

# **Examination of the Camden Local Plan Proposed Submission Draft**

## **London Borough of Camden Opening Statement**

Firstly, on behalf of Camden Council I would like to welcome the Inspector, Ms Kelly Ford, and all those participating in, and viewing, this public examination.

I would also like to thank Pauline Butcher, the Programme Officer, for her efficient management of the Examination process so far.

The new Camden Local Plan sets out the Council's vision for future development in the borough over the next 15 years and includes planning policies and site allocations to help achieve this.

It seeks to meet the development needs of the area and identifies where and how new homes and employment floorspace should be provided.

The Local Plan also has an important role in –

- shaping how Camden's places look and feel
- promoting inclusion and reducing inequality
- responding to climate change
- and securing sustainable neighbourhoods.

The Plan will also contribute to the delivery of the ambitions, missions and challenges identified in We Make Camden, the Council's corporate strategy, and other local priorities set out in plans and strategies prepared by the Council and other bodies.

The nature of planning means that the Local Plan cannot do what everyone wants and the Council will often be in the middle between those who think we are going too far and those who do not think we are going far enough. However, the Council considers that the Plan strikes an appropriate balance and is sound.

The new Local Plan builds on policies in the Council's existing adopted Local Plan, which were previously found sound at examination and in many cases, the new Plan continues the existing policy approach, which is being implemented successfully.

In some cases however, we have taken the opportunity to update our policies to make them more effective, and respond to emerging issues.

The new Camden Local Plan will ensure that Camden continues to have robust, effective and up-to date planning policies that respond to changing circumstances and the borough's unique characteristics.

Camden is a special place to live, with many valued places, diverse communities and a strong local identity.

However, it faces a number of social, economic and environmental challenges, which the Plan seeks to address.

Housing in Camden is some of the most expensive to rent and buy in the country and demand for affordable homes, particularly for young people and families, is high.

Camden is a relatively small, densely developed, inner London borough. Many people want to live here, but there is limited land available to deliver new development. Furthermore, the sites that do come forward have existing buildings and uses, and many are challenging to develop.

Housing also faces competition from other uses with higher returns on investment.

Although the availability of land to support housing delivery in Camden is limited, the Local Plan adopts a number of proactive measures to support and promote the delivery of housing.

In particular the Plan -

- regards permanent self-contained housing as the priority land use in Camden;
- seeks to maximise the supply of self-contained housing from mixed use schemes in defined areas;
- aims to minimise social polarisation and create mixed, inclusive, sustainable and multi-generational communities by seeking a variety of housing; and
- states that housing is the preferred use where it can be demonstrated an existing office use is no longer viable.

The Plan also allocates 70 sites to deliver new homes, alongside jobs, open space, health and community facilities, leisure, culture, retail and recreation opportunities, together with the necessary infrastructure, to benefit both existing and future communities.

Camden has a successful and diverse economy, which makes a significant contribution to the UK economy, as well as being a key part of central London.

The south of the borough is also both part of London's Central Activities Zone and home to the internationally significant Knowledge Quarter innovation district.

However, this success is not shared by all.

Camden has some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in London as well as some of the most prosperous. Therefore, it is important that the Local Plan helps to achieve equitable outcomes for all those living in the borough.

The Council wants to maintain and strengthen Camden's economic position, and create an inclusive economy, maximising opportunities for residents, businesses and the voluntary sector to contribute to and share in its success through local procurement, business support, education, training and skills.

The Local Plan supports this ambition through policies which seek to ensure a continuing supply of employment land and premises to deliver growth and innovation

while securing beneficial social, economic and environmental outcomes, such as the delivery of affordable workspace and employment skills and training programmes.

The Council declared a climate and ecological emergency in 2019, recognising not only the threat of climate change but also the impact of irreversible damage to ecosystems.

A key objective of the Plan is therefore to ensure that development in Camden responds to the climate emergency by –

- using less energy
- following the principles of a circular economy
- delivering net gains in biodiversity
- promoting active and sustainable travel
- and ensuring that buildings and spaces are designed to cope with more extreme weather.

The Plan also seeks to ensure that development coming forward in the borough celebrates and reflects the diversity of Camden's communities and supports the provision of accessible services and facilities to meet their needs.

Furthermore, the Plan aims to protect the quality of life of existing and future occupiers and ensure that standards of amenity are maintained.

It also makes sure that new development respects, explores and reveals the character, heritage and distinctiveness of Camden's valued and special places, recognising that Camden has many attractive and historic neighbourhoods, which contribute greatly to the character of the borough.

The Local Plan has been prepared against a backdrop of changing national policy and with the knowledge that a draft new London Plan is due to be published imminently. This will set a proposed new capacity-based housing target for Camden.

The Local Plan responds positively to this and makes clear that the Council recognises that the housing target in the Local Plan will only apply for a brief interim period, and that once the new London Plan is adopted it will become part of the Camden's development plan.

The Council has engaged constructively and on an on-going basis with the GLA as part of the preparation of the Local Plan and the GLA has confirmed on behalf of the Mayor of London that, with a small number of minor modifications, they consider the Local Plan to be in general conformity with the adopted London Plan.

The examination of the Local Plan is the culmination of many years' hard work by the Council's planning policy team, undertaken in partnership with other key stakeholders.

The Plan has been informed by several stages of community engagement to ensure it reflects the views of residents, community groups, businesses and other interested parties; and is supported by a robust evidence base.

It has also been subject to sustainability appraisal, habitats regulation assessment, health impact assessment and equalities impact assessment.

We consider that the Plan sets out a clear framework to deliver the Council's vision for Camden -

“To make Camden a better borough – a place where everyone has a chance to succeed and where nobody gets left behind. A place that works for everyone.”

It also responds effectively to national planning policy, the London Plan, and Camden's distinctive social, economic and environmental context.

It seeks to ensure that housing and other development in the borough will be provided in a manner which is socially and economically inclusive and environmentally sustainable, to create a borough that works for everyone.

The Council therefore considers that it has submitted a sound Plan that is positively prepared, justified, effective, and consistent with national policy.

For these reasons, I commend the Camden Local Plan to the Planning Inspector.