



# shh

agile  
creative  
responsive

## ATHLONE HOUSE

THE RESTORATION - 2016

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

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# The Design Team

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## Introduction:

The purpose of this document is to illustrate the historical significance, design response and community consultation relevant to this application to restore for residential use Athlone House, its gardens and its ancillary buildings. After decades of institutional use and dilapidation, the application seeks permission for a full restoration of the most important internal and external features. This will include the re-introduction of lost external decoration, removal of extensions over various time periods and a modern re-interpretation of the wing to the north of the house. The application will also seek to introduce new elements to compliment the restoration, such as a garden pavilion and a new vehicle entrance off Hampstead Lane.

Built circa. 1870, under the name of Caen Wood Towers, Athlone House is an undesignated heritage asset that has undergone various changes of use. Originally built as an industrialist's estate, the building was occupied by the National Health Service after World War II. In 2005, an application was granted permission for restoration after part of the site was subdivided to allow the creating of 22 apartments (now Caenwood Court) to the east of the house. After a change in ownership, applications to demolish and replace Athlone House were submitted in 2009 and 2013, to which both lost on a appeal decision. The strong desire from the London Borough of Camden, various local groups and the community at large to see Athlone House undergo restoration has formed the basis of this application. Therefore, this document will seek to demonstrate how the design approach has responds to the site's history whilst simultaneously adapting Athlone House to its place in the 21st century.



# Existing Site

site location  
site history  
historical photographs  
site context  
aerial photograph  
site photographs





# Site Location

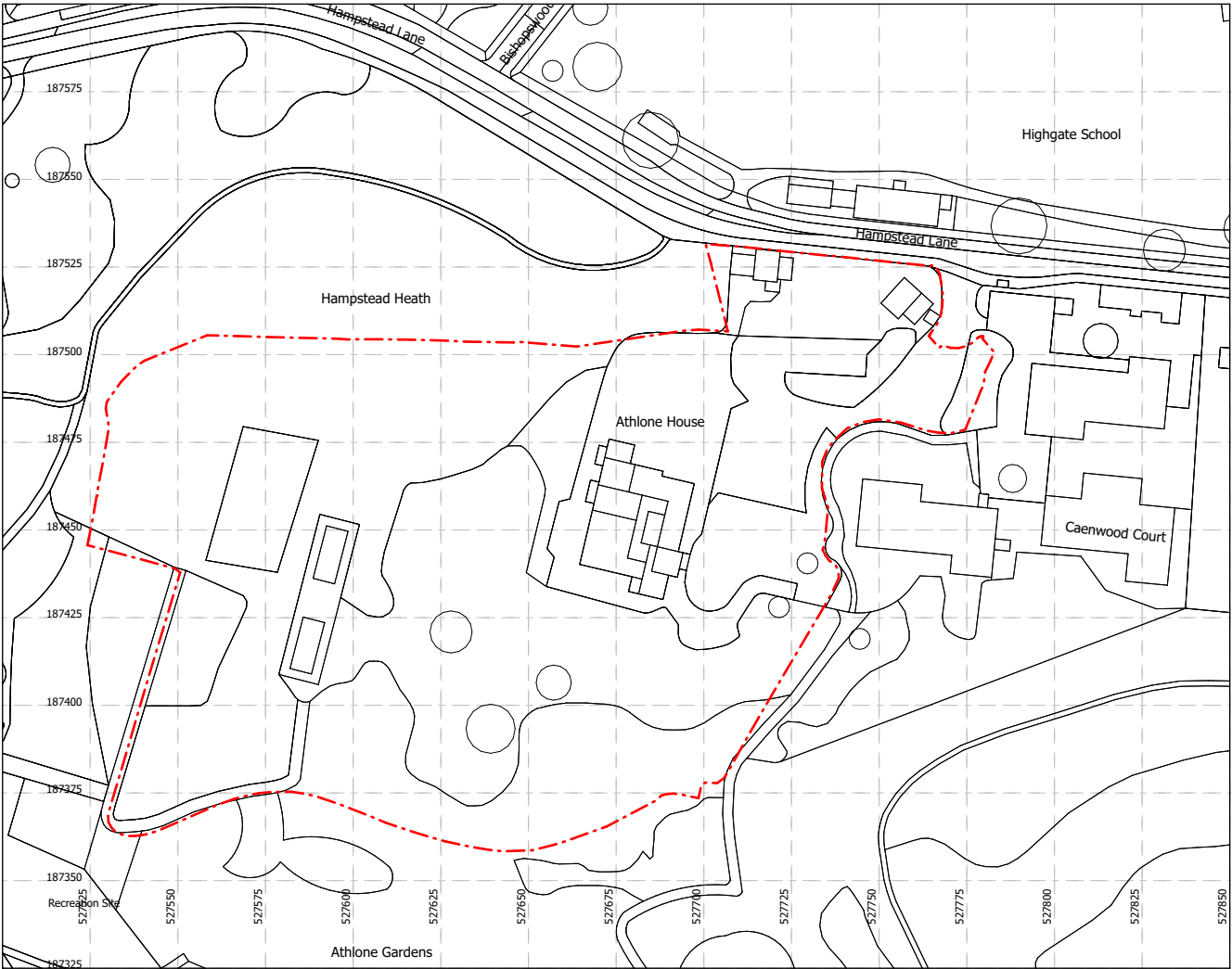


Image 1: Ordnance survey map of Athlone House.

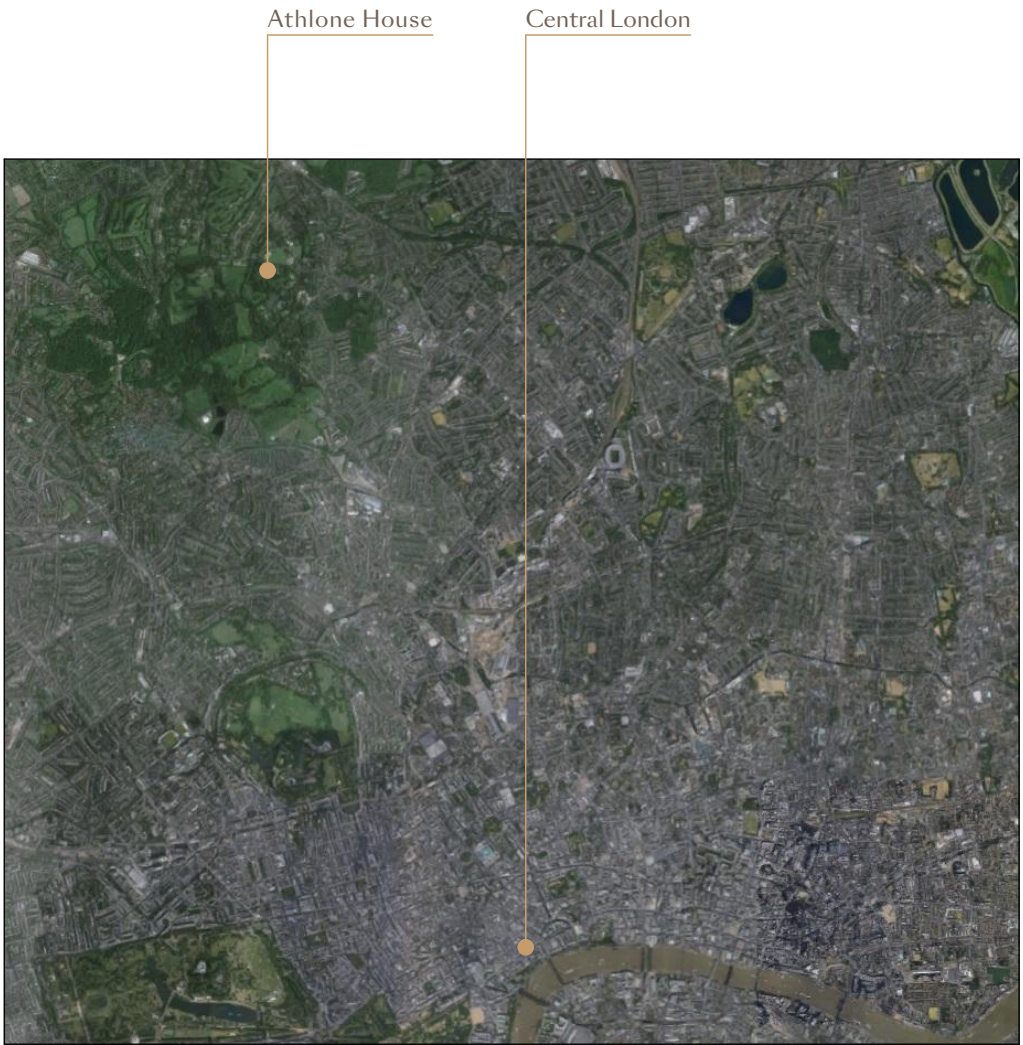


Image 2: Aerial view of London. Author: Google.

**Site Location:**

Athlone House sits on the north-eastern corner of Hampstead Heath, located in North London. Vehicular and pedestrian access is via Hampstead Lane that runs parallel to the sites northern boundary.

The site area covers 7.11 acres in total and the co-ordinates are 51°34'17.4"N 0°09'32.4"W.





Image 1: RAF Aerial Photograph, taken 29th of April, 1947. Author: Historic England.

**Site History:**  
(words by Dr Mervyn Miller)

Athlone House (originally Caen Wood Towers), built 1870-72 for the industrialist Edward Brooke, to a design by the architects Salomon's and Jones, is located south of Hampstead Lane about half a mile east of the centre of Highgate Village.

The design was richly eclectic, red brick with abundant stone dressings, mullioned windows with Gothic tracery; a tall tower with an outlook turret and crenulations; florid stone-coped Dutch gables; and tall Tudor style chimneys, with intricate twisted shafts of patent bricks. The house maintained its prestige under a succession of owners, of whom Sir Robert Waley-Cohen was the most notable: in residence from 1919-40 (and owner until his death in 1952). Alterations were made to the interior in the 1920s, and during the 1930s, there was some demolition and rebuilding in the service area. The 1935 Ordnance Survey revision (see Appendix MMH) shows a building which photographs affirm as flat roofed replacing one of the wings of the kitchen courtyard. The house was requisitioned by the Royal Air Force in 1940 and used as a school for intelligence officers, and appears to have suffered some damage. However the large glass house survived. After the war, the building was purchased by the National Health Service and converted for use as a hospital. Extensive demolition, including the glass house, garden pavilion, and more of the service wings took place. The exterior was radically simplified, with loss of the Dutch gables, virtually all the chimney shafts, window tracery, and crenulations of the tower. Many of the original decorative features of the interior were removed (with the exception of the main staircase), and single storey flat-roofed timber system-built hospital extensions spread to the north. The final NHS use was as a geriatric hospital, which ceased in 2003, since when the building has been unoccupied.



# Historical Photographs - External



Image 1: Author: Unknown (1874-1880)



Image 2: Author: Unknown (1874-1880)



Image 3: Author: Unknown (1874-1880)

## External historical photographs: (words by Dr Mervyn Miller)

- 1) Athlone House: South front showing circular pavilion extension at left.
- 2) Athlone House: West front, heavily ivy clad showing veranda and glass house.
- 3) Athlone House: This view clearly shows the porte cochere against the tower. Detail appears clear and relatively crisp, though some staining of the stonework is already evident, and there appears to be some erosion of the heraldic beasts; there was also a porcupine above the centre of the strapwork that contained the armorial shield. The detail of the gable copings shows that they had a roll moulded projection, which should have reduced deterioration. The banded fishscale and plain tiling of the roof shows up clearly. To the right, part of a chimney shows that it had ornamental shafts of elaborately moulded brick. There were elaborate square section eaves gutters with zig-zag ornament discharging into ornamented rainwater hopper heads, with square section downpipes. All the upper lights of the first floor windows had ornamental leaded glazing of 'bottle glass' discs set against a rectangular grid. The ground floor windows had trefoil cusped heads, with ornamental leaded lattice, grid and disc pattern glazing throughout. Growth of ivy over the building was evidently being encouraged, with some applied trelliswork panels.



# Historical Photographs - External



Image 1: Author: Unknown (1874-1880)



Image 3: Author: Unknown (1980)



Image 2: Author: Unknown (1874-1880)



Image 4: Author: The Builder (1872)

## External historical photographs: (words by Dr Mervyn Miller)

- 1) Athlone House: This view shows the west terrace, looking north towards the pavilion, obliquely along the west elevation of the house.
- 2) Athlone House: This view shows the house from the lower garden, looking towards the west elevation. Much of the detail of the south corner and return elevation is obscured by trees. However, it can be seen that there were projecting gargoyles below the crenulations of the upper stair turret above parapet level of the tower, and that heraldic beasts bearing flag standards stood on the square corner plinths of the tower parapet. The pierced stonework parapet above the right hand canted first floor bay is visible. The elaborate detail of the shafted chimneys is visible in a generalised way. The pent rooflight of the picture gallery is just visible above its crenelated parapet. Other details are as described above.
- 3) Athlone House: View from driveway toward main entrance in the early 1980's with the single-storey NHS extension visible to the right.
- 4) Athlone House: Completed illustration from the Builder (1/06/1872) showing the west elevation and glass house.



# Historical Photographs - Internal



Image 1: Author: Unknown (1874-1880)



Image 3: Author: Unknown (1874-1880)



Image 2: Author: Unknown (1874-1880)



Image 4: Author: Unknown (1874-1880)

## Internal historical photographs: (words by Dr Mervyn Miller)

- 1) Athlone House: the Drawing Room, looking east, with the original recess at left. Virtually everything seen here, including the fireplace, cornice and ceiling has been destroyed
- 2) Athlone House: the Dining Room, where the elaborate fireplace and sideboard have long since disappeared, together with the panelled dado, cornice and the elaborate moulded ceiling beams (although the boarding above survives).
- 3) Athlone House: the Billiard Room. Architecturally the feature of greatest interest is the 5 light mullioned window, with panelled reveals and fitted seat below.
- 4) Athlone House: the Hall, looking across from the staircase recess. The hooded fireplace, panelled Drawing Room door, pilaster, polished Granite column and heavy beamed ceiling were all removed in a later remodelling.



# Historical Photographs - Internal



Image 1: Author: Unknown (1874-1880)



Image 3: Author: Unknown (1874-1880)



Image 2: Author: Unknown (1874-1880)



Image 4: Author: Unknown (1874-1880)

## Internal historical photographs: (words by Dr Mervyn Miller)

- 1) Athlone House: the glass house, looking north away from the Picture Gallery. The arched structure of cast iron is visible through the planting. This feature survived WW2 and was finally demolished about 1952/3.
- 2) Athlone House: the Picture Gallery looking north into the glass house. The arch itself is exposed on the north elevation, following demolition of the later extensions for the hospital use.
- 3) Athlone House: the ante-hall looking into the main hall. Although the layout survives, the screen was much simplified in the 1920s. None of the decoration (somewhat in the style of Christopher Dresser) survives. All panelling of main hall was stripped - some of bracketed ceiling remains. The window looking into the inner area evidently had stained glass inserts, and cusped heads.
- 4) Athlone House: the Morning Room. This was opened out into the hall by Francis Cory Wright (see below), and later gutted to provide sanitary facilities for the hospital. All decorative features of significance appear to have been destroyed.



# Site Context

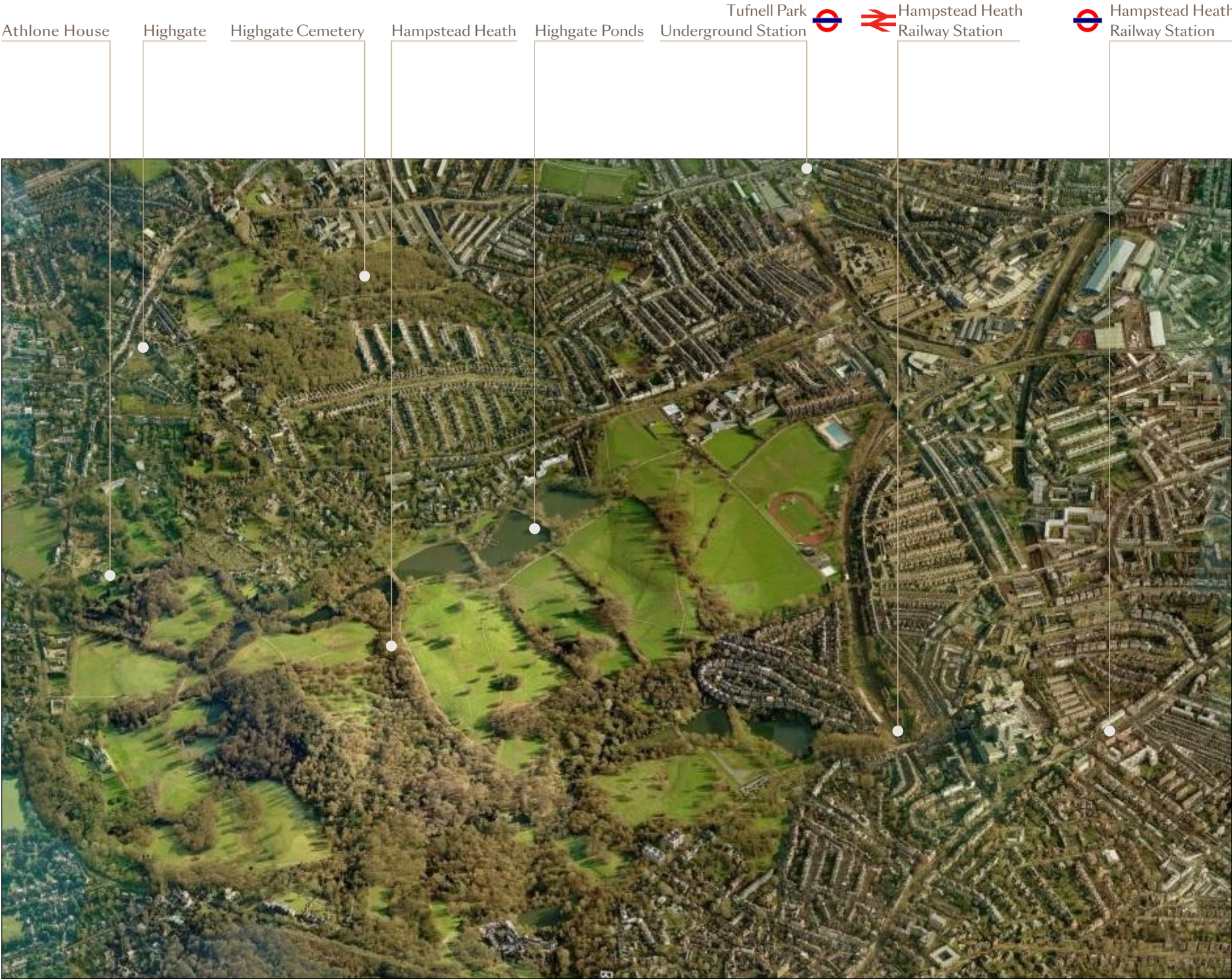


Image 1: Axonometric aerial view. Author: Bing maps.



Image 2: Hampstead Heath. Author: Ashley Coates



Image 3: Hampstead Village. Author: David Howard



Image 4: Hampstead Ponds. Author: Paul Robertson

## Site Context:

Athlone House shares most of its boundary with Hampstead Heath, a popular 790 acre open public space located north-west of central London. Located immediately to the south is Athlone Gardens and as the name suggests, this area was donated to the Heath in 2005.

The suburbs surrounding Hampstead Heath and to the north of Athlone House are primarily medium-density residential, typical of this area of north-west London. Demand for the large detached family homes around Hampstead Heath have created an exclusive residential population and have established the area as one of the more affluent in the capital, with high property prices and low unemployment levels.

The local architecture consists of a mix of traditional and modern buildings with various conservation areas (including both Highgate Conservation Areas) maintaining styles and forms deemed significant to the local area.

Nearby hubs such as Highgate and Hampstead Village offer commercial, transport and community services.



# Aerial Photograph



Image 1: Aerial view. Author: Google maps.