

**LONDON BOROUGH  
OF ISLINGTON**

**VALE ROYAL  
/BREWERY  
ROAD LOCALLY  
SIGNIFICANT  
INDUSTRIAL SITE  
HEIGHT STUDY**

**FINAL REPORT  
DECEMBER 2016**



**URBAN  
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PROJECT DIRECTOR Matthias Wunderlich


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REVIEWED BY Hugo Nowell  
DESIGN DIRECTOR

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APPROVED BY  
DESIGN DIRECTOR

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URBAN  
INITIATIVES  
STUDIO

Exmouth House, 3-11 Pine Street  
London EC1R 0JH

+44 (0)20 3567 0715  
www.uistudio.co.uk

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# 1 AREA CONTEXT

## 1.1 LOCATION

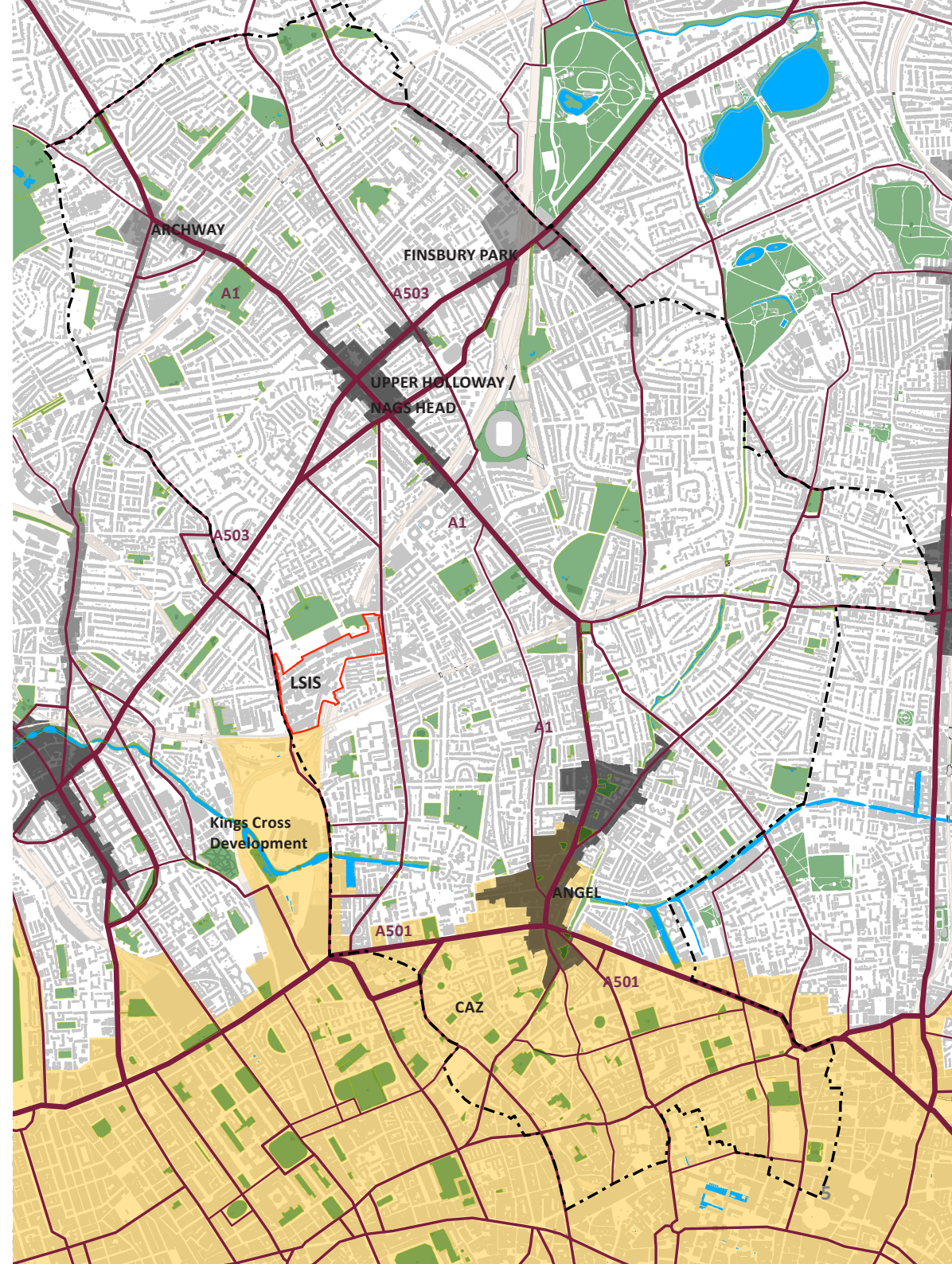
The purpose of this study is to inform a forthcoming SPD on the Vale Royal / Brewery Road Locally Significant Industrial Site (LSIS). In determining appropriate building height and other urban design parameters for the LSIS, it is necessary to examine this site and its immediate context in terms of townscape and function - particularly in the context of Kings Cross Central and associated development.

The LSIS is located on the western periphery of the Borough on the border with LB Camden. It is in close proximity to central London and the Central Activities Zone.

The LSIS is bound to the south by the London Overground lines that extend east west across the area. This is a significant barrier to movement between the LSIS and central London to the south.

Other boundaries are formed by York Way to the west, Caledonian Road to the east and Market Road to the north.

Figure 1.1: LSIS in the context of LB Islington





## 1.2 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT



Figure 1.2: Historic Plan 1837

Historic mapping shows that the area was largely undeveloped until the mid 19th century with the arrival of the railways. The 1837 map shows the Regent's Canal at the southern edge of the area and 'Experimental Gardens' further north on what is now the Vale Royal site.

York Way and Caledonian Road are evident but passing through open land.



Figure 1.3: Historic Plan 1882

By 1882 the area had been radically transformed into a dense cityscape of terraced streets. The railways have a huge impact on the area with extensive goods yards to the north of the canal and train lines passing northwards through the Vale Royal area, in part through tunnels. Large industrial/warehouse buildings are clustered around the railway. The metropolitan cattle market appears around about this time and sits adjacent to the northern boundary of LSIS. There was a coal and cattle depot to the west of the site. Early industrial development in the LSIS is apparent on York Way in an area named Rette Isle.

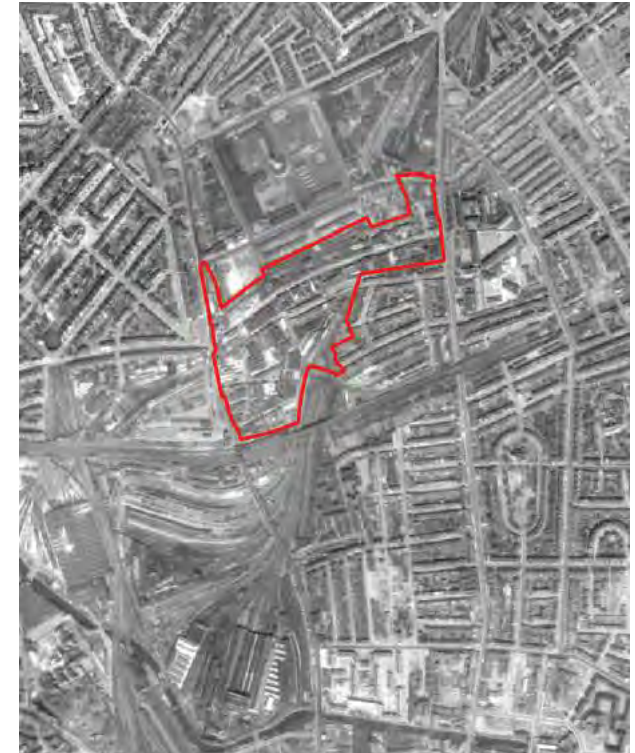


Figure 1.4: Historic Aerial image 1945

The area remains largely unchanged through to the 1950s. However, the cattle market has disappeared and pockets of post-war housing, such as those at York Way Close are beginning to be built. This pattern continues throughout the twentieth century with the development of large housing estates such as Maiden Lane and the Naylor Estate.



## 1.3 CHARACTER

### 1.3.1 CHARACTER AREAS

The area around the LSIS is diverse both in terms of built form and uses and includes several distinctive character types. These include:

- **Victorian High Street:** Traditional brick built terraces/ buildings with retail units at ground floor and residential above located on Caledonian Road;
- **Victorian housing:** typically laid out as two to four storey brick built terraces with traditional sash windows. This remains only in pockets within the area;
- **Post War Estates:** Residential estates providing a mix of flats and maisonettes. Typically they have internal networks of paths that are separate from the main vehicular routes. Much of the area south of the rail lines is of this character;
- **Late 20th century housing:** Blocks of flats, generally brick with pitched roofs, accessed from cul de sac style streets. Former rail land to the north of the area has been developed in this style;
- **20th Century office buildings:** A number of office buildings occupied by creative industries are located on Tileyard Road in Vale Royal; and

Despite this variety in the surrounding area the character within the LSIS itself is very consistent and distinctive. A vast majority of the area can be characterised as **‘Warehouse style employment’**. Most buildings are large footprint industrial style buildings and sheds. Exceptions to this include pockets of 20th century office / workspace buildings on Tileyard Road and the Victorian Robert Blair Primary School on Brewery Road.

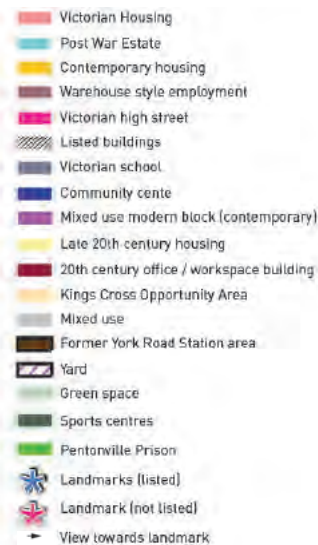
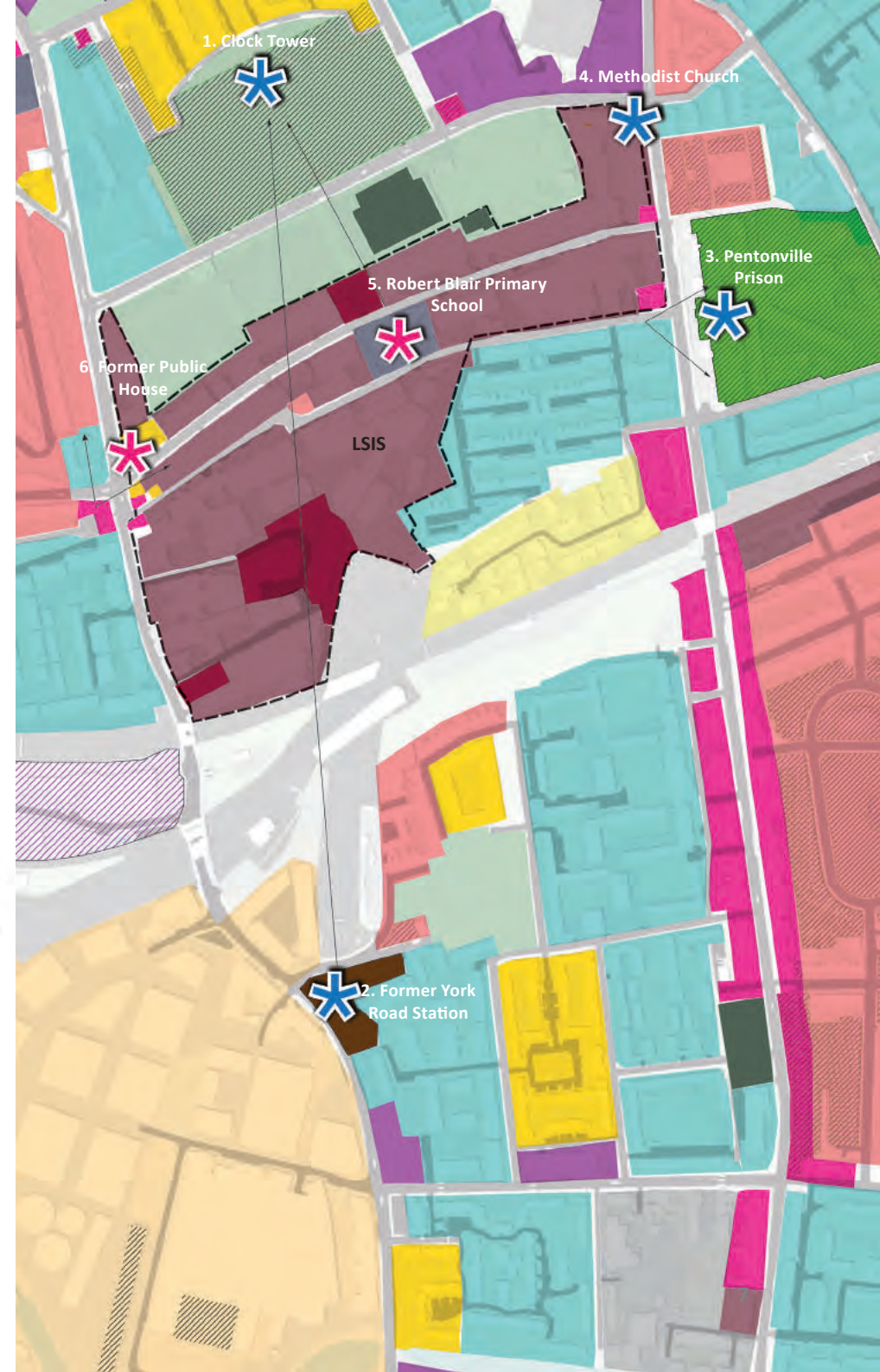


Figure 1.5: Character areas in the LSIS and wider area





There are a number of buildings in and around the LSIS that are important to the wider character of the area. These are marked on Figure 1.5 and include:

- 1 The Clock Tower on the former Cattle Market site at Caledonian Park;
- 2 The former York Road Station building on York Way- - views from here through the LSIS towards the Clock Tower on the former Cattle Market site are a particularly important element of the local character.
- 3 The entrance of Pentonville Prison on Caledonian Road;
- 4 Caledonian Road Methodist Church on the junction of Caledonian Road and Market Road;
- 5 The three storey Victorian Robert Blair Primary School on Brewery Road; and
- 6 Former public house on the junction of Brewery Road and York Way.

A high density residential led mixed use scheme has been approved on Caledonian Road in the LSIS area and is now under construction.

### 1.3.2 KINGS CROSS OPPORTUNITY AREA

Potential development in the LSIS is likely to be strongly influenced by the adjacent Kings Cross Opportunity area immediately to the west within LB Camden and by the railway land and associated yards.



Clock Tower on former Cattle Market site

The Kings Cross development is characterised by a mix of large floor plate Grade A office buildings and contemporary residential buildings set within a high quality public realm. The development has retained and incorporated several historic buildings and structures notably a former Granary building (now occupied by Central St Martins College of Arts and Design) which fronts onto a large new public space, Granary Square.

The development also includes a number of tall residential towers towards the north of the Opportunity Area close to the former York Road underground station just to the south of the LSIS.

### 1.3.3 OPEN SPACES

There are no open spaces within the LSIS. However, immediately to the north of the area is Caledonian Park located on the former Cattle Market site. The Clock Tower on the northern edge of this space is an important landmark within the wider area. Market Road Gardens and Islington tennis centre are located to the south of Market Road but are not directly accessible from the LSIS.



Former Public House on Brewery Road



Victorian Robert Blair Primary School

## 1.4 PLANNING DESIGNATIONS

The most significant planning factor to consider in this location is clearly the 'Locally Significant Industrial Site (LSIS)' designation which protects industrial uses within its boundary.

Other important designations in the wider area include the Kings Cross Opportunity Area and the Central Activities Zone. Whilst these elements are in close proximity to the LSIS there is a great degree of spatial separation on account of the railway lines that run between them.

Shopping areas are located along Caledonian Road and York Way in proximity to adjoining residential areas. Bus routes run through these areas.

The nearest open spaces are Caledonian Park and Market Road Gardens.



Figure 1.6: LSIS and wider area - planning policy designations





### 1.4.1 PLANNING SENSITIVITIES

There is only one listed buildings in the LSIS - the Caledonian Road Methodist Church on the corner of Market and Caledonian Road. There is a cluster of listed buildings opposite the LSIS's eastern boundary on Caledonian Road. This includes Pentonville Prison and adjacent mansion block apartments. These will have some impact on potential development of the eastern edge of the LSIS.

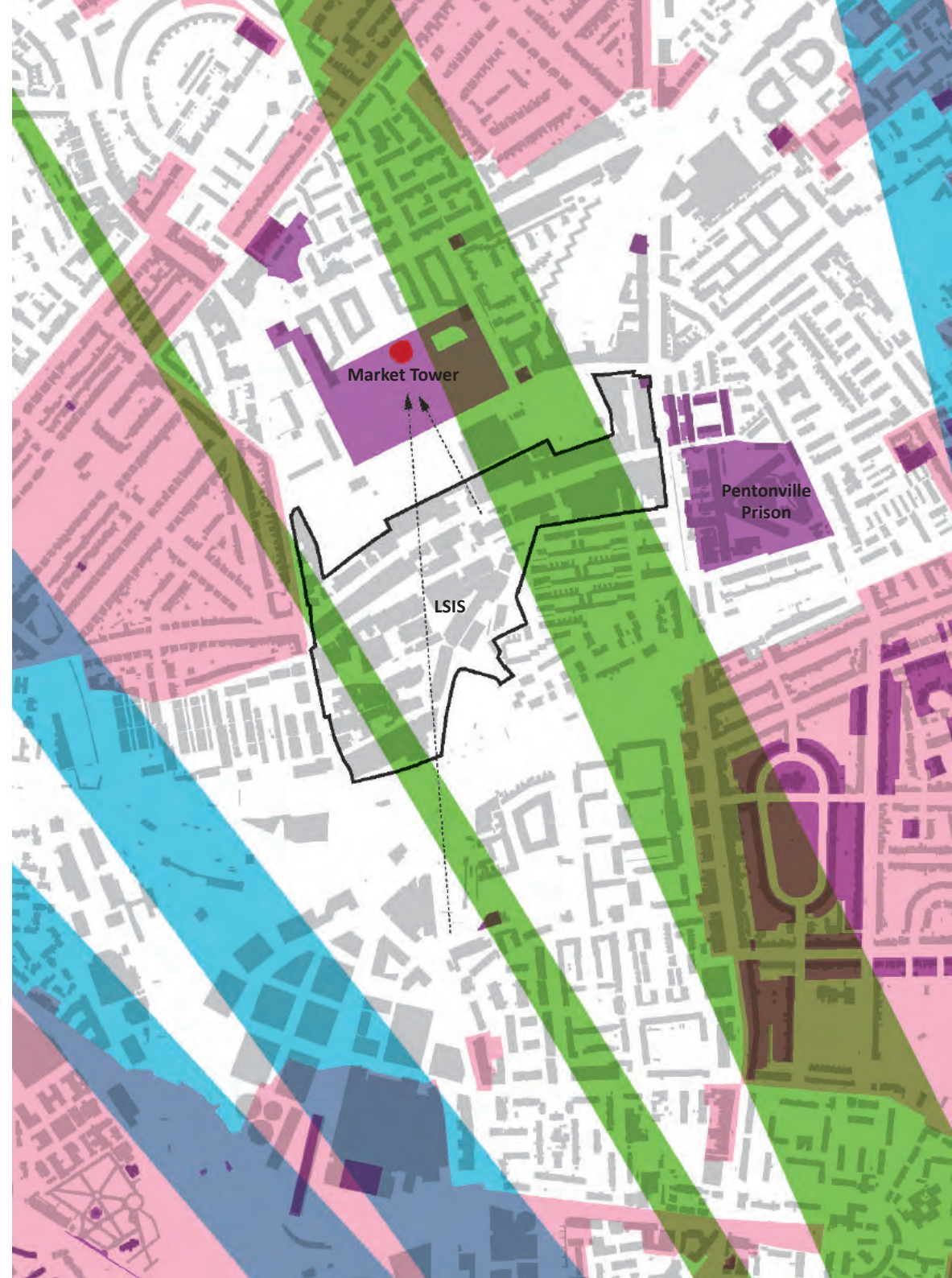
To the north the former cattle market site (now Caledonian Park) is also Listed. Whilst this will not have a significant impact on development in the LSIS its 'Market Tower' is designated as a local landmark. Policy DM2.5 states that the council will protect views of well known landmarks and exercise stringent controls on the height, location and design of any building that blocks or detracts from them.

The analysis has identified local views across the LSIS towards the Market Tower. One is from Randell's Road Railway Bridge to the to the south. The other is along the footpath between Brewery Road and Market Road. There are two locally protected views towards St Paul's Cathedral that run across the LSIS. These are from Dartmouth Park Hill and Archway Bridge respectively.

There are no Conservation Areas within the LSIS. However, there is a large, mainly residential, conservation area opposite its western boundary on York Road. Development along this edge needs to be sensitive to this.

- Grade 2\* listed property
- Grade 2 listed property
- Scheduled ancient monument
- Local landmark
- Protected Vista
- Locally Protected View
- Local view to Market Tower

**Figure 1.7: LSIS and wider area- planning policy sensitivities**





View toward the Market Tower  
from Randell's Road Railway  
Bridge





## 1.5 BUILDING HEIGHTS

The majority of the buildings in the study area are between two and four commercial storeys. There are a few higher buildings, such as Fitzpatrick House, which are between four and six commercial storeys.

Two applications for higher buildings in the area have been received. These include a planning application to increase the height of Fitzpatrick House up to 9 storeys (this is currently under consideration). Likewise, a consented development on Caledonian Road will also introduce a new scale and height to the area with heights up to 8 residential storeys.

This pattern reflects development in the wider area such as the redevelopment of Maiden Lane Estate on York Way which varies between four and seven storeys with a tower of 21 storeys.

To the south of the LSIS is the Kings Cross development where typically buildings are ten storeys and above. A Cluster of taller buildings is emerging to the north of the Kings Cross Development on York Way, which comprises buildings with heights between 15 and 23 storeys.

These new taller elements are not characteristic of this area - especially within the LSIS where storey heights are notably lower reflecting the big footprint industrial buildings located here.

**Figure 1.8: LSIS and wider area - existing and consented building heights** \*Please note that the height ranges shown go up in 3m increments. This reflects residential storey heights of 3m that were used for the assessment. The equivalent number of commercial stories is indicated in the key.





## 1.5 BUILT FORM & MIX OF USES

### 1.5.1 TOWNSCAPE

Most of the buildings in the study area front on to the street. However, many of the industrial buildings present blank elevations at ground floor level with openings restricted to vehicular access points or loading bays only.

The eastern and western edges of the LSIS have more positive frontages – this is partially due to the concentration of lighter industries, business and residential uses in proximity to York Way and Caledonian Road. Both of these roads are important routes in and out of London that can be seen in early historic maps. Both have been focal points for development over time with shopping areas and transport networks locating along them. Traditionally both would have had a very strong continuous frontage patterns that enclosed the road carriageway. This pattern has been somewhat eroded over time, especially with the advent of post war housing estates, such as the Naylor estate located directly to the south east of the LSIS. Recent development such as Maiden Lane and Kings Cross have tried to reinstate the traditional frontage pattern along these roads.

The LSIS is characterised by big footprint industrial style buildings. This contrasts markedly with the finer grain, traditional character of the surrounding area. Adjacent post war housing estates between the LSIS and Caledonian Road also vary from traditional patterns.



Figure 1.9: LSIS and wider area - frontage condition





## 1.5.2 MIX OF USES

Uses within the LSIS are varied and include: trade suppliers, emergency service depots, food manufacturing and distribution, music and equipment hire, offices and a primary school. There is a concentration of uses such as recording studios and small offices towards the west of the study area, especially around Tileyard Road and Vale Royal. The block between Brandon Road and Tileyard Road is largely occupied by distribution companies.

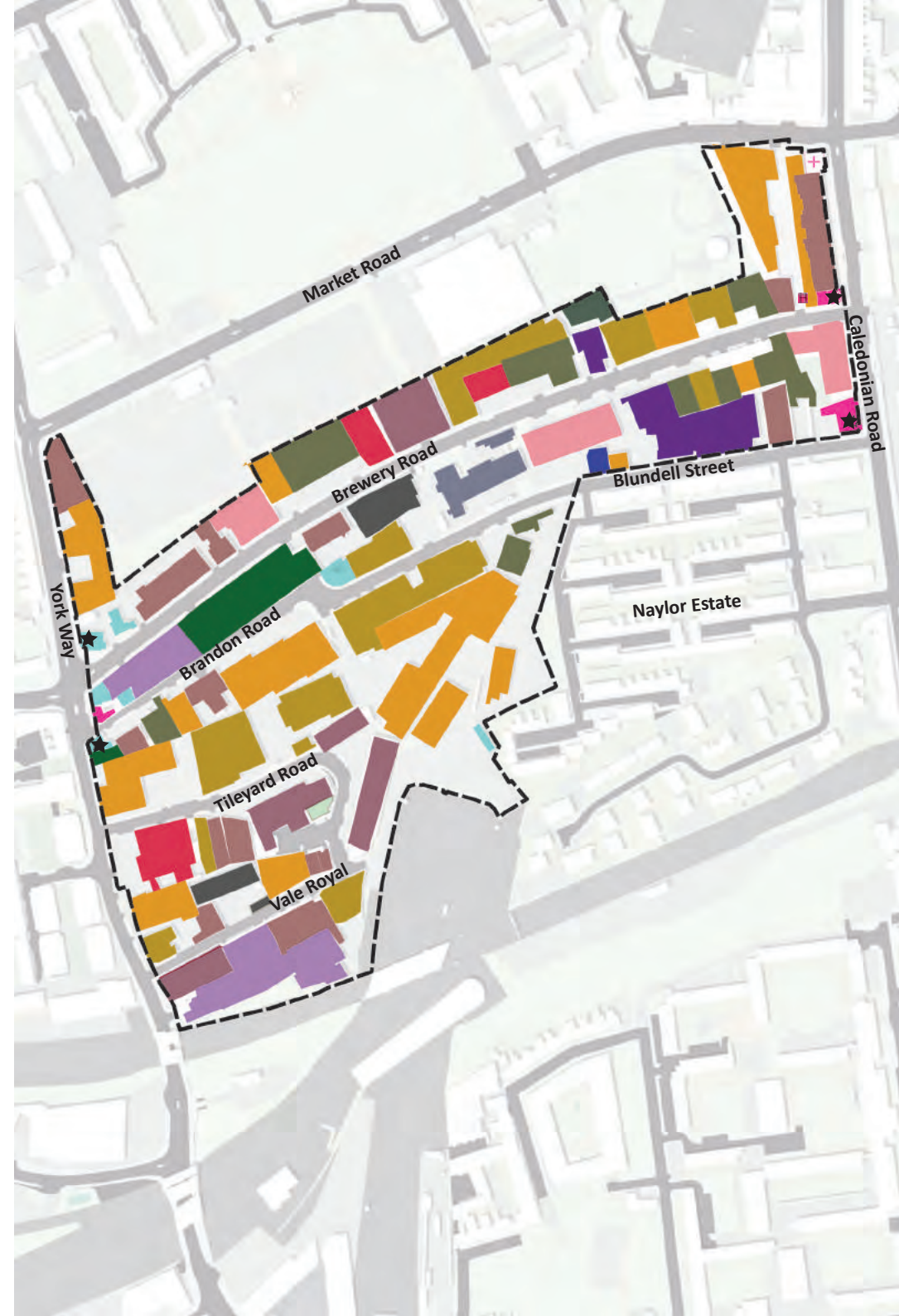
Retail uses are focused along Caledonian Road. These generally have residential uses at upper levels.

There is very little housing within the LSIS. There is one small block of flats on Brandon Road. Other pockets of housing are located around the peripheries of the LSIS along York Way and Caledonian Road.

Just outside the south eastern border of the LSIS is a large housing estate. The post war Naylor Estate has a direct relationship with the LSIS along Blundell Street. The amenity of these neighbours must be considered with any development in the LSIS.



**Figure 1.10: LSIS - mix of uses** \*This map shows current land uses. It does not show consented schemes such as the consented residential led mixed use at 425 Caledonian Road in the north eastern corner.



### 1.5.3 BUILDING TYPOLOGIES

There are a number of distinctive types of buildings in the study area. These relate closely to the types of uses identified above. These include:

- Contemporary office spaces and music studios - these are focused around the south west corner of the LSIS;
- Warehouse conversions – these are buildings that have been converted from storage/warehousing and industrial uses to offices, artists studios/other creative uses and showrooms and are primarily located in the LSIS;
- Warehouses with office - this type of building has vehicular access bays at ground floor level with office uses above. These are primarily located in the LSIS along Brewery, Brandon and Blundell Street.
- Multi –storey warehouses – this definition relates to large warehouse buildings with several storeys of accommodation above. Most have vehicular access points at ground floor level. These are mainly focused around the western edge of the LSIS.
- Warehouses – this type of building describes large shed like structures generally used for sales and distribution. They generally have dedicated yards or bays for vehicular parking. These are distributed throughout the LSIS.



--- LSIS boundary

Figure 1.11: LSIS - contemporary office spaces and music studios

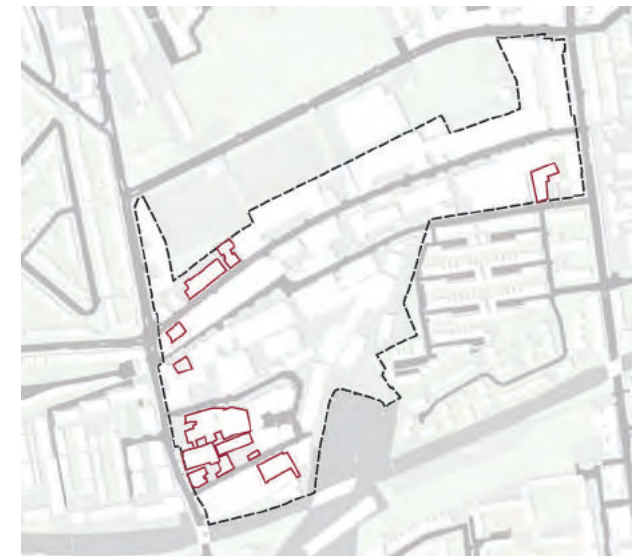


Figure 1.12: LSIS - warehouse conversions



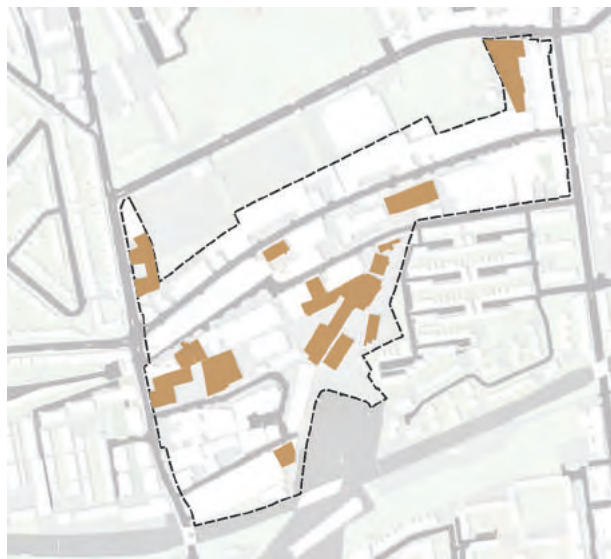


Figure 1.13: LSIS - warehouses with offices

Figure 1.14: LSIS - warehouse sheds

Figure 1.15: York Way / Vale Royal - other uses



## 1.6 MOVEMENT

### 1.6.1 VEHICULAR MOVEMENT

York Way and Caledonian Road are the key strategic routes running in a north- south direction through the study area and the only ones that cross the railway line. The rail lines disconnect LSIS from the area to the south including the CAZ and Kings Cross Opportunity Area.

The Vale Royal/Brewery Road LSIS is not well connected internally. Brewery Road and Brandon Road/Blundell Street are the only streets that run in an east west direction the entire way across the area. These are not connected internally for vehicles or pedestrians.

Tileyard Road and Vale Royal form a small access loop across in the south-west corner of the study area. The Naylor Estate and adjoining housing is accessed from Blundell Street and Caledonian Road.



Figure 1.16: LSIS and wider area - vehicular movement



## 1.6.2 PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The PTAL rating across the study area varies from 1b to 6.

The Caledonian Road corridor is the best connected part of the study area. Caledonian Road Underground (Piccadilly Line) and Caledonian Road and Barnsbury Overground Station, and several bus routes are located along this corridor.

PTAL ratings are poorest along the western edge of the study area on York Way. Should the former York Road Station re-open in the future, PTAL ratings in this area would likely improve significantly.

The study area is located in relatively close proximity to Kings Cross and St. Pancras mainline stations and associated underground station. PTAL ratings here are extremely high, between 4 and 7 as shown in the bottom left hand corner of Figure 1.7. A direct walking route connects the LSIS via York Way and the Kings Cross development to this transport hub.

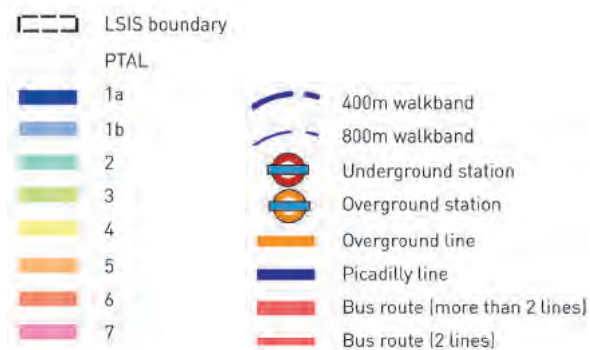
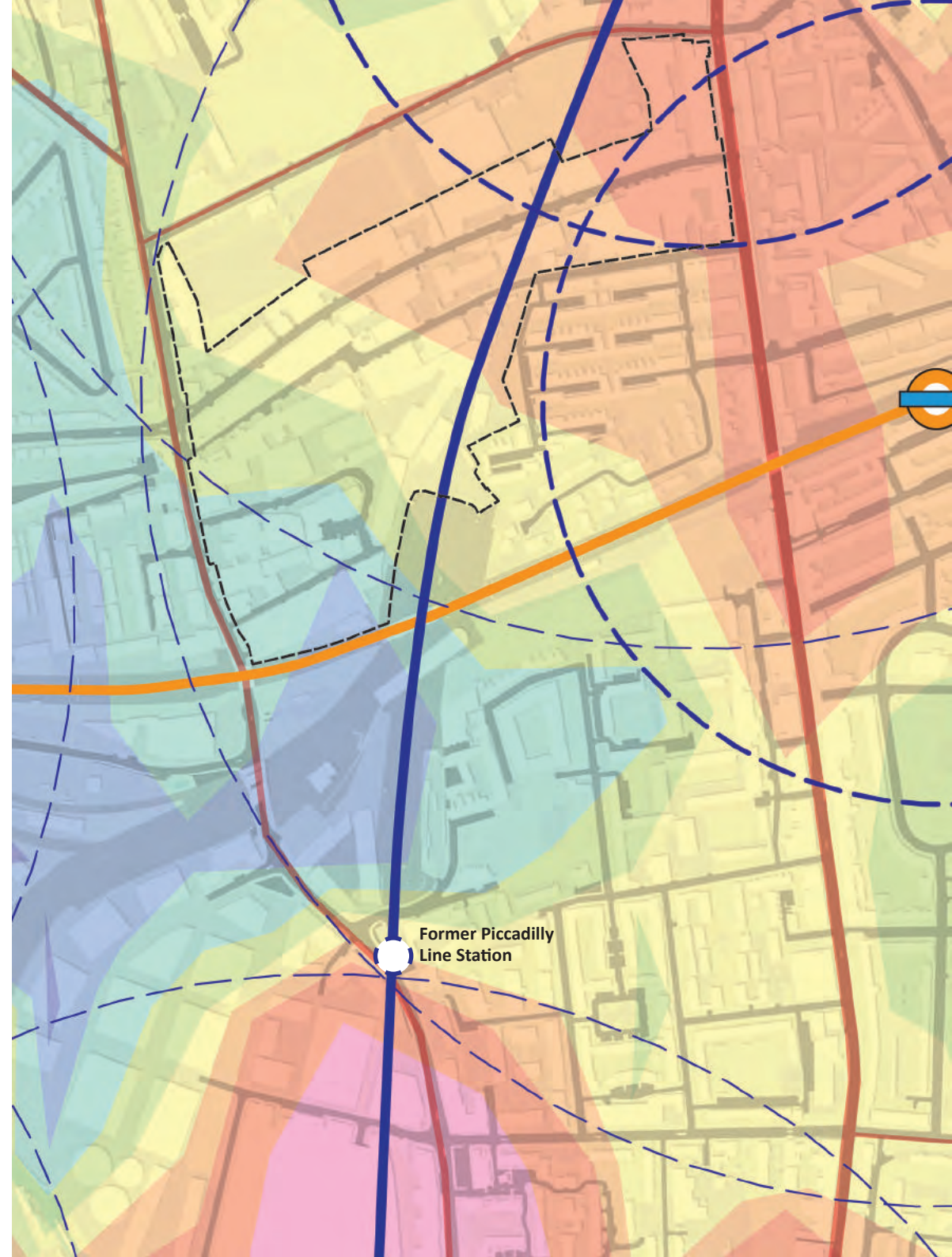


Figure 1.17: LSIS and wider area - public transport accessibility





### 1.6.3 PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE MOVEMENT

The railway lines along the southern border of the LSIS are a major barrier to pedestrian and cycle movement between it and the wider area.

There are no existing north - south pedestrian or vehicular routes between Brewery Road and Blundell/Brandon Road or between Tileyard Road and Blundell Street. There is however an existing pedestrian connection between Brewery Road and Market Road – this frames the view towards the Clock Tower which is an important local landmark. The entrance to this route is difficult to find, hidden between two sheds and poorly signposted. The quality of the route is extremely poor. It is dark and enclosed by tall industrial buildings without passive surveillance. This route dog legs around the back of buildings, does not offer forward visibility and is inaccessible for people with buggies or wheelchairs.

The pattern of poor connectivity continues in the housing estates to the east of the LSIS. The Naylor Estate (directly to the east of the LSIS border) and adjoining housing along Bunning Way are particularly isolated. Homes are accessed off a series of internal streets and only connect with the wider street network in three places.

Dedicated cycle lanes can be found along York Way and Market Road (to the north of the study area) – these do not penetrate through the LSIS.

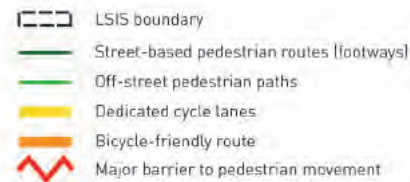


Figure 1.18: LSIS and wider area - pedestrian and cycle movement





York Way facing south



#### 1.6.4 NARROW STREET PROFILES

York Way and Caledonian Road are the primary access points to the LSIS. Most of the internal roads are narrower secondary roads. Only Brewery Road and some of the access roads to the Naylor estate are over 15m in width. These narrow road widths can cause issues for traffic movement in the Vale Royal / Brewery Road LSIS.

Many sites incorporate parking bays or yards for larger vehicles however street widths are often inadequate to facilitate turning of vehicles in and out of plots – this is exacerbated where there is a high concentration of on-street parking.

The narrowness of the internal road network also causes pinch points at the junctions of York Way, Brandon Road and Vale Royal. These adjoining streets are less than 10m wide which impedes the flow of vehicles in and out of the LSIS.

This is exacerbated by the width of York Way itself which narrows to approximately 12-15m between Brandon Road and the railway.

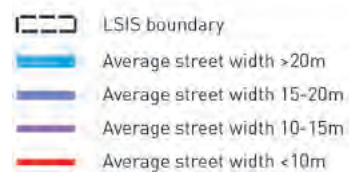
The width of pavements also decreases in this area. Many properties in the LSIS have vehicular access points off York Way. These create conflicts with pedestrians along the narrow footways.





The narrowness of streets can pose a significant constraint for the future development and growth of the area. It compromises access to the area, parking and servicing arrangements, the safety and quality of the pedestrian environment, the feel and character of the street space, day lighting, sun exposure and privacy of development.

In narrow streets the height of new buildings will need to ensure that the level of enclosure is not increased further, by for example stepping buildings back above the current frontage height.



**Figure 1.19: LSIS and wider area - street widths (including pavements)**

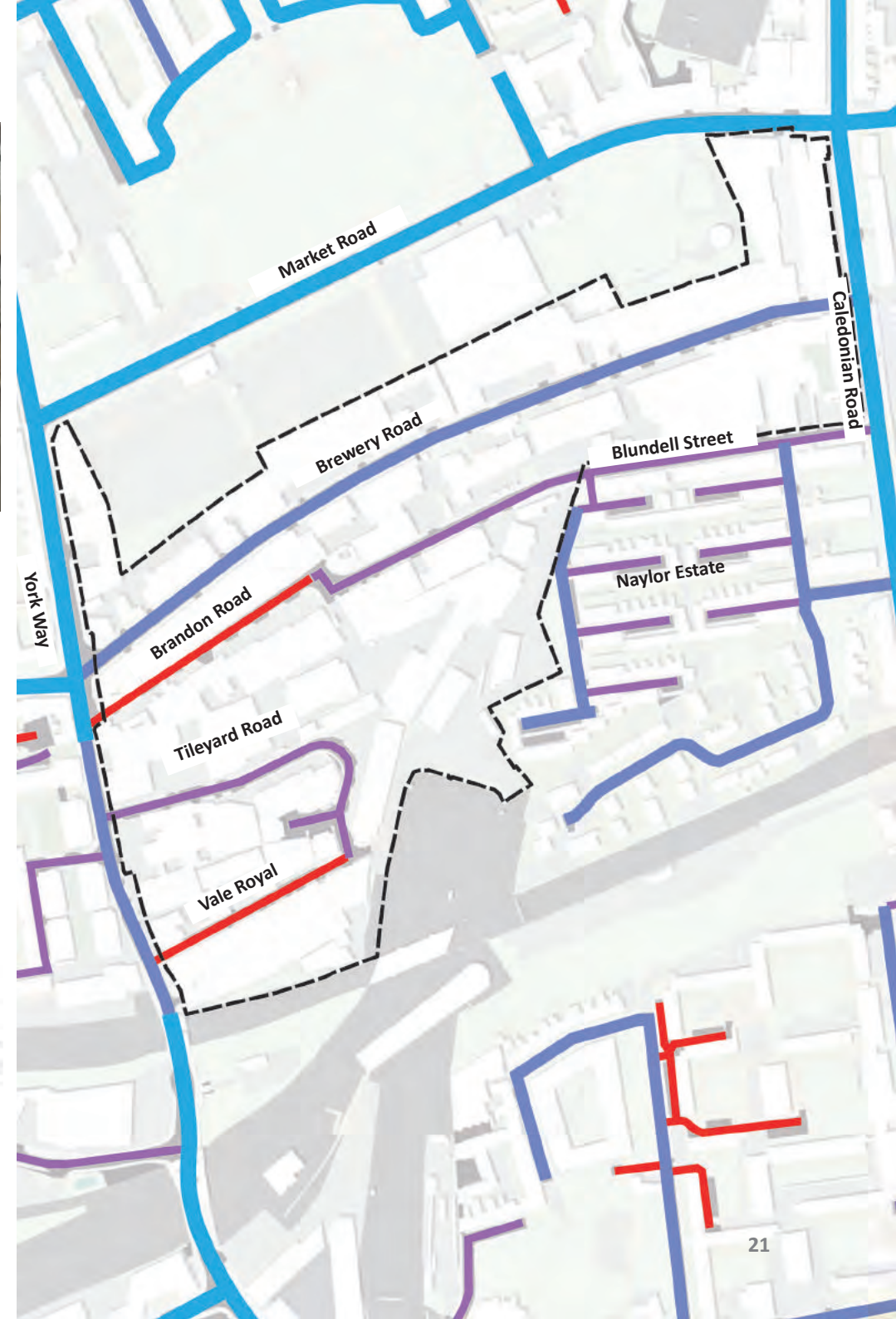
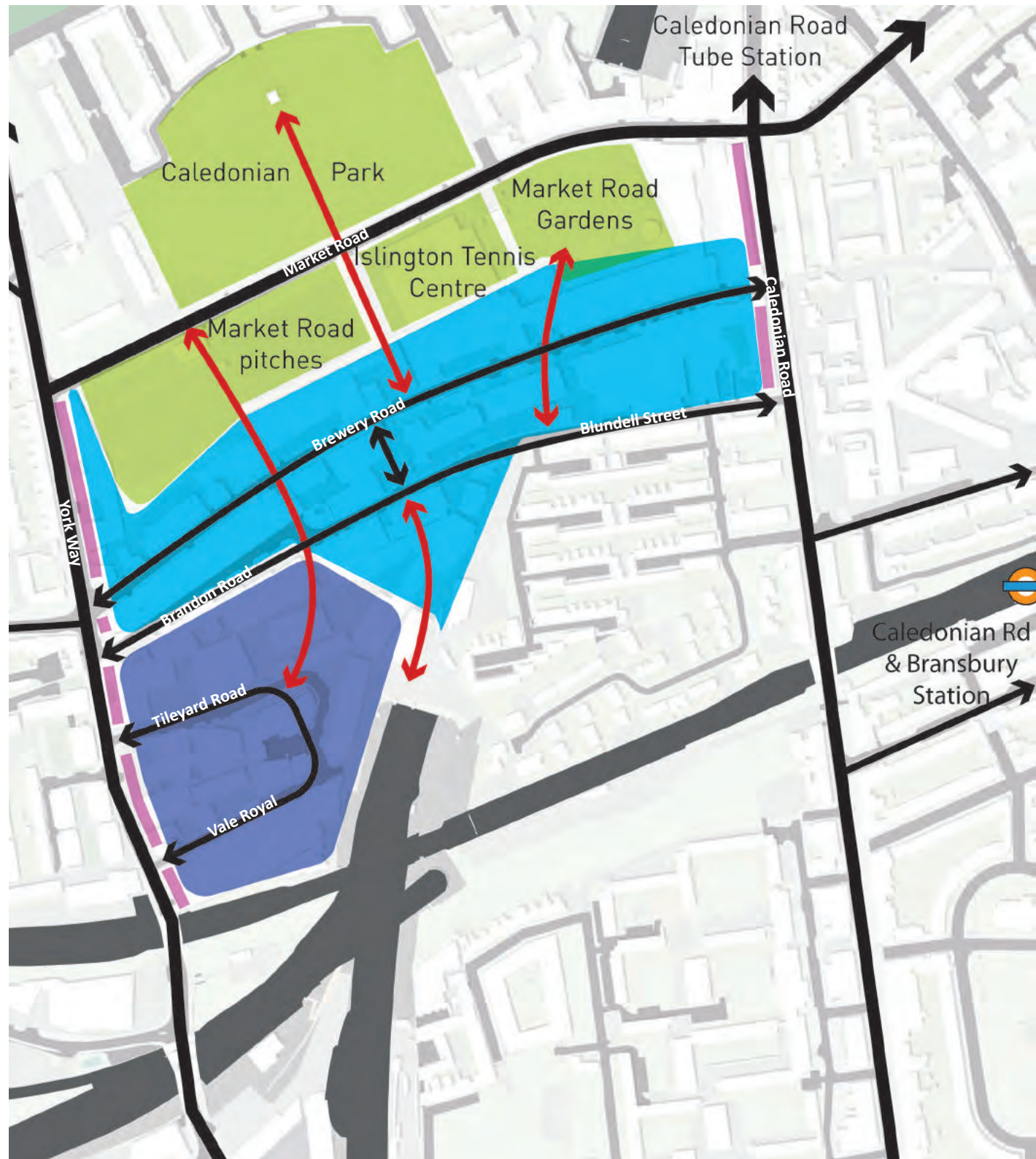






Figure 1.20: LSIS - proposed concept plan





## 2 POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE

There are a number of opportunities to strengthen the character and function of the Vale Royal / Brewery Road LSIS. These include:

- **Intensifying the creative quarter that is already establishing at Vale Royal;**
- **Consolidating and intensifying the mixed employment area in the Brewery Rd / Blundell St area to significantly increase the amount of business floorspace;**
- **Taking the opportunity, where appropriate, to allow ancillary uses at ground floor to improve the frontages and public realm, along York Way and Caledonian Road; and**
- **Increasing east - west and north - south permeability.**

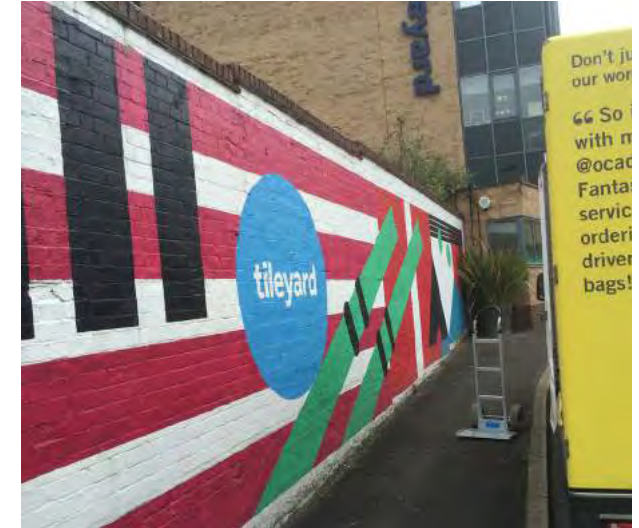




Figure 3.1: LSIS - height constraints



# 3 PROPOSED BUILDING HEIGHTS

## 3.1 HEIGHT PRINCIPLES

Based on the analysis and understanding of the area the following principles regarding height have been set out for the study area:

### 1) TO ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF 'HYBRID SPACE'

The Employment Land Study recommends the protection of the Vale Royal/Brewery Road LSIS and suggest that opportunities should be sought for intensification of business uses on the LSIS, particularly through the provision of hybrid space. It detects a strong growth in firms seeking 'hybrid space' – normally older, industrial-style stock that has been refurbished not as Grade A office stock, but as studio/light production space, or low specification office space (non-air conditioned; revealed ceilings, flexible and collaborative). Refurbishment and intensification of existing spaces as well as new built schemes in the LSIS should provide hybrid developments with a variety of spaces that can accommodate a range of employment and light industrial uses, and which are suitable and affordable to existing and new SME's and firms currently operating in the area. This can be best achieved with compact development of up to five storeys height (20m).



### 2) RESPOND SENSITIVELY TO THE EXISTING HISTORIC FABRIC

The Royal Vale area has a long industrious past which is still recognisable in some of the remaining historic buildings and the layout and scale of streets, which add to the character and distinctiveness of the area. Refurbishment, conversion and extension of existing older buildings should be preferred to demolish and rebuilding schemes wherever this is practicable. New development with their scale and height should respond sensitively to existing historic buildings and where necessary step down to their height to not appear overbearing.



### 3) STRONG FRONTAGES TO OPEN SPACES AND STREETS

Due to the nature of its uses the LSIS is inward looking and frequently presents the back of development to surrounding open spaces, such as the Market Road Gardens, the sports pitches on Market Road, as well as the Kings Cross railway cut. Visibility to and from open spaces are typical value driver for development. Where possible new development should create strong active frontages toward these open space, that can provide overlooking and animation and enhance the perception of the area. Backs should become fronts with the provision of new access routes along open spaces. The same principle applies to the building street interfaces, which are often characterised by inactive fronts and blank walls. Where consistent with priority land uses in the LSIS new development should create active street frontages that define, animate and overlook the street space - particularly along York Way and Caledonian Road.



#### 4) TO PROTECT VIEWS TO THE CLOCK TOWER

The clock tower on Market Road is a designated local landmark in the area, situated on a high point and marking the site of London's former cattle market just to the north of the LSIS. Currently the tower can be seen from York Way around the junction with Randell's Road. This will change with the planned development of the Kings Cross development. However, the view from Randell's Road Bridge north across the railway tracks to the tower, should not be affected by this development. New development in the LSIS should not encroach into viewing corridor and ensure this view to the clock tower is retained and enhanced.



#### 5) TO RESPOND APPROPRIATELY TO THE RESIDENTIAL INTERFACE

The LSIS is surrounded by residential developments and any new development should ensure an appropriate interface with existing residential uses in regards to day and sun lighting, privacy and overlooking.



#### 6) TO CREATE ADEQUATE LEVELS OF ENCLOSURE

Some of the existing streets in the LSIS are very narrow. Private forecourts and the limited height of industrial units currently alleviate the impact on the scale of the street. However, this may change if new development moves the building line forward closer to the street.

To avoid an overbearing scale of the street and allow light penetration, new development should ensure that the width to height ratio of street does not exceed 1/1.35 and optimally stays below 1/1. This can be achieved by the stepping back of development above a certain height on the building line or by sufficiently pulling the building line back from the street. Examples of existing and potential street profiles are shown in Figure 3.2.



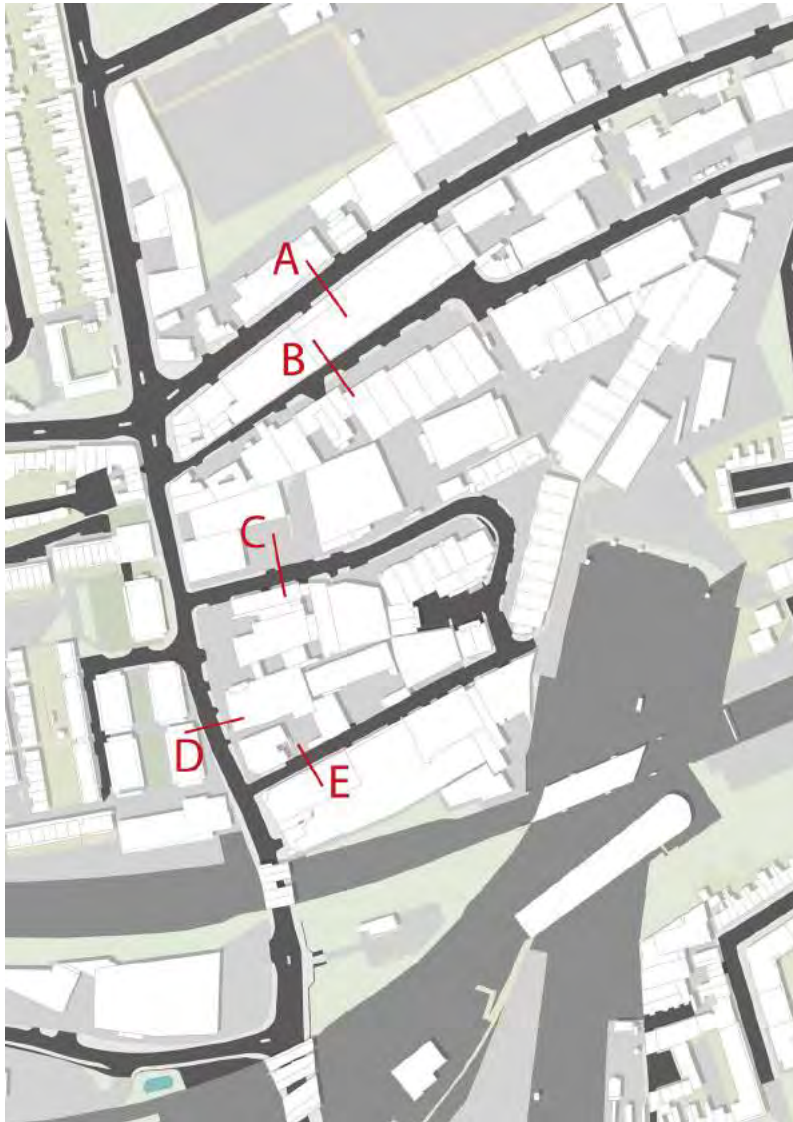
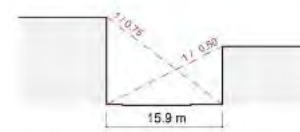
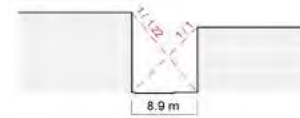


Figure 3.2: Existing and potential street profiles (including pavements)

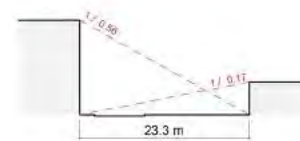
## SECTION EXISTING



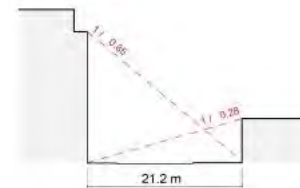
A BREWERY ROAD



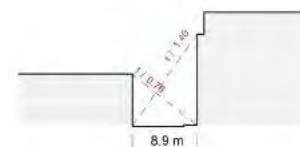
B BRANDON ROAD



C TILEYARD ROAD

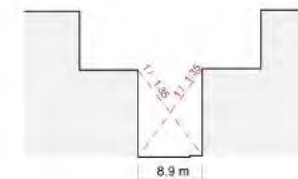
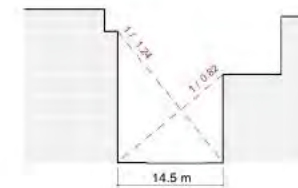
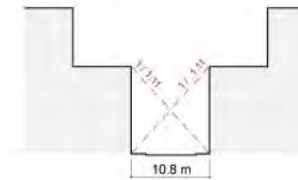
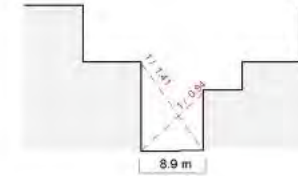
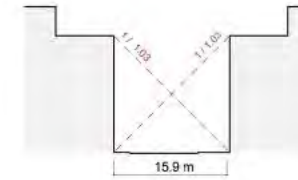


D YORK WAY



E VALE ROYAL

## SECTION PROPOSED





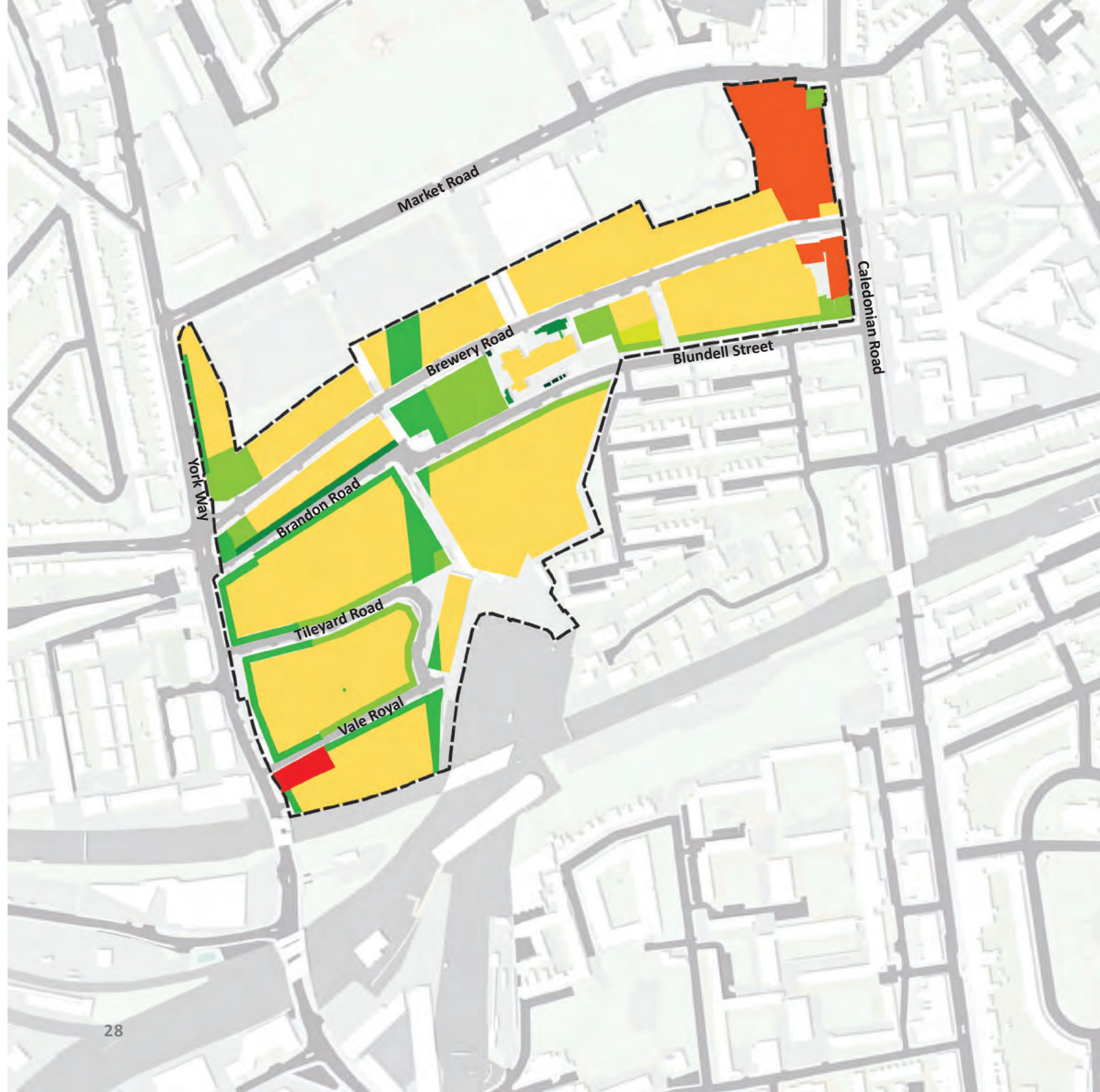


Figure 3.3: LSIS - indicative height plan



## 3.2 PROPOSED HEIGHTS

The Height Principles in the previous section have been translated into a proposed principle height map in Figure 3.3.

This shows that the proposed future height of development generally can be up to a maximum of five commercial storeys in the LSIS.

The recommended height of the building front, however, is lower in the majority of streets in the area. The maximum height would only be permissible where its impact on the street scale is negligible. Alternatively the building line could be moved away from the street space to retain or enhance the scale of the street.

Across the LSIS in the viewing corridor from Randell's Road Bridge to the clock tower on Market Road only a lower height of maximum three commercial storeys is permissible.

Development is expected to find an appropriate response to historic buildings in the area and where necessary step down with their height to avoid appearing overbearing.

The plan in Figure 3.3 is indicative only and development should demonstrate how it complies with principles outlined in section 2.1.

Recent development in proximity of the LSIS has brought forward higher buildings than those proposed in the adjacent heights plan. However, such development should not be seen as a precursor for further buildings above 5 commercial storeys.

The recently completed Maiden Lane Tower located across from the LSIS's western boundary is significantly taller than other buildings in this area. However, it plays a very specific role. It terminates

the vista along York Way from the north. It is a prominent landmark that marks the gateway and transition point between the fine grain, low to medium rise residential and industrial areas to the north and the metropolitan large scale development of the Kings Cross site to the south.

It is considered that any other additional tall building to the north of the railway would detract from the role and prominence of the Maiden Lane tower, weaken the cluster and be incongruous to the character of the Royal Vale industrial area and the residential environment in LB Camden/Islington, and therefore would not be acceptable.

Any development directly opposite the Maiden Lane tower on the western edge of the LSIS will need to be clearly sub-ordinate in height. Given the narrow street profile of York Way and Vale Royal there is a risk of creating an adverse canyon effect on street, which should be avoided through appropriate scaling and setting back of development in relations to the street space.

The area's proximity to the CAZ and Kings Cross Opportunity Area should also not be seen as justification for tall buildings. Despite proximity to these elements there is a great deal of physical separation between the LSIS and these elements by virtue of the railway lines. The big footprint industrial buildings in this area are very distinctive from development at Kings Cross or within the CAZ. Any loss or fragmentation of these elements would jeopardise the success of the vital industrial area and the profile of Islington as whole.