



My Ref: FOI5582  
Enquiries to: Information Requests  
E-Mail: [informationrequests@barnsley.gov.uk](mailto:informationrequests@barnsley.gov.uk)

Dear Requester,

**Re: Request for Information – Freedom of Information Act 2000**

I wish to confirm that the council has completed its search for the information which you requested.

The information requested and our findings are as follows: -

**I am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 relating to the council's decision to purchase the leasehold of the Alhambra Shopping Centre and develop it as a health and wellbeing hub. Please provide the following information:**

**1. Copies of any reports, briefings or summaries provided to councillors or senior officers setting out the reasons for purchasing the Alhambra leasehold.**

As per the Council's constitution a Cabinet Report was written to explain to councillors the rationale for and obtaining approvals to acquire the Alhambra leasehold. These documents set out, among other matters, the strategic context for the acquisition, alignment with town centre regeneration objectives, and the opportunity to repurpose the asset to support health and wellbeing services.

However, the report itself was considered in private due to the likely disclosure of exempt information as described by the specific paragraphs of Part I, of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as follows:

- Paragraph 3 - Financial and Business Affairs – Information which, if disclosed to the public would, or would be likely to, prejudice the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Local Authority holding the information). Financial or business affairs include contemplated, as well as past or current activities.

I am able to provide an extract from the report which outlines the reasons for decision to acquire the Alhambra, and an assessment of alternative options that were considered:

- Option 1: Do nothing and wait for the market to determine the future of the Alhambra.
  - Without BMBC intervention the asset would return to the open market as a shopping centre, without any strategic plan for its long-term sustainability as a viable asset for the town centre.
  - There is a real risk that the property would be purchased as a short-term investment and without any real plans for the future.
  - Given the size and location of this asset there is a risk that this would cause significant blight in the town centre and become a greater drain on council resources in years to come.

- Option 2: To try and work with the receivers to manage the decline of the Alhambra as an asset.
  - This could have resulted in a sale to an owner who would look to generate as much income as possible in the short-term through 'sweating the asset' with no eye to its long-term sustainability or value.
  - There was also a risk that any potential owner would look to convert the Alhambra for residential or other use class which was completely unsuited, resulting in protracted discussions with Planning preventing the Council from achieving the ambitions laid out in the Urban Spatial plan, our touchstone for future town centre development and a material consideration in all planning decisions relating to the town centre.
  - This option would enable the Council to manage the tenancies in the Alhambra, engage in positive discussions with existing tenants re retaining them in the scheme, and developing a more vibrant offer which will complement that of the Glass Works.
  
- Option 3: To pursue the purchase of the centre and re-purpose the upper floors as a health and wellbeing hub
  - The development of a health and wellbeing hub in the Alhambra would help to future proof its use for the long-term and secure the additional complementary retail uses in the centre

**2. Any documents which outline the intended objectives or expected benefits of the Alhambra health and wellbeing hub at the time the decision was taken.**

At the time the leasehold acquisition decision was taken, the Council did not hold a single, stand-alone set of formally agreed performance metrics specific to the Alhambra Health & Wellbeing Hub, however the report references anticipated benefits including environmental through proposed energy efficiency measures including solar PV and reduced car journeys due to its proximity to the Interchange. It's economic benefits already seen through delivery of the CDC in the Glass Works which has seen increased visitor numbers and associated visitor spend, as well as jobs retained and potentially created. And the health and wellbeing benefits for local residents by offering high quality healthcare facilities.

Review of the project's delivery on expected benefits and outcomes will be provided for through ongoing programme governance rather than a single milestone review. Success measures are referenced within subsequent Cabinet reports and governance papers and will be monitored particularly through Project Board oversight and post-project review requirements.

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**3. Any agreed measures, benchmarks or criteria held by the council which set out how the success or impact of the Alhambra health and wellbeing hub will be assessed in future.**

A formal evaluation framework is still to be adopted but is being developed across all stakeholders involved in the project and will consider the short, medium and long-term benefits that the health and wellbeing hub aims to achieve. These include:

**Health and Wellbeing**

- Improvements in healthy life expectancy
- Improved health equity
- Enhanced patient engagement and participation in health services
- Integrated, person centred pathways

**Economic and Place**

- Long term town centre resilience
- Increased and more diverse footfall
- Stronger links between health and economic participation

**System**

- Different ways of working not just a new building
- Scalable hub and spoke model for the borough

These high-level outcomes are being developed into a formal evaluation framework so this can be monitored before, during and long after construction is complete.

There is a strong evidence base from Barnsley's existing town centre health including:

- Health acts as a driver for footfall - over 220,000 diagnostic appointments so far in the town centre.
- Increased uptake of preventative services supports earlier intervention - 22% increase in attendance for mammograms.
- Reduced Did Not Attend rates indicate improved engagement - Did Not Attends reduced by 24%.
- Clinical delivery improvements - reduced median wait times to 9.6wks vs England national average of 14wks
- 200 healthcare staff now working in the CDC and Alhambra
- Another 140,000 outpatient visits, rising to 200,000 - already delivering on the NHS ten-year plan.
- Patients report higher satisfaction due to convenience and environment, and staff feedback highlights improved working conditions Each person spends approximately £15 when they attend, buying a coffee or visiting Barnsley Market. That's £5 million more for our town centre traders.
- By relocating appropriate activity away from acute hospitals, the programme contributes to reduced pressure on higher-cost settings

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Although full evaluation is ongoing, early evidence from Health on the High Street shows clear health and system benefits. Outcomes, not outputs, are the ultimate measure of success, aligning the programme with national priorities around prevention and system efficiency.

**4. Any stated review points or timescales for evaluating the project following its opening.**

No single fixed post -opening review date has been agreed. Evaluation is intended to take place through ongoing programme governance and post project- review mechanisms, as set out above. However, as with many large scale capital projects, this project will be subject to completion of Green Book compliant Full Business Case and value for money assessment.

The [Green Book](#) is the government's recommended framework for developing business cases and a framework for planning public sector spending, ensuring projects are strategic, economic, commercial, financial, and manageable.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact Information Requests Via email.

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are unhappy with the way the Directorate has handled your request, you may ask for an internal review. Please clearly mark your correspondence 'Complaint' and address it to:

Barnsley MBC  
Information Requests Team  
PO Box 634  
Barnsley  
S70 9GG  
email: [informationrequests@barnsley.gov.uk](mailto:informationrequests@barnsley.gov.uk)

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: -

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**PO Box 634, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S70 9GG**

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Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
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SK9 5AF

Email: <http://www.ico.org.uk/foicomplaints>

Kind regards,

Information Requests Team, Barnsley MBC

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