

Cultural and leisure facilities

- 4.49 Cultural and leisure facilities, such as theatres, galleries and museums; live music, comedy and dance venues; and provision for sports and exercise, contribute enormously to Camden's attractiveness as a place to live, work or study. These facilities support opportunities for people from all walks of life to meet and interact and promote a sense of belonging and connection. The variety and richness of culture and leisure facilities has an influence on community identity and mix, townscape character and the local economy.
- 4.50 Camden has a long history as a centre of creativity, attracting artists to live, study and work. This is demonstrated in the breadth of facilities in the borough, which include the British Museum, Roundhouse, Cockpit Arts, Camden People's Theatre, Akademi, The Place, Camden Arts Centre, Freud Museum and the New Diorama Theatre. Part of the West End theatre district lies in Camden and there are a number of cinemas and theatres elsewhere in the Borough catering for local/specialist audiences. Camden Town, in particular, acts as an internationally recognised centre for cultural activities, particularly the live music scene. There is also an important cluster of cultural activities and creative industries around King's Cross.
- 4.51 The ability to sustain and build on this success relies on the availability of a wide range of suitable accommodation, including small and affordable spaces, in appropriate locations. This includes retaining supporting infrastructure such as rehearsal rooms and studios. Policies E1 and E2 of the Local Plan seek to ensure there is a continuing supply of small and medium-sized employment premises, which may be suitable for businesses in the arts and creative sector and facilitates the clustering of firms. "Policy A2 Open space" of the Local Plan seeks to deliver improvements to open spaces, such as outdoor gyms and multi-use games areas.
- 4.52 Some of Camden's cultural and leisure facilities are considered to be at risk from demolition or a change of use due to the high values generated by alternative uses, particularly housing. Also, development in the vicinity of some facilities, particularly live music venues and theatres, can potentially lead to pressure from their occupants for additional restrictions on venues to be applied. This could affect their viability and may even lead to a facility closing despite of its wider community benefit. This risks diminishing the mix and richness of Camden's culture and leisure offer. Pubs are closely linked to the vibrancy of Camden's culture by providing space for live music, comedy and theatre and are protected through "Policy C4 Public houses".
- 4.53 There are a number of sports facilities in the Borough including multi-purpose sports halls, fitness centres/gyms, swimming pools and bespoke provision for individual sports. There is a mix of private, voluntary and public sector providers and shared-use agreements are an important means of securing access for the wider community. It is desirable to protect these facilities, if viable. There is a very high level of demand on some sports facilities in the Borough linked to the large population of students and popularity of after-work sports activities. The Council will seek to ensure these demands do not harm the opportunity for the wider population to participate in physical exercise and sport or adversely affect

the development of sports or athletes.

- 4.54 Some cultural facilities, such as museums and galleries, are classified as D1 under the Use Classes Order, as they are considered to provide a service to the community. They will be protected in accordance with “Policy C2 Community facilities”. Most other cultural and leisure uses fall under D2 of the Use Classes Order or are sui-generis (not belonging to a specific use class) for which this policy will apply.
- 4.55 This policy aims to ensure we give particular attention to the value provided by cultural and leisure facilities in planning decisions. It also seeks to address their vulnerability from higher value land uses.

Policy C3 Cultural and leisure facilities

Protection of cultural and leisure facilities

The Council will seek to protect cultural and leisure facilities and manage the impact of adjoining uses where this is likely to impact their continued operation.

Where there is a proposal involving the loss of a cultural or leisure facility, it must be demonstrated to the Council’s satisfaction there is no longer a demand. When assessing such planning applications, we will take the following into account:

- a. whether the premises are able to support alternative cultural and leisure uses which would make a positive contribution to the range of cultural and leisure facilities in the borough;
- b. the size, layout and design of the existing facility;
- c. proposals for re-provision elsewhere;
- d. the impact of the proposal on the range of cultural and leisure facilities; and
- e. the mix of uses in the area.

Exceptionally it may be practicable for a cultural or leisure facility to re-provided on-site through redevelopment, or elsewhere in the Borough. The Council will take the following into account when determining the suitability of proposals:

- i. the impacts of the re-provision on the existing occupier and users of the facility;
- ii. changes in the mix of uses arising from the loss of the existing cultural/leisure facility;
- iii. the loss of cultural heritage; and
- iv. the affordability of the new facility.

If a replacement facility is provided, it should be at the same or better standard than the facility which is lost and accessible to its existing users.

New cultural and leisure facilities

The Council will seek opportunities for new cultural and leisure facilities in major, mixed use developments and support the temporary use of vacant

buildings for cultural and leisure activities. We will seek shared-use or extended access for the community in appropriate developments through developer agreements.

We will expect the siting of new facilities, including the expansion of existing provision, to take into account its associated impacts. Large-scale facilities should be located where as many people as possible can enjoy their benefits and make use of public transport to get there. Central London and town centres will, therefore, be the most appropriate locations.

Smaller facilities may, however, be appropriate anywhere in the Borough providing they do not have an adverse impact on the surrounding area or the local community.

Retaining cultural and leisure facilities

- 4.56 The Council will seek to retain cultural and leisure facilities. In assessing planning applications, we will consider the effects of the proposal on both the local area and the wider borough and whether the loss of a use would be detrimental to the range of leisure and cultural facilities, including specific cultural and leisure activities (e.g. live music), where appropriate. We will also consider whether the scheme would be detrimental to health and well-being through the loss of facilities which provide meeting spaces for the community. We will take into account any planned new facilities which may address a shortfall in provision.
- 4.57 Cultural and leisure facilities can contribute to townscape value and the special character and appearance of conservation areas and may be a heritage asset in their own right. The civic importance of buildings, such as theatres and music venues, is often reflected by the quality of their architectural design and internal fabric and fittings. Cultural and leisure facilities support consumer expenditure, tourism and business investment in the Borough and contribute to the vibrancy and success of town centres and the night-time economy. The following types of facility are considered to be important in helping to define Camden's cultural and leisure offer:
- small, affordable accommodation highly valued by artists and performers;
 - the range of live music venues and performance spaces, including the concentration of these uses in Camden Town;
 - theatres of national, metropolitan and local/community significance, including part of London's 'theatreland';
 - the mix of galleries and venues supporting visual arts;
 - nationally and internationally important museums, archives and collections;
 - a wide range of indoor and built sports provision, including for specialist sports;
 - schools which through community access agreements provide opportunities for residents to participate in physical activity and sport; and
 - facilities supporting protected groups, e.g. children and young people.
- 4.58 The Council recognises that the users of a leisure or cultural facility will be drawn from a catchment unique to the particular venue and therefore we will consider the value a facility provides to Londoners, including protected groups (as set out in the Equality Act 2010) where relevant, as well as the local

community.

- 4.59 Cultural and leisure facilities are seen as being under particular threat in London due to rising property values and their siting in prominent locations. There are a wide range of facilities we wish to see protected, in particular affordable accommodation as this is becoming increasingly scarce in inner London. Certain facilities are particularly valuable due to their significance in helping to define Camden's cultural and leisure offer.
- 4.60 The Council wants to ensure that existing cultural and leisure attractions are sustained and enhanced. It is important that noise sensitive uses, such as residential, built adjacent to an established facility, do not affect the ability for cultural and leisure premises to continue operating successfully, e.g. live music venues. "Policy A4 Noise and vibration" provides further advice on this matter.

Additional considerations where the loss of a cultural or leisure facility is proposed

- 4.61 Demand for cultural and leisure uses varies over time and as a result, there may no longer be a demand for an existing facility. Where proposals would involve the loss of a cultural or leisure facility we will expect the applicant to demonstrate to the Council's satisfaction there had been a search for alternative cultural and leisure uses for the site through a marketing exercise according to requirements which will be set out in Camden Planning Guidance. The marketing exercise should be undertaken over a period of not less than 12 months and be based on a realistic price/rent which is supported by the Council. Alternative uses should support culture and leisure strategies in Camden and London and provide benefit for the local community or protected groups. This recognises that competition from other land uses could harm the variety, richness and character of Camden and London's cultural offer. Once lost, cultural and leisure uses cannot easily be replaced as land and construction costs make it challenging to provide new facilities.
- 4.62 When a proposal would result in the loss of existing cultural or leisure uses, we will take into account the size, layout and design of the existing facility, the mix of uses in the area and proposals for the re-instatement of a cultural or leisure facility on-site or elsewhere. It is considered that scope for re-providing cultural and leisure facilities is constrained by factors such as cultural history, including associations (e.g. with prominent people or important periods or events) or experience, where these are intrinsic to a particular premises, as well as the benefits an attraction may enjoy from being located close to other cultural and leisure uses.
- 4.63 The sustainability of the funding arrangements for Council run facilities is a serious concern. There may be circumstances where a cultural or leisure facility is no longer viable. In considering proposals for replacement provision, we will take into account relevant plans and programmes to ensure services can continue to operate successfully.

Enhancing culture and leisure provision

- 4.64 The cultural and leisure sector will require more floorspace as Camden and London's population grows and in order to sustain its future success. The Council will seek opportunities for new accommodation in major mixed use

schemes. Cultural and leisure facilities can enhance the potential appeal and character of a development although an impact assessment may be required for the largest facilities.

- 4.65 Major new cultural and leisure facilities should be located where as many people as possible can enjoy their benefits and make use of public transport to get there. Smaller facilities may be appropriately located anywhere providing they do not adversely affect the amenity of the area or the local community. We will also encourage temporary cultural and leisure attractions which can bring life back to vacant buildings and land and can help to offset the environmental impacts of a development's construction phase.
- 4.66 The Council will also support communities in nominating cultural and leisure facilities as 'Assets of Community Value'. For further details, please see "Policy C2 Community facilities".