

# Shaping the future of the West Hampstead area



*A plan for the wider West Hampstead area*

## Consultation on key issues May 2011

## Introduction



West Hampstead is a vibrant part of Camden boasting excellent transport links, a unique high street, and desirable residential streets. Local residents are proud of their neighbourhood, especially of the picturesque character of West End Lane leading up to West End Green and the area's stunning historic architecture. Many independent shops also contribute to West Hampstead's village feel.

West Hampstead is highly accessible by public transport and is a significant interchange with three stations served by London Underground, Thameslink and London Overground and a number of bus routes located on West End Lane. West Hampstead's three stations are a major asset to many residents, although the messy and congested station environment along West End Lane is also a source of local dissatisfaction. The station interchange area and the under-utilised railway lands have attracted a lot of attention over the last few years for their development and improvement potential. Many local residents have been very active in shaping proposals for the interchange over the years and feel passionately about ways to accommodate growth in the area while maintaining its distinctive sense of place.

As a whole, West Hampstead is one of Camden's most prosperous neighbourhoods with high levels of well-being, educational attainment, and employment. The area also has a higher proportion of people of working age, particularly in the 20-34 age group. There are relatively fewer Council or Housing Association homes in the area, and most residents tend to own their properties or rent their accommodation from a private landlord.

West Hampstead is one of nine places in the Borough where we are looking to shape the overall vision for the area, reflecting local issues and priorities and ensuring that all parties can make the most of future investment and service improvement through a plan. As part of this process we would like to hear from local people and groups about what they think are the most important issues that the plan for West Hampstead should address, so that we can improve the area for those that live and work here as well as visitors.

This key issues consultation covers three overarching themes:

- Living in West Hampstead
- Supporting a prosperous local economy in West Hampstead
- Managing sustainable growth in West Hampstead

### WHAT PEOPLE HAVE SAID:

“There is a strong community feel and really good connections between people who have lived here for decades”

“Shops around here provide a very strong social function”

“The lime trees on Iverson Road are lovely”

## *What are we doing?*

We are preparing plans for nine Camden places and in doing so there is an opportunity to think and act strategically about future investment decisions and service improvements that will really make a difference to people in each of the areas. It is about ensuring that the Council's ambition for making our places a better place to live, work and visit is realised. We will be considering local services as well as physical changes to ensure that they meet the identified needs, resources and local concerns of an area in the context of reduced public finances.

We will also aim to set out the improvements that can be achieved in the area, through working with partners and developers, such as enhancing streets and open spaces, improving the shopping offer on our high streets, delivering better homes for people, investing in our community spaces or securing local jobs and training opportunities for local people.

A plan for the Camden Town area was recently completed and plans will also be prepared for Euston, Kings Cross, Gospel Oak, Swiss Cottage, Kentish Town, Kilburn and the St Giles/Holborn area in consultation with local communities.

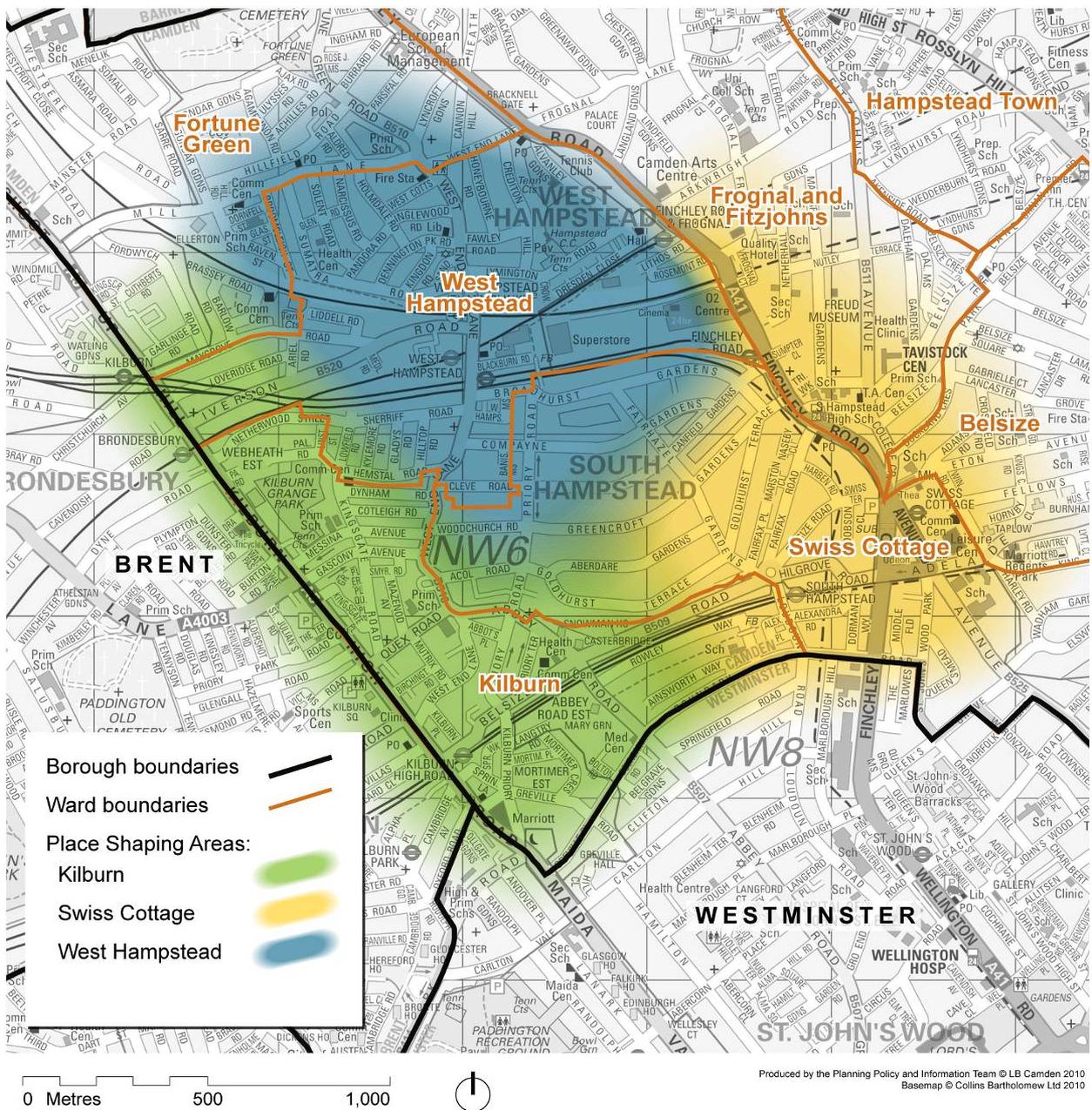


## *Why are we doing this work?*

This process is about making sure that future development and change in an area delivers services, facilities and a public environment that works for the communities who live in the area. In order to achieve this we are preparing plans for the nine areas to ensure that the particular needs of these important places are looked at in a comprehensive way. The plans will identify the key issues and set out what type of place an area could be in the future through articulating an overall vision and a set of objectives for each area. They will also include an action plan so there is a clear set of actions drawing together the input from a range of partners, including the Council. By having a clear overview of the actions that will make a difference to the people in an area we will be able to work with others to make these places better for the people who live, work and visit.

## *What will the plan for West Hampstead cover?*

The plan for the West Hampstead area will focus on the 'interchange' area comprising of the three stations located on West End Lane. It includes the West End Lane retail strip and adjoining residential areas and industrial sites. This is where planned change and investment is occurring and where the main development opportunities will arise. The plan will also cover a relatively wide area which includes the area up to the Finchley Road to the east, up to Kilburn Grange Park to the west, Abbey Road to the south and Mill Lane to the north. The plan will have no fixed boundaries. Neighbouring areas such as Kilburn High Road and Finchley Road will be covered in much greater depth through the Kilburn and Swiss Cottage plans. These areas may be of interest to local residents and businesses and linkages with West Hampstead will be considered. Please see Figure 1 below for a map illustrating the relationship between West Hampstead plan area and adjoining Kilburn and Swiss Cottage plan areas.



**Figure 1: Map showing the relationship of West Hampstead plan area to adjoining Kilburn and Swiss Cottage plan areas**

### What is this consultation asking?

Some background work has already been carried out to inform this consultation. This draws on the work of the Council across a wide variety of services and takes into account what previous consultations with people and groups in the area have told us about local priorities.

From this we have identified a series of key issues that the plan could address. The purpose of this engagement is to provide an overview of the issues already identified and to check whether there are other issues that are important locally.

In order to do this the consultation is aimed at community and voluntary sector groups we know are active in the area and who represent range of views and interests. Important stakeholders in the area like the police, health service and major land-owners, businesses and developers will also be included.

We recognise that there are a diverse range of views and perspectives, and we don't expect everyone to agree on everything. But we do know that if this work is really going to make a difference to our existing and new communities we need to hear a wide range of voices and work hard to balance competing views in the emerging vision and plan.

Questions are posed throughout the document to draw out views in relation to various topics, but the main things we would like to hear the views on are:

- *Whether the issues we have identified are the right ones to be given priority?*
- *Whether there are other important issue we have missed?*
- *What the overall vision for the area should be?*
- *What kinds of actions the community would like to see included in the final plan to address the identified issues?*

## **Next Steps: Developing a Vision and an Action Plan**

The next stage in this process is about developing an overall vision for the area and identifying what key issues and priorities should be covered in the plan. These should reflect local views across the West Hampstead area. Once we have developed a vision and heard what issues are important locally following this engagement and the associated workshops, we will begin developing an overall plan for the area. This will include an action plan which sets out all of the intended actions we plan to deliver.

### **Vision**

The vision will be a key part of the plan for the West Hampstead area as it will be an overarching statement that reflects the issues, most important in the West Hampstead area. It will make clear the kind of place the wider community would like the area to be. The vision will also be the statement from which the key objectives for the plan for the West Hampstead area will flow and that the actions in the action plan will be aimed at delivering.

**Question: What do you think the vision for West Hampstead should be?**

### **Action Plan**

The action plan will be the key element of the West Hampstead plan which sets out the actions and interventions that are proposed in order to deliver on the agreed vision and objectives. The actions are intended to be deliverable and measurable steps which the Council and its partners will take and against which progress will be monitored.

The action plan will be developed alongside the vision and objectives but please let us know if there are any priority actions that you would like to highlight at this stage.

**Question: Are there any important actions that you would like to highlight at this stage for inclusion in the plan for the West Hampstead area?**

### **How to contribute**

This document is intended to stimulate debate and comment on what are viewed as the most important issues locally and how we should seek to address these through the proposed plan.

As part of this process we are contacting groups and organisation to ask them to send representatives to attend workshops to participate in discussion about the most important issues for the West Hampstead area.

The workshops will be run by an independent facilitator who will summarise all of the points and comments made at the sessions in a report that will be used to inform the preparation of the plan itself.

We are also happy to receive any written contributions and comments you may wish to make. These can be sent to:

Post: Placeshaping Team  
London Borough of Camden  
6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Town Hall Extension  
Argyle Street  
London WC1H 8EQ

## West Hampstead in Context



West Hampstead has a distinctive village vibe. West End Lane in particular brings people together to shop and mingle at cafes and restaurants, especially on weekends and evenings when the high street really comes to life. West Hampstead is a friendly place which is elegant and lively. It offers many residents the perfect balance of intimacy and cosmopolitanism so prized in London.

### WHAT PEOPLE HAVE SAID:

**“I often bump into people I know on the street and stop for a quick chat”**

**“I’ve certainly spent plenty of lazy Sundays in the cafes around here”**

**“Things have really changed over the past 30 years or so. I loved it then and I love it now”**

West Hampstead is one of London’s most prosperous and attractive neighbourhoods. Most of the local housing falls within two conservation areas, West End Green/ Parsifal Road to the north and South Hampstead to the south. The development of West Hampstead’s transport corridors over the nineteenth century has had a major influence on the way the area has evolved. The railway lines carve into the urban fabric creating some isolated pockets. The central interchange area at the heart of West End Lane breaks up the high street and divides existing residential communities.

West Hampstead is an area of growth. It has been identified as an ‘area for intensification’ in the London Plan and a ‘growth area’ in Camden’s Local Development Framework (LDF). The London Plan is the Mayor of

London’s spatial development strategy for greater London and it sets out the integrated social, economic and environmental framework for the future of London. The LDF sets out Camden’s planning strategy and policies and suggest there is capacity for in the region of 1000 new homes and 7,000 sq m of business floor space over the next 15 or so years. West Hampstead is therefore likely to undergo significant change in the future. While it now appears improbable that a large scale interchange development will take place in West Hampstead, as proposed in 2003 by Chiltern Railways, this area is nonetheless likely to be transformed in the future through incremental development.

The projected scale of development in West Hampstead will undoubtedly transform the area. As development proposals emerge, as for example the new student housing scheme on Blackburn Road, West Hampstead is likely to become a more diverse and vibrant part of Camden. This new part of town has a great potential to contribute to the local sense of place and new families, students, and professionals will enrich local identity.

While the area's transformation won't happen over night, it's important that the change is guided by local aspirations and managed in a coordinated manner. The envisaged addition of 800 new homes will introduce new opportunities and challenges to the area. New development can address issues arising from local needs such as improved public realm on West End Lane and new employment space to bolster the local economy. However, an intense level of development will also put pressure on public services at a time of diminishing public funds.

The Council's recently published Financial Strategy outlines the implications of the Government's Spending Review and sets out Camden's approach to dealing with the financial challenge. The Council is looking at ways to improve, shape and transform key places and services in Camden in light of its current financial position. The Community Investment Programme outlines the strategic, place-based approach being developed to protect and improve Council assets into the future. West Hampstead is one of nine priority areas in Camden where this programme aims to target the right services in the right place to give each area the very best offer. This programme includes a number of localised proposals, and, in the case of West Hampstead, this includes provision of a new primary school. The Council will consult with on individual proposals as they will arise.

This consultation on key issues for West Hampstead aims to distil a vision for the area and highlight emerging issues. A clear and considered vision for West Hampstead is more important than ever as pressure on council resources demands more strategic and coordinated investment. This vision is vital in ensuring that any single proposal contributes to the area's wider objectives, needs, and identity.

## Key Issues

This section sets out the main issues identified from the Council's existing knowledge of the area and from previous engagement and consultations with local people and groups. The issues raised are up for discussion at the workshop and the Council would be happy to change or add new issues or remove issues if they are not important to the community. The issues in this paper will form the basis from which a plan for the West Hampstead area will be based on.

### 2004 Planning Framework:

*West Hampstead has had a long history of proposals relating to the interchange area. In 2004 Camden Council published a draft 'Planning Framework for West Hampstead Interchange Area' following public meetings and consultation with many individuals, groups, businesses and organisations. While the Council never formally adopted this framework, it identifies many key issues still relevant today such as the need to improve the transport interchange, introduce a rich mix of uses through development, and strengthen the town centre.*

### These issues are captured under three overarching themes:

- Living in West Hampstead
- Supporting a prosperous local economy in West Hampstead
- Managing sustainable growth in West Hampstead

## 1. Living in West Hampstead



Local residents are proud of their neighbourhood and feel that they are part of a community. There are many active local residents and groups, including online communities. As a planned area of intense development within Camden, West Hampstead's population is projected to grow. This will bring new demands for additional community uses. An overriding issue is to ensure that the area continues to feel welcoming and personal as the population diversifies. The preparation of a plan for West Hampstead presents an opportunity to reflect on the positive ways in which the area is changing, while recognising that there are a number of issues that continue to affect people in the area. These include:

- **Education, Play and Young People:** There is a lack of primary school places in this part of the borough and this will become even more pressing in the longer term as the population increases. Proposals to expand Emmanuel School from 0.5 form entry to 1 form entry have been approved and building works have commenced with a view to the new school building opening in September 2012. Furthermore, the council has identified a site on Liddell Road, part of which could be redeveloped for a new primary school of up to 2 forms of entry in the future. Liddell Road is currently a large employment site and therefore the local loss of any employment land will need to be carefully balanced against the community benefits achieved by the additional school places. Any change of use would require detailed consultation.

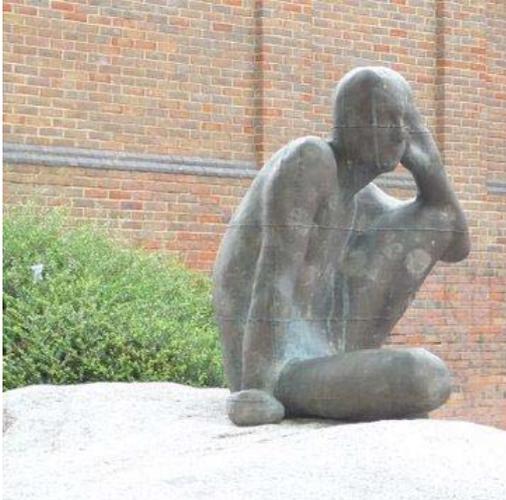
### WHAT PEOPLE HAVE SAID:

“I love the village feel in West Hampstead and that I can be in Central London in minutes”

“More greenery along West End Lane would be nice”

“The need for safety and security should be integral to any development plans and not an add on”

- **Cultural Services and Facilities** Local places West End Green and West Hampstead Library contribute to West Hampstead's village feel. These are valued by residents. For example, the local Area Action Group recently allocated £10,000 from the Improvement Fund to enhance the paved area around the library including an external community notice board, planters, lighting and seating. The council now has a target to achieve savings from the library service and a full and open consultation was carried out with the community between January and March 2011. Over 6,000 people completed the consultation survey or the childrens and young peoples survey. As part of this consultation the council asked people what their priorities are for a future service, including the location and number of libraries. West Hampstead Library was part of this consultation and therefore decisions on the future of the library will be considered with all other libraries in a report to Cabinet anticipated for June 2011. Local satisfaction with leisure and sports is above average in West



Hampstead, however lack of access to high quality parks and open spaces is an issue.

- **Voluntary and Community Sector** Ongoing funding pressures and national policy changes are transforming the way local authorities work in partnership with local communities to deliver services. Camden Council is working with voluntary sector partners in West Hampstead, such as Sidings Community Centre and West Hampstead Community Centre, to enable sustainable delivery of services to local communities in the future.



- **Community safety** There are relatively low levels of crime and anti-social behaviour in West Hampstead.

Nevertheless, local issues include residential burglary, street begging and drinking, graffiti, safety on alleyways such as Billy Fury Way, and shoplifting at the O2 centre. The Council and the Metropolitan Police will continue to work in partnership to tackle these issues. There is a need to work with landowners and developers to minimise the opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour with any future development.

## 2. Supporting a prosperous local economy in West Hampstead



West Hampstead is home to a wide variety of businesses including shops, food and drink premises, offices, and industrial spaces. Over 200 businesses from the cultural and creative industries sector are located in West Hampstead, many of which are micro businesses (under 5 employees) or freelancers working from home. West Hampstead has a relatively high proportion of convenience, retail and restaurants and cafes units, many of which are independent.



Broadhurst Gardens just south and east of West Hampstead underground station provides secondary retail, dominated by restaurants and bars. Mill Lane and Fortune Green Road, located just beyond the town centre's boundaries, provide much valued additional neighbourhood retail.

The smallest of Camden's six designated town centres, the high street provides for local people's day-to-day needs for mainly convenience shopping.

It is a highly accessible and heavily used 'spine' through the area with a mix of retail units. West End Lane is located between Kilburn and Finchley Road town centres, which further diversify the retail offer available to local residents. Shopping destinations further afield, such as Brent Cross, also have an impact on West Hampstead's commercial position.

The following issues have been identified as particularly important to West Hampstead's town centre and local economy:

### WHAT PEOPLE HAVE SAID:

**"I try to shop locally whenever possible, but I wish there was a better mix of shops"**

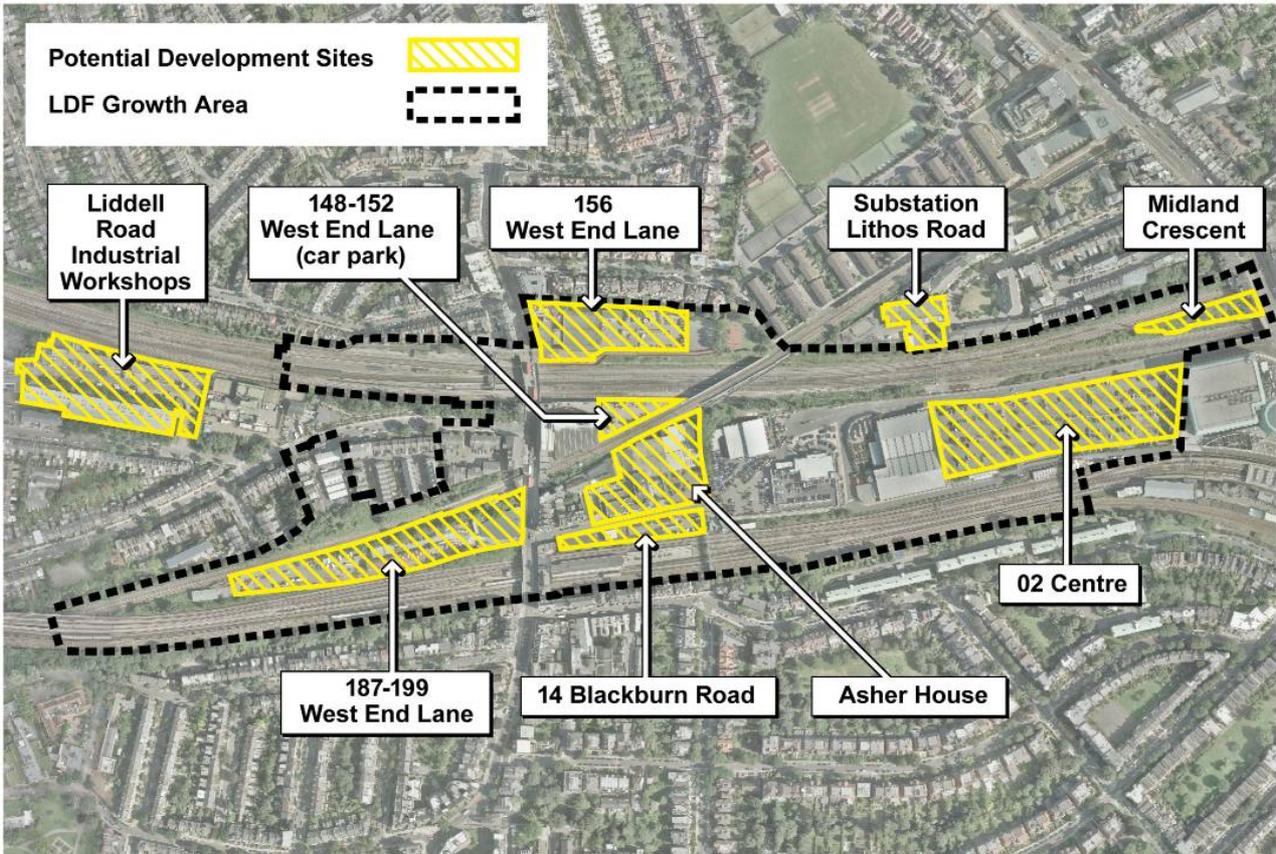
**"As a local business owner, I think our business community needs to adapt and innovate"**

**"It would be great if we could have a local market"**

- **Variety of shops** Although the town centre benefits from a range of independent shops and has low vacancy levels, the breadth of offer may not be varied enough to serve the needs of some of its residents and visitors. Several supermarkets, minimarkets and delis meet local convenience requirements but there are few comparison retailers (eg fashion or footwear). The three largest types of shop in West Hampstead are restaurants (33 units), estate agents (18 units) and hair dressers (11 units). These categories represent 37% of the businesses in West Hampstead. Independent shops and restaurants such as Blue Daisy and the Wet Fish Café along West End Lane contribute to the vibrancy and appeal of the area. It is important to maintain this valued character, try to minimise the creep of chains as well as ensure planning policies encourage retail diversity where possible to try to meet the needs of all residents and visitors.
- **Mix of employment spaces** West Hampstead offers a range of retail, industrial and office space which attracts businesses, creates employment opportunities, and contributes to the local economy as a whole. As a growth area within Camden, a key issue is to understand and respond to local business needs. Camden has very limited space dedicated to industrial and warehouse use. West Hampstead's industrial area is therefore a valuable asset, contributing to the local economy and employment. However, there is pressure from existing site owners in the southern part of the industrial area to build new accommodation on top of ground floor commercial uses. The plan can help manage these pressures and explore the suitable mix and concentration of employment space.
- **New business** Local retailers have expressed an interest in drawing customers from the station interchange to shops further north along West End Lane and are currently exploring the option of holding a market at West End Green. The Council wishes to protect West End Green as a valued quiet green space but recognises that limited business-led commercial activity here, such as a specialist market, may enhance the retail mix. Existing local business groups, freelancers and on-line business forums may wish to explore the development of, for example, a local wi-fi hotspot, serviced office space and start-up units to promote new business activity in the area.
- **Look and feel of town centre** While the northern part of West End Lane is well maintained and inviting to shoppers, the 'gateway' area around the interchange, including Blackburn Road and the hoardings in front of the railway land to the west, is far less attractive. Improving the appearance of the interchange area could improve the image of the area to visitors and potential investors. Ongoing improvement works around Iverson Road will ultimately lead to a more attractive townscape. In the meantime, managing the disruption of development on local residents, businesses and visitors will be an ongoing issue. Improvements could be made to how and when the public is informed of works, for example through clear and informative public notices.
- **Transportation** While West Hampstead is very well connected with three stations and a number of bus routes there is a problem with congestion and poor public spaces in some parts which can detract business from the area. Suspension of underground and rail services on weekends has reportedly affected local businesses. Lack of parking has also been identified as a barrier to shopping in the area. Improved pedestrian and cycle routes could alleviate local congestion and bring shoppers into the area. Improved transportation links to neighbouring town centres in Kilburn and Finchley Road could promote shopping in the wider area.



### 3. Growth in West Hampstead: Sustainable Growth and Development



**Figure 2: Aerial map showing the West Hampstead Growth Area as set out in Camden’s Local Development Framework and individual sites identified for possible development**

West Hampstead has been identified as an area of growth in the London Plan and in Camden’s Local Development Framework. There is scope for development of the underused lands between the railway tracks to create new housing, shops, offices, community facilities and public space. This new part of West Hampstead could contribute to the vibrancy of area but also compound pressures on public services, streets, school places and transport. The area is projected to accommodate 1000 new homes. While this growth is likely to occur incrementally, it will undoubtedly transform West Hampstead. The aerial map above (Figure 2) shows key sites in West Hampstead which are likely to be subject to development proposals over the next 10 to 15 years. These sites have been identified in Camden’s Local Development Framework Site Allocations consultation document, Camden’s Community Investment Programme and through recent major planning applications. There’s a need to consider how to approach development opportunities in a coordinated and strategic manner. The following issues have been identified in relation to the anticipated growth of the area:

**WHAT PEOPLE HAVE SAID:**

“Integrate areas to the north and south of West End Lane”

“Some accommodation should be set aside for smaller independent businesses”

“Provide car capped housing as there is good public transport in this area”

- **The interchange** The three stations on West End Lane are used by more than 13 million people each year and the area around the stations is a gateway into West Hampstead Town Centre. There are a number of approved planned infrastructure improvements to the Thameslink and Overground services, which could serve to increase passenger levels and therefore place additional pressure on the

interchange. Despite the high volume of pedestrians, the area is dominated by traffic, with narrow, cluttered, and highly congested pavements. Significant improvements to the interchange area are currently under way or planned, including a new Thameslink Station and streets upgrades to make pedestrian movement safer, more convenient and more attractive. However, there are still gaps and access to various transport modes is disjointed. Future development should assist in improving the interchange to the benefit of local residents, businesses and visitors.

- **Wider linkages and integration** The existing interchange and town centre are poorly connected with surrounding neighbourhoods. The railway lines divide West Hampstead and contribute to a lack of integration throughout the area. There is a need to improve access between the north/south and east/west of the area. New and improved pedestrian and cycle links can contribute to this.
- **Environmental sustainability** Sustainability is important to all of the Camden's work but there are some particular issues in West Hampstead. These include ensuring building works minimise the effects of flooding, improving insulation in the area's many historic buildings, and enhancing biodiversity along the railway tracks. Encouraging walking and cycling as an alternative to other modes of transport can contribute to the sustainability of the area, as can an improved infrastructure for electric vehicles and car clubs.
- **Architecture and Design** The central interchange area wedged between two conservations areas – West End Green Conservation Area to the north and South Hampstead Conservation Area to the south. For the most part, West Hampstead enjoys a high quality environment with a distinctive village character. Preserving and enhancing West Hampstead's unique architectural heritage is important to local residents.
- **Mixed-uses development** To use the opportunities in West Hampstead effectively, development should make the best possible use of sites by achieving high density developments compatible with the local context and provide a rich mix of uses including housing, commercial, community uses, and open space. Emerging proposals, such as the recently approved student housing scheme on Blackburn Road, can change the housing mix of the area and impact on the local facilities. Additional homes in West Hampstead can alleviate housing pressures in other areas of Camden such as neighbouring Kilburn. There will be a need to manage future pressures on facilities and services in the area.
- **Coordinated development** The key development sites for the area have been identified in the LDF Site Allocation Preferred Approach consultation document. The main development opportunities in the West Hampstead Area of Intensification are clustered around the railway lands. Property ownership in the area is complex. As sites become available throughout West Hampstead, it's important for ensure development contributes to the wider vision for the area as set out in the plan.
- **Council owned sites** The Council is looking at all the properties it owns in West Hampstead and will assess whether these properties can be used in other ways in order to meet the needs and aspirations of the local community. This builds on existing work to adjust Camden's property portfolio to meet established local need. For example, the Council recently purchased Bloomsleigh Hall for current use by West Hampstead Community Centre and Sington Nursery. The Community Investment Programme has identified a number of future opportunities in West Hampstead including proposals to assist the improvements to schools and education facilities, opportunities to improve community facilities, and sites which might have potential accommodate new homes. For example, the Council has identified a site on Liddell Road part of which could be redeveloped for a new primary school of up to 2 forms of entry in the future and 156 West End Lane for a new mixed-use development. Local communities will be consulted on proposals in the Community Investment Programme as they develop.

- **Open Space** West Hampstead has been identified as an area with open space deficiency. Residents have expressed some dissatisfaction with the provision of parks and open spaces in the area and suggest that work should be undertaken to make the most of the limited amount of green space in the area. Existing green chains and corridors along the railway tracks and existing sites of natural conservation (such as Rosemont Community Garden and Rosemont Road Railway) should be protected and enhanced. The West Hampstead growth area has the potential to provide new open space to serve existing and new residents.

## Conclusion

Hearing the views of local people and groups is critical to ensuring that the plan for the West Hampstead area reflects local needs and priorities.

If you or your group is unable to attend the workshops then we would still like to hear your views in relation to the questions posed throughout this document or any other comments you have.

**Question:** *Do you have any other views or comments to make in relation to our shaping the future approach or in relation to the proposed plan for the West Hampstead area?*

If there are any queries please contact the Placeshaping team on 0207 974 2295 or by email at [kate.goodman@camden.co.uk](mailto:kate.goodman@camden.co.uk)