

# Vale of Health Play Area

## Planning Statement

**on behalf of City of London Corporation**

01 November 2019



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## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 This planning statement is prepared by Nexus Planning of behalf of the City of London Corporation (“the Applicant”) in support of a planning application submitted at the Vale of Health Play Area, in Hampstead Heath (“the site”) to the London Borough of Camden Council as the Local Planning Authority for the following development:

*“Enhancement of the Vale of Health Play Area, comprising the installation of new play equipment and landscape features”.*

1.2 The following documents have been submitted in support of this application:

- Application form & CIL form;
- Site Location Plan;
- Proposed Concept Plan;
- Proposed Concept Images (February 2019); and
- Design Statement by Sioned Williams Landscape Design

1.3 This planning statement should be read in conjunction with the above listed supporting documents.

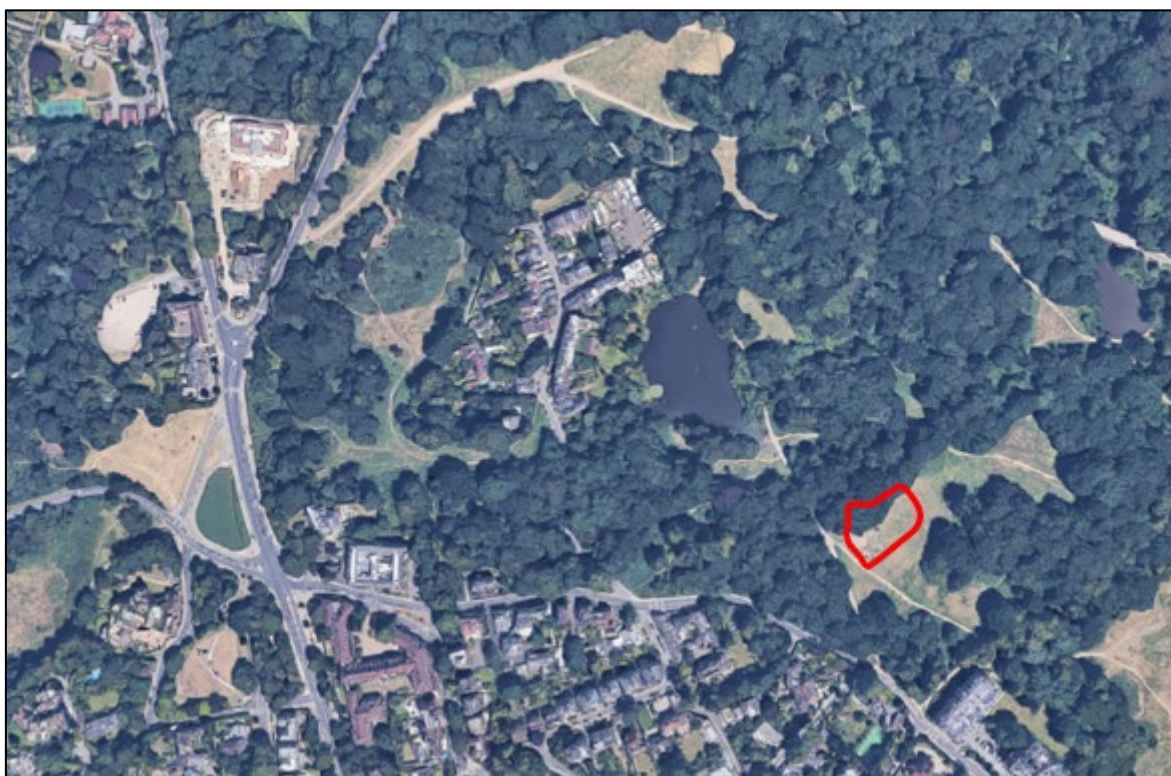
1.4 This planning statement is structured as follows:

- Section 2 sets out a description of the application site and the surrounding area and provides an overview of relevant planning history;
- Section 3 details the development as proposed;
- Section 4 outlines the relevant planning policy context;
- Section 5 considers the development proposal against relevant planning policies;
- Section 6 provides an overall summary and conclusion.

## 2.0 Background Information

### Site and surrounding area

- 2.1 The site is located to the west of Hampstead Heath in close proximity to the Vale of Health to the west. The site is an irregularly shaped and has a total area of 2000 sqm. The Site contains the Vale of Health play area.



**Figure 1: Location of Vale of Health Play Area**

- 2.2 The existing Vale of Health play area contains a number of play facilities including swings, sand pit, climbing logs and an area of open space which is fenced off from the surrounding Heath.
- 2.3 The site is surrounded on all sides by Hampstead Heath which contains areas of open space and woodland. The site being located within Hampstead Heath, is designated Metropolitan Open Land (MOL). The site is also designated as Local Plan Metropolitan Open Space.
- 2.4 The site is not within a conservation area and does not contain any listed buildings.

## Planning History

2.5 A review of Camden's Planning Search Tool has not identified any historic applications over the play area site. Notwithstanding, we note that several applications have been submitted over the Heath the most relevant are detailed in the table below:

**Table 1: Planning History - Surrounding Area**

Reference	Address	Proposal	Decision	Date
2014/4332/P	Hampstead and Highgate chains of ponds Hampstead Heath London	Proposed engineering works to the Hampstead and Highgate chains of ponds	Granted	27/01/2015
205/2578/P	Hampstead and Highgate chains of ponds Hampstead Heath London	Details of Piling Method Statement required by condition 9 of planning permission 2014/4332/P dated 27/01/2015 (Proposed engineering works to the Hampstead and Highgate chains of ponds).	Granted	10/06/2018
2015/1358/P	Hampstead and Highgate chains of ponds Hampstead Heath London	Details of hard & soft landscaping, wall designs, air quality and dust monitoring, precautionary works for protected species & drainage statement required by conditions 4, 7(a, b, c), 12, 16 & 18 of planning permission 2014/4332/P dated 27/01/15 (for engineering works to the Hampstead and Highgate chains of ponds)	Granted	01/06/2015
2015/0850/P	Hampstead and Highgate chains of ponds Hampstead Heath London	Details of tree protection required by condition 6 of planning permission 2014/4332/P dated 27/01/2015 (Proposed engineering works to the Hampstead and Highgate chains of ponds).	Granted	15/05/2015

## 3.0 Proposed Development

- 3.1 The proposed development seeks to improve the existing Vale of Health play area through the installation of new play equipment and landscapes features.
- 3.2 The purpose of the proposed development is to enhance and improve the play opportunities offered by the play area which offers a natural feel that reflects the character of the surrounding Hampstead Heath.
- 3.3 Specifically, the proposal include the following new features:
- a. New timber multi-play unit including a slide;
  - b. Extension to the existing sand pit
  - c. Fallen tree with grass mat for climbing;
  - d. Woven willow tunnel;
  - e. Slack grass;
  - f. Oak trunks for sitting and balancing;
  - g. Play ditched and mounds; and
  - h. Landscape features.
- 3.4 Existing play equipment will be retained and refurbished if required and the existing path network will remain the same.
- 3.5 Further details of the proposal are shown in the proposed concept images submitted as part of this planning application.

## 4.0 Planning Policy Context

4.1 The relevant planning policy framework includes:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (2019)
- The London Plan (2016)
- London Borough of Camden's Development Plan (2017)

4.2 The most relevant planning policy considerations from the NPPF, the London Plan, and Camden's Development Plan have been identified and addressed below.

### National Planning Policy Context

4.3 The National Planning Policy Framework was adopted 27th March 2012, and the Government published the updated National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') in July 2018, which was then revised in February 2019. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies and how these are expected to be applied.

4.4 At paragraph 7 the NPPF sets out that the purpose of the planning system is to achieve sustainable development. Paragraph 8 then identifies the three overarching objectives of sustainable development; the social, environmental and economic objectives.

4.5 At paragraph 11 the NPPF outlines a presumption in favour of sustainable development, and for decision-taking this means:

*"Approving development proposals that accord with an up to date development plan without delay."*

4.6 Chapter 8 of the NPPF emphasises the Government's intention to promote healthy and safe communities. Specifically, Paragraph 96 states:

*"Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities."*



4.7 At Paragraph 215, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing development plans according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF.

### **Regional Planning Context**

4.8 London Borough of Camden falls within the Greater London Area. Therefore, the London Plan (2016) is also of relevance, setting the planning strategy for the whole of London including Camden. This document sets out the Mayor's spatial development strategy for London. The London Plan outlines the integrated economic, environmental, transport and social planning policy.

4.9 The proposed scheme has been prepared in consideration with the following policies of the London Plan 2016:

- Policy 2.18 – Green Infrastructure
- Policy 3.16 – Protection and Enhancement of Social Infrastructure
- Policy 7.4 – Local Character
- Policy 7.5 – Public Realm
- Policy 7.17 – Metropolitan Open Land

4.10 Where relevant, these policies are discussed in further detail in Section 5 below.

### **Local Planning Policy Context**

4.11 At the local level, Camden's Development Plan consists of the Camden Local Plan (2017), the Camden Site Allocations Local Development Document (2013), and various neighbourhood plans. The site falls within the Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan (2018).

4.12 The Local Plan (2017) provides the overarching vision, strategy and objectives for planning in Camden to 2031. Key policies include:

- Policy C1 – Health and Wellbeing
- Policy C6 – Access for All

- Policy A1 – Managing the Impact of Development
- Policy A2 – Open Space
- Policy D1 – Design

4.13 The application site is not included in the Site Allocations Local Development Document (2013), and as such, this policy has not been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application.

4.14 The Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan (2018) provides a vision for the Neighbourhood Plan Area, and sets out five main aims and a number of policies to support the delivery of that vision. Key policies include:

- Policy DH1 – Design
- Policy NE1 – Local Green Spaces.

4.15 Camden Council has also adopted a number of “Camden Planning Guidance” (CPG) documents, and these have also been considered in the design of this proposal.

## 5.0 Material Planning Considerations

- 5.1 In this section of the planning statement, we assess the proposal against the most relevant policies from the planning framework, as identified above.
- 5.2 This assessment has specific regard to the following key issues:
- a. Principle of Development
  - b. Impact upon the Metropolitan Open Space
  - c. Character and design
  - d. Other material considerations
- 5.3 As noted above, Chapter 8 of the NPPF emphasises the Government's intention to support healthy and safe communities. Specifically, the provision of social and recreational facilities is promoted at paragraph 92, and access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is encouraged at paragraph 96.
- 5.4 This position is supported by the London Plan (2016), whereby Policy 3.16 states *"Development proposals which provide high quality social infrastructure will be supported in light of local and strategic social infrastructure needs assessments"*. It is noted that play and recreational facilities fall under the London Plan's definition of social infrastructure.
- 5.5 Under Policy A2 of the Camden Local Plan (2017), the provision of new play facilities is given priority, particularly when it meets residents' needs.
- 5.6 The proposed development will improve the existing facilities of the play area whilst reflecting the natural character of Hampstead Heath. Overall the proposed development is considered to be supported by relevant national, regional and local planning policy, being consistent with Chapter 8 of the NPPF, Policy 3.16 of the London Plan and Policy A2 of the Camden Local Plan.

### Impact on Metropolitan Open Land

- 5.7 As previously noted, the site is located within designated Metropolitan Open Land (MOL), as is all of Hampstead Heath.
- 5.8 Policy 7.17 of the London Plan and Policy A2 of the Camden Local Plan emphasise the importance of preserving the openness and character of MOL.
- 5.9 In line with Policy 7.17 of the London Plan, MOL is awarded the same level of protection as the Green Belt. Paragraph 145 of the National Planning Policy Framework identifies that the construction of new development in the green belt (or MOL) is inappropriate, apart from in specific exceptional cases. One such exception, as set out in item (b) of Paragraph 145 is:
- “provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation .... as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.”*
- 5.10 As the proposed development represents enhancements to an existing outdoor recreation facility (the Vale of Health play area), it is considered the proposal is an ‘exception’ in line with item (b) of Paragraph 145 of the NPPF, thus representing appropriate development within MOL. It is further emphasised that the extensions proposed to the play area are small in scale, and would preserve the openness of Hampstead Heath.
- 5.11 As set out within the Design Statement submitted with this application, the proposals have been designed to enhance the character of Hampstead Heath through incorporating natural design elements, and which preserve the openness of the MOL.
- 5.12 Overall it is considered that the proposed development is consistent with the NPPF, Policy 7.17 of the London Plan and with Policy As of the Camden Local Plan.

### Character and Design Considerations

- 5.13 As previously referenced, Policy 7.17 of the London Plan and Policy A2 of the Camden Local Plan promotes the preservation of the existing character of MOL.
- 5.14 Furthermore, Policy 7.4 of the London Plan emphasises that development proposals should contribute to a positive relationship with natural landscape features, including the underlying landform and topography of an area, and make a positive contribution to the character of a place.
- 5.15 Policy 7.5 of the London Plan requires social infrastructure (including landscape treatments and furniture) to be of the *“highest quality, have a clear purpose, maintain uncluttered spaces and should contribute to the easy movement of people through the space”*.
- 5.16 Policy D1 of the Camden Local Plan also emphasises that development must respect its local context and character, and comprise high quality, complementary materials, detailing and landscaping design.
- 5.17 This policy position is reiterated by Policy DH1 of the Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan, which requires development proposals to demonstrate how they respect and enhance the local character context.
- 5.18 The proposed development has been sensitively designed to respond to the character of the surrounding Heath. Specifically the proposal includes a fallen tree, play ditches and mound and woven willow tunnels. The proposed equipment has been designed using natural materials and colourings so to reflect the surrounding character.
- 5.19 Overall it is considered that the proposed development will enhance the natural and open character of the surrounding area of Hampstead Heath and will conform with Policies 7.4, 7.5 and 7.17 of the London Plan, Policies A2 and D1 of the Camden Local Plan, and Policy CH1 of the Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan.

### Other Material Considerations

- 5.20 In relation to flood risk, the site is located within Flood Zone 1, which is the lowest category of flood risk. The size does not exceed one hectare in size and therefore a flood risk assessment is not considered to be necessary.

## 6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 The proposed development at the Vale of Health play area involves the enhancement of the existing playground, and provision of new play equipment and landscape features within the existing play area.
- 6.2 The proposals, which comprise of play equipment and outdoor recreation facilities within an existing playground, are considered to be appropriate development within Metropolitan Open Space Land in line with Paragraph 145 (b) of the NPPF.
- 6.3 The proposed development has been carefully designed to ensure the openness and character of Hampstead Heath is preserved and enhanced. Specifically, the proposed playground equipment has been sensitively designed to reflect the natural, landscape character of the surrounding area, and will make a positive contribution to the Vale of Health and wider Hampstead Heath
- 6.4 Overall the proposed development will provide significant improvements to the existing play area. The proposal is considered to be acceptable to relevant national, regional and local planning policy and therefore the application should be approved without delay.

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