational’ in terms of the image and perception of Bromley town centre. There is early evidence that OLF investments are generating increased levels of confidence in Bromley Town Centre amongst investors.
- Increased profile of Bromley town centre within the council: leading to the allocation of additional resource to enable the delivery of further public realm enhancements post OLF delivery and the progression of planning for a Business Improvement District (BID).
- Partnership working: has been forged with partners including the Intu Centre, the Cathedral Group, St Mark’s Church, the Churchill Theatre, the Bromley Arts Panel and the Bromley Civic Society. Strong partners buy-in will be important in helping to maintain momentum post OLF delivery.

xxiii. A number of barriers to achievement have also been identified:

- Complexity of the project: the project comprised multiple interventions spread across a large town centre area. The delivery of each of these intervention was resource intensive, with detailed design work, partner engagement and administrative requirements typically required to facilitate successful project delivery
- LB Bromley Resource and Delivery Mechanisms: some of the key challenges faced by the project related to constraints on officer resource and the complexity of the delivery process internally within LB Bromley (with delivery taking place across multiple teams and directorates)
- Administrative Requirements: formal administrative challenges impacted on the delivery process. These included delays in project start up and sign off, the GLA's level of involvement at the detailed design level, the complex and frequent reporting requirements and invoicing requirements.
- Design and Procurement Challenges: as would be expected for a project of this scale and complexity, a number of design and procurement challenges were faced, which resulted in delays to project delivery
- Delivery Challenges: a number of external delivery challenges impacted on delivery, including disruption to public realm works caused by a damaged water main, the need for complex negotiations with landowners, and the responsiveness of external partners.
- Scale of Disruption of Public Realm Works: The public realm works were delivered over an 18 month period Bromley town

centre: consultees reported significant disruption for local town centre businesses and users over this lengthy period.

## Lessons Learnt

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- xxiv. Directly reflecting the achievements and barriers to achievements described above, the research has identified a number of learning points for future delivery:
- Scale of delivery – in planning for future projects, close consideration should be given to the practicality of delivering the planned interventions, set against resource available, delivery timescales, and level of disruption during delivery
  - Officer resource – specific resource for project management should be costed within bids for funding of this nature
  - Delivery structures – the establishment of a project board for the Bromley North Village scheme proved successful; this should be considered as an important part of the delivery mechanism for future projects of this type
  - Business communication – the appointment by FM Conway of a business liaison officer was seen to be a successful innovation. This should be considered a template to build upon for future projects of this type
  - Target Setting – adopting a more pragmatic approach to target setting for future projects will be beneficial in articulating project results and performance.
  - Ongoing performance monitoring – a strong body of evidence has been collated as part of the OLF process. It is important that the Council uses this information productively to keep up



to date with town centre performance to inform the focus of future delivery / investments.

## Project Legacy

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- xxv. In helping to generate a step change in the way the town centre is perceived by users, businesses and wider stakeholders alike, the OLF project is seen to have provided a strong platform on which to build with future interventions. There are already plans to build upon the momentum generated by the OLF project in a number of ways:
- Progression of public realm improvements – plans are already being formulated to roll out further public realm improvements to parts of the High Street which did not benefit from the OLF project.
  - Alongside the proposed extension of upgraded public realm treatments, the Council is also reviewing the 3-day town centre street market. Under consideration is a re-focussing of the market offer to meet more aspirational tastes and a physical relocation to the newly refurbished Market Square.
  - Support for the Bromley Town Centre Business Improvement District – proposals for a Bromley Town Centre BID emerged during the delivery of the OLF R2 project. It is anticipated that the BID would play an active role in town centre management and would work closely with the Council to build on the momentum generated by recent investments and to work towards long term regeneration and growth objectives. Planning for the BID is currently taking place, with a vote anticipated for autumn 2015.