

## Provision and enhancement of open space

- 6.27 Camden benefits from a wide range of open spaces including parks, natural or semi-natural green spaces, housing estate amenity areas, playgrounds, historic cemeteries, churchyards, allotments, community gardens, outdoor sports facilities and the Regent's Canal. Hampstead Heath is the largest open space in the Borough, providing nearly half of the total area of open space and a range of outdoor sports facilities. There are over 280 designated public and private spaces shown on the Local Plan Policies Map.
- 6.28 Camden has large areas of Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) which is important to the whole of London, as well as the Borough, and provides attractive, visual breaks to the built-up area, keeping land permanently open. This designation is broadly equivalent to the Green Belt, meaning development is only permitted in very special circumstances. The Regent's Canal forms part of the Blue Ribbon Network of waterspaces and is of strategic significance to London. It contributes to open space provision by providing amenity, opportunities for recreation and support for biodiversity. The London Plan sets out in detail how development affecting the MOL and Blue Ribbon Network will be assessed.
- 6.29 The Borough has a variety of locally significant open spaces performing a range of functions. About two-thirds of all spaces are small parks, linear green space/ green corridors or amenity land used and highly valued by local residents. A significant number of open spaces are designated for their nature conservation importance and "Policy A3 Biodiversity" relates to the safeguarding of these sites. The Borough's open spaces, together with street trees, soft landscaping, roof gardens, green/brown roofs and walls and the Regent's Canal, form a network of 'green infrastructure' performing a range of functions and delivering a wealth of benefits for the local population and wildlife.
- 6.30 The Mayor of London has published the 'All London Green Grid' Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) to support the implementation of the Green Infrastructure policies of the London Plan. A series of Area Frameworks expand on this by setting out objectives and strategic opportunities in eleven sub-areas – (part of) the Lee Valley and Finchley Ridge and Central London Frameworks provide detail relating to opportunities and projects in Camden. The SPG identifies two strategically important landscape corridors partly in Camden: the Regent's Canal Link and the Nash Ramblas Link: a continuous route connecting Parliament and the Thames with Parliament Hill and Hampstead Heath.
- 6.31 Open space is critical to sustainability and wellbeing. It performs a social role by providing a variety of areas in which to relax, socialize, enjoy sport and take part in physical exercise. This is especially important at a time when the Council is seeking to address the prevalence of obesity and weight issues and their link with conditions leading to premature death. Quiet areas of green space can enhance personal wellbeing and play space is an important tool in supporting the development of children and young people. Businesses are more likely to invest in areas which offer attractive green spaces. The upgrading of open spaces and the public realm is often a key driver of regeneration and renewal

plans, restoring confidence and pride in an area. Open space and greenery can limit the risks to human health and the economy from extreme weather events and environmental threats through cooling the air, the absorption of pollutants and attenuating run-off. This will become even more important if climate change results in more extreme weather events.

## Policy A2 Open space

The Council will protect, enhance and improve access to Camden's parks, open spaces and other green infrastructure.

### Protection of open spaces

In order to protect the Council's open spaces, we will:

- a. protect all designated public and private open spaces as shown on the Policies Map and in the accompanying schedule unless equivalent or better provision of open space in terms of quality and quantity is provided within the local catchment area;
- b. safeguard open space on housing estates while allowing flexibility for the re-configuration of land uses. When assessing development proposals we will take the following into account:
  - i. the effect of the proposed scheme on the size, siting and form of existing open space and the functions it performs;
  - ii. whether the open space is replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality; and
  - iii. whether the public value of retaining the open space is outweighed by the benefits of the development for existing estate residents and the wider community, such as improvements to the quality and access of the open space.
- c. resist development which would be detrimental to the setting of designated open spaces;
- d. exceptionally, and where it meets a demonstrable need, support small-scale development which is associated with the use of the land as open space and contributes to its use and enjoyment by the public;
- e. protect non-designated spaces with nature conservation, townscape and amenity value, including gardens, where possible;
- f. conserve and enhance the heritage value of designated open spaces and other elements of open space which make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of conservation areas or to the setting of heritage assets;
- g. give strong protection to maintaining the openness and character of Metropolitan Open Land (MOL);
- h. promote and encourage greater community participation in the management of open space and support communities seeking the designation of Local Green Spaces through the neighbourhood planning process;
- i. consider development for alternative sports and recreation provision, where the needs outweigh the loss and where this is supported by an up-to-date needs assessment;

- j. preserve and enhance Hampstead Heath through working with partners and by taking into account the impact on the Heath when considering relevant planning applications, including any impacts on views to and from the Heath; and
- k. work with partners to preserve and enhance the Regent's Canal, including its setting, and balance the differing demands on the Canal and its towpath.

### **New and enhanced open space**

To secure new and enhanced open space and ensure that development does not put unacceptable pressure on the Borough's network of open spaces, the Council will:

- l. seek developer contributions for open space enhancements using Section 106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The Council will secure planning obligations to address the additional impact of proposed schemes on public open space taking into account the scale of the proposal, the number of future occupants and the land uses involved;
- m. apply a standard of 9 sqm per occupant for residential schemes and 0.74 sqm for commercial and higher education developments while taking into account any funding for open spaces through the Community Infrastructure Levy;
- n. give priority to securing new public open space on-site, with provision off-site near to the development only considered acceptable where provision on-site is not achievable. If there is no realistic means of direct provision, the Council may accept a financial contribution in lieu of provision;
- o. ensure developments seek opportunities for providing private amenity space;
- p. give priority to play facilities and the provision of amenity space which meet residents' needs where a development creates a need for different types of open space;
- q. seek opportunities to enhance links between open spaces recognising the multiple benefits this may bring;
- r. tackle deficiencies to open space through enhancement measures; and
- s. seek temporary provision of open space where opportunities arise.

## **Protection of public and private open spaces and land on housing estates**

6.32

It is important that we protect the public and private open spaces designated on the Local Plan Policies Map, as well as areas of land on housing estates with the potential to be used as public open space. They are a limited resource and highly valued by the community. There will be increased pressure on this space from the anticipated growth in Camden's population. Camden's open space designations include outdoor sports provision, including playing fields and ancillary facilities, which the Council will seek to protect, maintain and enhance. The Council's Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (2014) provides further information relating to the attributes of individual open spaces. The loss of an

open space will only be acceptable where provision of equivalent or better space is made within an appropriate catchment area for the type of open space. Catchment distances are set out in Camden Planning Guidance on amenity.

- 6.33 Camden has many large housing estates with extensive areas of amenity land. This has generally not been formally designated as open space but constitutes a potential resource for providing enhanced public or communal open space. The Council wishes to protect this land, while allowing for the reconfiguration of open space and other land uses across estates where significant public benefits have been demonstrated (for example provision of new homes, schools and other community benefits), in particular for residents of the estate. The Council will consider whether such schemes provide equivalent or better provision in terms of the quality and quantity of usable open space and secure improvements to the accessibility and range of uses. This can bring enhancements where land set within housing estates is of poor quality, badly arranged or offers limited value in terms of open space functions for which it can be used.
- 6.34 The success and viability of open spaces is closely linked to the scale, character and quality of the adjacent townscape and development. We will resist proposals which would affect the use and enjoyment of an open space through detrimental changes to its setting. This includes changes to the space's appearance or character, effects on the microclimate, levels of external light or noise pollution and overshadowing, overlooking or disruption to views in or out of the space.
- 6.35 When assessing proposals that would involve the loss of open space, it must be demonstrated to the Council's satisfaction there is an exceptional need for the development and it is associated with the use of the land as open space. Any development should be the minimum necessary to address the identified need. We will resist proposals which would be detrimental to the amenity and character of the space or reduce the public's use and enjoyment of the open space and its setting. The Council will seek replacement provision elsewhere to compensate for the loss.
- 6.36 Extensions and alterations to existing buildings on open space should be proportionate to the size, including the volume, of the original building. Proposals seeking the change of use of an existing building should also be sensitive to the role and function performed by the open space. The poor quality of an open space will generally not be accepted as a reason for its partial development to fund improvements as, once built on, the open space is lost to the community for ever.

### **Protection of other undeveloped areas including gardens**

- 6.37 Development within rear gardens and other undeveloped areas can have a significant impact upon the amenity and character of the area. The Council will protect such spaces in accordance with paragraph 74 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Gardens help shape their local area, provide a setting for buildings, provide visual interest and may support natural habitats. Therefore they can be an important element in the character and identity of an area (its 'sense of place'). We will resist development that occupies an excessive part of the garden, and the loss of garden space which contributes to the character of the townscape. Part of the established character of these spaces may also

be defined through features such as railings and garden walls. We will seek the retention of these features where they make a positive contribution to townscape value.

- 6.38 We will seek the retention of important views and glimpses of green space where these have been identified in a conservation area appraisal or development brief, particularly where schemes are unable to meet the requirement to provide public open space on-site, to enhance the amenity of residents and occupants. Spaces above rooflines, gaps between buildings and even small, sometimes isolated pockets of amenity space, can be vital in supporting the notion of openness, provide visual interest, soften the built environment and contribute to wellbeing. These views may also help to define the significance of heritage assets.

### **Open space designations**

- 6.39 Many of the Borough's designated open spaces are located within Conservation Areas or designated as heritage assets in their own right. This includes 'London Squares' protected for their leisure and recreational value and non-designated heritage assets identified on the Council's 'Local List' or through neighbourhood plans. A number of spaces are Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest – significant designed landscapes registered by Historic England. Open spaces can positively contribute to a conservation area's character and the setting of heritage assets. We will have regard to conservation area appraisals and management plans, the National Heritage List for England, the Greater London Historic Environment Record (HER) and other appropriate sources when establishing the contribution made by open spaces to the historic environment.
- 6.40 Camden's designated open spaces include areas of MOL. This is open space of London-wide significance that provides a break in the built up area and receives the same presumption against development as green belt land. There are four main areas of Metropolitan Open Land in Camden, which are of great importance to the borough and its character – Hampstead Heath and adjoining areas, Regent's Park, Primrose Hill/Barrow Hill Reservoir and Highgate Cemetery/Waterlow Park/Fairseat. We will protect the openness and character of these spaces in accordance with London Plan policy 7.17 and policy guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on Green Belts.
- 6.41 The NPPF introduced the concept of a Local Green Spaces designation. This is green space where development is ruled out other than in very special circumstances. A Local Green Space should be within reasonably close proximity to the community it serves, be demonstrably special to a local community and hold particular local significance, be local in character and not form an extensive tract of land. The Council is supporting Neighbourhood Forums in identifying these spaces through neighbourhood plans.
- 6.42 The Council recognises that the need for sports and recreation provision can change over time. The Council will consider proposals for alternative provision of such uses where a need has been demonstrated to its satisfaction and this need outweighs the loss of the existing provision. The proposal will also be assessed taking into account its impact on the integrity of the open space and against other relevant policies.

**Key open spaces in Camden**

- 6.43 Hampstead Heath is the largest open space in the Borough providing nearly half of our total area of open space and many of our outdoor sporting facilities. The Council will work with partners, including the City of London (who own and manage the Heath), to ensure it is properly safeguarded. There are numerous large private gardens adjacent to the Heath that are designated as open space. We will continue using guidance in conservation area appraisals and management strategies to preserve and enhance the built environment around the Heath and preserve outlooks and views from it. This includes protected views from Kenwood House and Parliament Hill to St. Paul's and from Parliament Hill to the Palace of Westminster.
- 6.44 The Regent's Canal is Camden's only significant open watercourse and winds through the borough from Regent's Park to King's Cross. It is an important historical feature and development near the Canal will be expected to reflect its unique character. We will take into account the Regent's Canal Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy when assessing applications for sites along and adjacent to the Canal. Other issues relevant to development proposals include increasing demands on the towpath by pedestrians and cyclists, the potential for crime and anti-social behaviour due to the canal's relative isolation and importance of retaining dark, unlit land in sustaining habitats and species, particularly the foraging of bats. The Canal is designated as a site of metropolitan importance for nature conservation and there is considerable scope to improve biodiversity along the Canal through planting, the provision of green or brown roofs and green walls.

**New and enhanced open space**

- 6.45 The growth of Camden's population will lead to increased use and pressure on our open spaces and therefore the Local Plan seeks to secure sufficient open space with the capacity to meet the additional demand arising from new development (including a change of use).
- 6.46 The Council will seek Section 106 planning obligations, where it is legitimate to do so, to ensure that the additional demand a development places on existing open spaces is met. In some cases the Community Infrastructure Levy will be used to provide funding for open space improvements identified by the Council on the CIL funding list. Where the Council negotiates a planning obligation, we will apply the standards set out in criterion I. Planning obligations will not be sought for open space projects which are included in the CIL funding list. In addition, the Council recognises that the pooling of planning obligations is limited to a maximum of five section 106 agreements per infrastructure project or type of infrastructure. The Council will also not seek contributions for open space from small scale and self-build developments in line with the circumstances set out in the National Planning Practice Guidance.
- 6.47 The Council will seek on-site provision of open space wherever possible, particularly in areas we have identified to be deficient in open space. Where it is demonstrated to the Council's satisfaction that on-site provision is not possible, the Council will seek other forms of open space contribution, giving preference to off-site provision which is capable of meeting the needs generated by the development. This includes securing public access to existing open spaces;



potential sites include land around housing estates and large private spaces.

### **Securing high quality new open space**

- 6.48 Where new open space is provided, it should take into account the characteristics of the site and the local context. This includes existing street patterns and pedestrian routes. The open space should be easy to use by people of all ages and consider the particular barriers that can be experienced by people with physical and sensory disabilities and must be safe and secure for everyone. An important consideration will be the long-term ability for a space, including landscaping, planting, street furniture and surfaces, to be managed effectively and with demands minimised on natural resources, where relevant.
- 6.49 Private amenity space is also important in adding to residents' quality of life and applicants are therefore encouraged to explore all options for the provision of new private outdoor space. Gardens, balconies and roof terraces are greatly valued and can be especially important for families. However, the densely built-up nature of the borough means that the provision of private amenity space can be challenging, and the Council will require that the residential amenity of neighbours is preserved. In densely developed areas, we will consider use of a financial contribution to create usable spaces within the public realm, for example through the widening of pavements, as this can be an effective means of achieving a range of environmental and quality of life benefits. These measures may also contribute to the implementation of conservation area management plans, e.g. the installation of sympathetic lighting or restoration of pavement materials.
- 6.50 Where a development generates a need, the Council will give priority to securing suitable provision of playspace for children and young people and an appropriate level of amenity space for the occupiers of a development. Camden Planning Guidance on amenity provides further detail on how financial contributions for open space provision will be calculated for individual schemes. It also sets out our requirements in relation to the maintenance of open spaces.

### **Enhancing our green infrastructure**

- 6.51 The term 'green infrastructure' refers to the network of green and open spaces, green features such as trees and green roofs and water bodies, such as the Regent's Canal, which taken together provide multiple quality of life benefits. There is a particular opportunity to continue improving links between open spaces to improve access for recreation and corridors which allow species to move between habitats. Schemes should contribute to the implementation of green infrastructure strategies (e.g. All London Green Grid) and wider strategies seeking to enhance green infrastructure, such as the Thames River Basin Management Plan.

### **Tackling open space deficiencies**

- 6.52 The Camden Open Space, Sports and Recreation Study (2014) shows the continuing presence of a number of 'deficiency areas' in the Borough where the local population is farther than 280m (or a 5 minute walk) from a designated public open space. The mapped deficiency areas are shown on "Map 2: Locations deficient in access to open space" on page 176. There are

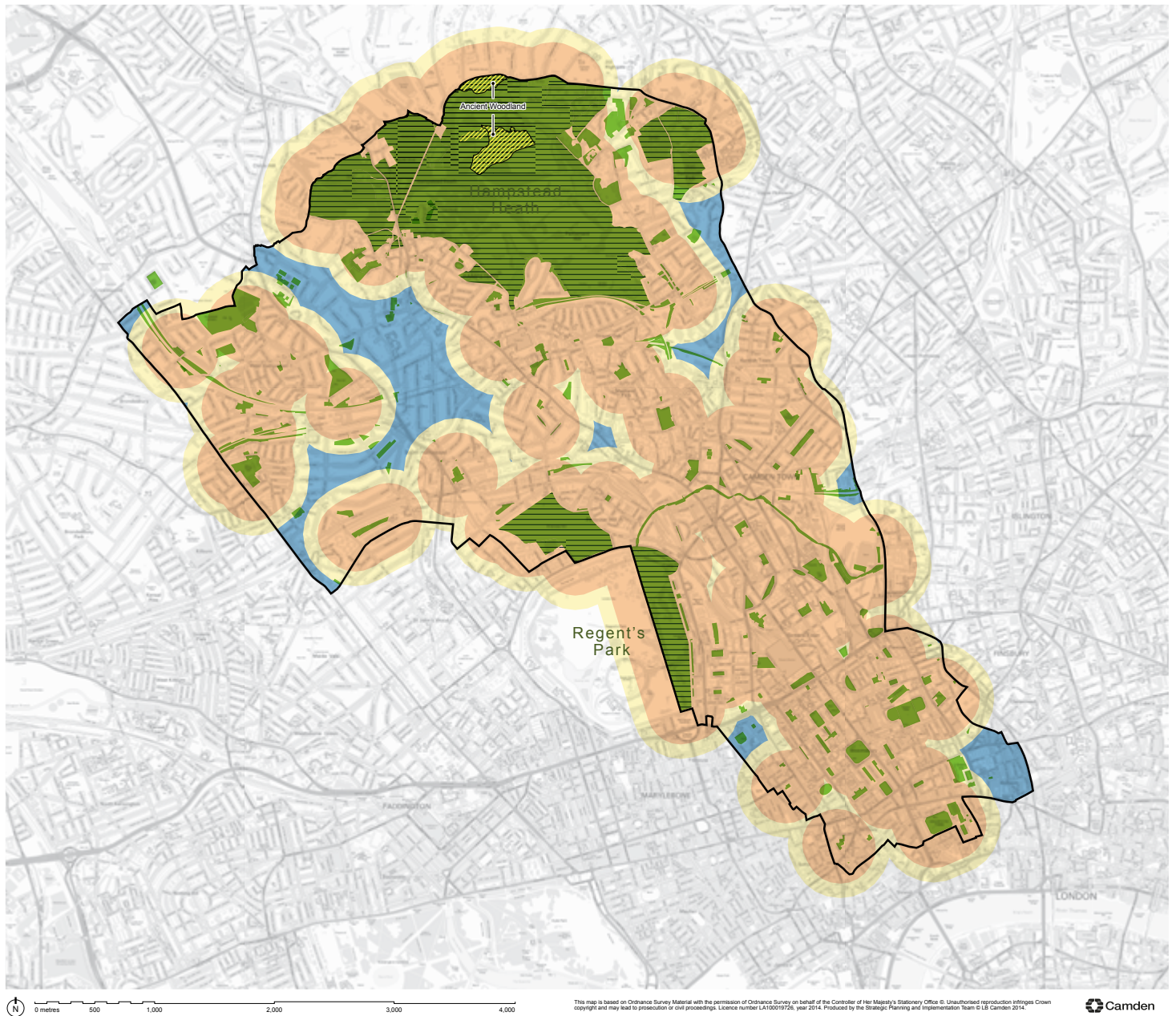
particularly large areas of deficiency in the west of the Borough and Gospel Oak. The Council's Community Investment Programme is helping to address this through improving access to high quality open spaces. There are also deficiencies in the south of the Borough where it will be very difficult to create new areas of formal open space although there will still be opportunities for green and brown walls, roof gardens or public realm improvements.

- 6.53 The Open Space Study maps the areas that do not meet standards for different types of open space (parks, children's play areas, allotments and outdoor sports pitches). The Study advises that deficiency areas should be applied flexibly because they do not take into account local demographics and population density. Nevertheless, the Council considers the deficiency areas to represent a reasonable starting point for identifying where future on-site provision should be prioritised. The Open Space Study sets out a range of measures across seven sub-areas which could potentially address the issues relating to the supply of open space.
- 6.54 Camden's Site Allocations document has identified areas and development sites where there may be opportunities for incorporating new public open space. The Fitzrovia Area Action Plan and Euston Area Plan also identify how access to open space can be improved in association with development in these areas.

#### **Temporary provision of open space**

- 6.55 Sites awaiting development can sometimes make short term contributions to open space provision. We will strongly support the temporary use of cleared sites for public open space during the construction period where this can meet local needs. Such sites provide a potential location for local food growing projects.



**Map 2: Locations deficient in access to open space**

- Open Space
- Metropolitan Open Land
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Borough boundary

Open space deficiency:

