

## **Viability of Former Uses of 215 & 217 Belsize Road, NW6 4AA**

The Kilburn Halal Supermarket and Express Newsagent have been converted from their former retail uses (A1) to a community centre (D1). In accordance with Policy DP10 of the Local Development Framework it can be seen that a retrospective change of use at 215a & 217a Belsize Road could be justified.

The Kilburn Halal Supermarket stopped trading in November 2010 and Express Newsagents stopped trading in March 2009. They could not be sustained purely because the numbers of customers were minimal. The retail premises were marketed as a retail lease for sale with Nationwide agents but nobody showed interest.

The attached independent retail survey confirms both that this side of Belsize Road receives less pedestrians than the North Side and that the numbers of potential customers present now would be too few to maintain the viability of an extra news and further food retailer serving the local community.

**Policy DP10 states that the council may grant planning permission for a loss of retail space outside designated centre's if alternative provision is available within 5-10 minutes walking distance.**

- i. The Express Newsagent at number 217a has an alternative provider of its service with the RST Wine Mart at number 232 which is within 1 minute walking distance. There are a large number of alternative providers available for the Express Newsagent in the local area and within 5-10 minutes walking distance including Abbey Newsagent at 212 Belsize Road, Abbey Food & Wine at 214 Belsize Road and WHSmith at 113 Kilburn High Road.
- ii. The Kilburn Halal Supermarket has alternative providers of its service at H R Halal Meats at 2 Quex Road, Babylon Halal Meat at 237 Maida Vale and Willesden Lane Halal Meat at 34 Willesden Lane. A short bus ride southwards down Kilburn High Road leads to Edgware Road which has a thriving Middle Eastern community with plentiful halal facilities.
- iii. Within 5 minutes walking distance there is a Sainsbury's superstore at 88-92 Kilburn High Road and a Tesco Express at 34 Kilburn High Road which are alternative providers for Express Newsagent and possibly for Kilburn Halal Supermarket.

**Policy DP10 states that the council may grant planning permission for a loss of retail space outside designated centres if there is clear evidence that the current use is not viable.**

- i. The portion of Belsize Road under consideration is located in what could be viewed as an interim area interlinking the Kilburn High Road town centre and the shops incorporated within the Hinstock and Emminster blocks of flats.
- ii. The Kilburn High Road town centre already provides for all the needs of the local community and is located less than 5 minutes walking distance away - there is an extensive variety of retail uses, including many chain stores and supermarkets. Local residents could be drawn to the town centre away from this portion of Belsize Road, making it less viable.

- iii. The local residents of the Abbey housing estate already have their retail facilities on the ground floor of some of the Hinstock and Emminster blocks of flats - there are newsagents, a pharmacy, a restaurant and a public house, directly providing for the local community as well as some specialist shops. It appears more viable for the local community of the blocks of flats and houses east of the portion of Belsize Road under consideration to use the retail provided in the Hinstock and Emminster buildings for their basic, everyday needs, rather than that which is in the portion of Belsize Road under consideration, making it less viable.
- iv. There are already a number of vacant shop-fronts of former retail spaces on Belsize Road which bring the character and business viability of the road into question. 199 Belsize Road is a large vacant premise on the road which used to be a council Environment Local office. 207 Belsize Road is a vacant premises "under offer" by Dutch & Dutch estate agents. 234 Belsize Road is an unmarked shop-front façade which appears to be the entrance to a residence, not a retail outlet trading to the local community. 242a & b Belsize Road is another unmarked shop-front façade which appears to be the entrance to a residence, not a retail outlet trading to the local community. The numerous vacant premises located in the portion of Belsize Road under consideration are clear evidence that the demand for retail space in this area is low and helps to confirm that the shops replaced by the community centre would be not viable.
- v. If the community centre at 215a and 217a was to be refused planning permission and fall vacant then this may be the tipping point for the outlets on the road becoming unsustainable, what with 2 more unoccupied premises giving even less visual presence of activity and less vibrancy, making it harder for the other vacant premises to appear viable to run or to sell, with the visual effects of an exodus surrounding them.
- vi. The community centre attracts people from up to a radius of 3 miles. That in turn will help provide potential custom to the remaining retail units.