

## A. HOUSING, DESIGN & CHARACTER DESIGN

### POLICY 2: Design & Character

All development shall be of a high quality of design, which complements and enhances the distinct local character and identity of Fortune Green and West Hampstead.

This shall be achieved by:

- i. Development which positively interfaces with the street and streetscape in which it is located.
- ii. Development which maintains the positive contributions to character of existing buildings and structures.
- iii. Development which is human in scale, in order to maintain and create a positive relationship between buildings and street level activity.
- iv. Development which has regard to the form, function, structure and heritage of its context - including the scale, mass, orientation, pattern and grain of surrounding buildings, streets and spaces.
- v. A presumption in favour of a colour palate which reflects, or is in harmony with, the materials of its context.
- vi. New buildings and extensions that respect and are sensitive to the height of existing buildings in their vicinity and setting. Tall buildings in the Growth Area will need to have regard to their impact on the setting of the two immediately adjacent conservation areas, in order to avoid any negative impact on them.
- vii. Extensions - and infill development - being in character and proportion with its context and setting, including the relationship to any adjoining properties.
- viii. The provision of associated high quality public realm.
- ix. Having regard to the impact on local views across the Area and the streetscapes within the Area (as identified in A11 and Map 2).
- x. Development which aims to fulfil the criteria set out in Building for Life 12 (as detailed in A18).

# CHARACTER PHOTOGRAPHS



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**A8.** The **NPPF** states as a core planning principle (paragraph 17) that planning should “always seek to secure **high quality design and a good standard of amenity** for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings”. It also states (56) that “good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people”. The London Plan (Policy 7.6) says that “architecture should make a positive contribution to a coherent public realm, streetscape and wider cityscape. It should incorporate the highest quality materials and designs appropriate to its context”. These principles and policies shall be clearly and demonstrably applied in Fortune Green and West Hampstead.

**A9.** The NPPF (60) states that it is “proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness” and says (58) that development shall “respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials”. As outlined in 2.2 & 2.5 many parts of Fortune Green and West Hampstead have a clear **architectural heritage** – with an attractive character and a distinct local identity. These positive features are strongly supported (as set out in the Consultation Statement) and need to be protected and preserved. New developments in such areas – particularly terraced streets – need to be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area in terms of their proportion, height, scale, massing, materials, storey height and rooflines. Larger developments, while reflecting new design, need to incorporate design features that reflect the character of existing development, using materials (such as red brick) which complement existing buildings. Innovation is not ruled out, however schemes incorporating innovation will need to make a persuasive case for such development and demonstrate the suitability of such schemes.

**(Also see character photographs)**

**A10.** The **height** of existing development in Fortune Green and West Hampstead makes a significant contribution to the overall character of the Area. The NPPF (59) recognises height as an important consideration and that design policies “...should concentrate on guiding the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout, materials and access of new development in relation to neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally”. Much of the Neighbourhood Plan Area consists of terraced housing, which is normally two or three storeys high. Mansion blocks tend to be four, five or six storeys in height.

New buildings and development will need to be based on a human scale and efficiently use the site area. High density developments are not ruled out, and it is noted (*see recent reports on ‘Mid-Rise Housing’ from the Prince’s Foundation and other groups*) that high densities can be achieved through high quality design, without the need for tall buildings. In order to promote and reinforce the distinct and widely appreciated local character of Fortune Green and West Hampstead, new development shall respect, and be sensitive to, the height of existing buildings in their vicinity and setting.

**A11.** Also of importance to the character of the Area are the **views** across it, which give a widely appreciated sense of openness and space. **(See Map 2)** Of particular note are the views to the east to Hampstead (in particular the view of St John’s Church) and, from the higher parts of the Area, the views to the south to the skyline of central London. Views of, from, and around the Area’s conservation areas are of great importance to their setting. The railway corridors provide the space for significant views across the Area and an important sense of openness - in particular in and around the West Hampstead Growth Area. In addition, streetscape views are important, particularly in areas of terraced housing and mansion blocks. The streetscapes of the main roads through the area - especially West End Lane, Fortune Green Road and Mill Lane - are also of note.

**(Also see views photographs)**

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**A12. Infill developments:** any replacement of a house or houses, or addition of a new house, within an existing terrace should be to the same scale as the terrace, including the roofline. It should be similar in form, materials and details. Replication of particular exterior details is strongly recommended where such details are consistent in streets. Houses should be set back from the pavement and match or fit the building lines of existing properties, with front garden areas remaining unpaved. The same principles should apply to vacant sites in streets where there is already a pattern of existing development.

**A13. Garden developments:** in order to protect the Area's green/open spaces, the development of new dwellings in private gardens should be avoided. If any developments are approved, they should maintain a much lower profile than existing housing stock, usually one or two storeys. (Also see Policy 17).

**A14. Roof extensions** and loft conversions should fit in with existing rooflines and be in keeping with existing development. Such extensions should be in proportion to the existing building and should not block views.

**A15. Basement developments:** there is concern in the Area about the increasing number of such developments. These concerns include the effect on the structural stability of adjacent properties; damage or loss to the character and biodiversity of gardens; the impact on sustainable drainage; and the impact on carbon emissions. Camden Planning Guidance (CPG4) states that the council will only permit basement and underground developments that do not: cause harm to the built and natural environment and local amenity; result in flooding; or lead to ground instability. The NDP fully supports the requirement for full and rigorous Basement Impact Assessments before any such applications are considered. The Guidance cites West Hampstead, South Hampstead and Cricklewood as areas that have been identified as being subject to localised flooding from surface water due to local soil conditions and topography; it also cites a large number of streets in the Area that have been subject to surface water flooding in the past.

Basement and underground developments in these areas should therefore be normally avoided. Given that some of the existing Victorian and Edwardian housing stock was built with basements and cellars, it is considered that some sites in the Area may be able to accommodate one storey basement developments (subject to the requirements set out in CPG4). However, there needs to be greater caution about basements deeper than one storey to ensure that they do not raise concerns about the stability of existing buildings - many of which were built with shallow foundations - and do not cause problems for surface water drainage.

**A16.** New development should also seek to achieve high **environmental standards** and support the aims of the NPPF (95) in "the move to a low-carbon future". Development should aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, support energy efficiency - and, where possible, should aim to exceed national standards. The national target for zero-carbon new homes from 2017 is welcomed and should be applied in this Area before that date. Measures to retrofit existing buildings to make them eco-friendly and sustainable are strongly supported. Such measures have been trialled elsewhere in Camden, including in conservation areas, and would be welcomed in Fortune Green and West Hampstead.

**A17.** All development should provide adequate space for **waste and recycling** bins and containers. Such provision should not encroach onto pavements and should not have a negative impact on the public realm.

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**A18.** In line with the policies in this section and other sections of this Plan - as well as the findings in the Consultation Statement accompanying this Plan - the NDF strongly supports the 12 criteria set out in the **Building for Life 12** document - published in 2012 by Cabe at the Design Council, Design for Homes and the Home Builders Association. This sets out “the industry standard, endorsed by Government, for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods that local communities, local authorities and developers are invited to use to stimulate conversations about creating good places to live”. The NDF urges all those proposing development in the Area to consider these criteria and, where relevant, to seek to apply them. This is particularly important for those proposing large development which will have an impact on a wider area than the immediate site.

**A19.** The NPPF states (207) that “effective **enforcement** is important as a means of maintaining public confidence in the planning system”. It suggests local authorities publish information about their enforcement activities. During its consultations, the NDF found concern about weak levels of enforcement (including in Conservation Areas) and a lack of clarity about the processes involved. The NDF would welcome the publication of clear information about the enforcement of planning policies in the Area and greater transparency on this issue by Camden Council.

**A20.** In all development, this Plan welcomes and encourages early, positive and meaningful **engagement** between developers and those living and working in the Area. The NPPF states (188) that “early engagement has the potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties” resulting in “improved outcomes for the community”. The NDF strongly encourages those planning development in this Area to use this Plan as the basis for positive and constructive engagement. This particularly applies to large developments, and any development in the West Hampstead Growth Area, where early, positive and ongoing consultation with the community is required.

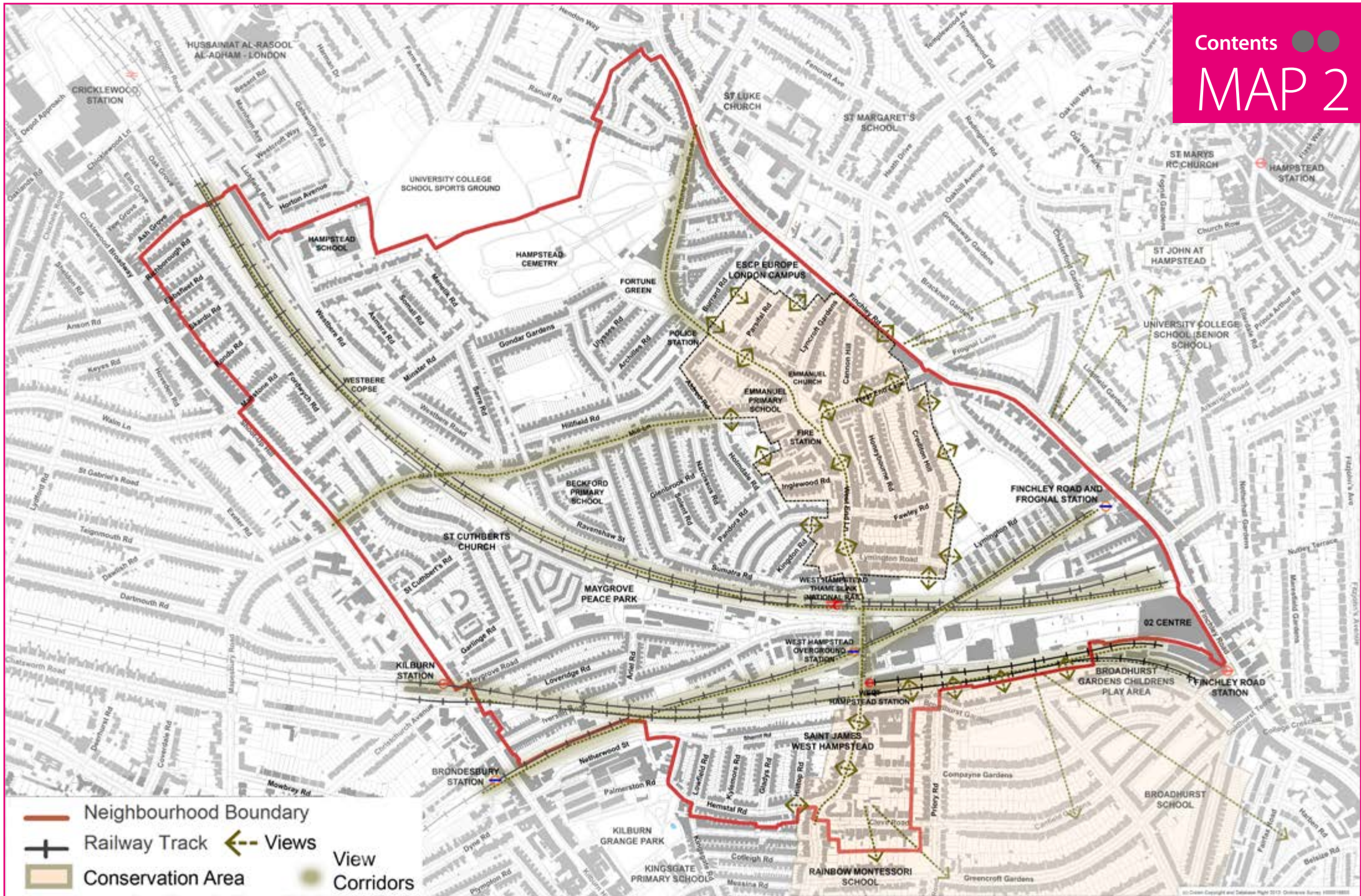
*Complementary action: as elsewhere in section 4 of the Plan, in support of Policies 1 & 2 the recommendations which follow set out a range of actions which seek to complement and support the objectives of the above policies - and which the NDF will seek to promote with the relevant agencies (see 5.1)*

### RECOMMENDATION A: In support of Policies 1 & 2, the following actions are recommended to fulfil and complement the aims of these policies:

- i. That greater efforts be given to monitor and enforce approved planning applications and planning policies in the Area, and that this process is made more transparent.
- ii. That all large developments have - as a condition of their approval - the mandatory formation of a consultation group with local residents and groups, to discuss the development between planning approval and completion.
- iii. That significant schemes aim to retain the proposed architect or architectural practice for the development from application to completion - in order to give a consistent approach to design.
- iv. The introduction of a register of private landlords in the Area.
- v. That consideration is given to the needs of the large and growing private rented community.
- vi. The enforcement of more rigorous controls on HMOs.
- vii. The positive and proactive engagement with the community by those bringing forward plans for development - as plans are prepared and submitted, and as development takes place. All planning applications for development which is likely to have an impact beyond the immediate site should be accompanied by a Statement of Community Engagement.

# VIEWS PHOTOGRAPHS





- Neighbourhood Boundary
- + Railway Track    ← Views
- Conservation Area
- View Corridors

**Map 2: Local Views**  
 Neighbourhood Plan Map

