Newham London

WE ARE SHAPING.
WE ARE NEWHAM.
OUR HIGH STREETS.

People at the Heart
of Everything We Do
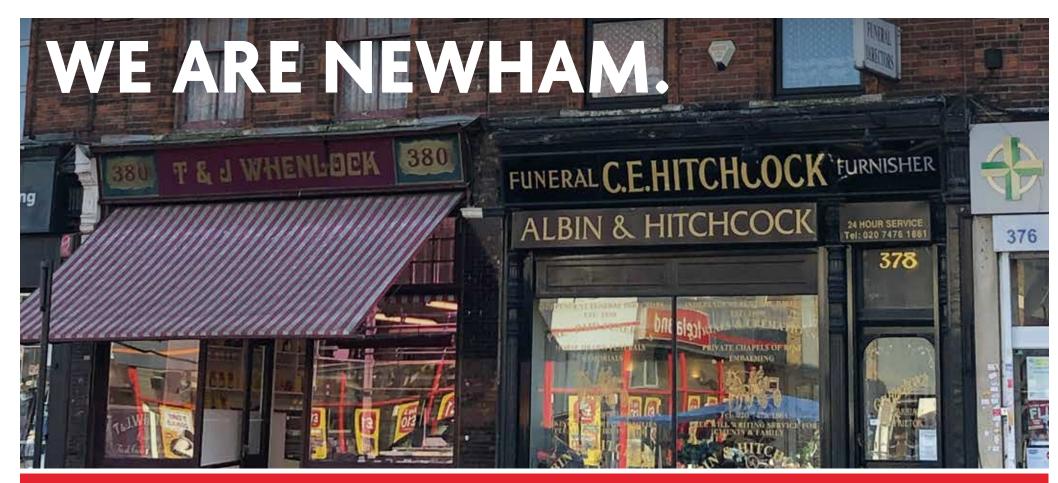
Introduction

This section considers the full range of Newham's high streets, from small shopping parades to large town centres, from retail parks to markets, and the remaining sections of out-of-centre commercial activity. Newham's high streets offer a range of functions of vital importance to the daily lives of our communities and their individual character and size, alongside their transport connectivity, provides choice and helps connect people across neighbourhoods.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the importance of access to a range of local services usually available on our high streets, as well as the importance of quality public realm to help support and attract activity. The pandemic has also accelerated a number of behavioural trends which, alongside recent changes in national planning legislation and policy, pose challenges for our high streets.

The current Local Plan policies that relate to this topic are:

- INF5: Town Centre Hierarchy and Network;

- SP6: Successful Town and Local Centres;

- SP7: Quality Movement Corridors and Linear Gateways; and

- SP9: Cumulative Impact, in relation to Licensing Saturation Policy Zones, Primary Shopping Frontages, control of quality of leisure offer in town centres, and control of proliferation of betting shops and hot food takeaways borough-wide.

What does our current policy seek to achieve?

INF5: Town Centre Hierarchy and Network

- A defined hierarchy and network of existing and potential town centres, local centres and shopping parades where town centre uses are promoted. Identifies Primary Shopping Areas/Frontages within town centres.

- Encourages the loss of town centre uses to residential use in areas outside of the designated town centres network.

- A specific scale and mix of retail development in each of the town centres.

SP6: Successful Town and Local Centres and SP7: Quality Movement Corridors and Linear Gateways

- High quality public environment for town centres and the main movement corridors that connect centres to residential areas, so that they feel safe and are attractive and convenient for everyone.

SP9: Cumulative Impact

- Manages the cumulative impact generated from proliferation of certain uses, such as those that require licensing control for sale of alcohol, betting shops, and hot food takeaways.

- Improve the overall quality of leisure offer in town centres, by capping the number of betting shops, amusement arcades and hot food takeaways to 33% of the overall leisure offer.

Spatial policies S2-6

- Provide key objectives for each town centre in terms of broader mix of uses, character and public realm enhancement needs.

What you've told us

- The variety of shops and range of independent offer are features residents like the most about their local high street.

- While satisfaction is generally high, people feel that there is room for improvement in Newham's high streets, particularly to improve the leisure offer and quality of the public realm, to promote placemaking, and to address the climate emergency.

- Young people feel excluded, due to places that they spend time in becoming unaffordable, and limited access to safe, well-lit and freely accessible public spaces.

- Cultural heritage is valued as much as the historic built fabric; people would like more public art, and social spaces for local communities to come together, including pop-ups and meanwhile uses.

- Crime, anti-social behaviour and cleanliness remain residents' biggest concerns regarding their high streets.

- Residents continue to be concerned about the number of betting shops, and the quality of food and the impact of rubbish from hot food takeaways.

Sources:
- Join the Docks - Royal Docks and Beckton Opportunity Area Framework (2019)
- **Newham High Streets Phase 1**
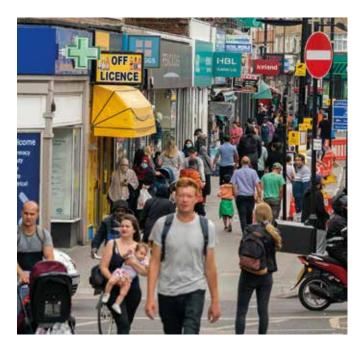- We Make Newham Youth Assembly Event (2021)

What does the data tell us?

- The majority of residents (88% in 2019) are satisfied with their local shopping facilities. However, residents of Canning Town and Custom House, and Royal Docks were least satisfied, reflecting more limited offer in these areas – which ongoing regeneration programmes are aiming to address. Green Street residents continue to be among the most satisfied with their shopping facilities, at 94%. Overall, satisfaction is lowest amongst residents who have a disability (72%).

- Pre-pandemic, vacancy rates in Newham's town centres were below national average.

- Stratford is the main focus for leisure uses in the borough, in part reflecting its metropolitan centre status, with a complementary offer within Stratford City.

- Forest Gate and East Ham are both performing relatively well in terms of overall provision of leisure uses, but the quality of provision remains low given the high number of betting shops/amusement arcades and hot food takeaways.

- The overall leisure offer within Green Street is more restricted compared to the borough's other town centres, and remains predominantly of lower quality although has been steadily improving.

- The format of East Beckton town centre, focused around the Asda Superstore and several large floorplate single-use buildings, means that it is less adaptable and provides a less diverse mix of uses than the other town centres.

- Redevelopment of Canning Town is bringing in new commercial, leisure and work floorspace, but many of the new units have stayed vacant for long periods and the town centre is overall under-performing.

- Developers of major schemes often seek to provide retail and leisure uses as a form of placemaking, but without sufficient market testing to ensure successful take-up of all proposed spaces. Indeed, research indicates that scattered commercial premises tend to be less appealing to businesses than those clustered within high streets.

Sources:
- Newham, Annual Survey (2019)
- Newham Development Management activity
- **Newham Town Centres Monitoring Bulletin**
- **GLA: Vacant Ground Floors in New Mixed-Use Development**

What are we required to consider and plan for?

The National Planning Practice Framework (2021)

- Defines the 'town centre first' approach which directs 'main town centre uses' to within the boundaries of centres identified in Local Plans. Where this is not possible, a process of sequential and impact testing of sites is usually required to demonstrate that development would not negatively impact on the vitality and viability of the centres.

- Requires Local Plans to identify not only the boundaries of town centres, but also their Primary Shopping Areas that identify concentrations of retail provision. Development sites should also be identified within or adjacent centres which can provide identified needs and improvements.

- Strongly supports the role of residential intensification as a driver of increased visitor numbers to local high streets which in turn is expected to promote vitality and viability.

The Use Class Order and Permitted Development Rights (amended 2020)

- Following changes in 2020, the Use Classes that relate to the 'main town centre uses' are:

NPPF TOWN CENTRE USES	USE CLASS
Shops, services, gyms, restaurants and cafes, health centres, offices	E (Commercial, Business and Service uses)
Art galleries, libraries, exhibition halls	F1 (Learning and non-residential institutions)
Leisure centres	F2 (Local community uses)
Cinemas, bars and pubs, nightclubs, casinos, theatres, bingo halls, concert halls, dance halls, betting shops, hot food takeaways	Sui Generis
Hotels	C1

- These new use classes bring together more uses than the previous use classes. The use classes are important because planning permission is only required when uses change between use classes. Changes to, from and within Sui Generis classes always require planning permission.

- The government has also introduced changes to allow for some change of use to occur without planning permission. This includes the right to change from Use Class E to residential.

- The Local Plan will need to consider where and when it may be reasonable to control these flexibilities through available planning tools.

London Plan (2021)

- Expands the list of town centre uses to night-time economy, civic, community and social uses.

- Sets the wider regional roles of the Borough's town centres, as well as their potential to grow through the London Plan hierarchy.

  - Forest Gate, Canning Town, Green Street and East Beckton: District centres serving a number of neighbourhoods.
  - East Ham, and potentially Canning Town and future new centre at Beckton Riverside: Major centres serving the whole borough.
  - Stratford: Metropolitan centre and Central Activities Zone overspill location, serving sub-regional needs, with potential for international status.

- Requires Boroughs to:

  - Promote the role of town centres in building sustainable, healthy and walkable neighbourhoods with the Healthy Streets Approach embedded in their development and management.
  - Plan for the adaptation and diversification of town centres in response to the challenges and opportunities presented by multi-channel shopping and changes in technology and consumer behaviour, including improved management of servicing and deliveries.
  - Seek the delivery of a barrier-free and inclusive town centre environment that meets the needs of all Londoners.
  - Support flexibility for temporary or 'meanwhile' uses of vacant properties.
  - Support markets in their full variety, including street markets, covered markets and specialist and farmers' markets.
  - Realise the full potential of existing out-of-centre retail and leisure parks to deliver housing intensification through redevelopment and ensure such locations become more sustainable in transport terms, by securing improvements to public transport, cycling and walking.
  - Manage existing edge-of-centre and out-of-centre high streets, by considering their potential for protection as local parades or business areas, and by encouraging comprehensive redevelopment.

Relevant London Plan Chapters and Policies:

- Chapter 1 Good Growth, Objective GG1 Building strong and inclusive communities, Objective GG3 Creating a healthy city and Objective GG5 Growing a good economy

- Chapter 2 Spatial Development Patterns, Policy SD6 Town Centres and High Streets, Policy SD7 Town centres: development principles and Development Plan Documents, Policy SD8 Town centre network

- Chapter 6 Economy, Policy E9: Retail, markets and hot food takeaways.

What new trends and objectives do we want to address?

- **15 minute Neighbourhoods to enable every resident to live in an accessible and inclusive locality which will provide all of their social, civic and economic essentials.** The Council, as expressed in the 'Towards a Better Newham – Re-orientation and Recovery Strategy', is committed to delivering 15 minute neighbourhoods. This builds on existing social trends that have been amplified by COVID-19, including the 'shop local' drive where residents support their local high streets, and particularly the small independent businesses, through their spending choices. This enables money to stay local for longer through the spending cycles and contributes to community wealth building. Data suggest that many local centres, and centres with a strong independent offer, have fared better during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **High streets are adapting to be about work, leisure, social experience and personalised services (for example, health, wellbeing, styling services).** The more successful high streets have been those that can support a strong independent retail and leisure offer, local cultural events, markets, meanwhile uses and pop-ups, which draw in a more diverse range of people. As we move into new working patterns, with more people working from home for most of the week, there is a growing demand for smaller scale affordable workspaces. This is driving new footfall patterns in town and local centres.

- **Promote health and wellbeing on the high street.** There is an ongoing need to create a healthy food and drink environment, addressing affordability and access, to support the delivery of the 50 Steps to a Healthier Newham strategy. Public Health research indicates that increased access to healthy, affordable food for the general population is associated with improved attitudes towards healthy eating and healthier food purchasing behaviour. Conversely increased access to unhealthier food retail outlets is associated with increased weight in the general population, and increased obesity and unhealthy eating behaviours among children residing in low income areas. We also want to consider how planning can support a smoke-free Newham, including tackling waterpipe smoking (shisha) which is an issue of growing concern in the borough. High street environments also offer opportunities for social interaction to help tackle mental health and social isolation, but high levels of traffic, crime and fear of crime, lack of access to health promoting food and services, and inaccessible design can negatively impact on health.

- **Manage the opportunities and challenges presented by multi-channel retailing.** This is a growing trend, offering customers seamlessly blended experiences between a businesses' online and physical presence. Retail businesses are rebranding their shops to be more about the shopper experience, with leisure activities and personalised in-shop support. The introduction of Use Class E with its broad range of uses further enables businesses to innovate and diversify their offer without needing planning permission. Building on the trend of click and collect services that has been growing for many years, brands are also offering specialised apps and augmented reality experiences connecting the physical environment to the business's online platform. This type of retail service delivery means that bricks and mortar shops are becoming multi-use spaces, and there is generally less need for retail space and more demand for urban warehousing and delivery lockers. In the case of food and drinks industry, the increased demand for deliveries from popular restaurants and cafes is leading to more demand for dark kitchens. The multi-channel retailing trend is also impacting SMEs, who are increasingly diversifying to online services too. Small changes could have significant cumulative impacts that could be better managed strategically at the town centre level.

- **The digital infrastructure of town centres is becoming important** in enabling successful competition with other centres, offering a positive experience to visitors through 'live' use of apps and social media.

- **Manage town centres towards more environmentally sustainable business models,** by considering the impact of growing demand for deliveries on local traffic and related air pollution – this is yet to be fully understood. Some businesses have adapted a sustainable active travel model of local delivery focused on service bikes as opposed to motorised vehicles, or through pooling deliveries to reduce the number of vans on the road. Some town centres have adopted servicing times of 6p.m. to 6a.m. to avoid commercial traffic adding to peak traffic and air pollution. Coordinated business servicing models are being explored in some areas, for example, shared management of commercial waste, high street consolidation centres, or micro-fulfilment centres serviced by cargo bikes or e-bikes. However, there are no set standards or guidance to help guide this growth in a sustainable way. There are also opportunities for town centres in the growth of the sharing economy (upcycling, freecycling, second-hand).

- The trend for **retail parks to diversify to be more like town centres** continues, further drawing away trade from established centres. Claps Gate Lane and Gallions Reach Retail Parks are examples where this has happened in recent years in Newham.

Sources:
- [Newham Town Centres and Retail Study Update](#)
- [RSPH: Health on the High Street Towards a Better Newham Recovery and Reorientation Strategy](#)
- [Newham Social Integration Strategy](#)
- [50 Steps to a Healthier Newham Strategy](#)
- [TCPA: The 20 Minute Neighbourhood](#)
- [GLA High Streets for All](#)
- [HGLA High Streets – Adaptive Strategies](#)
- [London Collective Town Centres Post-Coronavirus](#)
- GLA, High Streets Data Service
- [SATCM Successful Town Centres – developing effective strategies](#)

What evidence will we use?

Characterisation Study

- Will apply the '15min neighbourhood' concept and consider the extent to which people's daily needs in relation to town centre uses are met within their local area.

- Will consider the elements of the built and natural environment in Newham's town and local centres that contribute positively to their role as hubs for the local community.

Town Centres Retail and Leisure Study

- Will identify shopping and leisure patterns, and expected demand for floorspace for retail and leisure uses in various parts of the borough.

Newham High Streets Programme (led by Regeneration team)

- Phase 1, focusing on Forest Gate, Manor Park, Green Street and Little Ilford are complete and work is underway to identify funding and mechanisms of delivering the strategies for each centre.

- Where the priorities identified can be delivered through development activity, they will inform the town centre policies of the Plan.

Royal Docks Development & Placemaking Strategy update (led by GLA's Royal Docks Team):

- Will analyse existing and emerging neighbourhood high streets and centres to better understand and define their local function and character, as well as their potential to contribute towards the economic and cultural functioning of the area. The strategy will be supported by an implementation plan with detailed delivery activities.

Proposed policy changes:

1. **Facilitate 15min Neighbourhoods.** The Characterisation Study will help identify the range of uses that people need in order to live well locally, taking into consideration local preferences and movement patterns, as well as wider market trends and service delivery models. Options to deliver 15 minute neighbourhoods borough wide, include:

a. **Reviewing the borough-wide coverage of the centre network:** Review boundaries of existing town and local centres, and look at potential for new local centre or shopping parade designations (with a clear boundary identified). Provide additional quantitative and qualitative requirements for new local centres where the boundary cannot yet be defined due to stage in on-site delivery or masterplanning. Continue to support the de-conversion of shop fronts outside of the designated network to residential or other uses where justified by local context (see also option 3 below).

b. **Create and/or sustain a special identity for each of the town and local centres** in the network. This can be enabled by promoting adaptability, innovation and diversification of uses with a focus on local enterprise (including provision of affordable workspaces), social and civic functions. See also option 4 below.

c. **Define Primary Shopping Areas for local centres.** This will recognise the important role of local centres to enabling local living, and we can consider how to protect these key frontages from the impacts of permitted development rights which allow conversion to residential.

2. **Take a proactive approach to enabling and managing the evening and night time economy.** This could include promoting intensification and diversification of leisure and cultural uses within town and local centres in a way that reflects local character, starting with the approach set by the London Plan Policy SD 8. We could also promote Healthy Streets and Secured by Design improvements in the public realm along key movement corridors linking town and local centres to neighbourhoods to enable a safer walking and cycling environment at all times.

3. **Managing the impacts of growth in online shopping.** Options include:

a. Allowing uses diversification where evidence indicates surplus of retail floorspace. See option 1 above.

b. Investigate the **potential for developing high street consolidation centres**, or micro-fulfilment centres in order to take advantage of economies of scale and a growing trend for multi-stakeholder coordination and management of town centres.

c. Promote **click and collect facilities** (including as part of micro-fulfilment centres) to help drive footfall.

d. Enhancements in the **public realm and digital connectivity** will also be key to attracting people into centres, enabling **street markets, pop-up events and free, safe, accessible and inclusive spaces to rest, play and socialise.**

4. **Continue to manage cumulative impacts which create unhealthy environments and promote poor health,** taking into account continuing and emerging trends. We propose the following options:

a. Expand the cumulative impact policy managing the **quality of leisure uses** in town **centres to also apply to local centres**, ensuring that quality leisure opportunities are promoted in all localities.

b. Consider developing a cumulative impact policy that address **dark kitchens,** for example by requiring adherence to **healthy catering standards** through planning conditions.

c. Consider developing a cumulative impact policy that address **waterpipe smoking (shisha)** lounges or shops.

d. Proactively promote development of **street markets.**

e. **Remove current policy requirement for 70% of uses in the Primary Shopping Frontage to be shops.** Within the boundaries of the town centre network, flexibilities allowed by the new Use Class E can help promote more multi-functional buildings and overall diversification of uses to support the trend of centres adapting away from retail focus (see options 1 & 3 above).

5. **Clarify technical requirements** that help secure the vitality and viability of the town centre network. We propose the following options:

a. **Require market testing and meanwhile use strategy** to support **all proposals for town centre uses** that are **above** the impact test floorspace threshold (currently **300sqm**).

b. On sites that are outside the boundaries of the town centre network, **require Sequential and Impact testing for all proposals incorporating Use Class E floorspace above the 300sqm threshold.** To help implementation, the policy should be supported by methodology guidance to facilitate common approach and easier assessment of these tests. The policy and guidance could also address the need for conditioning of permissions to only certain parts of the overall Use Class, for example, if approving a health facility which is Class E (e) in an out-of-centre location, only allow future uses of the building to be within Class E(e) health or class E(f) childcare.

6. **Remove duplication between town centre policies** by having individual policies for each town centre and local centre, covering all physical and functional development needs, potentially relocated in the neighbourhoods chapter of the Local Plan; and a separate technical policy (or policies) for aspects of managing town centre uses that apply borough-wide.

You tell us

- **Do you agree with the proposed changes?**

- **Are there other changes we should consider?**

- **Is there anything missing?**

- **What type of leisure and cultural activities would you like to see expanded into the evening and night time? What do you think are the essential elements for this to be managed successfully in terms of access, amenity impacts (e.g. noise, privacy) and health and safety?**

- **How far (considering travel mode and duration) do you usually travel for your shopping, leisure, education or to social events?**

- **What is your local high street? What would you like to see more of in your local high street? Anything you would like to see less of in your local high street?**