

Protection, enhancement and management of biodiversity

- 6.56 Nature provides us with a variety of environmental, social, cultural, education, health and recreation benefits. For example, trees and plants improve air quality, absorb carbon dioxide and help to regulate city temperatures; vegetated areas reduce surface water run-off and flooding risk; and insects such as bees provide pollination.
- 6.57 Biodiverse green spaces provide opportunities for inspiration and contemplation, boosting mental wellbeing. Local Nature Reserves and other natural sites provide a focus for conservation activities, support physical activity and contribute to community spirit and social inclusion. These sites also provide a rare opportunity for young people living in the urban area to learn about the natural environment. Biodiversity can provide colour and contrast to the built environment and may be important to an area's character and amenity.
- 6.58 Camden's Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study identifies there are 186 spaces with a least 5% natural greenspace cover in the Borough. Amenity grassland is the most prevalent habitat to be found across Camden. It has limited biodiversity value but does offer scope for improvement. Woodland is the second most prevalent habitat and supports a range of wildlife but is mainly in the north of the borough, meaning it is not accessible to all residents. There are also smaller areas of UK Priority habitat (i.e. of national importance) including acid grassland, heathland, ponds and reedbeds. Sites have a range of wildlife designations which reflect their national, regional and local importance. Around three quarters of all provision in the borough is found within four large sites of metropolitan importance (Hampstead Heath, Highgate Cemetery, Regent's Park and Regent's Canal).
- 6.59 Policy A3 is intended to support the London Biodiversity Strategy and the Camden Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) by ensuring Camden's growth is accompanied by a significant enhancement in the borough's biodiversity. The Council aims to maximise opportunities for biodiversity in and around developments in order to deliver a net gain in biodiversity and a range of wider environmental benefits.

Policy A3 Biodiversity

The Council will protect and enhance sites of nature conservation and biodiversity. We will:

- a. designate and protect nature conservation sites and safeguard protected and priority habitats and species;
- b. grant permission for development unless it would directly or indirectly result in the loss or harm to a designated nature conservation site or adversely affect the status or population of priority habitats and species;
- c. seek the protection of other features with nature conservation value, including gardens, wherever possible;

- d. assess developments against their ability to realise benefits for biodiversity through the layout, design and materials used in the built structure and landscaping elements of a proposed development, proportionate to the scale of development proposed;
- e. secure improvements to green corridors, particularly where a development scheme is adjacent to an existing corridor;
- f. seek to improve opportunities to experience nature, in particular where such opportunities are lacking;
- g. require the demolition and construction phase of development, including the movement of works vehicles, to be planned to avoid disturbance to habitats and species and ecologically sensitive areas, and the spread of invasive species;
- h. secure management plans, where appropriate, to ensure that nature conservation objectives are met; and
- i. work with The Royal Parks, The City of London Corporation, the London Wildlife Trust, friends of park groups and local nature conservation groups to protect and improve open spaces and nature conservation in Camden.

Trees and vegetation

The Council will protect, and seek to secure additional, trees and vegetation. We will:

- j. resist the loss of trees and vegetation of significant amenity, historic, cultural or ecological value including proposals which may threaten the continued wellbeing of such trees and vegetation;
- k. require trees and vegetation which are to be retained to be satisfactorily protected during the demolition and construction phase of development in line with BS5837:2012 'Trees in relation to Design, Demolition and Construction' and positively integrated as part of the site layout;
- l. expect replacement trees or vegetation to be provided where the loss of significant trees or vegetation or harm to the wellbeing of these trees and vegetation has been justified in the context of the proposed development;
- m. expect developments to incorporate additional trees and vegetation wherever possible.

Protection of designated nature conservation sites and safeguarding of habitats and species

6.60

Designated sites of nature conservation interest are shown on the Local Plan Policies Map. Taken together, these sites occupy some 414 ha of land. They are as follows:

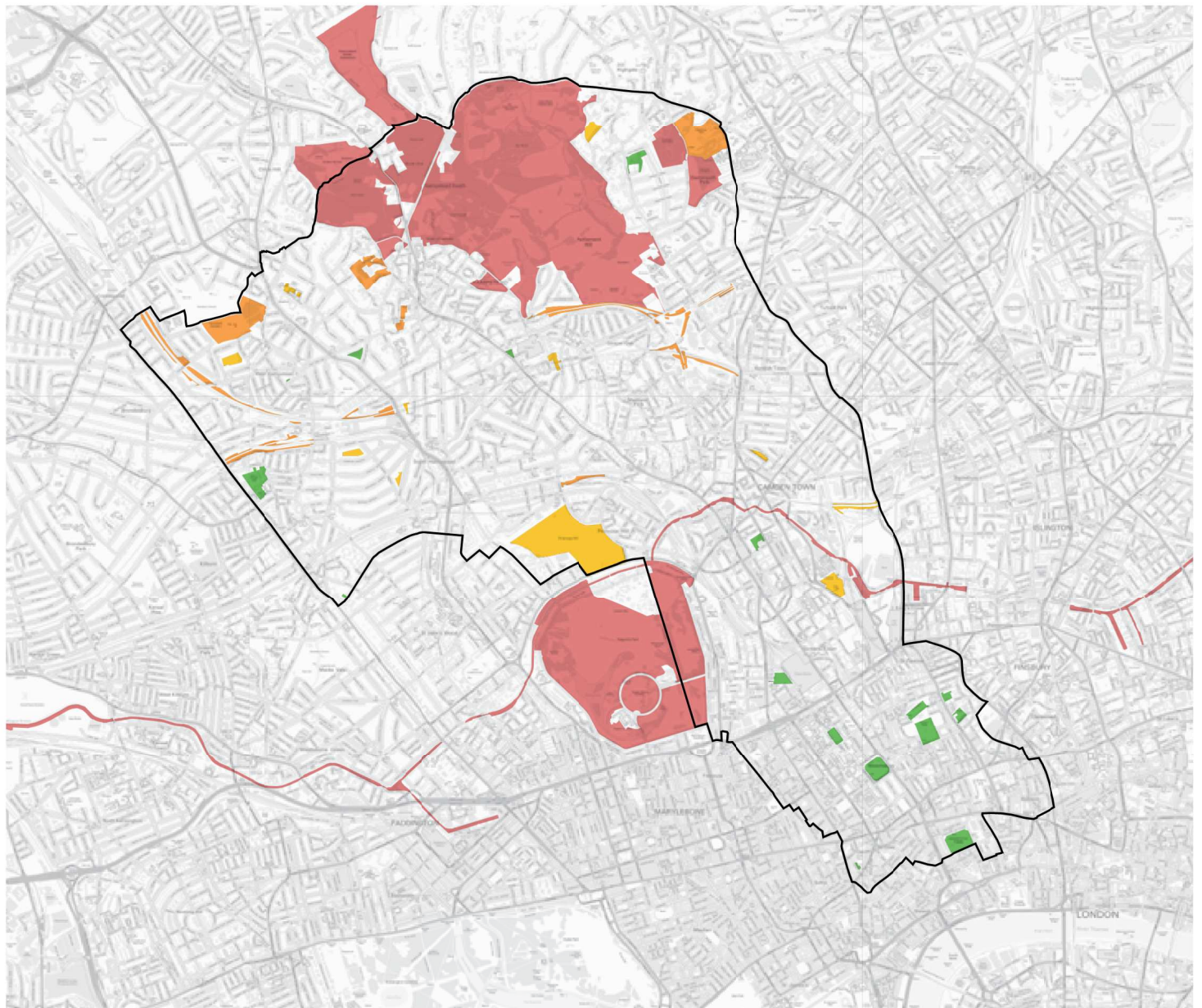
- Hampstead Heath Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which is Camden's only SSSI. SSSIs are designated by Natural England due to their nationally important habitats and species and/or geological features and must be given the highest protection in accordance with legislation.
- 36 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) which are graded into four categories according to spatial significance and quality. As part of the evidence base for the Local Plan, LB Camden commissioned the London

Wildlife Trust to undertake a review of these sites. This resulted in a number of boundary changes and the identification of 3 new SINCs which are reflected on the Policies Map.

- 4 nationally designated Local Nature Reserves (LNR) which host a rich variety of flora and fauna and provide opportunities for local communities to access and engage with nature – Adelaide, Belsize Woods, Westbere Copse (all managed by LB Camden) and Camley Street Natural Park (managed by London Wildlife Trust).

- 6.61 The Council will protect designated nature conservation sites from inappropriate and harmful development, proportionate to the weight afforded by these designations. In a highly built-up area, relatively small sites can be highly valued by providing access to nature. Most of the SINCs are not in the Council's control and therefore it is difficult for the Council to protect species, habitats and foraging areas other than those formally protected by international and national legislation. To protect existing sites, the Council will resist the development of designated sites where the nature conservation value has been diminished or lost, especially where this loss is due to neglect and damage as it is possible for the habitat to be restored.
- 6.62 Camden's green spaces and built environment support species protected under UK and international legislation. The presence of protected habitats or species is a material planning consideration. Protected species in Camden include significant populations of bats and rare species of birds and amphibians. Species and habitats of principal importance to the conservation of biodiversity or 'priority species', are identified in the BAP. The Council will give specific consideration to habitats and species on this list when assessing planning applications. The current BAP (2013-2018) contains targets and actions to protect and enhance habitats and species and increase opportunities to engage with nature.
- 6.63 The Council will also seek the retention of other areas with nature conservation value, such as gardens. Development will be resisted where it would result in the loss of an excessive part of the garden or garden space which contributes to the character of the townscape. Native hedgerows and vegetation comprised of native species should be retained as far as possible. However, we also recognise that existing non-native plants may also make a significant contribution to biodiversity.
- 6.64 We will expect applicants to appropriately address the indirect impacts a development could potentially have on a designated nature conservation site, (such as noise, light, shading, inappropriate planting and increased human presence). Applicants should give consideration to the need for species to move between habitats. Proposals should therefore seek to connect with existing green corridors where it is appropriate to do so.

Map 3: Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation



Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)

□ Borough boundary

- Metropolitan
- Borough 1
- Borough 2
- Local

Ecological surveys

- 6.65 Our supplementary planning document Camden Planning Guidance on sustainability sets out when the Council will require ecological surveys, the level and scope of detail required and the times in which they should be carried out. These surveys are used to identify important habitat features. It is expected that an ecology scoping survey will be required on all major sites unless the Council has specifically agreed it is not.

Enhancing nature conservation value

- 6.66 On larger schemes where development is considered to place a significant additional demand on natural greenspace, the Council will seek the provision of new natural greenspace within the site. Our Camden Planning Guidance on amenity sets out the size of scheme this relates to and how much greenspace will be sought based on the occupancy of the development. The layout and type of new habitats should take into account the site's role in buffering and connecting nature sites and wildlife corridors. Habitats and wildlife features should be integrated throughout the site, rather than being isolated pockets of nature.
- 6.67 Where on-site provision is not possible, the impact should be mitigated through works to create, reinstate or enhance habitats nearby. Enhancements will be secured through the use of planning conditions and where appropriate, planning obligations. Strategic projects will potentially be funded through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).
- 6.68 In many developments, it should be feasible to incorporate biodiversity enhancing measures. These can deliver a wide range of environmental and social benefits. This includes retrofits of existing buildings, subject to impacts on heritage assets and amenity. Potential responses including biodiverse-rich landscaping, sustainable urban drainage systems, 'species features' such as bird and bat boxes, artificial roosts for bats, tree planting and green roofs and walls. The Council will negotiate the provision of biodiverse living roofs in all suitable developments. Front gardens also provide an opportunity to provide soft landscaping (planting) which can improve biodiversity as well as enhancing the character and attractiveness of the area.
- 6.69 Developers and landowners should also give consideration to the need for species to move between different types of habitats. The Council will seek opportunities to secure green corridors as part of developments and through public realm improvements. Areas that could provide these corridors include land adjacent to railway lines and the Regent's Canal, where existing vegetation can be enhanced or new vegetation provided, and sites adjoining existing open spaces.
- 6.70 All enhancement measures, including the provision of natural greenspace, should contribute to the delivery of the BAP and green infrastructure strategies. As highlighted in "Policy A2 Open space", the Mayor of London is supporting the development of a multi-functional network of accessible spaces and natural features (the All-London Green Grid).

Increasing opportunities to experience nature

- 6.71 A key objective of the BAP is to increase engagement with nature. There are typically lower levels of active engagement in more deprived areas of the borough. This is partly related to the limited spatial extent of natural habitat in these locations, where nature conservation sites are generally quite small, with parts of the west, east and south of the borough having the lowest coverage. In some cases, access to nature conservation sites is restricted in order to safeguard their nature conservation interest. The Council will need to give particular priority to addressing deficiencies in the areas shown in “Map 2: Locations deficient in access to open space” on page 176.
- 6.72 Of particular social benefit to the borough are Local Nature Reserves. They support a variety of learning and community based activity and it is important to protect and maximise their value. By raising awareness of our links, and dependence on the environment, these sites can foster an interest in the stewardship of natural habitats.

Use of management plans to protect and sustain habitats

- 6.73 The demolition and construction process can pose a significant risk to habitats and species, including green corridors. The Council may request a construction management plan for developments adjoining or within sites of high nature conservation value in order to protect biodiversity.
- 6.74 Once a development has been completed, management and monitoring of habitats may be required. Management plans are used to ensure areas with nature conservation value are retained and reach their full potential. Monitoring can confirm that relevant environmental measures have been implemented successfully. Maintenance and monitoring may be secured through a planning condition or legal agreement.

Trees and vegetation

- 6.75 Trees and vegetation are integral to the amenity and character of the street scene, provide connections and habitat for wildlife, offer shade and cooling to improve the local microclimate, reduce the impacts of flooding and filter pollutants from the air. There is a strong representation of native species in Camden reflecting local soil types including trees first planted to support the substantial growth of Camden’s built form in the 18th and 19th centuries. Increasing trees and vegetation is an important way of adapting to projected/ future temperature increases linked to climate change.
- 6.76 The Council will seek the retention of trees and vegetation of significant amenity, historic, cultural or ecological value. This includes trees within the public highway which can potentially be affected by a development. Trees and vegetation are important to the contribution a site and its setting make to townscape character and amenity and have a sense of maturity which may often be lacking from replacement planting. Ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland are particularly valuable as once lost they can never be replaced. The ancient woodland in Camden forms part of the Hampstead Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

- 6.77 Applicants will be required to take measures to the Council's satisfaction to minimise any adverse impacts from development on retained and proposed trees and vegetation. This includes the potential risk of damage arising from demolition or construction works and development which fails to allow sufficient space above and below ground to prevent damage to root systems or facilitate future growth.
- 6.78 Camden Planning Guidance on design supplementary planning document sets out the information required by the Council to ensure that there is a systematic approach to the safeguarding of trees and vegetation within the development site and on adjacent land (including street trees) both during and following the construction process. We will expect developers to follow the principles and practice set out in 'British Standard 5837:2012 (or as subsequently updated) Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations'.

Tree Preservation Orders

- 6.79 Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) are used by the Council to legally protect specific trees or groups of trees that provide public amenity. Cutting, lopping or removing any part of a tree subject to a TPO other than the removal of deadwood requires the Council's consent. Where a planning application relates to trees in conservation areas, the Council will pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character of that area. Where a tree in a conservation area is already protected by a TPO, we will apply the normal procedures and controls associated with a TPO. In other cases, a notification procedure exists (Section 211) unless an exception applies allowing the opportunity to consider whether to make a TPO on the tree. The felling of protected trees will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and in accordance with relevant legislation, policy and guidance.

Replacement and additional planting

- 6.80 Where the loss of trees or vegetation of value cannot be avoided or would adversely affect their future growth, the Council will require suitable replacements capable of providing at least equal amenity and ecological value. Where this cannot be achieved on-site, the Council will require a financial contribution towards re-provision. Tree planting should, as a minimum, offset the capacity of trees lost as a result of the development to absorb carbon, taking account of the time needed to reach maturity.
- 6.81 The Council will also expect developments to incorporate additional trees and vegetation wherever possible as part of the package of biodiversity enhancing measures described above. This should include large species trees where opportunities allow. It is particularly important that new trees and vegetation are provided on sites where this is currently lacking or where this would enhance public areas.

- 6.82 We will take a 'right tree for the right site' approach which takes account of:
- the amenity value of any trees to be removed,
 - ecology,
 - historic context,
 - availability of space,
 - soil conditions including hydrogeology,
 - potential improvements to air and soil quality,
 - reducing the effects of and adapting to climate change; and
 - the guidance provided in BS 8545 Trees: from nursery to independence in the landscape – Recommendations'.
- 6.83 The ability to sustain an attractive treed environment will often be contingent on age and species diversification.

Noise and vibration

- 6.84 This policy seeks to ensure that noise and vibration is appropriately considered at the design stage and that noise sensitive uses are not negatively impacted by noise and vibration or that existing uses (such as music venues, theatres and some employment uses) are not unduly restricted through the introduction of nearby noise sensitive uses.
- 6.85 Noise and vibration can have a major effect on health and amenity and quality of life. Camden's high density and mixed use nature means that disturbance from noise and vibration is a particularly important issue for health and wellbeing in the borough. The Council may seek to explore the identification and designation of Quiet Areas, which are local green spaces identified for their particular tranquility and amenity value.

Policy A4 Noise and vibration

The Council will seek to ensure that noise and vibration is controlled and managed.

Development should have regard to Camden's Noise and Vibration Thresholds (Appendix 3). We will not grant planning permission for:

- a. development likely to generate unacceptable noise and vibration impacts; or
- b. development sensitive to noise in locations which experience high levels of noise, unless appropriate attenuation measures can be provided and will not harm the continued operation of existing uses.

We will only grant permission for noise generating development, including any plant and machinery, if it can be operated without causing harm to amenity. We will also seek to minimise the impact on local amenity from deliveries and from the demolition and construction phases of development.

Sources and the character of noise in Camden

- 6.86 The main sources of noise and vibration in Camden are; road traffic, railways, industrial uses, plant and mechanical equipment, food, drink and entertainment uses, and building sites. The top six sources of noise that receive the most complaints in Camden are; music, construction noise, general people noise (e.g. footsteps, gathering), parties, fixed machinery and burglar alarms.
- 6.87 There is a proliferation of fixed machinery, such as air conditioning units in Camden's centres which cumulatively can have a harmful impact. The borough is also home to a large number and variety of food, drink and entertainment uses, often close to where people live, and as a result, conflicts can arise (see "Policy TC4 Town centres uses"). Such sources of noise and the character of noise can increase stress levels and cause significant disturbance. Other sources of noise such as those associated with construction are considered in "Policy A1 Managing the impact of development", whereby measures required