

Putney Town Centre Partnership

Business Plan 2010 to 2013

Introduction

This is the business plan for Putney Town Centre Partnership for the three years from 2010 to 2013. It sets out the context for managing the town centre, our strategic priorities and also outlines our longer term aspirations for Putney.

The Putney Town Centre Partnership was formed in 1996 and is a collaborative partnership between the business community in Putney and the public sector. The Partnership and town centre management in Putney are supported by Wandsworth Borough Council who employ the Town Centre Manager and provide an annual budget, and by The Exchange Shopping Centre who provide accommodation. Other support is provided by sponsorship and contributions from businesses.

The role of the Town Centre Partnership is to maintain and improve Putney town centre's commercial environment so it is a strong, successful, competitive and attractive place in which to do business, shop, visit and live. The Partnership sets the overall strategic direction for town centre management in Putney and provides direction and support for the Town Centre Manager.

Current situation and analysis

Putney - a snapshot

Location and history

Putney is a successful riverside town. It traces its history back to pre-Roman times and owes its importance to its position by the river Thames where it could be crossed relatively easily by ford, ferry or bridge. For many centuries Putney had the reputation of place where Londoners came for enjoyment, entertainment and games. At the time of the English Civil War, it was the location for the Putney Debates which helped pave the way for modern democratic government. Putney Bridge was the second of the modern day bridges across the Thames, and remains one of the busiest traffic carrying bridges in London.

Putney is well connected, with both mainline and two London Underground stations connecting it to London Waterloo and central London. There are major arterial roads running close by, and the town is well served by many bus routes.

The layout of the town is bounded, by the River to the North and the Upper Richmond Road to the south. The town centre is closely surrounded by residential areas, and the overall characteristic of the surrounding population is of relative affluence compared to other parts of Wandsworth and London.

Putney Town Centre today

Putney is identified in the current draft London Plan as one of 34 major town centres with medium potential for growth, and a night time economy of regional or sub-regional importance.

Fact Box

The prime catchment area for Putney includes 142,000 residents and 63,000 households

The 2009 Experian GOAD survey identifies 357 business units in the town centre, However, this omits some areas of the town further away from the High Street, and the database maintained by

the Town Centre Manager identifies 700 business units.

On the GOAD figures, the split of units between the main categories are broken down as follows:

Convenience	49	14%
Comparison	85	25%
Cafes, restaurants, bars, take-aways	83	24%
Hair, beauty, personal services	35	10%
Estate Agents	20	6%
Services	34	10%
Betting and Leisure	8	2%
Charity	5	1%
Other	23	7%
Total	342	100%

Looking at GOAD floorspace , the split is 16% for convenience and 67% for comparison goods. 68% of Putney retail floorspace is occupied by multiples and 19% by independent retailers, compared to an average of 63% and 37% for London's major retail centres.

The GOAD figures show 20 vacant properties (December 2009), 6% of the total

There is a significant presence of office floorspace – 107,000 sq metres, slightly more than Kingston and Wimbledon. It is estimated that just under 10,000 people are employed in the town centre including 4,000 in commercial offices (*State of the Cities Report, 2004*) .

Putney has maintained its commercial success through the first 18 months of the economic downturn. Traders report even performance compared to the previous 12 months. Compared to many other similar sized town centres in South London, Putney has a lower level of vacant units and has managed to attract new investments. The level of voids at 6% is significantly lower than the current London average of 8.5% and a national average of 10%.

There has been sustained interest from investors and there have been new openings, particularly in women's fashion, such as the arrival of Topshop and TK Maxx. However, there is remains a shortage of larger units which are required by many investors.

The Exchange Shopping Centre has kindly made available the results of its most recent (2009) Retail Group user research:

- 37% of Exchange users are from SW15 – slightly down from 2006
- 13% are from other SW post codes – the same as 2006
- This makes a total of 50% of Exchange uses coming from Putney and SW postcodes, and this compares to 27% for a similar survey of users on the High Street.
- Inflow users from wider areas are increasing slightly – 49%of the total Exchange traffic compared to 47% in 2006 and 29% in 2004.
- There is evidence of increasing volumes of users from Fulham
- The proportion of inflow users is greater at the weekend than in the week

The survey showed that the main reasons Exchange shoppers visited Putney were:

- Main food shop – 23%
- Visiting- 23%
- Non Food shopping – 15%
- Top up food shopping - 14%
- Browsing – 10%
- Working - 10%
- Passing through – 6%

Food is therefore the main draw for current shoppers visiting the Exchange – 37% of the total. In the town centre as a whole there are 94 food and drink outlets comprising:

- 48 cafes and restaurants
- 15 fast food outlets
- 22 pubs, bars and clubs
- 8 Other food and drink outlets.

These figures are taken from GOAD and so will exclude some food outlets in the outlying areas of the town centre. These figures are higher than Fulham, the nearest competing centre.

The catchment population of Putney remains affluent in comparison with the national average, with a very high level of “Urban Intelligence” at 59%. The Putney catchment spends above the UK average, with spending patterns reflecting the relatively affluent lifestyle.

“The catchment profile remains distinct, different to the national average and biased towards the well educated and well off”
The Retail Group for The Exchange; 2009

The Metropolitan Police report that the level of crime in Putney is lower than in other comparable town centres. There is less incidence of gang related trouble. While there are occasional issues with night-time disorder due to the active evening economy, it is at a lower level than in other towns.

In terms of how people get to Putney, the London Plan report shows that walking and public transport are the main modes of transport.

Mode of weekly trips to town centre	Putney	London Average
Walking	43%	40%
Cycle	1%	<5%
Car/private transport	24%	22%
Public transport	32%	32%

GLA: London Town Centre Health Check Analysis Report; December 2009

The town centre is not homogenous, and there are distinct areas, or zones, which have different characteristics. The Exchange Shopping Centre is a major presence in the town and a very significant element of the attraction of Putney to users. The main high street area has weathered the economic downturn relatively well. However, there are outlying areas where circumstances are more difficult for traders, and where there is a higher proportion of independent traders. A recent survey (January 2010) by the Town Centre Manager of agents and traders identified a number of issues with this area including parking, lack of footfall and a number of vacant properties. However, it is also a good location for independent businesses as rents are lower and it is a good location for destination shops.

Achievements in the last three years

There has been good progress in the last three years in improving the town centre:

Improving the town centre environment:

- Re-paving of Putney High Street (phase one and two)
- Installation of the Putney Sculpture Trail
- Improvements to paved area in Church Square adjacent to cinema and installation of benches on cinema flank
- Installation of bench in Disraeli Rd
- Installation of a new Christmas tree pit and power supply

Increasing safety and security:

- Full safer Neighbourhood team in place, close co-operation
- Active Pubwatch and Businesswatch meetings
- Active Safer Neighbourhood Panel and meetings and Retail Radio scheme

Improving transport and movement in the town centre:

- SCOOT implementation in the High Street to speed traffic flow
- 'tabling' of footways scheduled for High Street feeder roads
- Successful Partnership appeal against restricting width of Putney High Street by building out pavement at Costa Coffee and Topshop locations

Promoting Putney

- Creation of 'Invest in Putney' inward investment document
- Creation of a Marketing sub-committee
- Successful launch event for the Putney Sculpture Trail
- Expansion of the Putney Music Festival event
- Creation and expansion of a popular Christmas marketing event

Supporting commercial development

- Development of Putney Retail meetings into a seminar learning and networking event for Putney businesses, making them better able to weather the economic downturn
- Arrangement of Inward Investment event in March 2010
- Active engagement with major retail groups (e.g. BHS, helping to lead to Topshop/Top Man presence) and owners (e.g. Wereldhave)/developers (e.g. Oracle)/ agents (many) providing feedback of Partnership views and information regarding funding, research findings and facilities.

Challenges for the future in Putney

Putney is successful but will face a number of challenges in both the short and long term.

Putney will face increased competition from centres which have recently opened or which are on a rising trajectory:

- Westfield
- Fulham
- Wimbledon

There will be further new developments in the longer term, including Wandsworth Town centre and the Nine Elms developments.

The retail mix has become wider with an increasingly strong fashion offering, but there is further scope to target the affluent catchment group outlined above. There is a long term trend towards

fewer independent traders and they tend to be clustered along the less expensive fringes of the town centre.

The catchment area is widening slowly, particularly at the weekend. There is evidence of a change in the user demographic – including some observations from independent bodies – with a shift toward very young families – the push-chair factor. This is supported by evidence from Wandsworth Education Department which shows a steady increase in young primary school age children.

However, The Exchange survey showed low levels of promotional awareness of Putney, possibly reflecting the very local nature of the catchment group.

There are no significant developments currently underway in the town centre, which is a potential long term problem. The Wandsworth Local Development Framework Area Spatial Strategy for Putney identifies a number of retail sites which would help further develop Putney as a thriving town centre:

- Wereldhave 56-66 Putney High Street
- Jubilee House/Cinema 230-232 Putney Bridge Road and 25 Putney High Street
- Corner of Putney bridge Road and Putney High Street : 327 – 339 Putney Bridge Road and 31-53 Putney High Street

The Spatial Strategy also supports the re-development and improvement of office buildings on Upper Richmond Road and a number of schemes are in the pipeline. There is limited room for new developments, with the constraints of the river and the Upper Richmond Road, coupled with the tight bounding by residential areas.

Proposals for improvement of the Putney mainline station are to be worked up following Network Rail confirmation that Putney Station is on its Priorities List.

The condition and trajectory of the outlying parts of the town, including the Lower Richmond Road remain of concern. It will be important to ensure these areas do not become detached from the wider success of the town centre.

Conclusions about Putney's current situation

The Partnership's assessment is that the town centre is in a better situation than it was three years ago:

- It has weathered the recession better than most, with steady commercial performance and evidence of continuing investment interest from retailers
- It is cleaner, tidier and better presented
- It feels more secure
- Activity is better coordinated and it works better as a town
- There have been significant new openings despite the difficult economic circumstances
- The riverside Putney Wharf area has added an extra dimension to the Putney experience

There are some issues which cause more concern:

- Rail and underground transport to the town has not had any significant recent investment
- The retail mix is capable of improvement to give it a more clearly defined character
- The High Street remains congested with slow moving traffic
- The pavements are cluttered despite some recent improvements
- Outlying parts of the town are experiencing more difficult trading conditions

- The level of other non retail employment space in and around the town centre may reduce if redevelopment of offices occurs, though residents will increase (as offices become mixed use residential/offices/retail)

No new significant investments in commercial mixed use developments are likely until the general economy improves

The Partnership draws three main conclusions from the evidence of performance in the last three years and assessment of the current situation:

1. Town centre management has done well with the foundations of a clean and safe environment. These standards must be maintained.
2. To avoid complacency and to anticipate increased competition from new and upward moving centres, Putney must position itself more strongly, with a better defined offer and more effective promotion – both to current users, potential users and new investors
3. The lack of plans in the near term for larger retail/leisure investment is a concern. The Town Centre Partnership should not shy away from larger aspirations and should work with others to create and promote the case for longer term investment in Putney.

The Business Plan for the next three years

Putney Town Centre Partnership has agreed a business plan which reflects the conclusions resulting from the evidence and analysis of the current situation.

Overall objectives

The overall strategic objectives are:

- To maintain the current success of Putney and build on the strong local catchment market
- To widen the appeal of Putney as a destination for longer duration visits and to widen the catchment
- To build the investor, commercial and employment profile of Putney
- To create the long term case for further larger scale investments and improvements

The Partnership will also target longer term aspirations which will not be achieved during the lifetime of this business plan, even though Partnership itself does not necessarily have direct control over many of the issues involved. Nevertheless, we believe we should hold longer term goals and aspirations for Putney and seek to influence those who set policies and deploy budgets.

The Partnership also believes that its methods of working and structure should be reviewed and adjusted to reflect our new objectives.

Strategic priorities

Seven strategic priorities are proposed to realise the overall objectives:

1. To maintain the environment of Putney as an attractive place to shop, visit and linger
2. To ensure shoppers and visitors feel safe and secure and to support the reduction of business crime
3. To make it easier to get to Putney and to move around within the town centre
4. To attract, create and promote a range of events and special occasions which will encourage more visitors into Putney and to capture visitors for longer durations in the town centre
5. To develop the strategic positioning of Putney and influence the long term visitor profile

6. To support the promotion of Putney to potential investors, commercial developers and employers and to lobby for significant investments in commercial property and infrastructure
7. To support traders to develop their businesses

For each priority, the actions which follow include a mix of short term actions and longer term aspirations.

The programme set out below will be delivered through a mixture of :

- directly delivered town centre management activity, deploying a combination of time from the Town Centre Manager, Wandsworth Council services (eg cleansing), board members' and traders' time and project funding,
- partnership delivery, with partners and other organisations who are actively delivering services in the town centre,
- OR seeking to influence longer term plans through representation and lobbying

For each action we have indicated how delivery will take place. Some actions will require a mix – for example, directly undertaking the collection of evidence, of development of alternative solutions, followed by influencing the plans and actions of others.

Priority 1: To maintain the environment of Putney as an attractive place to shop, visit and linger

The actions proposed are:

a. Work with appropriate Wandsworth Council Departments, contractors and others to maintain the high standards of cleanliness and absence of graffiti and other environmental nuisance	Directly delivered
b. To engage traders in a drive to keep pavements clear of commercial waste and help promote phased collection when introduced.	Directly delivered
c. To work with train operators and others to improve the mainline station environment	Partnership delivery
d. Promote the greening of the main areas, environmental improvements and organise festive lighting	Directly & partnership delivered
e. Encourage improvements in shop fronts by actively promoting take up of the Town Centre Improvement Scheme	Directly delivered
f. To promote the provision of facilities that enable longer duration visits, including public toilets (or equivalent scheme) and the public spaces where shoppers can linger	Partnership delivery

In the longer term the aspirations for further improvements to the environment in Putney include:

a. Reducing noise and air pollution on the main thoroughfares. This will be dependent on resolving some traffic flow issues (see below) and the introduction of quieter, cleaner, greener buses by TfL and bus operators	Influence others
b. Improvements in paving	Influence others

Priority 2: To ensure shoppers and visitors feel safe and secure and to support the reduction of business crime

The actions proposed are:

a. Maintain close links with the Metropolitan Police and other patrolling agencies and share intelligence on emerging hot spots. Develop quick responses to hot spots.	Partnership delivery
b. Maintain vigilance on the night time economy, and work with licensees and the Police to keep a safe night-time environment	Partnership delivery
c. Tackle the mismatch between crime levels and perception and fear of crime by promoting good news stories about crime and safety in Putney through Wandsworth Council publications and Putney websites	Directly delivered
d. Continue to support links between traders and the Police via Pubwatch, Businesswatch, and Retail Radio	Directly delivered
e. Deal with pavement nuisance including charity “chuggers” and itinerants.	Partnership delivery

Priority 3: To make it easier to get to Putney and to move around within the town centre

The number one goal is easing congestion. The proposed actions are:

a. Reduce pavement congestion by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review bus stops locations in the middle of the High Street and press for their re-location Identify hot spots of pavement clutter and work with agencies and traders to remove signs, street furniture etc. that are hindering the free movement of pedestrians 	Directly delivered & Influence others
b. Reduce road congestion by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing the routes and timings for out-of-service buses into and out of the bus garage Reviewing traffic flow options, including right-hand turns 	Partnership delivery & Influence others
c. Make it easier and more attractive to move around the town centre by creating and promoting walking routes	Directly delivered
d. Review bicycle parking to assess the potential for more cycle stops closer to shops	Directly delivered
e. Promote greater use of river transport	Partnership delivery
f. To review parking arrangements in outlying areas, including Lower Richmond Road	Partnership delivery

In the longer term the aspirations for Putney include:

a. Improvements to both the underground and mainline stations and their immediate surroundings	Influence others & partnership delivery
b. Greater use of river transport and extension of the commuter and other regular river services	Influence others
c. Bringing in expertise for a review of more radical options for traffic and pedestrian management including removing barriers, revising markings, adjusting pavements etc.	Directly delivered & partnership delivery & influence others

Priority 4: To create and promote a range of events and special occasions which will attract more visitors to Putney and to capture visitors for longer durations in the town centre

Events are a high profile method of attracting profile and publicity. However, they are time consuming to arrange, and we need to make sure that they work to secure a wider catchment for the town. While it is important to keep the current users interested, events should be focused on drawing in new shoppers and users and encouraging them to become repeat visitors. We also need to better capture visitors for traders in the town more generally – and this is linked to promoting Putney as a place where it is possible to make longer duration visits.

The proposed actions are:

a. Better exploit major events like the Boat Race, and other local Wandsworth events (eg Wandsworth Arts Festival) by developing complementary activities which can be cross sold to visitors and linking the town more tightly to events by engaging more traders in developing the wrap-around offer - packages, improving promotion, information and signage	Directly delivered
b. Build on the existing programme and extend the Putney calendar to include an achievable number of well executed and organised events and festivals	Directly delivered
c. Increase the impact of events by making greater use of road closures	Partnership delivery

The longer term aspirations include:

a. The generation of further sponsorship to support a rich and exciting annual programme in Putney of benefit to businesses	Partnership delivery
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Priority 5: To develop the strategic positioning of Putney and influence the long term visitor profile

The aim is to consolidate use of Putney by the current local catchment and develop the profile of Putney as a destination for inflow users. It is important that the current offer is kept relevant to the well educated and better- off local users as this group is one which will easily and quickly make a switch to other centres if their requirements are not met.

Proposed actions include:

a. Develop a medium term marketing strategy for Putney, including defining the offer for local and inflow target markets, based on existing strengths (food, night time) and driving up duration	Directly delivered
b. Find and exploit suitable promotional channels for both the current prime catchment group and the wider inflow target groups	Directly delivered
c. Ensure that other bodies who have contact with the target groups are fully appraised of the Putney offer – eg Visit London	Directly delivered
d. Create and implement a new web strategy for Putney, involving traders as appropriate	Directly delivered

Priority 6: To support the marketing of Putney to potential investors, commercial developers and employers and to lobby for significant investments in commercial property and infrastructure

Proposed actions are:

a. Maintain a promotion case for investment in Putney, with an emphasis on comparison shopping and leisure offers which would appeal to the well-educated, affluent core catchment, younger families (including children's retailing) and men's fashion	Directly delivered
b. Build a better and lasting relationship with agents and landlords, with periodic opportunities for them to learn more about Putney and create a database of key contacts; enlist them to the cause of Putney and through them make sure enquirers get the full Putney story	Directly delivered
c. Support the promotion of Putney as a good location for other employment, particularly commercial office uses.	Partnership delivery

In the longer term, the Partnership supports developments which will bring significant new investment:

a. Moving the bus garage to free up space for expansion of The Exchange	Influence others
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b. Significant improvement and development at the mainline station	Influence others
c. Support for the proposed developments set out in the Wandsworth Area Spatial Strategy for Putney	Influence others

Priority 7: To support traders to develop their businesses

Helping the traders to improve their ability to market themselves, attract more customers and provide a better quality service is essential to securing the long term future of the town centre. The focus will be on supporting independent traders.

Proposed actions are:

a. Build a close relationship with Business Link, One London the Chamber of Commerce and other business support agencies to make sure they are fully engaged in Putney and that they are kept fully informed of the needs of traders.	Partnership delivery
b. To maintain regular communication with businesses via networking meetings and monthly e-updates and to feedback intelligence on business issues to the relevant agencies	Directly delivered
c. To offer three business meetings per year with a mix of networking and expert input on business issues	Directly delivered

Resources

The Partnership will continue to have as dedicated resources the Town Centre Manager, a modest budget provided by London Borough of Wandsworth, and office space provided by The Exchange. It is recognised that the actions and long term aims set out in this plan cannot be achieved with these resources alone.

In this three year period it is proposed that current resources be prioritised and additional resources secured as follows:

- a. The work of the Town Centre Manager to be focused on activities which have a direct impact on the town centre, marketing and promotion and maintaining high visibility with businesses
- b. Working with traders to ensure they play their part in securing the foundations of town centre management
- c. Secure more bid funding for particular initiatives, working closely with Wandsworth Council and other organisations
- d. Engage more traders in town centre activities, securing their time, support in kind and sponsorship

How the Partnership manages itself

The Partnership will review its operations and adjust ways of working and structure to reflect the more ambitious nature of this business plan. We wish to get to a position where the Partnership will:

- Be more strategic
- Focus on what we can do, but also influence things which others are responsible for
- Drive and lead
- Anticipate and direct

To do this, the proposed actions are:

- a. Review the agenda and conduct of Partnership Board meetings to ensure the issues considered are strategic and to make decisions which set direction; and to review the membership to ensure we have the right skills available, including the representation of independent traders
- b. To review and adjust the terms of reference of the Board sub groups and to ensure they in turn are focused on strategic objectives which contribute to the achievement of the goals set out in this business plan
- c. To delegate detailed planning of events, occasions and specific projects to time limited task groups
- d. To engage more businesses, improve communications with them and promote the work of the Partnership to them more strongly
- e. To invite the involvement at appropriate times of key organisations including TfL, bus and train operating companies.

Proposed sub groups

It is proposed to revise the Board sub groups as follows:

Townscape

Key purpose – to make proposals that will support Putney as a destination for longer duration usage and to de-clutter the public spaces and pavements

Transport and access

Key purpose – to seek solutions to ease both road and pavement congestion and to widen the possible modes of travel to Putney

Strategic marketing

Key purpose – to create “Destination Putney” and to oversee the three year marketing strategy and annual marketing plan

How will we know when we are successful?

During the period of this plan the Partnership wishes to increase the evidence base on which decisions are based by understanding more about what users and potential users want and by evaluating the performance of initiatives.

Proposed actions are:

- a. Gathering on a regular and systematic basis information about conditions in the town, including footfall (via an automatic counter or TCM ready reckoner methods) and trading conditions (via a panel of traders)
- b. Evaluating the impact of promotions and events so that the most effective can be repeated and the least dropped.
- c. Annual “quick and dirty” survey of users to establish home post code, means of travel and reasons for visiting, to support and provide a control group to the more sophisticated surveys carried out by The Exchange

Performance indicators

We propose to measure our success through the trends in a small number of performance indicators:

- Footfall
- Attendance at events and special occasions
- Trading information
- Level of vacant properties
- Crime levels, including business crime

During the first year of this plan we will establish methodologies for collection data on these indicators and fixing a baseline for future comparison.