LONDON BOROUGH
OF ISLINGTON

TALL BUILDINGS STUDY

FINAL REPORT
NOVEMBER 2018

4124

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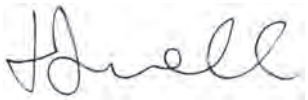
APPROVED BY DESIGN DIRECTOR	

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Regent’s Canal at Kings Place

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Exmouth Market

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 WHAT IS THIS STUDY ABOUT

Islington Council is embarking on a programme of Local Plan Review. As part of this the council wishes to review and update its current policy in regards to tall buildings and appointed urban design consultants Urban Initiatives Studio to prepare a Tall Buildings Study. The study informs the development of Islington's tall buildings policy and forms part of the evidence base for the Local Plan.

Islington is required to deliver on or above the London Plans housing delivery target of 1,264 dwellings per annum until 2024/25. The Draft London Plan (2017) sets a new housing target for Islington of 7,750 homes by 2028/29, which equates to an annualised target of 775 homes per year. The London Plan expects boroughs to identify and seek to enable additional development capacity above this target through intensification, town centre renewal, opportunity and intensification areas, mixed use redevelopment and sensitive renewal of existing residential areas. In this context there is a requirement for further densification of the Borough, which could include tall buildings, particularly around transport nodes, while developers are also pushing for greater height.

Based on an appreciation of the characteristics of the Borough this study investigates the potential for tall buildings and identifies locations where tall buildings could be appropriate and at what height.

1.2 CONTEXT

In recent years London has seen a surge of taller buildings being planned and built across the capital. Many are located in places that previously were not characterised by taller buildings, often within low to medium rise development contexts. In less than ten years new towers have altered London's skyline beyond recognition. Towers have had a profound impact on the character and amenity within their immediate areas, as well as the legibility of the urban fabric and the city image. Permitted or completed towers have set a precedent for exceptional height in many locations, increased land values and were the genesis for tall building clusters.

The boom of tall buildings has been largely developer driven in the context of weak or inadequate guidance. The Mayor's approach to taller buildings in the past has focused primarily on the protection of specific view corridors across the capital (View Management Framework) without establishing a clear spatial vision for London that identifies where taller buildings would be appropriate in the capital and at what height.

The current London plan asks for 'a plan led approach to changing or developing an area by the identification of appropriate, sensitive and inappropriate locations for taller buildings.' It provides general location criteria where taller buildings could be considered such as the Central Activity Zone, opportunity areas, areas of intensification or town centres that have good access to public transport. However, the London Plan does not provide a clear and unambiguous definition of a tall buildings in respect of their height: 'Tall and large buildings are those that are substantially taller than their surroundings, cause a significant change to the skyline or are larger than the threshold sizes set for the referral of planning applications to the Mayor.' The latter point is a reference to buildings above 30m in height. This definition is currently used by Islington's Core Strategy.

In the absence of a coherent and overarching London wide approach different Councils have adopted different approaches and definitions of tall buildings. The approach of some boroughs has been relatively light touch. However Islington has had a robust, plan-led approach which identified tightly drawn areas suitable for tall buildings. This approach has been implemented successfully. Different approaches lead to inconsistencies across London Boroughs, which are particularly notable at Borough boundaries where different approaches meet.

LB Islington so far has followed a comparatively restrictive approach to tall buildings. This has imposed a borough wide limitation to development height to up to 30m with few exceptions in the Central Activity Zone. The Finsbury Local Plan identified three areas that were appropriate for tall buildings, at Moorgate, at Old Street and at City Road Basin.

City Road Basin is currently the location for the development of four tall buildings ranging from 31 to 42 storeys in height. They bring forward heights previously unseen in the Borough and their full impact has yet to be fully appreciated.

The restrictive, plan-led approach to tall buildings has meant that Islington has not been affected in the way other Boroughs have been by the recent spike of tall building proposals in London. As the new Local Plan for Islington is being prepared, it is the right time to review Islington's approach to tall buildings in the context of emerging planning policy and pressures for development.

Elia Street looking eastwards towards the cluster of tall buildings at City Road (2017)

1.3 APPROACH TO THIS STUDY

The methodology for the preparation of the Tall Building Study is reflected in the structure of this report, which is summarised below:

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

SECTION 2: PLANNING CONTEXT

The study is based on a robust policy review. This covers the national, regional and local planning policy context, including Historic England's Advice Note 4 on tall buildings and a review of the policy and evidence base underlying the current tall building policy. The tall building approaches by other central London Boroughs have also been reviewed.

SECTION 3: ISLINGTON SPATIAL OVERVIEW

This section provides a spatial overview of the Borough of Islington, identifying it's spatial structure, distribution of land uses, and public transport accessibility. A detailed mapping of existing building heights across the Borough has been undertaken that illustrate the typical height and scale of development in the Borough as well as where exceptional height is concentrated. This section also identifies areas that are potentially sensitive to tall buildings, by mapping listed buildings, conservation area designations, protected vistas and local views, local landmarks and Islington's topography.

SECTION 4: ISLINGTON'S TALL BUILDING APPROACH

This section sets out the theoretical baseline for undertaking the search for potential locations that could be acceptable for tall buildings. It includes a definition of what constitutes a tall building in the Borough, provides an overview on the current tall building debate in London, discusses the potential role of tall buildings in Islington, summarises potential negative impacts of tall buildings, and outlines the scope of tall buildings to enhance legibility, to contribute to the skyline and the city image, and to form clusters. The section concludes with a list of eight tall buildings principles which set the objectives and define criteria that were instrumental in deciding if and where tall buildings could potentially appropriate in the Borough.

SECTION 5: STRATEGIC SEARCH

This section describes the strategic sifting approach that was undertaken to select a handful of areas that potentially could include location where tall buildings would be appropriate. The strategic search first identified potential locations that from a policy perspective and/or due to their current height characteristics or exceptional transport accessibility could generally be suitable for tall buildings. It then applied a sifting approach that overlaid these areas with mapping of designated heritage assets and protected views to sieve out those search areas where tall buildings would not be appropriate. The section identifies the remaining areas with tall building potential to be subject to further detailed testing in Section 6.

SECTION 6: LOCAL SEARCH

This section starts by setting out the local search methodology for deciding on appropriate locations for tall buildings and their height. It further includes detailed sub-chapters for each of the seven identified local search areas. For each it describes the current character of the local search area, the existing height and tall building context, relevant planning policy designations, important townscape features and local views, and concludes with the identification of opportunity sites for tall buildings, and how they could potentially contribute to and enhance the place and other relevant considerations.

APPENDICES:

The report is accompanied by a three appendices:

Appendix A: Local Search – details the local sifting approach

Appendix B: View Analysis – presents the impact of potential tall building location on key local views

Appendix C: Cost Drivers for tall buildings (AECOM)

Arsenal Stadium from Drayton Park

2 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the government's objectives for new development. The NPPF does not have any specific policies on tall buildings, however, it sets out a number of more general design and planning principles which are relevant to the development of tall buildings.

Good design is a key requirement of the NPPF. The NPPF states that it is important to plan positively to achieve high quality and inclusive design and that local authorities should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected in their area. These should be based on a clear vision for the future of the area and upon a detailed evaluation of the characteristics that define it.

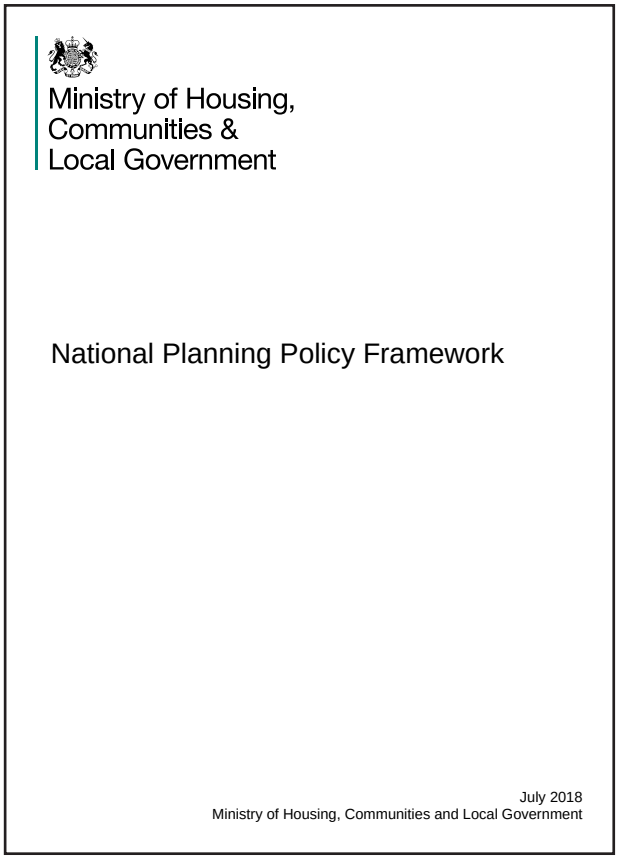
The NPPF promotes an urban design led approach to planning that requires buildings to respond to the location in which they are located rather than prescribe specific architectural styles.

Planning polices are required to ensure that new development will:

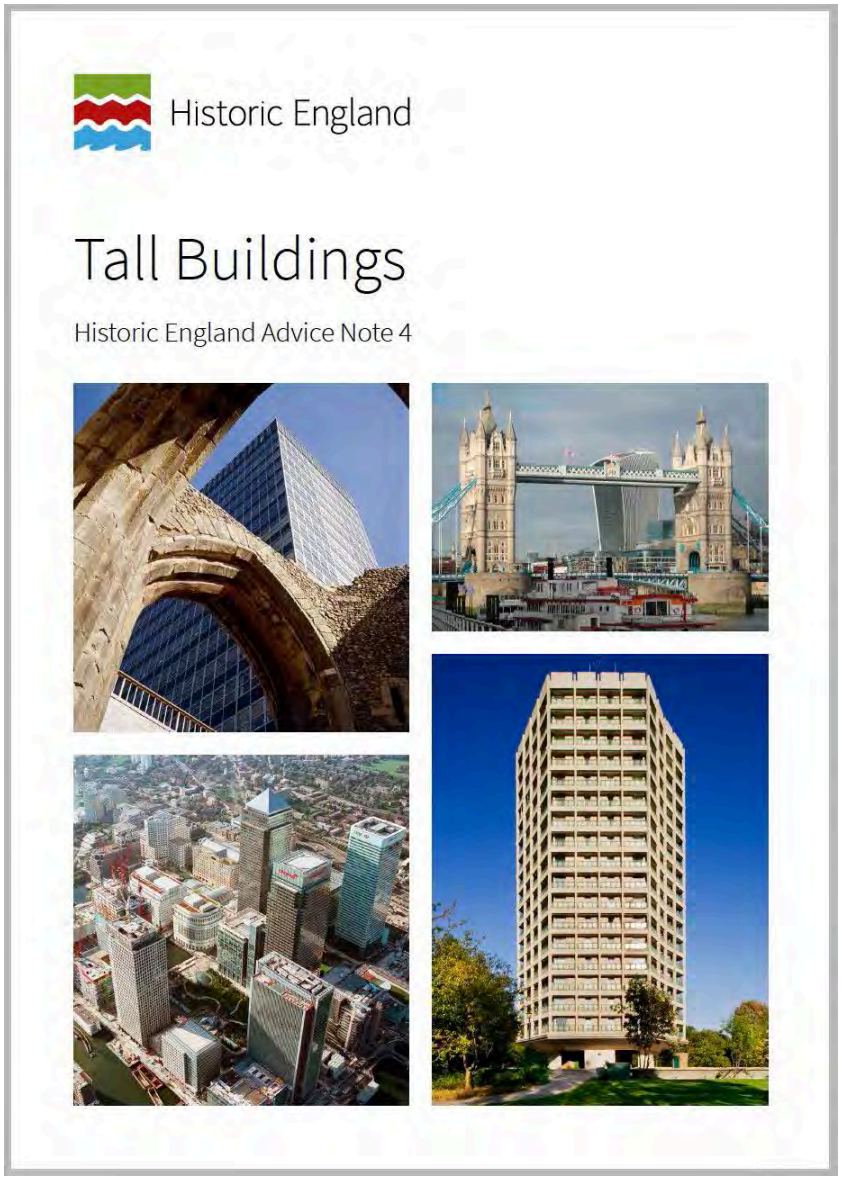
- Function well and add to the quality of the area;
- Establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive places to live;
- Make the most of the potential of the site;
- Respond to local character, history and identity;
- Create safe and accessible environments;
- Are visually attractive;
- Respond well to heritage assets and their setting;
- Respond to the views of local people;
- Make effective use of land and make use of brownfield land as much as possible;
- Encourage multiple benefits from land, in terms of development and net environmental gains, and;
- Support opportunities for upward extensions where the development would be consistent with the prevailing height and form of neighbouring properties.

The NPPF makes a presumption in favour of sustainable development and states that buildings that generate significant movement should be located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes maximised.

The NPPF states that great weight should be given to outstanding and innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability as long as they respond to their context in terms of form and layout.



National Planning Policy Framework (2018)



Historic England Tall Buildings Advice Note (December 2015)

2.2 HISTORIC ENGLAND - TALL BUILDINGS ADVICE NOTE

Historic England published a Tall Buildings Advice Note in December 2015. It is intended to support all of those involved in dealing with proposals for tall buildings from designers to local authorities. It supersedes the earlier 2007 CABE/English Heritage 'Guidance on Tall Buildings'. Although its primary focus is the impact of tall buildings on heritage assets, it also provides a number of general guidelines surrounding the design and location of tall buildings.

The document does not take a negative stance against tall buildings. It states that tall buildings can be excellent works of architecture and make a positive contribution to towns and cities. However, Advice Note 4 states that for tall buildings to be successful measures to control the location and design of such structures must be embedded in local planning documents.

Advice Note 4 promotes a plan led and positive approach to the location and design of tall buildings. It states that this should be specific to areas and include a local definition for tall buildings that is appropriate to its specific context.

Local Plans will be expected to:

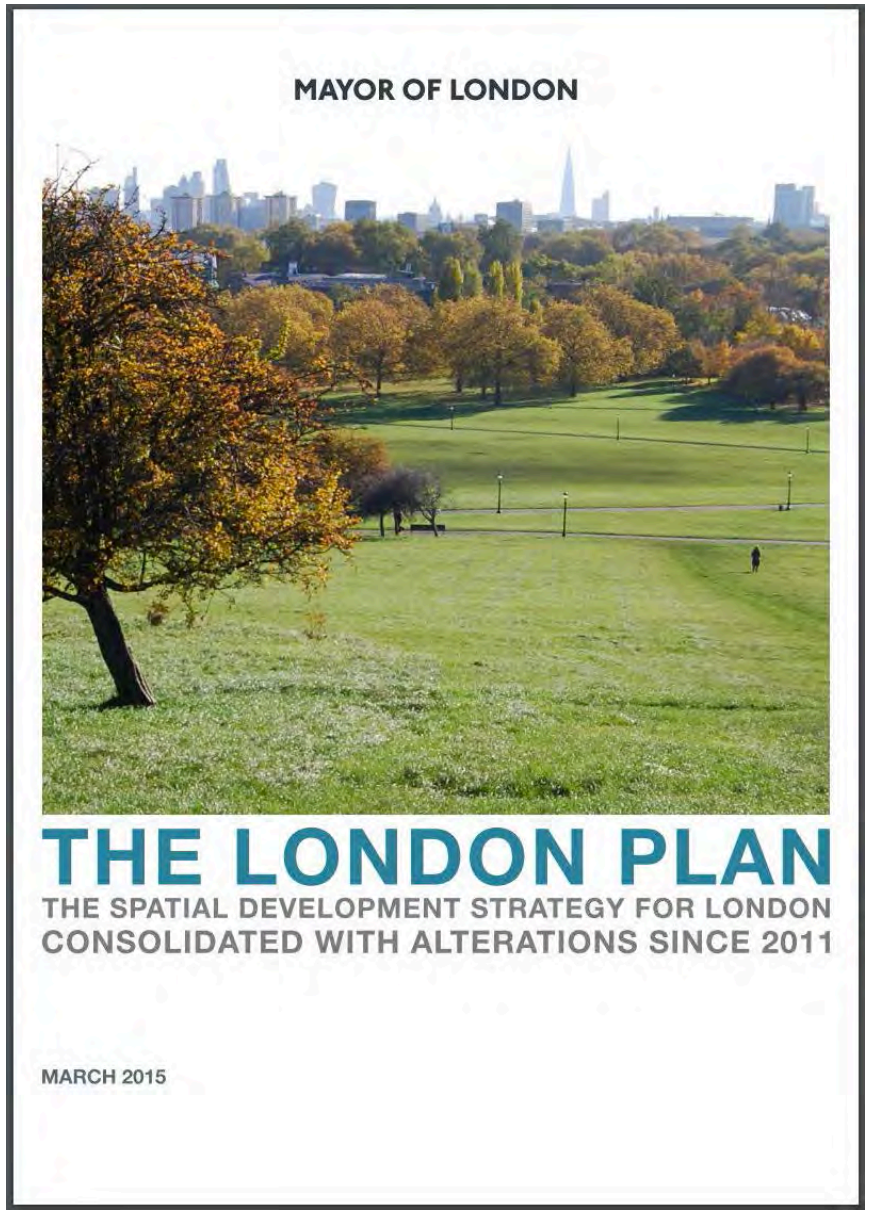
- Identify the role and contribution of tall buildings as part of an overall vision for a place;
- Ensure that the setting of heritage assets are protected from any potential negative impact from tall buildings;
- Identify areas that are appropriate for tall buildings;
- Express design requirements for tall buildings;
- Encourage a mix of uses within tall buildings that are required in the local area;
- Ensure early public consultation is undertaken;
- Reduce inappropriate applications for tall buildings in the wrong places;
- Ensure that tall building applications fully consider the impacts on local people.
- Identify sites where removal of existing tall buildings may enhance the environment; and
- Identify whether tall buildings are the most appropriate way to deliver high densities or whether another solution is more appropriate.

Advice Note 4 states that the scale and form of development should be assessed as part of the formulation of the local plan. It suggests the use of characterisation/building height studies as well as heritage and urban design assessments to designate appropriate locations and polices for tall buildings. The document very clearly states that the existence of a tall building on a site is not a justification for a replacement building of the same scale or on an adjoining site.

Advice Note 4 makes it a general requirement for tall buildings to set exemplary standards of design and states that a high quality tall building will have a positive relationship with:

- Topography;
- Character;
- Heritage assets;
- Height and scale of surrounding development;
- Urban grain and streetscape;
- Open spaces;
- Rivers;
- Important views and panoramas; and
- The skyline.

Advice Note 4 promotes an urban design led approach with less attention on architectural style or detailing.



The London Plan (2015)

2.3 LONDON PLAN

The London Plan is the statutory spatial development strategy for Greater London. All of London's Boroughs Local development plans should be in general conformity with the policies included within this document.

The London Plan defines tall buildings as structures that:

- Are substantially taller than their surroundings;
- Cause a significant change to the skyline; and
- Are larger than the threshold sizes set for the referral of planning applications to the Mayor (currently above 30m in height).

Policy 7.7 'Location and Design of Tall and Large Buildings,' is the primary policy related to this type of building. It states that tall and large buildings should be part of a plan-led approach to changing or developing an area. As part of this, local plans should identify appropriate, sensitive and inappropriate locations for large and tall buildings.

It states that tall buildings should:

- Generally, be limited to sites in the the Central Activity Zone, Opportunity Areas, Areas of Intensification or town centres that have good access to public transport;
- Only be considered in areas whose character would not be affected adversely by the scale, mass or bulk of a tall or large building;
- Relate well to the form, proportion,

composition, scale and character of surrounding buildings, urban grain and public realm (including landscape features), particularly at street level;

- Individually or as a group, improve the legibility of an area, by emphasising a point of civic or visual significance where appropriate, and enhance the skyline and image of London;
- Incorporate the highest standards of architecture and materials including sustainable design and construction practices;
- Have ground floor activities that provide a positive relationship to the surrounding streets;
- Contribute to improving the permeability of the site and wider area, where possible;
- Incorporate publicly accessible areas on the upper floors and where appropriate make a significant contribution to local regeneration;
- Not affect their surroundings adversely in terms of microclimate, wind turbulence, overshadowing, noise, reflected glare, aviation, navigation and telecommunication interference; and
- Not interfere with strategic and local views.

In addition consideration should be given to the impact a tall building may have on sensitive locations such as listed buildings parks, scheduled ancient monuments and conservation areas.

At a more general level the London Plan also emphasises the importance of high quality design. **Policy 7.6 'Architecture'** states that buildings should make a positive contribution to a coherent city/streetscape and incorporate the highest quality of materials and design. This policy states that buildings should not cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of surrounding land and buildings in relation to privacy, overshadowing wind and micro-climate – especially with tall buildings.

Urban Design and the roles that buildings play in the wider cityscape is prioritised in the London Plan's Design policies. Policy 7.4 requires buildings to provide high quality design responses that:

- Have regard to the pattern and grain of existing spaces and streets in orientation, scale, proportion and mass;
- Contribute to a positive relationship between the urban structure and natural landscape features, including the underlying landform and topography of an area;
- Are human in scale, ensuring buildings create a positive relationship with street level activity and people feel comfortable with their surroundings;
- Allow existing buildings and structures that make a positive contribution to the character of a place to influence the future character of the area; and
- Are informed by the surrounding historic environment.

Policy 7.5 requires development to make the public realm comprehensible at the human scale, using 'gateways, focal points and landmarks as appropriate to help people find their way'.

The London Plan does not focus on particular styles of architecture or types of buildings, rather it promotes a place led approach to planning and design.

Draft New London Plan Cover from December 2017, (updated in August 2018)

2.4 NEW LONDON PLAN

TALL BUILDINGS POLICY

In December 2017, a new draft of the London Plan was published for public consultation. Subsequently (August 2018), the Mayor published an updated version of the draft plan, which incorporates suggested changes. The Plan is due to go through Examination in Public between January and May 2019 with a final version due for publication in late 2019 or early 2020.

The current 2016 Plan is still the adopted Development Plan. However, the Draft London Plan is a material consideration for planning decisions. It is therefore essential that the Islington Tall Buildings Study considers the content of the Draft Plan.

Draft Policy D8 'Tall Buildings', is the primary policy with regard to tall buildings. It states that tall buildings should be part of a plan-led approach and that local authorities should identify in Development Plans, locations where tall buildings are appropriate in principle and indicate general building heights that would be appropriate.

The Draft London Plan Policy D8 puts the onus on the London Boroughs to define what constitutes a tall building in their Development Plans. It states that:

"Based on local context, Development Plans should define what is considered a tall building for specific localities, the height of which will vary between and within different parts of London".

Where a local definition of tall buildings has not been determined, the Tall Buildings policy (D8) applies to buildings over 25m in the Thames Policy Area, and above 30m elsewhere in London.

Policy D8 - C identifies the following impact criteria that will determine the appropriateness of a location for tall buildings:

- Contribute to skyline and not adversely affect strategic views;
- Reinforce the spatial hierarchy of the local and wider context;
- Assist legibility and wayfinding;
- Respect heritage and not cause harm to World Heritage Sites;
- Be of exemplary architectural quality;
- Be supported by transport and social infrastructure;
- Maximise economic and regeneration benefits.

The changes in tall buildings policy between the current London Plan and the Draft New London Plan can be summarised as follows:

- London Boroughs must now create their own definition for tall buildings - it is not clear how the Boroughs are to reach this definition and it will likely require additional work and studies;
- London Boroughs must set out where tall buildings are acceptable in principle in their borough in line with the impacts listed in the new London Plan Policy;

- The impacts that both planning policies and development applications need to consider in terms of tall buildings are focused around the practical impacts of development and the potential for tall buildings to deliver new homes and economic growth;
- The impact that tall buildings may have on local character or townscape is not explicitly prioritised by the new policy. However, the importance of existing and emerging local character is discussed in policy D1 London's Form and Characteristics, and so has relevance for tall building applications;
- In determining the location of tall buildings, visual impacts should be considered in terms of long-range views (positive contribution to the skyline), mid-range views (positive contribution to local townscape) and immediate views (pedestrian scale, interface with street, character and vitality of street, and transition in scale from tall building to surrounding context).
- There is a lack of clarity over what role the Mayor will have in coordinating the location of tall buildings across London - this is especially critical in cross boundary locations where Boroughs may define tall buildings differently and identify conflicting locations as suitable for tall buildings. In these situations, boroughs are expected to engage with one another;
- Less protection for heritage assets as the new policy states that harm may be justified if the public benefits outweigh the harm, with the exception of World Heritage Sites.

DESIGN POLICIES

There are also a number of design policies in the draft Plan that are relevant to tall buildings:

- **Draft Policy D1 London's form and characteristics**
- **Draft Policy D2 Delivering good design**
- **Draft Policy D4 Housing quality and standards**
- **Draft Policy D6 Optimising density**

The changes in design policies can be summarised as follows:

- New developments will be more successful if they respond to local character and show a clear understanding and relationship to the distinctive features of a place. However, emphasis is placed on accommodating change and the plan does not promote a static preservation of local character;
- The policies place the onus on the London Boroughs to evaluate opportunities for growth and optimise the use of land through their development plans based on elements set out in the policy;
- Promotion of the use of masterplans and design codes to help bring forward development and ensure it delivers high quality design and placemaking rather than design policies themselves;
- Encouragement of both applicants and local authorities to use Design Review;
- Housing no longer needs to be delivered at densities set by the mayor but by 'a design led approach' that optimises the housing density of the site. Boroughs should determine the capacity of allocated sites through an approach outlined in Policy D2.

Overall, the draft London Plan represents a shift in focus towards facilitating development, including tall buildings, particularly where potential benefits can be demonstrated and designs respond to local character. London Boroughs must manage this through effective plan-making and ensure design quality through design review and design codes.

Although the focus of the tall buildings policy has shifted from the previous London plan, the function and remit of the Islington Tall Buildings Study remains the same.

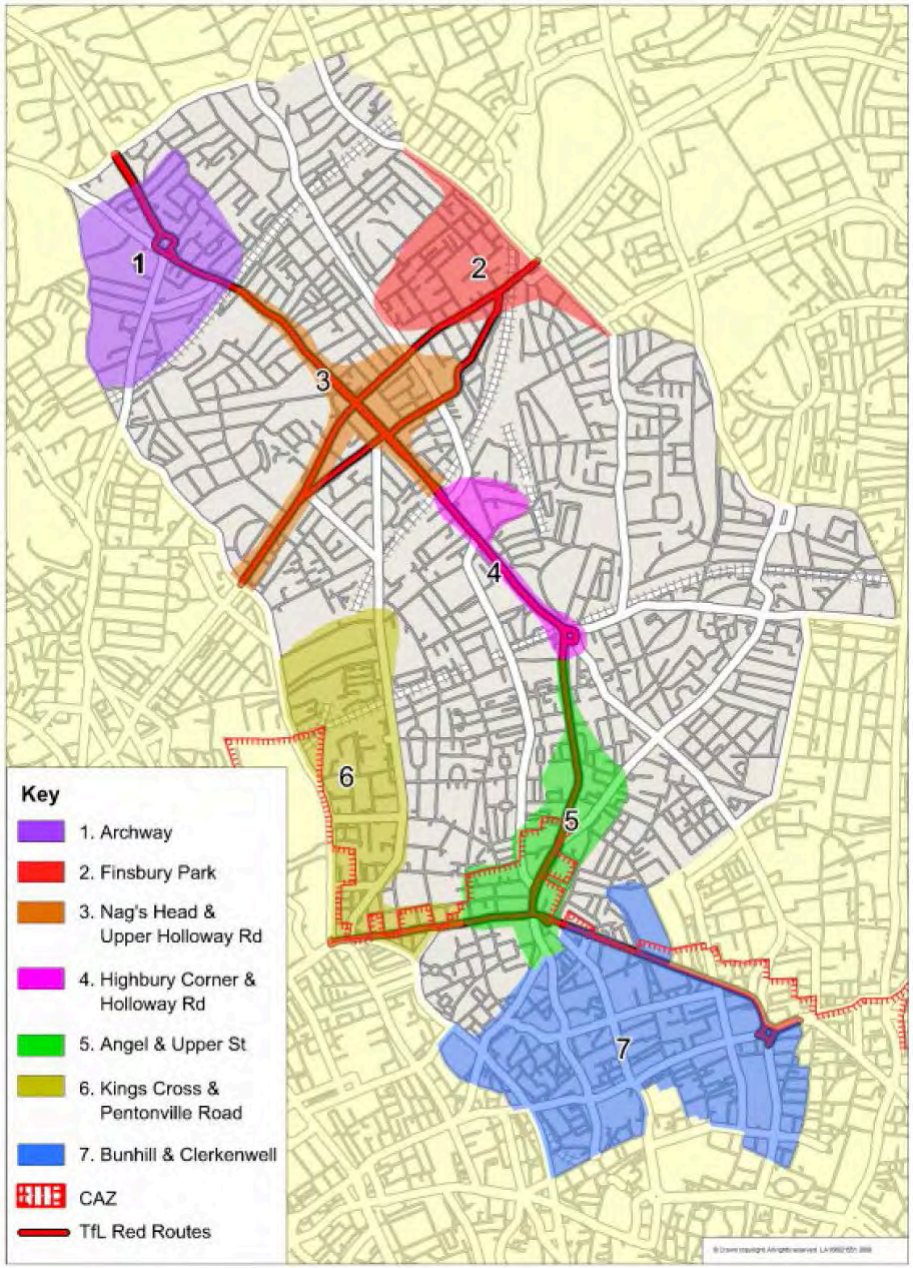


Figure 2.1: Islington Core Strategy - Spatial Strategy (2011)

2.5 ISLINGTON DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2.5.1 CORE STRATEGY

The 2011 Core Strategy sets out the spatial vision for Islington until 2025 and associated policies that will make this vision possible.

The Core Strategy lists key areas where growth and change are expected and the key objectives for each. These include:

- **Archway:** Retention of high streets and regeneration and expansion of the town centre;
- **Finsbury Park:** Mixed use intensification around the station;
- **Nag's Head and Upper Holloway:** Strengthen the high streets of Seven Sisters Road and Holloway Road through intensification of underused sites;
- **Highbury Corner and Holloway Road:** Enhancement around the station and mixed use development along Holloway Road;
- **Angel and Upper Street:** Extension of town centre along Upper Street and Essex Road; retail and employment focused intensification;
- **Kings Cross:** Office led mixed use development along York Way and Pentonville Road and estate renewal. Vale Royal/Brewery Road area will be retained as industrial /employment location;
- **Bunhill and Clerkenwell:** Important employment location with need to intensify both housing and employment. Located within the Central Activities Zone (CAZ) and potential for large city scale buildings along City Road and Chiswell Street.

The Core Strategy places a strong emphasis on the conservation of the Borough's historic character. **Policy CS9 'Protecting and enhancing Islington's built and historic environment'** sets the boroughs strategic approach to new development. It includes:

- Preserving historic urban fabric and promoting a traditional street pattern/perimeter block approach;
- Conserving and enhancing the Borough's heritage assets;
- Taking the opportunity to redesign areas that suffer from poor layout;
- Promoting development on coherent street frontages;
- Providing dual aspect residential accommodation; and
- Creating high quality design that responds to, and challenges traditional design, but with pastiche design not being acceptable.

This policy states that tall buildings are generally inappropriate in the borough with the exception of some sites in Bunhill and Clerkenwell. The Core Strategy states that high densities can, and should be, met by other types of development.

2.5.2 DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES

The Islington Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (DPD) (June 2013), sets out the development management policies to be used in determining individual planning applications in conjunction with the policies included in the adopted Core Strategy and documents in the Development Plan.

The Development Management Policies DPD further clarifies that the only locations suitable for tall buildings are set out in the Finsbury Local Plan. In addition, **Policy DM2.1 'Design'** sets out the overarching elements of architectural and urban design that need to be satisfied by new development. The policy repeats the statement in Core Strategy Policy CS9 that tall buildings are not generally acceptable in the Borough. The policy focuses instead on the preservation and enhancement of the Boroughs historic character and ensuring that new development does not impact negatively on this.

Other Development Management Policies relevant to tall buildings include;

- **DM2.3 Heritage:** This champions the preservation of the historic townscape and the need for new development to be of a high quality contextual design and the need to protect the Borough's historic assets; and
- DM2.4 and DM2.5 which protect the Mayor of London's strategic views and local views towards local landmarks such as the Union Chapel on Upper Street.

2.5.3 THE ISLINGTON URBAN DESIGN GUIDE SPD

The Islington Urban Design Guide SPD was first published in 2006 and has recently been updated. It provides detailed design principles and standards for development that expand upon those polices included in the Core Strategy and Development Management Polices.

The document contains a section on tall buildings. This follows the polices in the Core Strategy/ Development Management plans and states that tall buildings are only suitable in Bunhill and Clerkenwell. It then sets out a number of principles that tall buildings in these locations should follow, including:

- Becoming a focal point;
- Providing a successful contrast with its surroundings;
- Reinforcing a sense of place;
- Highlighting the importance of a public building;
- Allowing ventilation between buildings to occur at street level (such as through breezes that disperse urban pollutants);

The SPD also states that when a building is substantially taller than its surroundings it should be designed to an exceptional standard and the need to protect views to and from the Highgate Ridge.

2.5.4
FINSBURY LOCAL PLAN DPD

The Finsbury Local Plan DPD (the Area Action Plan for Bunhill and Clerkenwell) was adopted in June 2013 and covers a specific part of south Islington that has seen significant change in recent years. Despite a vibrant and ever expanding residential population the area retains some of the most deprived areas in the city. Development pressure in the area is likely to continue in to the future as infrastructure projects such as Crossrail and Thameslink are completed. The Finsbury Plan aims to manage this growth in a way that ensures the area's communities, environment and economy will feel its benefits. The plan comprises both objectives and policies. Chapter 12 summarises how objectives and policies will be implemented. Chapter 13 allocates sites for future development.

The Finsbury Plan area is the only location in which the council considers tall buildings to be appropriate. It states that buildings over 30m are only suitable in locations identified at the City Road Basin, at Old Street and north of Moorgate. Elsewhere buildings are expected to respond to the local context. The policy goes on to state a number of requirements to which tall buildings should respond. These are largely based on the principles of the CABE/English Heritage Advice Note 4.

2.5.5
TALL BUILDINGS EVIDENCE BASE 2010

The analysis that underpinned all of the tall building policies listed above is contained within the 2010 'Tall Buildings Evidence Base.' This report was produced to provide an evidence base for formulating Local Development Framework policy on tall buildings in Islington. The document includes two phases of analysis:

- **Phase 1 - Strategic Search:** This comprised a strategic assessment of the borough to identify the areas that may contain sites that could be suitable for tall buildings and may warrant further assessment; and
- **Phase 2 - Detailed Analysis:** This involved a more detailed analysis of the areas potentially suitable for tall buildings.

Both are summarised beside.

Summary of Phase 1: Strategic Search
This process analysed a number of strategic level constraints. These were:

- Historic Development Pattern of Islington;
- Conservation Areas;
- Topography;
- Conservation Areas, Protected Vistas and Local Views;
- Building heights;
- Predominantly residential areas; and
- Access to public transport nodes.

The analysis concluded that tall buildings are not appropriate in Conservation Areas, areas that are predominantly residential, within protected viewing corridors, or in locations where they would block views to, or from, the Highgate Ridge.

The above exclusions were then translated into a plan to indicate the parts of the Borough that were left when areas that were considered unacceptable for tall buildings were removed (Figure 2.2 on adjacent page).

This approach identified four principle areas that were tested in the Phase 2 Analysis.

Summary of Phase 2: Detailed Analysis
The four areas identified phase 1 as having some potential for tall buildings were:

- Archway;
- Finsbury Park;
- Lower Holloway; and
- Angel.

These areas were analysed in more detail with the following characteristics considered in more detail:

- Land uses;
- Building heights;
- Block pattern; and
- Street network.

This analysis concluded that none of the areas were suitable for tall buildings. The reasons given were:

- The prevalence of low rise residential architecture;
- The need to preserve viewing corridors and Conservation Areas;
- The need to preserve historic plot patterns;
- The need to maintain local landmarks/location such as Arsenal's Emirates Stadium and Nags Head town centre as the most prominent features; and
- The need to protect views to and from Highgate Ridge.

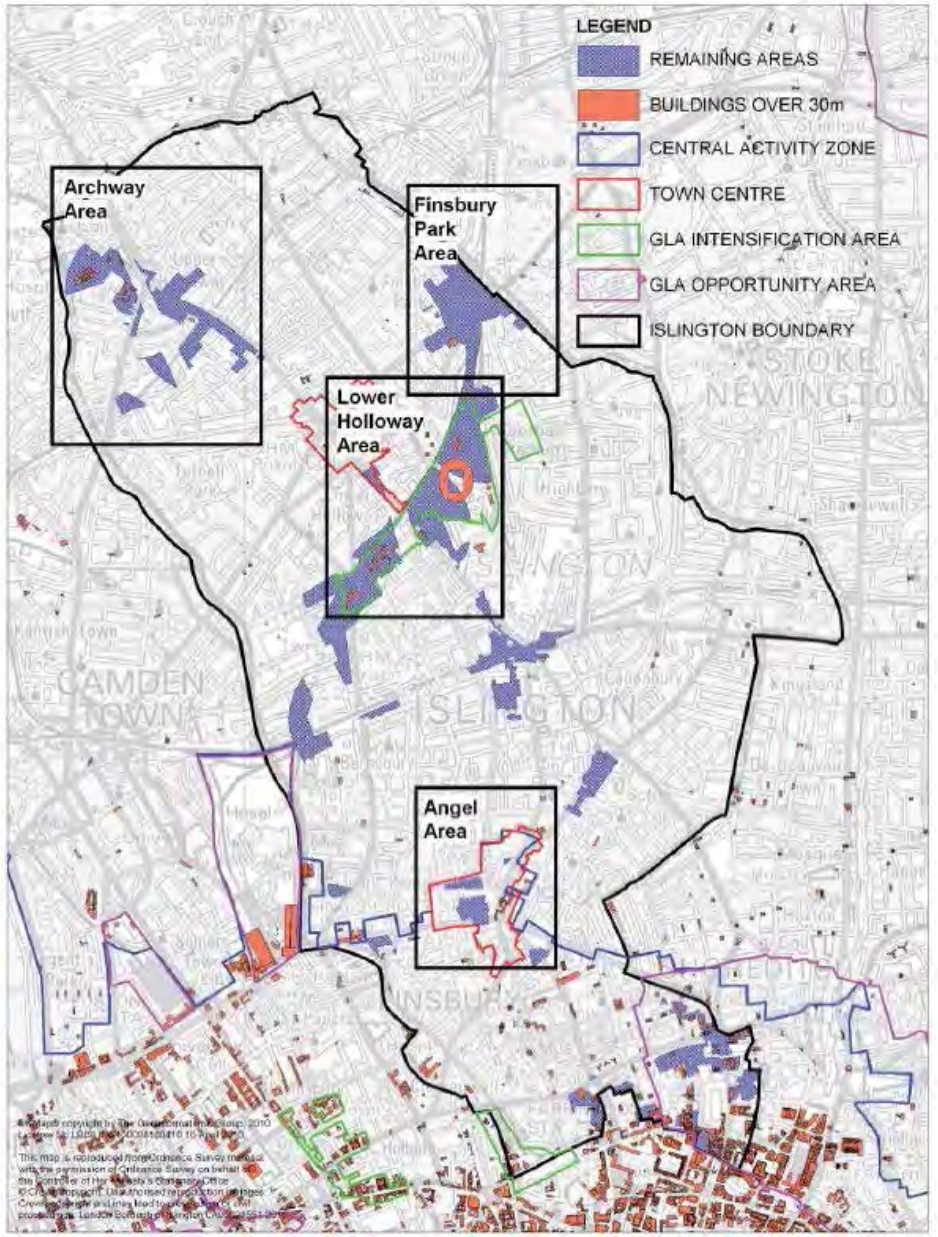


Figure 2.2: Islington Tall Buildings Evidence Base - detailed study areas (2010)

2.6 POLICY APPROACHES OF OTHER LONDON BOROUGHS

Tall buildings policy in London is primarily guided by the London Plan. However, each Borough has a slightly different approach to designating locations for, and managing tall buildings. Although this report is concerned with Islington, it is important to consider how other boroughs, especially those in close proximity to Islington, approach the issue.

For the purpose of this report we have reviewed tall buildings policies prepared and adopted in the following local authorities:

- London Borough of Camden;
- London Borough of Haringey;
- Westminster City Council;
- City of London;
- London Borough of Hackney;
- London Borough of Tower Hamlets;
- London Borough of Southwark;
- London Borough of Lambeth; and
- London Borough of Lewisham.

This review was undertaken in 2016 and approaches by Local Authorities may since have changed.

Like LB Islington, most of these boroughs employ a contextual approach when defining tall buildings. The London Boroughs of Southwark, Camden, Tower Hamlets and Westminster and the City of London, do not use storey heights to assess or identify tall buildings. Instead they state that a building should be considered tall if it is significantly taller than its neighbours or significantly changes the skyline.

Only LB Lambeth defines tall buildings by height. Lambeth considers a tall building to be a height of 25m adjacent to the River or 30m and above elsewhere.

Other boroughs have definitions that combine these two approaches. For instance, LB Haringey takes the following approach to identifying a tall building:

'The Council has adopted the definition of Tall and Large Buildings as those which are substantially taller than their neighbours, have a significant impact on the skyline, or are of 10 storeys and over or are otherwise larger than the threshold sizes set for referral to the Mayor of London, as set out in the London Plan.'

LB Hackney goes the furthest by defining tall buildings as ones that are significantly taller than surrounding development and gives indicative height ranges for tall buildings in various parts of the borough.

Likewise, the Boroughs studied all have a different approach to identifying where tall buildings should be located.

The London Borough of Camden does not give specific locations where tall buildings would be acceptable. Rather it provides a detailed list of requirements that tall buildings applications should follow.

LB Haringey directs tall buildings towards Opportunity Areas and town centres such as Haringey Heartlands and Tottenham Hale. Additional locations will be identified in a series of AAP documents. LB Haringey also sets out requirements for all tall building applications.

Westminster City Council directs tall buildings towards opportunity areas at Victoria and Paddington. It states that opportunities for tall buildings are limited outside these locations. However, it will consider the acceptability of locations elsewhere.

LB Hackney identifies a number of 'tall building opportunity areas'. These are around town centres, growth areas and transport nodes. It states that all tall building applications must consider the principles set out in the 2005 Hackney Tall Buildings Strategy.

LB Tower Hamlets considers building height in accordance with their town centre hierarchy. Aldgate and Canary Wharf are identified as the locations for the tallest buildings followed by the CAZ, major centres and preferred office locations. The Borough also sets out a number of criteria for tall buildings. Tower Hamlets has seen a proliferation of tall buildings under this approach.

LB Southwark sets out a number of detailed criteria for new tall buildings. It states that the most appropriate areas are east of Borough High Street, London Bridge, Elephant and Castle and the northern end of Blackfriars Road. Applications in areas outwith these zones are not considered

appropriate. LB Southwark have a designated Design Review Panel for tall buildings and state that they will work with CABE, the GLA and English Heritage (now Historic England) to prepare detailed design guidance for appropriate locations.

LB Lambeth identifies suitable locations at Vauxhall and the Waterloo Opportunity Area and Brixton Town Centre. A saved UDP policy provides detailed urban design advice based on the CABE/English Heritage Advice Note.

LB Lewisham states that tall buildings may be appropriate in specific locations identified by the Lewisham Tall Buildings Study. These locations are Lewisham and Catford town centres, Convoys Wharf, Oxestalls Road, Plough Way and Surrey Canal Triangle. Within these locations the Study identifies further details of areas which may be appropriate, inappropriate or sensitive to tall buildings. All tall building proposals should be accompanied by detailed urban design analysis to assess its impact upon the immediate and wider context. It lists the landscape and character features, heritage assets that must be protected and states that it will use CABE/English Heritage guidance to assess applications.

LB Islington is comparatively restrictive in terms of the locations it deems suitable for tall buildings. Tall buildings are directed to very tightly drawn areas/sites within the Finsbury Local Plan area only. Given the development pressure that the borough is under it is fitting to re-examine the potential for some less sensitive parts of the Borough to accommodate tall buildings.

Figure 2.3: Illustration showing building heights for the preferred office locations and the town centre hierarchy (from Tower Hamlets Local Plan, 2013)

Islington High Street (Angel)

3 ISLINGTON SPATIAL OVERVIEW

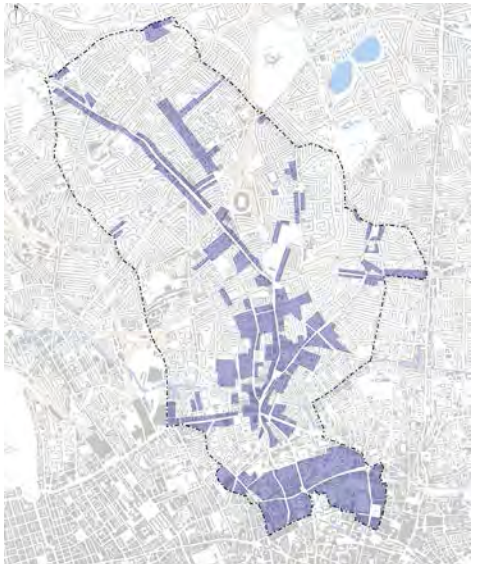
3.1 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The oldest parts of Islington can be found in proximity to Central London. Over time the Borough grew along major radial routes out of the city swallowing up surrounding villages as it expanded.

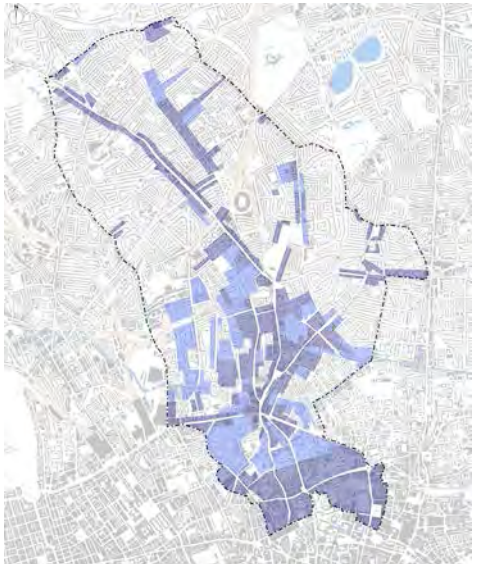
By the 1840s The Grand Canal, Islington Tunnel and City Road Basin were constructed. At this time Georgian expansion formed new development around Angel and the City. This was characterised by formally laid out terraces and squares – much of which still exist today, now protected by Conservation Area designations.

A step change in the development of the Borough came with the arrival of the railways in the mid 1850s. This changed the character of the area with rapid urbanisation, the appearance of industry and warehousing around the railway goods yards and long rows of terraced housing built to accommodate new residents and workers.

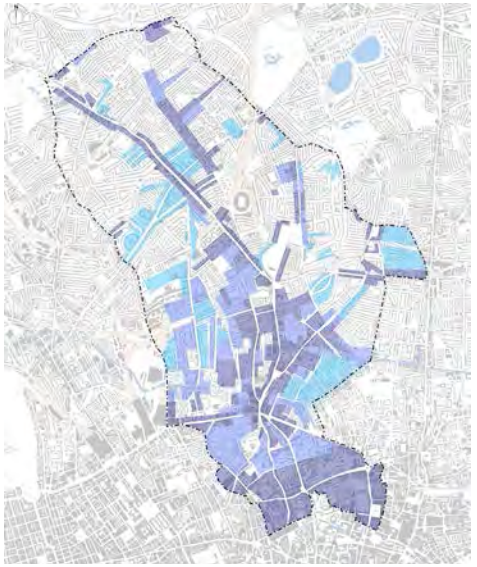
In the 20th century WW2 and subsequent construction of large post war housing estates were responsible for further transformations in the townscape of the Borough. These estates are generally contained within large gap sites or cleared areas clearly defined by streets. Many have poor internal connectivity but are generally urban in character rather than Corbusian style blocks sat within large areas of open space. This maintains the dense urban character of Islington's townscape.



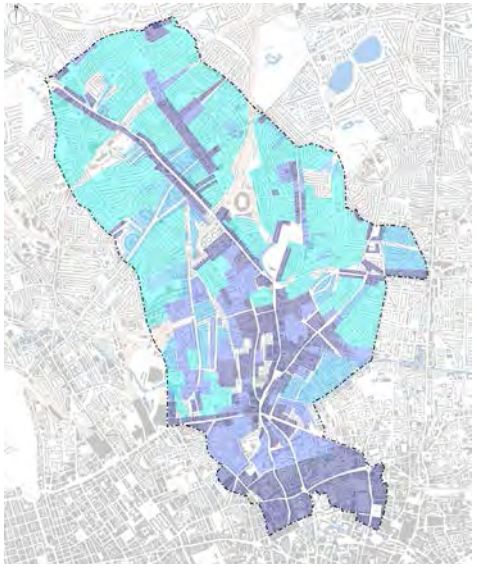
Islington 1805



Islington 1841

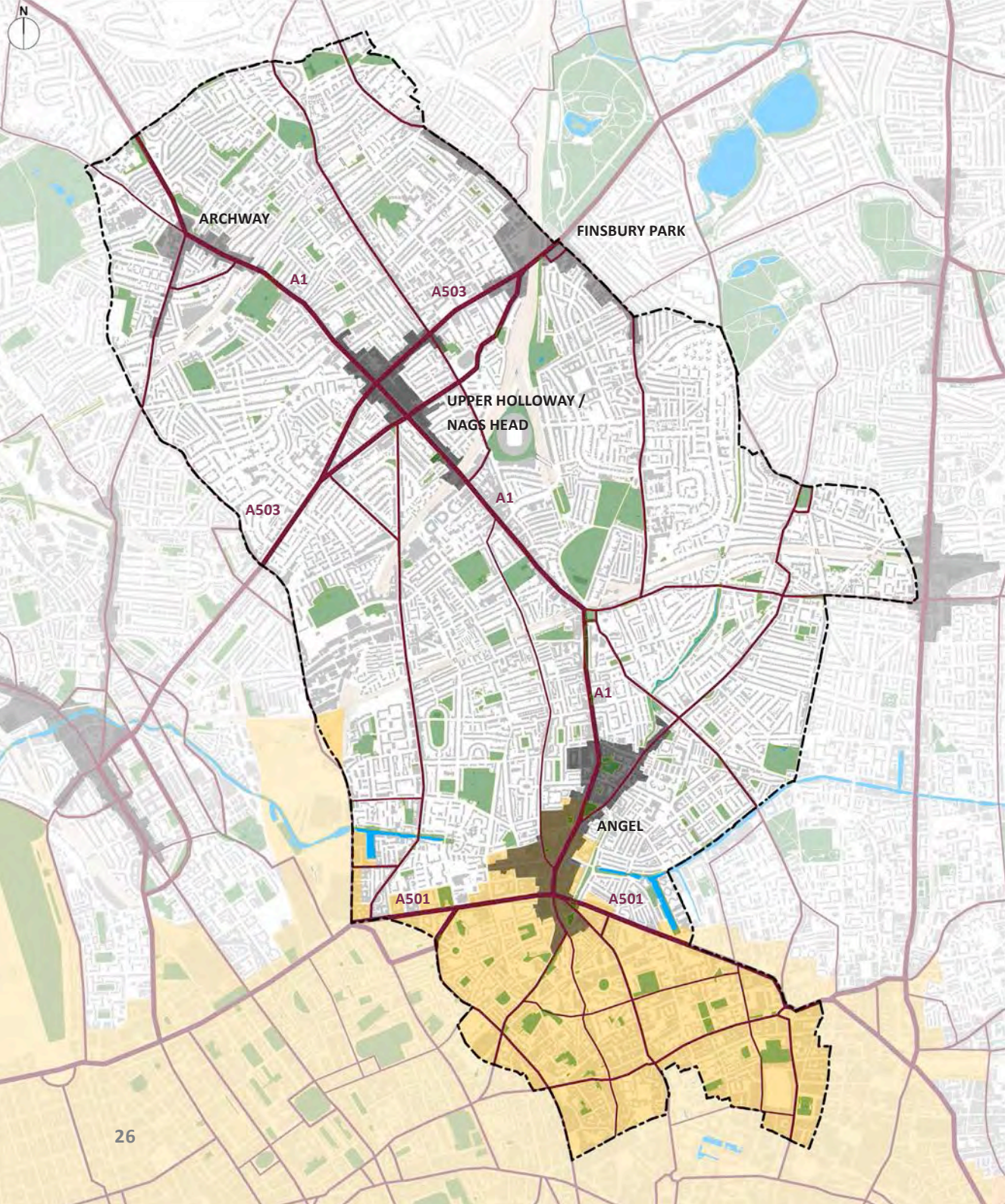


Islington 1862



Islington 1900

Figure 3.1: Historic development of the Borough



3.2 SPATIAL STRUCTURE

3.2.1 CENTRES

The Borough has four town centres. These are:

- Archway;
- Angel;
- Finsbury Park; and
- Upper Holloway / Nags Head.

Each of these centres are located along major arterial routes and can trace their beginnings back to the very early expansion of London. Angel and Upper Holloway are classified as Major Town Centres and Archway and Finsbury Park are District Town Centres.

Figure 3.2: The Boroughs centres and structure

The borough is partially contained within the Central Activities Zone (CAZ) as defined in the London Plan. This is described as:

"a unique cluster of vitally important activities including central government offices, headquarters and embassies, the largest concentration of London's financial and business services sector and the offices of trade, professional bodies, institutions, associations, communications, publishing, advertising and the media".

The CAZ is likely to be under considerable development pressure. The London Plan has a dedicated Supplementary Planning Document related to the CAZ. This includes guidance on elements such as striking the balance between new residential development and offices and protecting commercial uses.

The presence of the CAZ emphasises the important strategic position that Islington is in and how development in the Borough must also relate to wider policies that effect the whole of London. Significantly, the CAZ is also one of the locations where the London Plan is supportive of new tall buildings.

3.2.2 CORRIDORS

The primary route through the Borough is the A1. This connects to the A501 – London's inner ring road which also forms the boundary of the Congestion Charge to the south and to the North Circular to the north. The Borough is bisected by the A503 which passes through the Nag's Head/ Upper Holloway town centre. Other main and secondary roads connect to these routes.

3.2.3 OPEN SPACES

Islington has relatively few open spaces. It is a very dense borough with tightly packed urban blocks that generally follow a traditional perimeter pattern. Islington's population density of 153 people per hectare is the highest in England. The borough's area is only 14.86 square kilometres, the smallest in London other than City of London Corporation. It is 40% more densely populated than even the inner London average of 109 people per hectare. Islington has one of the smallest amounts of open space per capita in the country. Open spaces are generally limited to pockets behind buildings such as Spa Fields Park or formal squares such as Milner Square.

The largest open space in the Borough is Highbury Fields. Other larger parks such as Finsbury Park and Clissold Park are located on the Borough Boundary.

The Regents/Grand Union Canal runs through the Borough and is the only significant water body. The canal is contained within the Islington Canal Tunnel for some distance between Angel and Caledonian Road. The water is not accessible between these spaces.

There are some green corridors – most notably around Arsenal Stadium which have been identified as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC's).

3.2.4 USES

Employment

There is only one Locally Significant Industrial Site in the Borough at York Vale/Brewery Road area. This is located on the edge of the CAZ on the border of Islington and Camden. It is home to a wide range of uses including both B1 and B2 employment.

The Borough's employment uses are heavily concentrated within the CAZ, with parts specifically designated as Employment Priority Areas in the Finsbury Local Plan.

Small but important clusters of employment uses can also be found throughout the rest of the borough and are designated as Employment Growth Areas. These are generally concentrated along key routes and town centres.

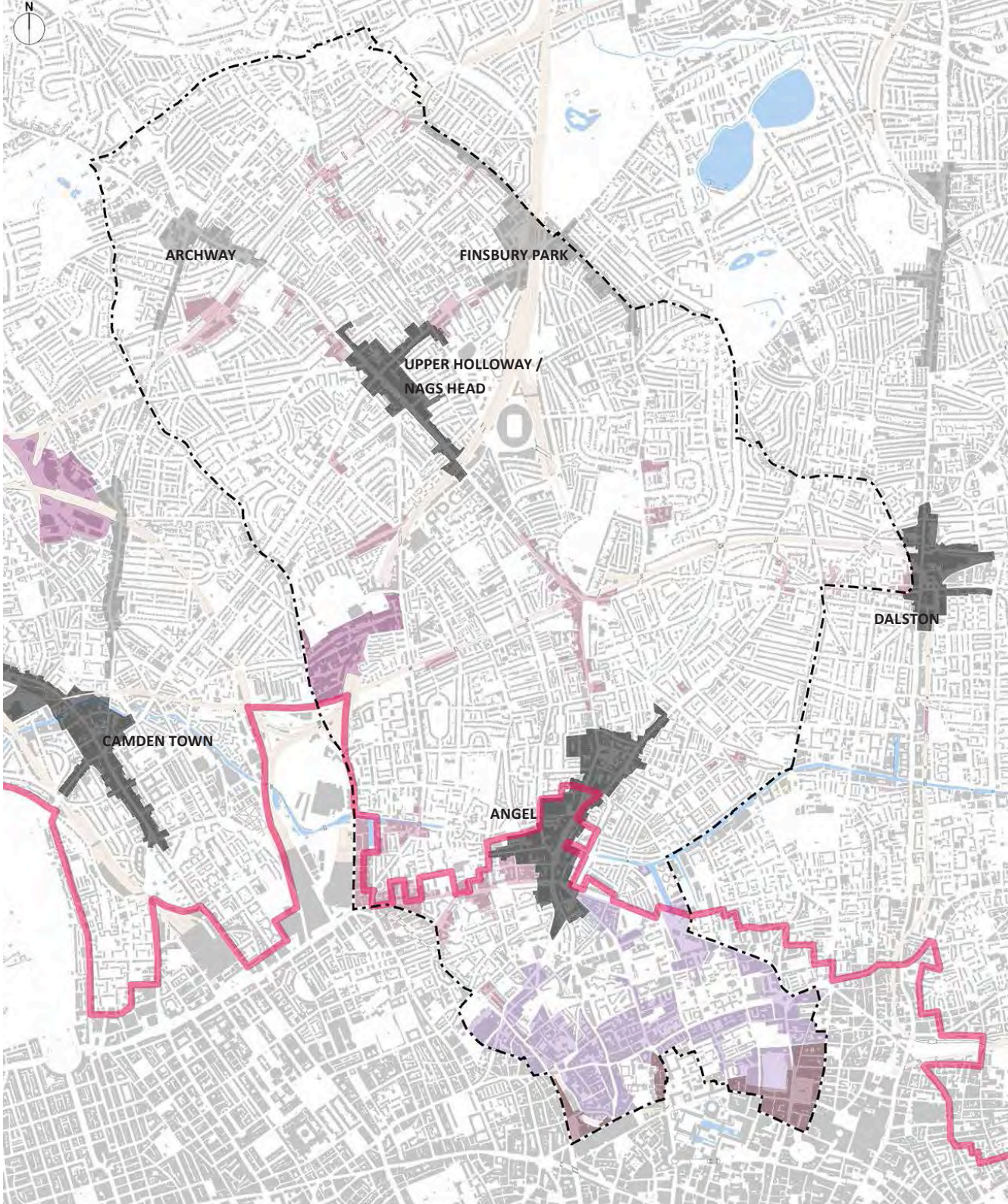


Figure 3.3: Employment uses

Residential
Islington is predominantly a residential borough but still retains a rich mix of uses in many areas. It is very densely populated and has a high proportion of housing estates, many of these post war, spread evenly throughout the borough.

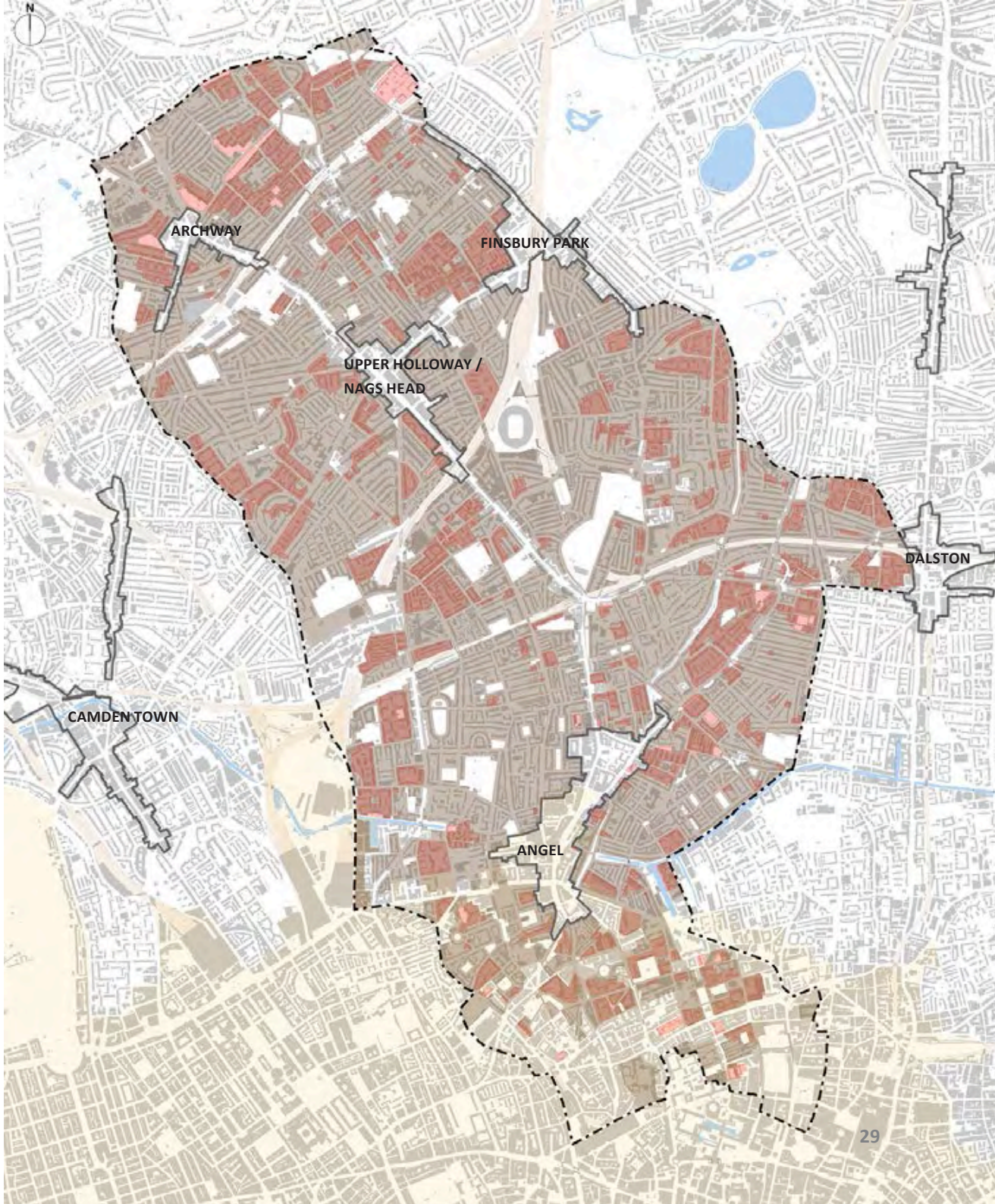


Figure 3.4: Residential uses

3.2.5
PUBLIC TRANSPORT NETWORK / PTAL

The Borough has a comprehensive bus network running along its major roads and connecting to extensive rail and underground networks. The Northern, Piccadilly and Victoria London Underground lines, the London Overground Network and two mainline railway lines all run through the borough.

The south of the borough is close to national transport interchanges at Kings Cross, St Pancras and Farringdon. Other important interchanges can be found at Finsbury Park, Highbury and Islington and Angel.

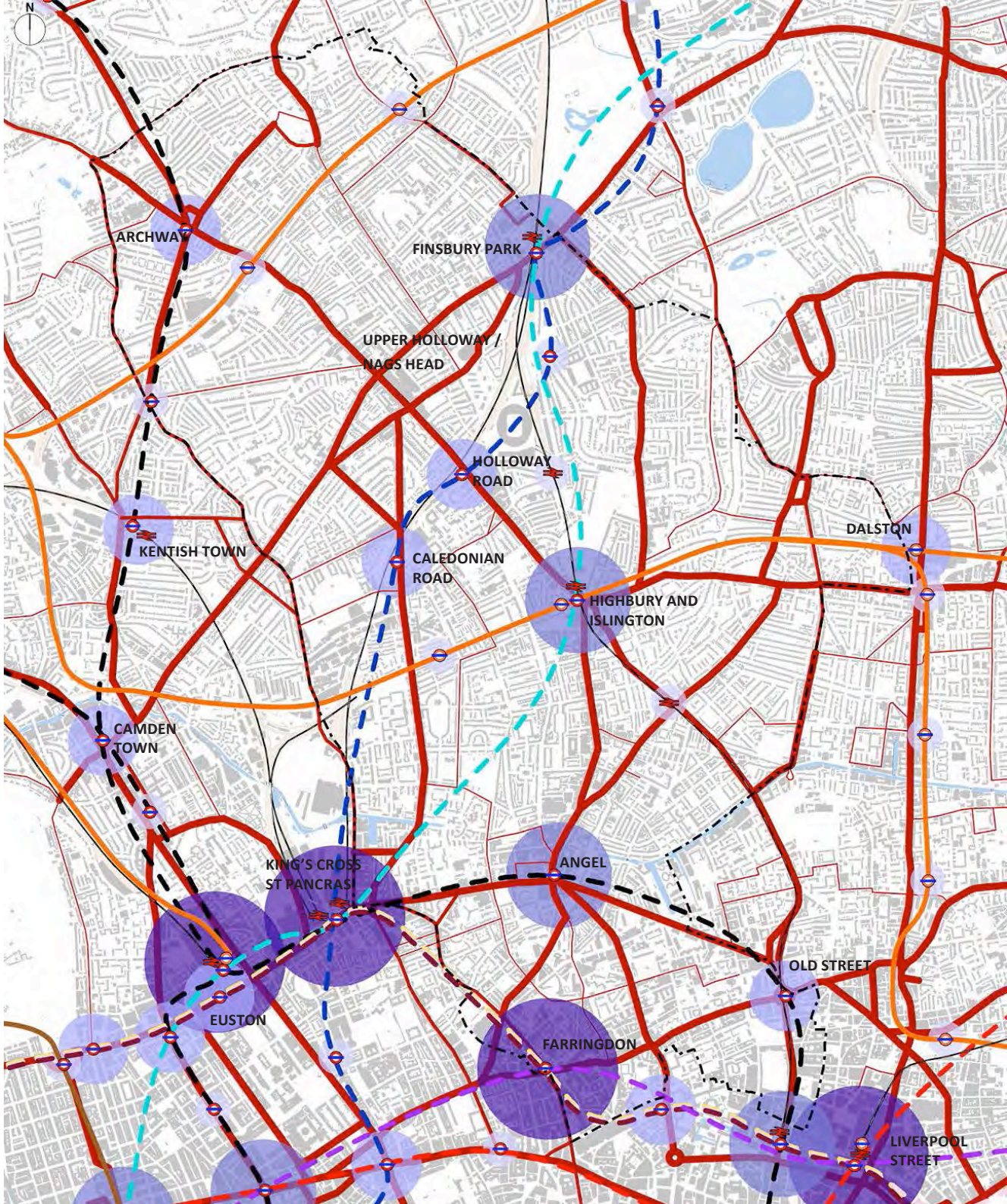


Figure 3.5: Public transport

Most of the Borough has a PTAL rating of 4 or above however, there are pockets of poor accessibility. These are focused in the west of the borough along the border with Camden. There are also smaller areas of poorer accessibility in the north-east part of the borough around Elthorne Park, in peripheral areas around the Regents Canal in the south east corner and to the east of Arsenal underground station.

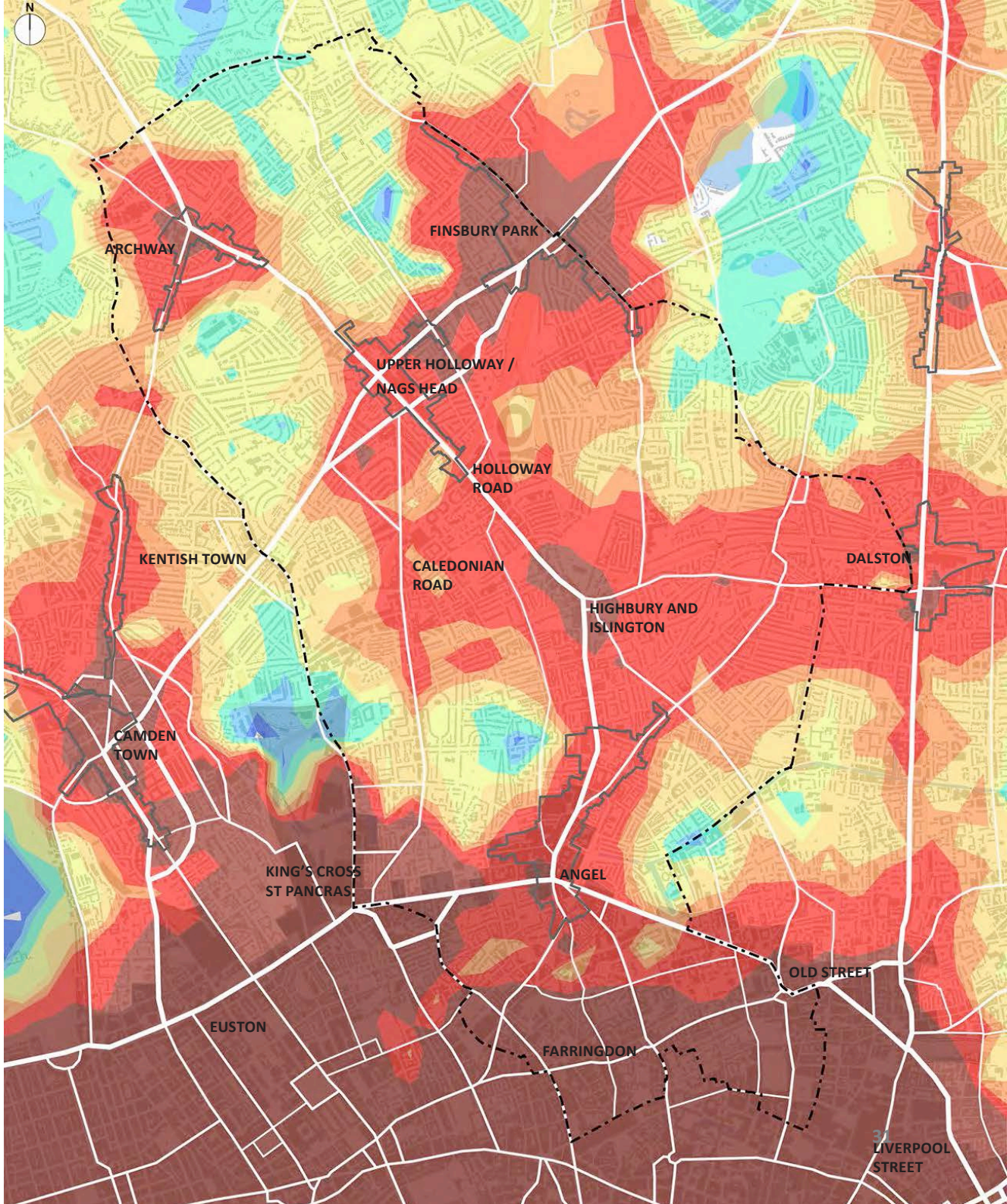


Figure 3.6: Public transport accessibility

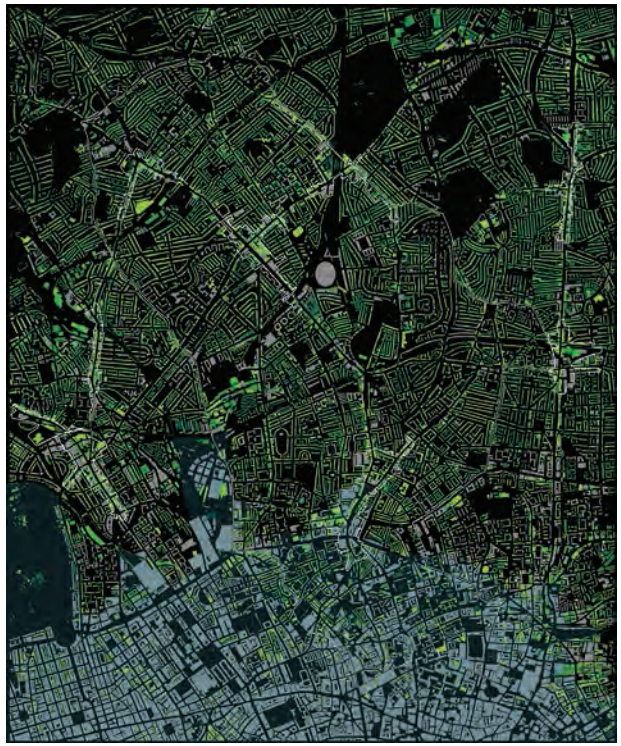


Figure 3.7: Existing low-rise developments (up to 16m / 5 storeys)

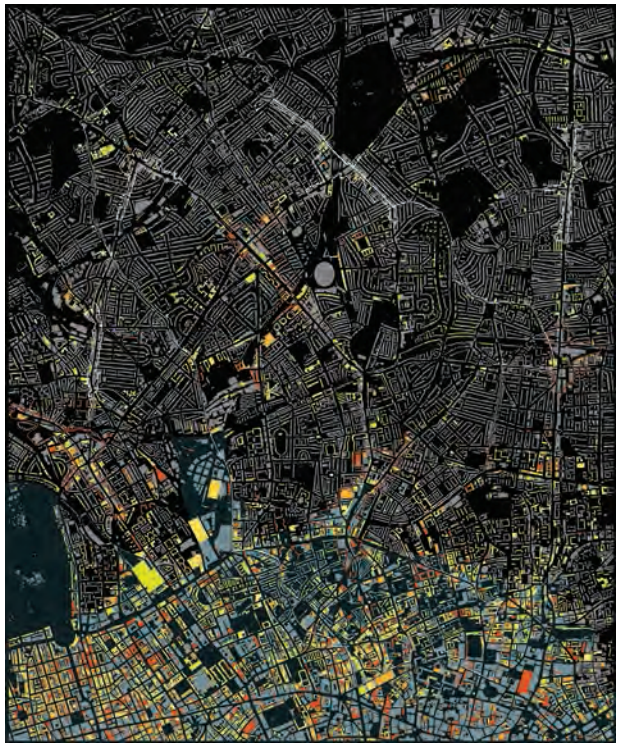


Figure 3.8: Existing mid-rise development (16m / 6 storeys to 28m / 9 storeys)

Figure 3.9: Existing and permitted higher Buildings of 28m / 10 storeys to 37m / 12 storeys

3.3 EXISTING HEIGHTS

Islington is predominantly a low to medium rise borough with most of the buildings standing at five storeys or less in height. Mid-rise developments up to 10 storeys are scattered throughout the borough with a greater concentration located to the south in the CAZ and along corridors. Other higher buildings are peppered around the borough with some more noticeable clusters to the west of the Emirates Stadium and in town centres. There are only a few taller buildings with a height greater than 12 storeys in the Borough (Figure 3.10). They include the following:

- a number of estate tower blocks largely concentrated in the CAZ, but also to the north of the Emirates Stadium;
- two recent residential conversions of office towers in Archway;
- Emirates Stadium and associated development;
- Commercial and other taller buildings at Kings Cross, Old Street and Moorgate on either side of the Borough boundary;
- a cluster of four new tall residential buildings at City Road Basin; and
- permission exists for development with two tall buildings at Finsbury Park that is currently under construction .

Figure 3.10: Existing and permitted taller buildings (>37m / 12 storeys and above)

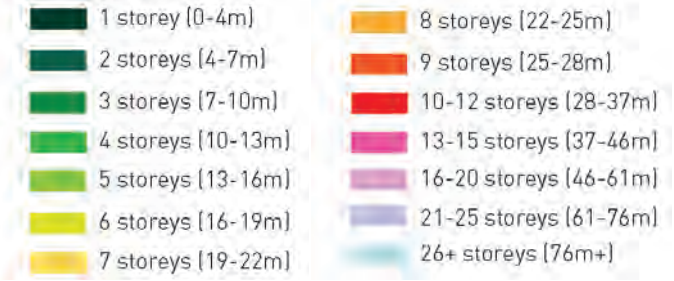


Figure 3.11: Existing and permitted building heights

3.4 SENSITIVITIES

There are a number of aspects of the Borough that are particularly sensitive to taller buildings. These are:

- Listed buildings and Conservation Areas;
- Protected views and landmarks; and
- Local topography.

3.4.1 LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS

Approximately half of the Borough is covered by Conservation Area Designations. Most of the Borough's listed buildings are located within these Conservation Areas.

The Conservation Areas and listed buildings are concentrated in the southern half of the Borough (south of the Emirates Stadium and to the west of Holloway Road). These areas represent the Borough's early development as London expanded to the north.

Conservation Areas, listed buildings and parks and gardens are particularly sensitive to tall buildings. Tall buildings with their massing and height can be out of character within historic areas and significantly undermine the setting of designated heritages assets.

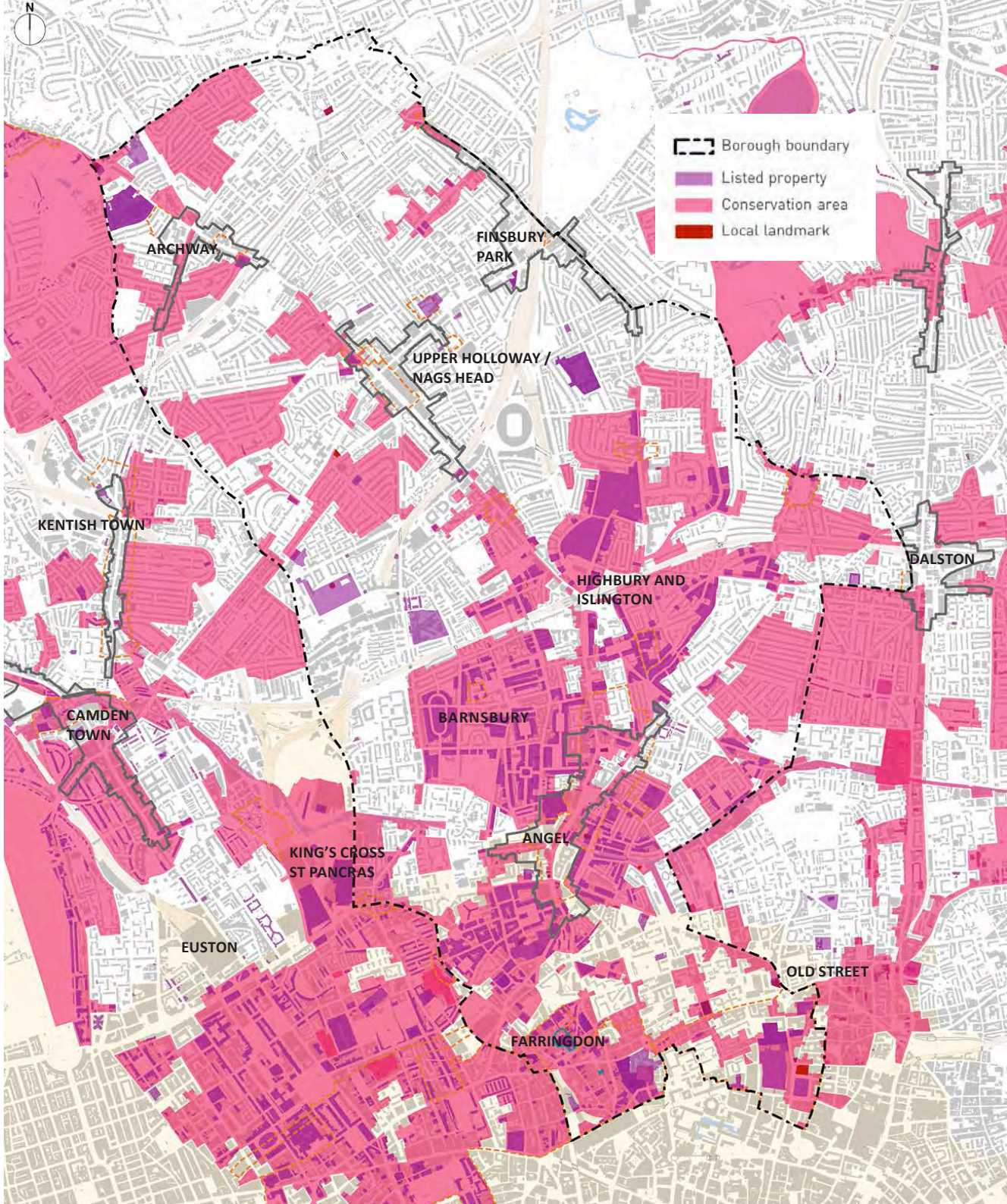


Figure 3.12: Conservation Areas and listed buildings

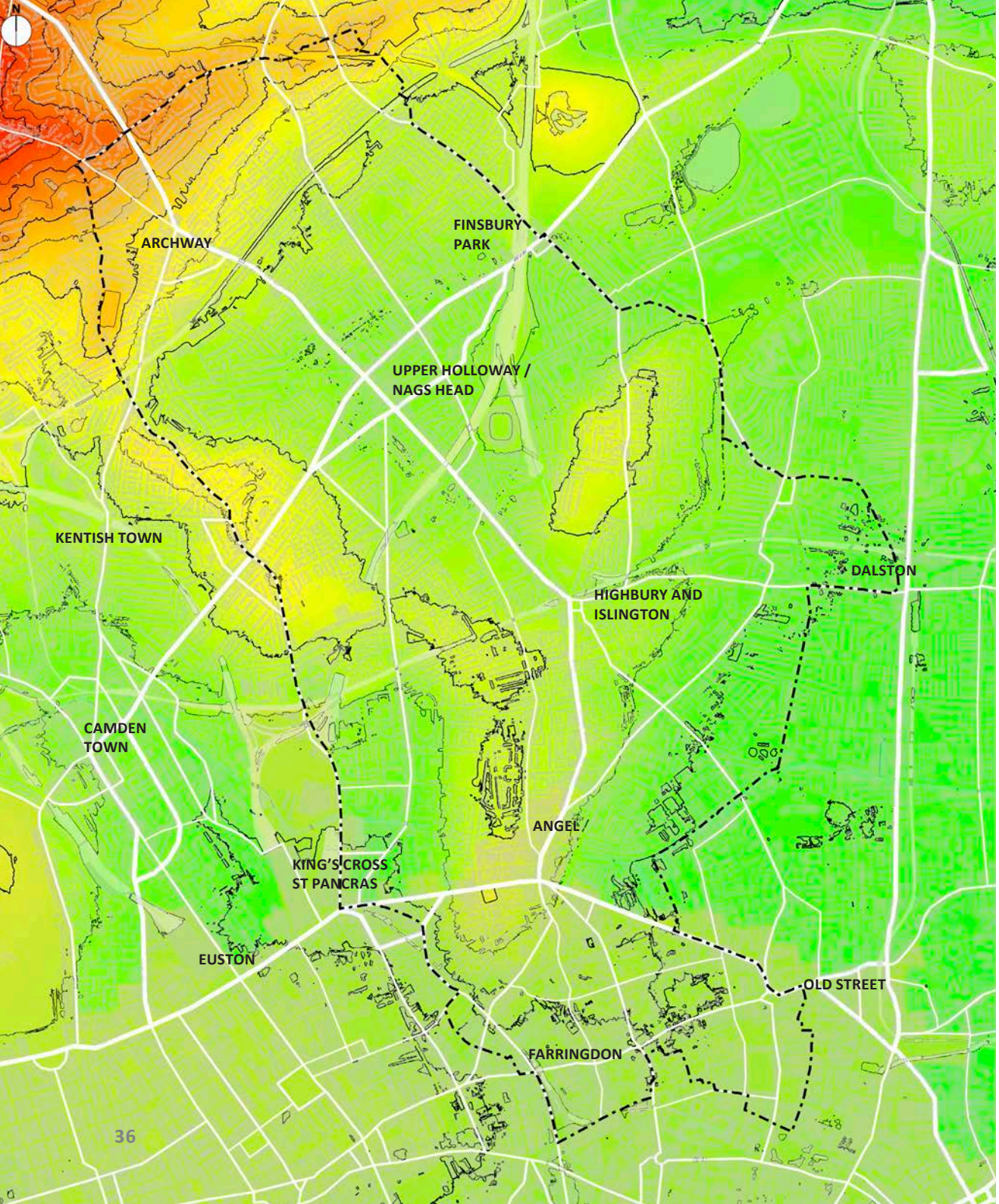
3.4.2
PROTECTED VIEWS AND LOCAL LANDMARKS

A number of protected vistas/views run through the Borough. The Mayor has designated protected vistas to St Paul's Cathedral, of which three cross Islington: from Alexandra Palace, Kenwood House, and Parliament Hill. The southeast corner of the Borough at Moorgate is situated in the backdrop of the view from Westminster Pier to St Paul's Cathedral.

Islington has designated seven local views to St Paul's Cathedral. The views from Archway Bridge, Archway Road and Dartmouth Park Hill are particularly relevant as they pass across much of the Borough. Tall buildings should not be located within these viewing corridors or protected vistas.

Islington identifies a number of well known local landmarks. Views to local landmarks are protected and development should not block or detract from important views. Local landmarks include the Clocktower at the former cattle market near Caledonian Road and Union Chapel Tower on Upper Street.

Figure 3.13: Protected views and local landmarks



3.4.3 TOPOGRAPHY

The topography of the borough plays an important role in defining its urban form. Buildings located on the higher parts of the borough can be visually prominent even if they themselves are not particularly high. Generally, the land rises gently from the low level of the City fringe, around 17m AOD to 40m AOD (Above Ordinance Datum) in the north. However, in the northwest of the borough it rises relatively steeply up to the Highgate Ridge, which reaches over 125m AOD just outside the borough boundary. Developments built on the high ground within the borough need to be particularly sensitive to their impact on this ridge.

Figure 3.14: Topography

Figure 3.15: View from Highgate Ridge

Wharf Road, view towards tall buildings on City Road

4 ISLINGTON'S TALL BUILDING APPROACH

4.1 DEFINITION OF BUILDING HEIGHT

Building height can be expressed in a number of ways. Most commonly it is defined by the number of floors, either the total usable number of floors, or the number of floors up to the parapet, roof structure or ridge line.

Alternatively the height of buildings can be indicated in metric height. This could refer to the total height of a building (usually including roof plant) or the sheer height of a building at its façade subject to what aspect of form the guidance is concerned about. Metric height can be relative to the ground, which is useful when comparing heights or when defining the scale of a building or street. Relative height depends on the place it is measured from as the topography might vary around a building, or differ from the front to the back.

Building height can also be established as an absolute measurement that refers to AOD (Above Ordnance Datum). The absolute height of a building is, for example, required to understand encroachment into air traffic corridors or sight lines of protected views.

This study adopts a definition of building height that is based on relative measurement above ground, both in numbers of storeys as well as metres. Storeys directly relate to the organisation and use of a building, and height in storeys is easier to measure than absolute metric height. As such it is a straightforward concept that allows the simple understanding of building height. However, storey heights may vary between different developments, within a building itself and also between different uses.

To establish a common and unambiguous basis this study translates the proposed number of storeys into metric height that define the physical envelop height of a building. Given the prevailing residential character of the Borough, this is based on a typical residential floor-to-floor height of 3 metres multiplied by the number of floors, and adds a discretionary additional metre to allow for a slightly higher, or elevated ground floor or roof structure.

Both figures are normally provided. For clarity and in case of doubt, the metric height of a building as indicated takes precedence over the height indicated in number of storeys. This is particularly important when considering commercial buildings where the floor-to-floor height is greater (often in the range of 4 to 4.5 metre per storey), as the resultant height of a commercial building and a residential building of the same number of storeys would be significantly different. Where relevant the applicable height in commercial storeys has been indicated.

Eagle House and taller buildings on City Road

4.2 DEFINITION AND CLASSIFICATION OF TALL BUILDINGS

A ‘tall building’ is a relative term. A ten-storey building might be a (very) tall building in a predominantly two-storey suburban area, yet would be considered only as a local highpoint in an urban five to six storey context. Thus, tall buildings must be considered in relation to their local context. (see Figue 4.1)

The taller a building the greater is its presence and impact, both locally as well as on the skyline. The ratio of the height of a tall building to the prevailing contextual height is a useful indicator of the extent of ‘tallness’ of a building within its specific context.

The prevailing height in an area, as well as the degree of variation or coherence in building height, are important physical attributes that shape the experiential quality of an area and define its character. These attributes are the contextual references against which the height of a tall building is recognised and appreciated from the urban environment.

This study categorises tall buildings into different height groups by reference to their context height ratio (Figure 4.2 and 4.3). This allows a simple expression of the ‘tallness’ and impact of a tall building within their context as well as on the skyline.

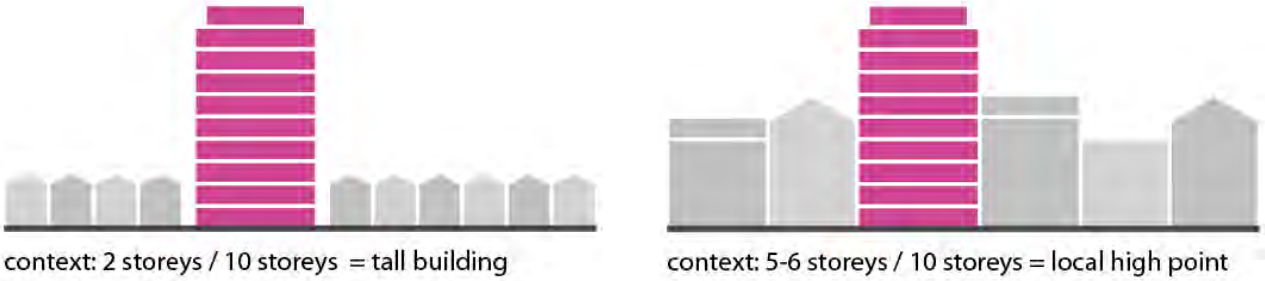


Figure 4.1: The impact of a tall building is related to its context

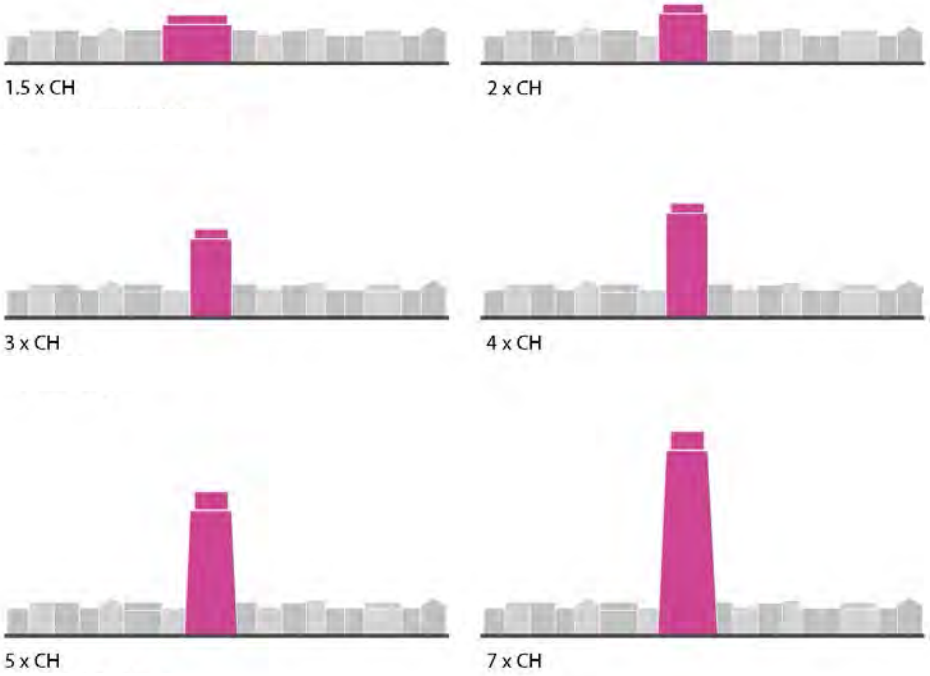


Figure 4.2: The height of buildings can be expressed as 'context height ratio'

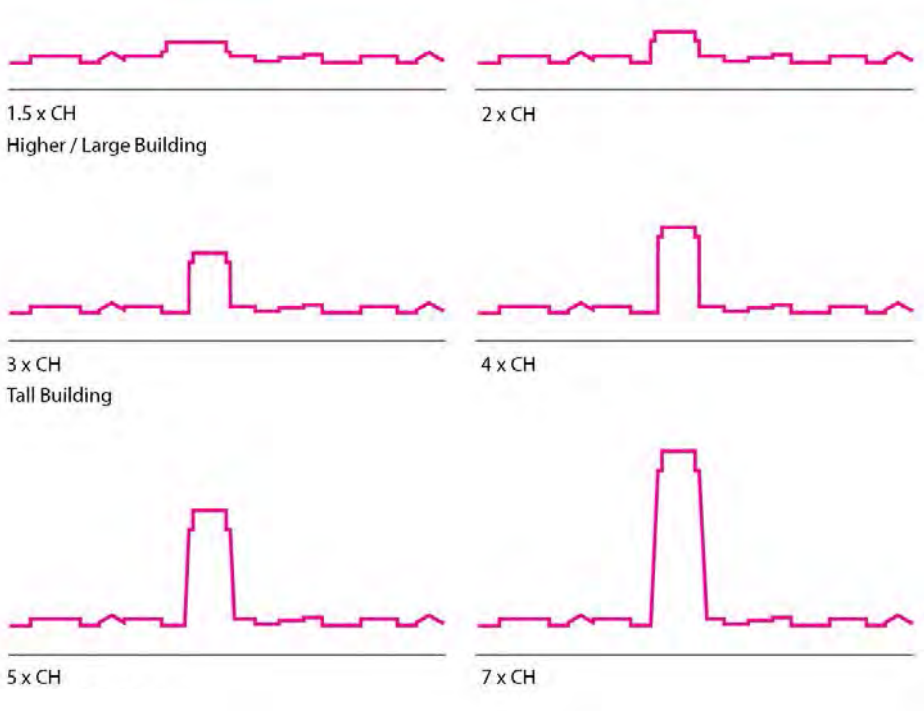


Figure 4.3: The context height expressed as an impact on the skyline

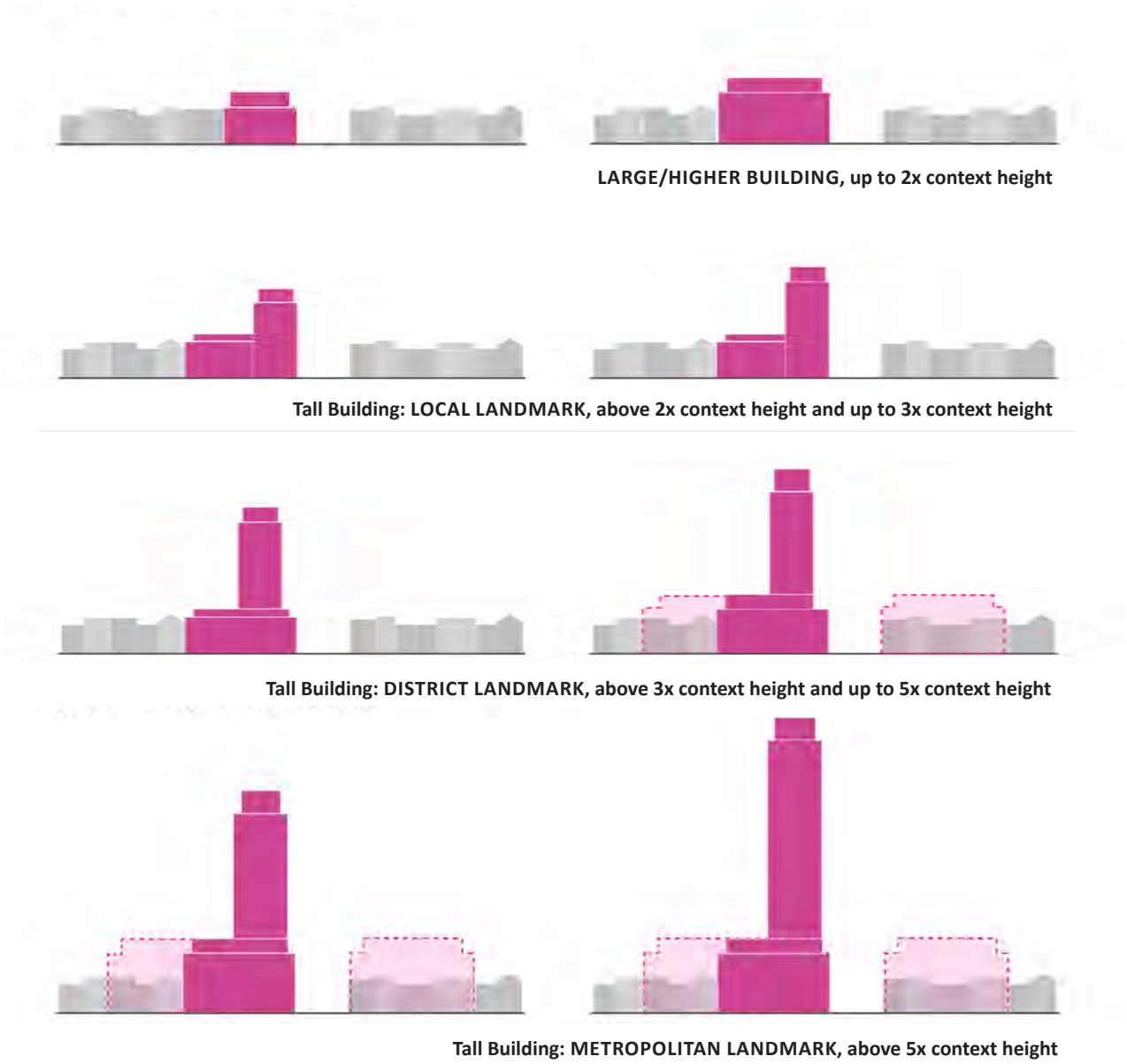


Figure 4.4: Diagram indicating the principles of height relativity and tall building classification

Figure 4.4 diagrammatically depicts a large or tall building within its context. It illustrates how the relationship between the taller element and its surrounding context changes as its height increases. In reference to the context height ratio it identifies four height classifications:

- Large/higher building;
- Local Landmark;
- District Landmark; and
- Metropolitan Landmark.

In reference to the building height classification Table 4.1 set out the principal perception of a tall building in relation to its context, and its principal impact on the skyline.

It is recognised that other contextual factors may also influence how the relationship of a taller building with its context is perceived. These include for example the local topography, the variation in the context height, the form, scale and roofscape of surrounding buildings, other tall buildings in the vicinity, the location of the tall element within the street block, the structure of the area and from where the tall building can be seen. For simplicity these factors are not included in the concept.

Generally the relationship of a tall building with its surrounding will gradually change as its height increases. It is recognised that there may be an overlap at the classification thresholds where buildings can be perceived as part of both adjoining classifications (for example as a Local Landmark as well as a District Landmark). In many cases however, it will be clearly possible to define a proposed building in one particular classification only.

Ratio to Context Height (CH)	Building heigth classification	Perception in relation to its context	Visual impact on the skyline
Up to 2 x CH	**Large/higher building**	Large/Higher building establishes a localised high point. Building is more notable within a setting of consistent height, and less notable where there is a greater variation in the context height for example along corridors	Higher building is of limited visibility and its significance is local.
Above 2x CH and up to 3x CH	**Local Landmark** Tall building of local significance	Tall building establishes a prominent exception within its context, yet may be perceived as constituent part of the context.	Tall building is outstanding, yet its impact on the skyline is mainly local.
Above 3x CH up to 5x CH	**District Landmark** Tall building of district wide significance	Tall building is markedly outstanding and establishes a pronounced contrast with its context.	Tall building is highly visible and notably affects the skyline on a district wide scale.
Above 5x CH	**Metropolitan Landmark** Tall building of metropolitan significance	Tall building establishes a jarring contrast with its context, unless a locally increased building height and/or a cluster of other tall buildings help to mediate and visually build up to and integrate its height.	Tall building is highly visible and significantly affects the skyline on a London wide scale.

Table 4.1: Table indicating principles of height relativity and tall building classification

Lexington Apartment building on City Road

4.3 CLASSIFICATION OF TALL BUILDINGS IN ISLINGTON

Analysis of building height in the Borough (Section 3.3) shows that outside the CAZ the majority of buildings in Islington are four to five (residential) storeys (13m - 16m). Only few places outside the CAZ record slightly higher buildings of six (residential) storeys, occasionally up to nine and ten (residential) storeys. These can be found for example along the main corridors, in housing estates and on recent development sites. However, higher buildings are typically concentrated in relatively small and locally confined areas and do not fundamentally change the overarching height characteristic of Islington that prevails (outside the CAZ).

Within the CAZ heights are more varied. However the predominant height is concentrated in the height brackets of 19m and 22m, which is generally six to seven residential storeys, or four to five commercial storeys respectively. Especially Faringdon and the City Fringe areas are consistently higher than elsewhere in Islington.

As set out in section 4.1, due to the difference in average storey height between residential and commercial buildings, the analysis has considered the actual envelop height of buildings in meters above ground, and uses (residential rather than commercial) storey height for reference purposes only.

The predominant height of an area is the reference height against which the height of taller buildings are appreciated. Based on the height analysis the following contextual reference heights are used

Ratio to Context Height (CH)	Building Height Classification	Majority of Islington	Southern part of CAZ
	Context height	13m / 16m corresponding to 4 to 5 residential storeys or 3 to 4 commercial storeys	19m / 22m corresponding to 6 to 7 residential storeys or 4 to 5 commercial storeys
Up to 2 x CH	**Higher building**	Up to 31m - up to 10 residential storeys (equivalent of up to 7 commercial storeys)	up to 43m - up to 14 residential storeys (equivalent of up to 10 commercial storeys)
Above 2x CH and up to 3x CH	**Local Landmark** Tall building of local significance	31m to 46m - 10 to 15 residential storeys (equivalent of 7 to 11 commercial storeys)	43m to 64m - 15 to 21 residential storeys (equivalent of 10 to 16 commercial storeys)
Above 3x CH up to 5x CH	**District Landmark** Tall building of district wide significance	46m to 76m - 15 to 25 residential storeys (equivalent of 11 to 18 commercial storeys)	64m to 106m - 21 to 35 residential storeys (equivalent of 16 to 26 commercial storeys)
Above 5x CH	**Metropolitan Landmark** Tall building of metropolitan significance	Above 76m - above 25 residential storeys (equivalent of above 18 commercial storeys)	Above 106m - above 35 residential storeys (equivalent of above 26 commercial storeys)

Table 4.2: Tall building classification in Islington

for the calculation of the tall building classification thresholds in Islington:

- Outside CAZ: up to 16m (5 residential storeys)
- Inside CAZ: up to 22m (7 residential storeys).

Resulting building height classifications for Islington, both outside and inside the CAZ, are shown in Table 4.2 above. As explained earlier on, borderline case should automatically be considered under both adjoining classifications.

The Islington tall buildings classification puts the threshold between a 'higher' building and a tall building at ten residential storeys in the majority of the Borough. This broadly confirms Islington's long-standing policy position that defines a tall building as a building above ten storeys (30m) in height in the Borough.

As set out previously, the threshold between 'higher' buildings and tall buildings is fuzzy and the actual classification will depend on the relevant site specific context height of a proposal as well as other contextual factors. A building with a height immediately below the Local Landmark threshold height might still be considered a tall building within its local context and would not necessarily automatically considered acceptable.

The purpose of the analysis above is to clarify the tall building classification within the Islington height contexts as point of reference for this study. It is an abstraction and does not in any way replace the need for a contextual site specific assessment of a proposal and the establishment of an appropriate height in response to its context and in accordance with relevant policy criteria.

City of London Skyline from Waterloo Bridge - a constantly evolving skyline

4.4 TALL BUILDINGS – A CONTENTIOUS TOPIC

Tall buildings are a contentious topic. The last decade has seen many new tall buildings been constructed all over London. This has had a profound effect on London's skyline, which in some places has altered beyond recognition. Towers have been developed, not only in the commercial centres of the City of London and Canary Wharf, but also along the river Thames, in the city fringe, in London's town centres, as well as in more peripheral and outer London Boroughs. Towers have become higher and higher, with The Shard at some point becoming the tallest building in Europe and residential tall buildings reaching 40 and more storeys.

The proponents of tall buildings argue that tall buildings are essential for London's world city status, to compete globally and project an image of being open to business. Tall buildings are important in increasing development density, allow thousands more people to live and work near transport hubs, give previously unheralded areas a new identity and play an important role aesthetically and as economic catalyst for regeneration (Chris Brett, Barton Wilmore in Knight Frank, Tall Towers 2012).

There is a view that *"the fundamental quality of London's character has been that it is always changing, taking risks, experimenting, and unafraid to mix uses, materials, styles, dimensions and heights. London is neither Georgian, Victorian, Edwardian, nor any historical character at all. New buildings should add to this continuing tradition of variety and cosmopolitan change in creating heritage for tomorrow"* (GLA, Interim strategic planning guidance on tall buildings, strategic views and the skyline of London, 2001).

Tall buildings in this context are a contemporary expression of the economic success and adventurous nature of London and *"that proposals for tall buildings need to be considered for the positive qualities they can add to London's character, taking account of location, design and accessibility."* (ditto).

This view was adopted by the GLA during Ken Livingstone's period as Mayor of London (2000-2008), and by Boris Johnson (Mayor from 2008-2016) who took a similar position in promoting tall buildings. Policies and guidance by the GLA on tall buildings remained high level, and in the absence of a strong London wide policy framework on location, height and composition of tall buildings in the capital, this opened the door to a large number of speculative tall building proposals entering the pipeline.

Research by New London Architecture and GLHearn found that a total of 510 tall buildings (above 20 storeys) were in the pipeline in April 2018, of which 115 were under construction, 267 had planning approval but are not yet on site and 128 are proposed. The mean number of storeys of all tall buildings in the pipeline identified was 29 storeys. 62% are to be 20 to 29 storeys with 5.5% extending above 50 storeys. The primary use of the tall buildings remains as residential (90%) and only 6% are proposed for office use.

There are many residential towers across London with a large number dating from the 1960's and 1970's (Residential Tower in Estate near Finsbury Park

St George's Tower at Vauxhall

However, there have always been voices opposing tall buildings, for a variety of different reasons. Tall buildings can have an adverse impact on the value of special buildings, designated heritage assets or protected parks and gardens, or their settings. They can undermine the character of a place, or intrude into and undermine cherished views of landmarks or urban skylines. They may impact on the quality and safety of the public realm for example through blank facades and a poor street interface or by generating adverse micro-climatic conditions such as wind funnelling at the base of the tower. They also may cause overshadowing or solar glare and undermine the quality and value of adjacent developments. In residential neighbourhoods their extreme height can feel overbearing, may affect the amenity and privacy of residential units and associated outdoor spaces.

The American urbanist Jane Jacobs warned of the consequences of the anonymity offered by skyscrapers in cities as they would compromise the *"very nature of cities, their real lifeblood of sociability and interdependence, and undermine the innate community awareness and safety mechanism of neighbourhoods where there are eyes on the street"* (as quoted by http://thephilosophersmail.com/utopia/the-great-urbanists-jane-jacobs).

Post-war social housing tower blocks, often monolithic, poorly designed and situated in failing estate developments have also tainted the image of tall buildings in the public perception.

Various commentators have reflected on the socioeconomic and political aspects of tall buildings. Renowned architecture critic Aaron Betsky for example describes them as the *"purposeful symbols of wealth and power"*.

Flats in new tall buildings are frequently marketed and sold off plan to foreign investors, often from the Middle East or Asia, rather than to Londoners seeking residential accommodation in high density central locations.

Research by the Guardian Newspaper revealed that the 50-storey St George's Tower at Vauxhall is two third foreign owned, with a quarter of apartments held through secretive offshore firms. Many of the homes are barely occupied and 85% of units have nobody registered to vote. This article raised a wider debate about 'empty towers' that do nothing to tackle London's housing crisis.

The growing number of completed tall buildings in London inevitably will further raise public awareness of towers and their impact on neighbourhoods and city image. Already now there are few tall building proposals that are not opposed by a lively group of local people that fear harm to their locality. Public opposition to tall building, specifically within the wider context of established residential areas is likely to increase in the future.

Two completed tall building of the planned cluster of four tall at City Road Basin (2016)

A YouGov poll commissioned by Historic England in March 2016 found that nearly half of Londoners (48%) think that the (then) proposed 436 tall buildings planned for the capital will have a negative impact on the skyline while 34% think they will have a positive impact. 60% say that they would like a say over tall buildings if they are proposed for a historically significant area in London, which shows that Londoners care for the image of their city beyond the place where they live and work.

An open letter signed by Sir Laurie Magnus, the Chairman of Historic England, Dr Lloyd Grossman, Chair of the Heritage Alliance and Sir Terry Farrell, Author of the Farrell Review, criticise the current approach to the planning for tall buildings in London:

"There is at present no strategic, pan-city plan for their location or design. Proposed developments are often promoted at random, and marketed to the public using idealised imagery. They lack proper analysis of any impact on existing views or settings for miles around. The planning approval process has, as a result, become somewhat chaotic and there is widespread confusion as to how those with an opinion can make their views heard. … Tall buildings that soar in the right places can make exciting contributions to London's environment and growth. It is vital, however, to provide a clear strategy in the forthcoming London Plan showing where they are acceptable and where not."
(Historic England, 5th April 2016)

LB Islington's contextual, plan-led approach to tall buildings has resulted in relatively few tall buildings being constructed when compared to other central London boroughs. The Finsbury Local Plan identified three areas that were appropriate for tall buildings, at Moorgate, at Old Street and at City Road Basin.

City Road Basin is currently the location for the development of four tall buildings ranging from 31 to 42 storeys in height. They bring forward heights previously unseen in the Borough and their full impact has yet to be fully appreciated.

The comparatively restrictive approach to tall buildings has meant that Islington has not been affected in the way other Boroughs have been by the recent spike of tall building proposals in London. As the new Local Plan for Islington is being prepared, it is the right time to review Islington's approach to tall buildings in the context of emerging planning policy and pressures for development.

4.5 THE ROLE OF TALL BUILDINGS IN ISLINGTON

Grade A offices in the Central Activities Zone

New homes in Finsbury Park

4.5.1 COMPETING DEVELOPMENT DEMANDS

Islington's development demand is for commercial as well as for residential floor space.

Islington's Employment Land Study (2016) found that the Borough's forecasted employment growth requires the delivery of 400,000 sq m of office floor space between 2014 and 2036. The demand is for Grade A office uses in the CAZ to maintain and enhance the area's role in supporting London's strategic business role.

Outside the CAZ the priority is to encourage the SME economy and nurture space that is appropriate to its diverse needs, specifically through the provision of hybrid space. The study identifies the biggest threat to growth as the restricted supply caused by potential new office developments being outbid, in terms of land value, by residential development. (Employment Land Study, 2016)

As a central London Borough Islington presents a strong residential property market with above London average house prices, both for sale and rent, and a higher proportion of smaller units in flatted accommodation. Demand for market housing is strong across all dwelling sizes. The pressures for the council are to ensure sufficient provision of affordable and intermediate housing of the right sizes to meet existing and forecast housing need.

4.5.2 DOES LIMITED LAND MEAN BUILDING HIGHER?

Commercial and residential development pressures both compete for limited available development land. As Islington is largely built up and does not have a reserve of larger brownfield sites, the majority of additional floor space provision has to come from intensification of already developed sites, through the selective redevelopment of sites with higher development potential, especially in designated employment areas, town centres and along corridors.

While development economics are complex, generally new developments need to increase the density of development and provide more floor space on a site to make a project viable and deliverable. In many cases this requires new buildings to be of greater mass or height than the buildings they replace.

Compact mixed use development to east of Goswell Road

New mixed use development at Finsbury Park

4.5.3 ISLINGTON'S POLICY OBJECTIVES AND TALL BUILDINGS

Left to their own devices and without the planning and regulatory mechanisms of the Council, market pressures would bring forward many new buildings that are significantly taller than their context, even on unsuitably small sites. They would be skewed to higher value residential dwellings with smaller unit sizes, rather than delivering the affordable or intermediate housing provision or employment spaces that the Borough needs.

There is a recognised need and justification for the Council to intervene in the market to redress the balance between provision and demand and to ensure an appropriate response to Islington's character. In doing so the Council needs to consider its policy objectives in deciding its approach to tall buildings.

The scope of this study is to look at the suitability of tall buildings primarily from a character perspective and to identify how and where tall buildings can fit in and contribute to and enhance the character of the Borough.

Given the largely low rise characteristic of the Borough it can be said that the character argument on its own will be more restrictive to tall buildings than if tall buildings would be promoted for other policy reasons.

Islington's objective is to deliver significant growth in housing, business and other priority uses in the most sustainable way possible. The council considers that much of this need can be delivered through high-density, compact mid-rise development below the tall buildings threshold. There can be a role for tall buildings to contribute to this growth where they are the appropriate response to the overall context of the borough's townscape and urban character. An overview of the key considerations is provided below.

4.5.4
THE HIGHER COST OF TALL BUILDINGS

Tall buildings cost more to construct per unit of floor area than low or medium rise buildings. This is due to their increased wind loadings and heavier frames, their vertical transportation requirements and the larger capacities of plant and distribution systems, but also the more complex building process.

Building tall also increases the risks for developers, and therefore demands a premium. The additional cost needs to be passed on to the end-user in the form of higher rental or sales costs. There has been a strong demand for luxury residential dwellings in Central London willing to pay the premium but in recent years the market for high value properties has slowed down signficantly. There is also evidence to support a demand for Grade A offices in parts of the CAZ and its fringe.

Islington's identified housing need is primarily for affordable and intermediate housing. Maximising affordable housing delivery remains the borough's number one priority. The Local Plan Review will explore the most suitable routes for achieving this. Tall buildings may have a role to play in this. However, due to the higher unit cost and the higher operation cost/service charge requirement, tall buildings are unlikely to be the first choice for the provision of affordable or intermediate housing in the Borough.

Islington's demand for business floor space outside the CAZ is for lower specification office space such as hybrid spaces, which combine features of office, light industrial, studio and production space. The policy emphasis should be focused on encouraging the SME economy (Employment Study, 2016). SME businesses are unlikely to be able or willing to pay the premium required from occupying a tall building. Lack of demand or pre-lets from end users will also mean that developers are unlikely to develop high-rise office space outside the CAZ on a speculative basis.

The Employment Study recommended prioritising within the CAZ the delivery of Grade A office developments to maintain and enhance the area's role in supporting London's strategic business role. The extent to which this includes demand for premium office space within taller commercial buildings could be further investigated. There is evidence for new and refurbished office stock being developed.

Derwent London has developed a new 17-storey office tower at Old Street (The White Collar Factory), and the 17-storey 207 Old Street office tower opposite (The Bower) has been refurbished to high standard office and increased in height. Taller commercial buildings are more likely to be viable within established and desirable clusters in central and highly accessible locations. (e.g. Tech City cluster on Old Street, City Fringe including around Moorgate, Kings Cross). However, other locations such as Finsbury Park might become viable over time.

The White Collar Factory - Grade A offices on Old Street

4.5.5
TALL BUILDINGS AND THE DENSITY ARGUMENT

Residential

A common argument brought forward in support of tall buildings is the need to achieve higher densities to accommodate a growing population and to support London's employment growth. However there is a growing body of evidence that illustrates that high density residential (and commercial) development can be delivered with compact low and medium rise developments and do not require tall buildings.

Recent residential developments as well as historic examples of some Edwardian Mansion Blocks show that residential densities of 200 to 450 units per hectare can be delivered with buildings of less than 10 storeys with a common height range of six to eight storeys. Medium rise developments are likely to have less of an impact on neighbouring buildings such as overshadowing, compared to higher rise, and are also more likely to deliver better amenity for residents. They provide a human scale, and can offer a sense of intimacy and family friendly environments. However, some historic examples of mid-rise high density housing (ie some mansion blocks) would fall some way short of London Plan inclusive design and space standards and don't offer useful precedents for modern housing.

A study by Jan Gehl on perception and building scale has shown that beyond a height of six storeys people cannot recognise facial expression any longer and there is less scope for meaningful communication and engagement, which are essential for community life.

Grade A offices in the Central Activities Zone within tall buildings

This does not mean that tall buildings cannot help to increase density of residential development. If densities beyond 450 units per hectare are sought, then tall buildings can have a role to play.

However, the London Plan's recommended maximum density threshold for the highest PTAL setting 6 and the Central Character setting is 405 units per hectare[1]. Considering this there is no need from purely a residential density point of view to promote tall buildings, as increased densities can equally be achieved with compact medium-rise development forms such as urban perimeter blocks.

1 Note that the new Draft London Plan (2018) does not include maximum density levels but instead promotes a design-led approach where the optimal density for allocated sites is determined by Boroughs.

Commercial

For commercial floor space and in particular for Grade A offices, there is a preference for compact and efficient large floor plate provisions in "ground hugging" schemes with a minimum of 1,700sqm sized floor plates but more typically of 2,500 sqm and above. Large floor plates lend themselves to open plan office space, with flexibility to subdivide and share internal atrium spaces. They also allow for concentrating staff on single levels for better work organisation, reducing the need to travel between floors and limiting circulation infrastructure and cost.

While 'ground hugging' office development can go to heights of 10 storeys or more, typically they are below this range. Taller office buildings are generally less efficient and flexible than 'ground huggers', and while there might be cases where they are the perfect response to a certain location and market demand, they are rather the exception than the first choice for delivering high density office space.

4.5.6
TALL BUILDINGS AND REGENERATION

Tall buildings are often argued to have a role in regeneration projects. Regeneration is about bringing new activities to underperforming areas through changing the area's image, creating a new focus, promoting new uses and revitalising its activities.

Regeneration generally brings higher densities and a greater mix of uses. It has been argued that regeneration areas should be marked by tall buildings to signal change, raise the profile and generate confidence of investors in the area and its opportunites. However, regeneration projects are highly place and context specific, and what works in one area may be not be desirable in another. For example public realm improvements or establishing a new connection could be highly effective in signalising change and enhancing the urban experience in a more direct way. A tall building promoted in a regeneration area will have its biggest impact at the time when it is built. It is important that it remains a vital and successful beacon once the initial effects of novelty and gloss have worn off, and that it will contribute in longer term to the success of the area.

Tall buildings have the tendency to push land values upwards and encourage land speculation in their surroundings. The planning and construction of a single tall building frequently results in neighbouring sites also being promoted for tall buildings, often with greater height. While raising land values may be desirable for the regeneration of an area, for example by making schemes more viable, they can also undermine the affordablity of an area for local businesses and people and fuel gentrification. The potential local socio-economic and land value implications (including the potential ripple effect) should be thoroughly studied and carefully considered when a tall building is promoted as part of a regeneration initiative.

Given the extent of permanent and significant change that a tall building brings to the built environment, and the prominence and impact it inevitable will have on the surrounding context as well as on the skyline, there is an argument that where they are permitted they should deliver tangible regeneration benefits, beyond mere token gestures. Thus while regeneration projects do not necessary require tall buildings, where a tall building is being brought forward there is an requirement for it to deliver significant benefits and added value to its locality beyond its simple function.

Tall buildings often form prominent part of large scale regeneration schemes - Royal Docks, London

North Road Estate Renewal - successful regeneration project providing street blocks of coherent height that enhance the setting of the historic clock tower

4.6 THE POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF TALL BUILDINGS

4.6.1 TALL BUILDINGS AND THE PROTECTED HERITAGE

Islington currently has 40 designated Conservation Areas covering around 50% of the total local authority area. There are also around 4,500 statutorily listed buildings in the borough and a significant number of locally listed buildings.

All of these heritage assets contribute greatly to the character, economy and community pride of the borough and are irreplaceable features, which need careful protection. Any change needs to be sensitively managed.

Due to their massing and height, tall buildings are likely to have a greater impact on the built and natural heritage than other buildings types. Tall buildings can affect the setting of a listed building and detract from its significance. A tall building can also be incongruous with the character of a conservation area. It may appear out of place, disrupting the urban pattern, character, scale, roofscape and building line of the protected townscape in Conservation Areas.

All tall building proposals will need careful assessment of their impact on local Conservation Areas and the setting of listed buildings. Due to the inherent low rise and consistent height characteristics of many of Islington's conservation areas tall buildings are unlikely to be appropriate in them. However, Conservation Areas were not subject to automatic exclusion in the methodology. Where relevant they have been assessed and qualitative judgements have been made about the appropriateness of tall buildings.

Modern tall buildings on City Road Basin contrast markedly with the historic fine grain Georgian townscape in Angel

St Joseph's Church on Highgate Hill at the entrance into Islington is an important local landmark and views to it are protected

4.6.2 TALL BUILDINGS AND THE PROTECTION OF STRATEGIC AND LOCAL VIEWS

Due to their massing and height, tall buildings can intrude into, or detract from, important views, prospects or panoramas. Views from elevated vantage points and across open spaces can be especially sensitive because of the longer range views they can offer. The impact of tall buildings on a particular view can be established through a visual impact study. Impacts of a tall building on a view might be considered positive, neutral or harmful.

The GLA has designated a number of protected views to St. Paul's Cathedral that pass across the Borough. LB Islington has identified further views to St. Paul's Cathedral and these are also protected under existing policy. The extent of the protected view corridors is described in Section 3.4.2. Generally no tall building will be permissible within these viewing corridors.

Islington has designated a list of local landmarks. These are special and outstanding buildings that provide the focus for interesting views and skylines, and help to create local distinctiveness. Each landmark may feature within a number of important views from different locations. The impact of new development on these views will need to be considered when development is proposed in the vicinity. Tall buildings can have a detrimental impact on existing local landmarks, for example by competing with them, detracting from views or undermining their presence.

4.6.3 TALL BUILDINGS IMPACT ON THEIR IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT

Tall building have a significant impact onto their immediate environments and need to have due regard in their design response to the following aspects:

Microclimate
Tall buildings usually overshadow and overlook their immediate surroundings. Furthermore, wind funnelling, shadow patterns and sunlight reflection can create disturbing features and have a negative impact on the local microclimate. Reflected solar glare and night time light pollution require further considerations. Appropriate measures must be taken during the design of tall buildings to minimise these negative impacts.

Public Realm Quality
Tall buildings have significant access and servicing requirements which come together at the base of the building. This can result in a poor relationship of the building with the public realm. While the front of the building is ussually well designed with a generous and attractive lobby space, the sides and backs often fail to establish a positive and active interface with the public realm, especially where sites are relatively small. Servicing bays, blank walls, car parking entrances and other secondary functions can compromise the quality of these environments.

Residential Amenity
Tall building design needs to pay particular attention in residential environments, to privacy, amenity and overshadowing. Inappropriately planned, designed and located tall buildings can detract seriously from the quality of a residential environment. Tall buildings may overshadow, overlook and dominate their immediate surroundings and have harmful effects on living conditions, private gardens, patios and public spaces.

Tall buildings, with their large grain, substantial bulk, clean lines and modern materials can represent a jarring contrast when built in low-rise housing areas, and indeed can have the effect of visually demeaning the surrounding area. Tall buildings are often impersonal and therefore weaken the sense of ownership of an area by its people.

4.6.4 TALL BUILDINGS AND SUSTAINABILITY

Tall buildings are considered less sustainable than medium rise buildings of comparable size in particular due to detrimental environmental effects and higher energy requirements.

The greater its height *"the more inefficient the building becomes in terms of the net area measured against carbon emissions from operation, construction and maintenance."* (Simon Sturgis of carbon profilers Sturgis Associates).

Tall buildings have an inherent requirement for more energy because of their vertical travel and servicing requirements and their poor ratio of external façade to floor area. Due to the high degree of glassing in many high rise buildings and sun exposure they are susceptible to overheating, often requiring intensive mechanical ventilation and hence greater amounts of Carbon Energy. Shadows from towers may result in the loss of daylight and solar gain in neighbouring developments, resulting in greater reliance on artificial light in affected properties.

Tall buildings are very specialised structures. They are typically less adaptable to changing economic circumstances and use requirements, and often need resource intensive and expensive refurbishment, or even complete re-development, when they become dated in layout, performance or appearance. The life expectancy of glazed cladding systems is only 40 to 50 years before replacement is required (Simon Sturgis).

4.7 A PLACE BASED APPROACH TO TALL BUILDINGS

4.7.1 THE CITY IMAGE

London, as a living city, is in a constant state of change. While its principal structuring features, including the river, road corridors and streets, its topographical features and open spaces only gradually change, its quarters, neighbourhoods, buildings and structures are subject to constant modification, through building alterations and redevelopment. The physical parts of the city, and also its people and their activities and movement constitute the everyday environment of the city. Every day, people observe and participate in this environment, and as such, they perceive the city with all their senses, forming an image of the specific environments they are in and the city as a whole.

The environmental image is a generalised mental picture of the physical environment, and involves the recognition of its pattern and specific elements. It is the product of immediate sensation and memory of past experience.

The environmental image is used to interpret information and to guide action. As such it helps legibility, on various scales, assists orientation and give cues to help navigation through the urban environment. A clear image of a particular 'special' city feature may become part of the collective memory of a place, be a signifier or symbol for this place, and may instil a sense of emotional security and belonging.

London's city image features a number of iconic buildings and structures visible from the river Thames

"The sense of home is strongest when home is not only familiar but distinctive as well." (Kevin Lynch, 1960, The image of the city)

The city image is not only generated by the physical attributes of a place. The meaning people associate with buildings and places also plays an important role. This may include a place's historical dimension, its role as a setting for current or past activities, or the significance of a place's or building's role in society. Beyond the realm of its spatial configuration this also affects whether an environment is liked or disliked.

A city image is not fixed. With time, as the physical environment and the pattern of activity within it change, the image of the city changes. New development and other interventions can enhance or weaken the city image.

In an environment where cities compete with each other on a national and global scale, cities strive to outperform others on many fronts, by focussing for example on attracting business, their green credentials and quality of life. Enhancing the city image is part of this contest, and cities can benefit from efforts that foster their uniqueness as a place by strengthening the identity of its distinctive features, and improving the inherent legibility of its urban areas through clarity of form and structure.

London's city image should clearly be a concern to the Mayor and his London Plan, who should aim to make sense of the tall buildings that have sprung up across the capital in the last decade, and to provide firmer guidance to where tall buildings should go and why.

Georgian residential areas around Angel form part of Islington's image

Islington is made up of numerous compact urban quarters and neighbourhoods each with their own character and feel and including many fine buildings and landmarks, centres and open spaces. It is the unique patchwork of different character areas, nodes, open spaces and landmark features, which creates the distinctiveness of north London of which Islington is a part.

Islington's townscape includes special character areas such as Clerkenwell, Angel, Barnsbury, Canonbury, Highbury, Holloway Road, Archway and Finsbury Park. Together they form composite part of the public image of Islington.

Beyond the Central Activities Zone Islington is largely residential and low-to-medium rise in character with few incidents of tall buildings. This low to medium height characteristic and the relative absence of taller buildings also form part of the environmental image of Islington and is an important aspect in how people know and feel familiar with their Borough.

Clerkenwell's compact street blocks and historic warehouses are also part of Islington's collective image

London's skyline view from Alexandra Palace (2016) features the two distinct tall building clusters of the City of London and Canary Wharf, as well as the iconic Shard. While St. Paul's Cathedral is visible, it does not have prominently role in this view.

4.7.2 TALL BUILDINGS, THE SKYLINE AND VIEWS

An important aspect contributing to the city image is its skyline. Due to their prominence and height tall buildings can have a significant impact on the city skyline.

Historically the urban silhouette (or 'the city portrait') was a result of a cumulative process, and its reading was calculated. The landmarks that stood out in this picture were symbols of a collective life; they advertised civic priorities, and made palpable the hierarchy of public institutions.

Up to the late 19th century taller buildings were usually public beacons, those of religion (as St. Paul's Cathedral), or government (as the Houses of Parliament), or technological progress (as the Tower Bridge). Their height was not particular useful except in the symbolic sense.

The skyscraper in contrast was the product of private enterprise, stacking up building mass for their functional payoff, with the symbolism as a bonus. From the end of 19th century this started to visually dominate cities in the new world. A city image dominated by skyscrapers, particular in the American context became symbolic of the prosperity and commercial vitality of a place. The only other private structures that began to populate the skyline of cities were artefacts of the industrial revolution - smoke stacks, water towers and cranes.

London did not see the advent of taller buildings during the first half of the 20th century as the London Building Act in 1894 restricted building height to 80ft (24.3m) tall. Until 1962 St. Paul's Cathedral was the tallest building in London, surpassed then by the Post Office Tower.

Since the advent of the private skyscraper alternate and opposing views have emerged on who should be allowed to dominate the skyline. One side of the debate focuses on the common 'ownership' of the city skyline, and argues that in a democratic system *"a minority of private interests should not be allowed to dominate the town architecturally anymore than it should be socially"* (Thomas Sharp, 1963). The other side argues that

"Skylines are … urban signatures. They are the shorthand of urban identity, and the chance of urban flourish. Cities of all descriptions and periods raise aloft distinctive landmarks, to celebrate faith and power and special achievement. These landmarks focus city forms and highlight city portraits. The presentation itself is contrived. It is chiefly meant for an external audience. …The image changes slowly and deliberately. … The skyline in the end is a negotiated symbol. What stands out as the city's official silhouette was given license to do so."
(Spiro Kostof)

London Skyline as seen from Archway Bridge (2018)

today's cities have their own socio-economic foundations that, with their modern practices, have set aside the traditional cities, and deserve their own skyline.

The shape of the skyline matters to residents. It may present a fond icon of the city form, a vision to cherish and come home to, the urban advertisement to the world, and the front they present to visitors. Taller buildings, with their outstanding height, impact on the skyline. They also affect the perception, identity and attachment that people hold for their city. When a building is associated with a negative connotation this can be particularly harmful.

A distinctive and attractive skyline is frequently used for the presentation of a city to the outside world, and plays an important role in city marketing and branding. Vantage points, or viewing balconies, from where a particular skyline can be appreciated, and distinctive landmark structures are often an important tourism focus, and as such foster the local economy.

The management of London's skyline sits firmly with the Mayor and extends to more than the protection of a few viewing corridors to St Pauls Cathedral and The Palace of Westminster.

The skyline at Borough level concerns the protection or enhancement of local views across the Borough (for example from Archway Bridge on Highgate Ridge), and the protection and enhancement of views onto local landmarks. This requires the coordination of any new taller buildings as distinct landmarks, for example to enhance vistas; the grouping of taller buildings in distinct and recognisable clusters; or the protection of existing views to local or city landmarks from harmful intrusion by tall buildings.

Incidental view in Faringdon of two City Scale Iconic Landmarks - Historic: St. Paul's Cathedral, and contemporary: The Shard

4.7.3 TALL BUILDINGS AS LANDMARKS

City scale landmarks

What iconic landmarks such as The Shard can deliver on a city scale, other buildings or structures do on smaller scales. Distinct landmarks are notable point references that exist on different scales, city-wide, district-wide or locally. District or city wide landmarks can normally be seen from far away over the tops of houses and other buildings. If they are of a distinct shape and silhouette, they are recognisable even from far away and can become iconic place symbols. In London these include older buildings like St Paul's Cathedral, The Palace of Westminster, the Post Office Tower, and new additions including The Shard, 30 St Mary Axe (The Gherkin) and the London Eye.

Some tall buildings have received nicknames from the association of their shape on the skyline and their representation in public consciousness these include the 'Gherkin', the 'Walkie-Talkie', the 'Cheesegrater' and the 'Shard'. Many of these iconic buildings have place on the mental map of London's city image.

Local landmarks

Local landmarks are notable buildings that make their presence felt in a limited local area or within certain (local) views. Local landmarks do not need to be tall but can be equally expressed through their special form, architecture, use or other features that make them stand out from their context. Historically parish churches with their spires were typical local landmarks.

Landmark buildings offer distinctiveness to particular locations in the urban fabric. They contribute to the character of an area, make it special and easier to recall. They can enhance the legibility of an area, provide place markers that assist orientation and way finding. People recognise them as special features and include them in their mental map of an area. They are more powerful, when their unique aspects are associated with a special function or meaning, such as a public transport node, a civic, cultural or faith based function, or when they are located at nodal points in the urban fabric, such as at major cross roads, gateways or stations.

Kevin Lynch argued that a landmark's key characteristic was 'singularity': 'some aspect that is unique or memorable in the context', and that 'spatial prominence' can establish elements as landmarks by making them visible from many locations and/or creating contrast with nearby elements. Landmarks with a clear form contrasting with their background, and a prominent spatial location, are more easily identifiable and likely to be significant to the observer. As observed above this definition does not limit itself to tall buildings. In fact many of Islington's designated landmarks are architecturally elaborate, but otherwise low or medium rise buildings.

New local landmark hotel tower at Walthamstow Central is a visual marker to the station and helps local way finding

The location of landmark buildings

Tall buildings can act as landmarks in the urban fabric and assist legibility and orientation, as discussed above. Potential locations that might benefit from a landmark are:

- Nodal points where important movement corridors come together or intersect;
- Arrival and departure points in the urban fabric, such as transport interchanges and stations;
- Gateway locations at the edge or border of neighbouring urban areas; and
- Prominent focal points at the end of vistas or important streets, that can emphasise the importance of a route or mark an important destination.

The scale and height of a landmark building should be proportionate and provide cues to the role and importance of a place in the hierarchy of the city. When seen from further away, a tall building in the urban fabric, usually denotes a concentration of activity, a centre with a mix of uses and / or potentially a transport node.

A disjuncture between the prominence of a building and the function and role of its location, undermines the legibility and common understanding of the urban fabric. It is confusing, disorientating and detracts from the 'sense of place'.

Being a 'landmark' and 'enhancing the legibility' are commonly arguments for taller buildings. However, not every tall building will qualify as a landmark and enhance legibility. Despite its height, a tall building may not be recognised as a landmark due to its lack of 'singularity' in form, height, expression or architecture, or when situated amidst other buildings of similar height or characteristics. If the 'landmark' building is not located in an exposed and notable position or at an important node within the urban fabric, then it is unlikely to support the landmark argument. For example, a tall building located in the middle of a street frontage amidst other buildings will be perceived as a lesser landmark (if at all) than the same building at an important junction or terminating a particular view. Therefore proposals for 'landmark' buildings that are not genuine landmarks are not justified.

To help shaping places that 'make sense' it is important to guide the location and height of tall buildings in respect to the character, function and structure of an area. The quality of a tall building and its response to its surrounding context need to ensure that it offers sufficient distinctiveness and contrast to justify the term 'landmark building'.

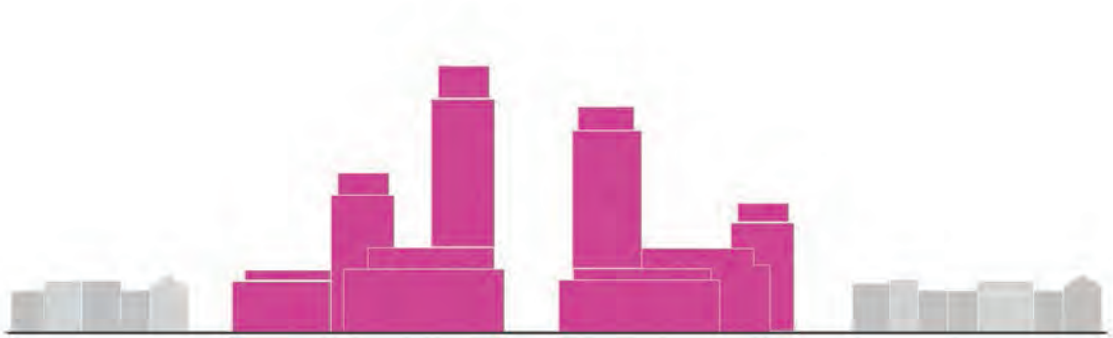
4.7.4 CLUSTERING OF TALL BUILDINGS

A cluster of tall buildings is formed when a group of tall buildings are collocated in a confined area, such as a town centre or a Central Business District. Clustering of tall buildings can create powerful and distinctive features on the skyline. Clusters may centre around well known iconic landmarks, like in the City of London cluster which has focused around the 'Gherkin' and the 'Cheesegrater', which are now overtaken by other event taller developments the compete for prominence.

For clusters to establish and remain distinctive features on the skyline they require management and coordination in respect of the location and height of potential tall buildings. Competition between sites for the 'tallest' building may shift the centre of gravity around and affect the reading of a cluster on the skyline. Tall buildings proposed outside a cluster can weaken its strength and legibility on the skyline. If not carefully managed clusters can easily mutate into an uncoordinated sprawl of taller buildings over time, and undermine the impact and distinctiveness of the cluster on the skyline.

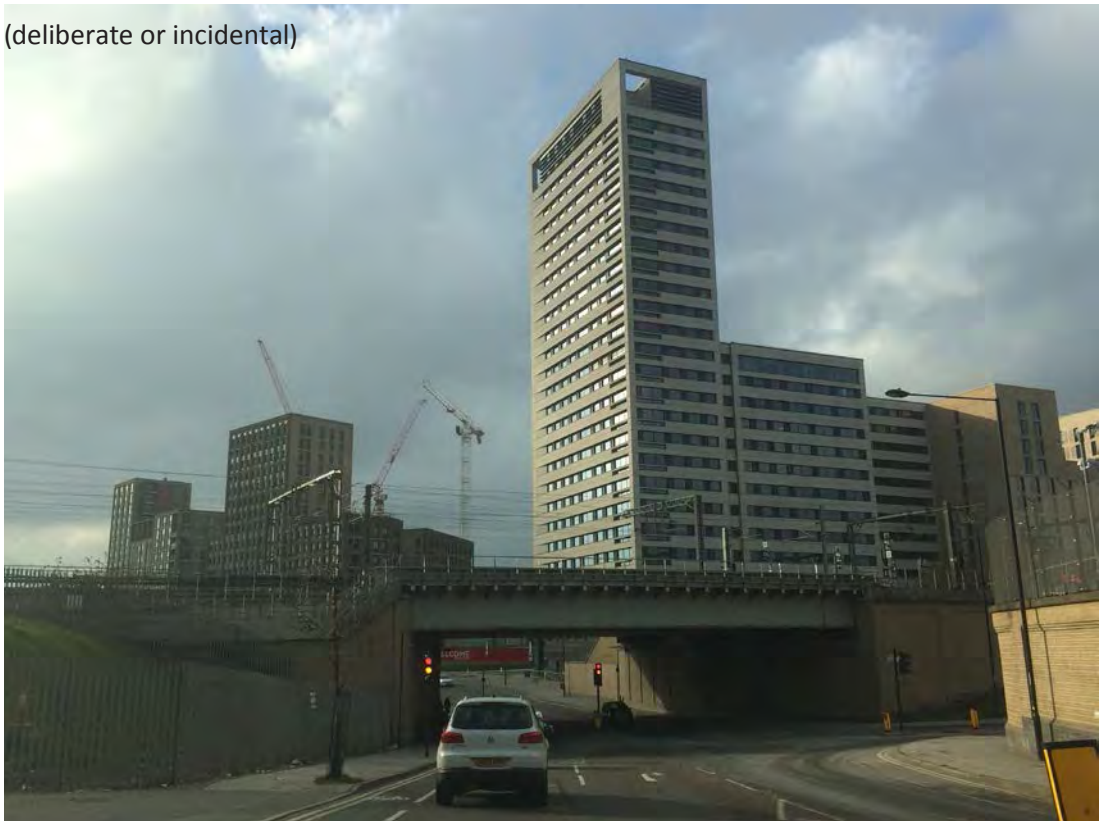
Ideally the tallest buildings are situated in the centre of a cluster. The height of taller buildings should decrease the further they are away from the centre. Tall buildings need to stand sufficiently close together to be read as part of the cluster on the skyline. A cluster should be confined to a small square or circular geographical area and not be allowed to stretch out too far, for example along a street, to ensure it is read as a cluster on the skyline from all directions, both clearly identifiable and distinctive.

A related concept to the cluster is the skyline composition. This comprises of a (deliberate or incidental) aesthetic arrangement of special buildings, structures, topographic and landscape features that together form a distinctive spatial composition, for example in a waterfront view. A major skyline composition often is part of the city image and strongly valued by residents. Sidney, for example, presents itself with the image of the Opera House next to Sidney Harbour Bridge. A notable skyline composition in London are the three Barbican towers, which provide an unique landmark to central London and the iconic Barbican development.



Principal diagram of a cluster of tall buildings - higher and taller buildings concentrated in a confined location

(deliberate or incidental)

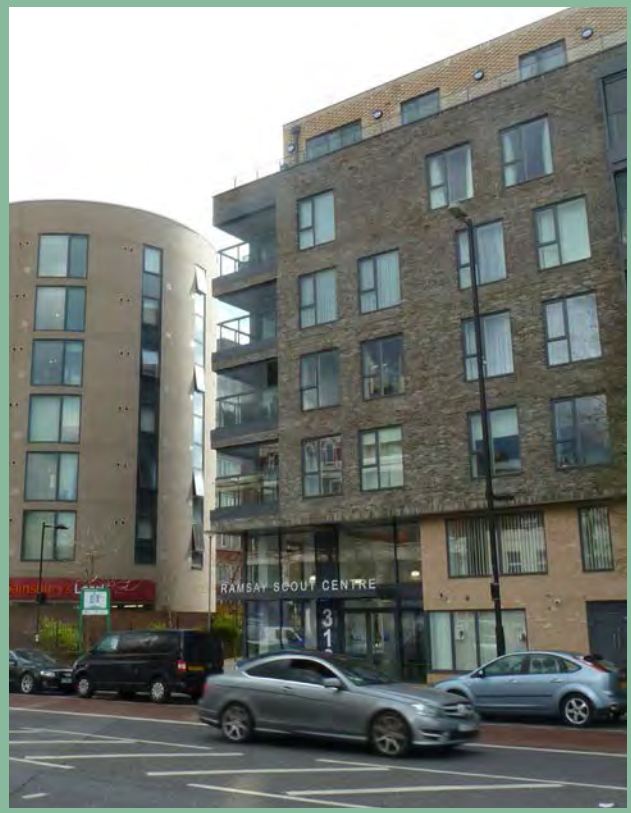


Emerging tall building cluster to the north of the Kings Cross development

Example of a coordinated tall building cluster at Canary Wharf, viewed from Royal Observatory in Greenwich. Canary Wharf Tower forms the central high point, from where height drops away. More recent development has began to undermine this aesthetic principles of the cluster and may weaken its distinctiveness and compositional quality.

4.8 ISLINGTON'S TALL BUILDINGS PRINCIPLES

Based on the justification in Sections 4.3 to 4.7 above, the following tall buildings principles are identified for Islington:



01 TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE EXISTING TOWNSCAPE

The overriding aim that guides the planning for tall buildings is to protect and enhance the unique quality of the townscape that characterises the Borough of Islington. Tall buildings can be especially harmful to the setting of listed buildings, conservation areas, historic parks and significant views. Tall buildings can affect the setting of listed buildings and views of historic skylines even some distance away. They often appear out of place disrupting the urban pattern, character, scale, roofscape and building line of historic quarters. Tall buildings should only be promoted where they help to enhance the character and distinctiveness of an area without adversely affecting established valued townscapes or landscapes, or intruding into important views.

02 TO PROMOTE COMPACT DEVELOPMENT

High density development of the type and mix of uses that is needed in Islington can be delivered through well-designed compact development without the need for taller buildings. Compact buildings below the tall buildings threshold offer ample flexibility for increased density and additional height in accordance with Islington's place specific and design policies.

However, it is recognised that taller buildings can contribute to the delivery of superdense developments on constrained sites that have exceptional public transport accessibility and where this would assist the delivery of benefits without harming the local enviornment, character or signficance of heritage assets.

03 TO DETERMINE THE LOCATION OF TALL BUILDINGS

Tall buildings should generally be limited to central mixed-use areas with high levels of activity, excellent public transport accessibility and existing infrastructure, that have a character that can absorb and accommodate a taller building in terms of its townscape impact as well as its resulting levels of activity and impact on the capacity of transport infrastructure.

04 TO ENHANCE LEGIBILITY

Tall buildings should perform a positive landmark role within the townscape. They need to be of exceptional design and offer distinctiveness to a locality. A tall building should enhance the legibility of an area and contribute positively to its character and sense of place.

05 TO BE PROPORTIONATE TO THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF A PLACE

The principle of proportionality should apply, whereby the height of a tall building corresponds to the role and relative importance of its location in the local, wider Borough or Metropolitan Context:

a) Local landmarks should help to mark special locations in the townscape, such as a strategic street corner, a public space or a particular function, such as a station;

b) District landmarks should only be located central to locations that are of district or borough wide importance, such as strategic infrastructure nodes or public institutions; and

c) Metropolitan landmarks should be confined only to areas in the Central Activity Zone that have a London wide strategic importance and form part of a high intensity employment cluster.

06 TO FORM CLUSTERS WHERE APPROPRIATE

District and Metropolitan landmarks should not be scattered around but confined to discrete and identifiable clusters to control the form and impact on the skyline. The height of tall buildings in a cluster should drop away from the centre to the periphery to support its central emphasis. The layout and form of other development in clusters should provide a context of larger scale buildings, and sufficiently scaled streets that can integrate and support tall buildings.

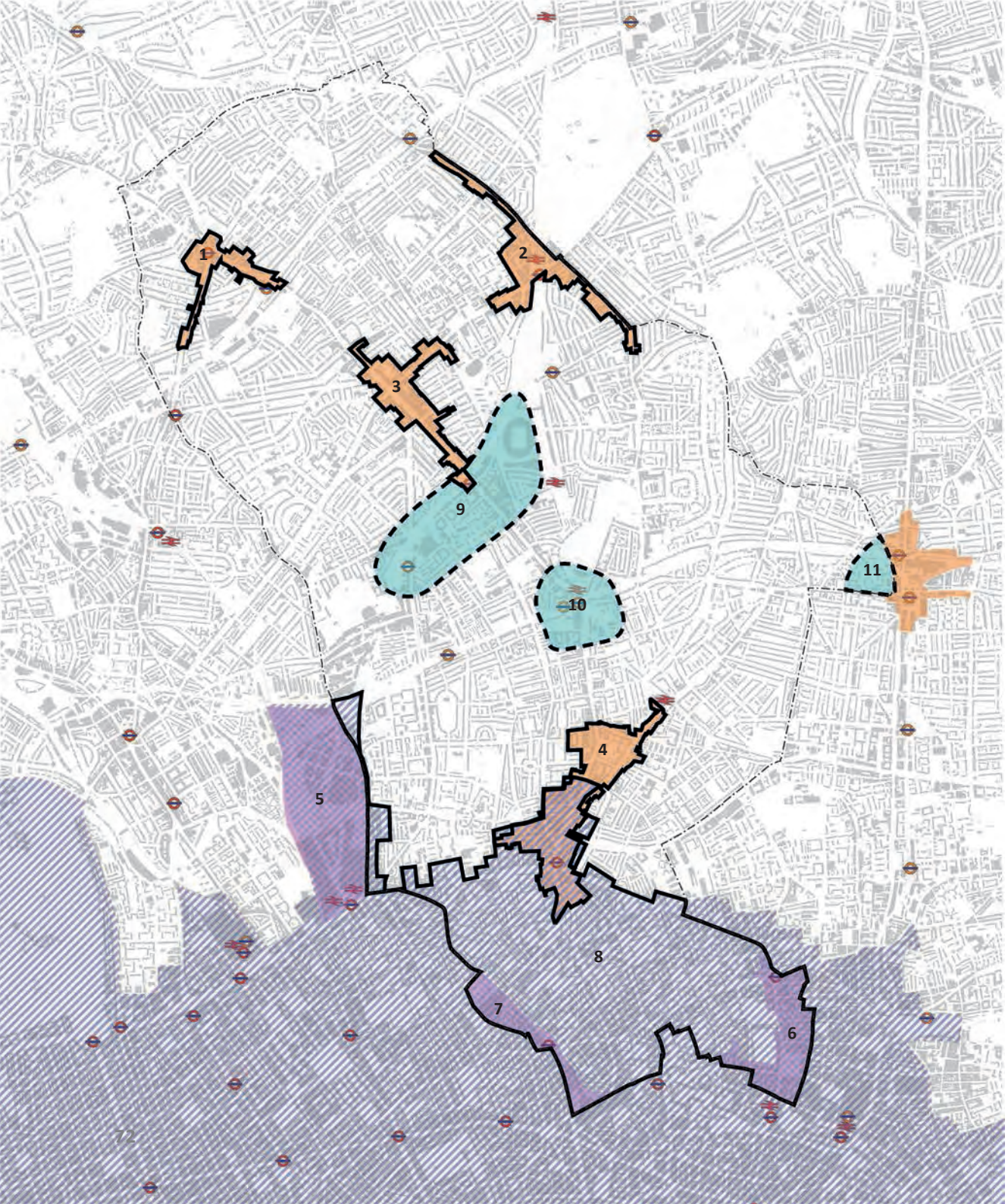
07 TO DELIVER ADDED VALUE

Tall buildings bring significant and permanent change to a place and its community. Therefore they are expected to deliver wider regeneration and social benefits for their locality. Benefits should be well beyond the normal development contributions or tokenistic gestures, but could include significant environmental improvements, comprehensive change and other community benefits.

08 TO PROMOTE HIGH QUALITY DESIGN

The quality of design and the right siting of tall buildings is critical for making a positive and lasting contribution to their locality. More than any other development type they require design excellence to maximise their contribution to the skyline and local environment and mitigate their negative impacts, particularly at street level. Every tall building should be of the highest architectural and urban design quality.

These eight principles form the basis for the tall building guidance set out in this report.



1 Archway District Centre
2 Finsbury Park District Centre
3 Nag's Head and Upper Holloway Major Centre
4 Angel Major Centre
5 Kings Cross Opportunity Area
6 Tech City / City Fringe Opportunity Area
7 Farringdon / Smithfield – Area for Intensification
8 The Central Activity Zone
9 Caledonian Road Station, Holloway Road, Emirates Stadium Corridor
10 Highbury Corner
11 Dalston Fringe

Figure 5.1: Plan indicating Strategic Search areas

5 STRATEGIC SEARCH

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The methodology for undertaking the tall building height study follows a two-tier approach. The first tier is the Borough wide Strategic Search that identifies areas where tall buildings may potentially be appropriate. The second tier is the Local Search, which examines the areas identified by the Strategic Search and evaluates the potential for tall buildings in each locality.

This section covers the first tier analysis: Strategic Search.

5.2 POTENTIAL SEARCH AREAS FOR TALL BUILDINGS

The Strategic Search identifies areas across the Borough where tall buildings could potentially be appropriate. The London Plan Policy 7.7 (C) generally limits tall buildings to sites in the Central Activity Zone (CAZ), opportunity areas, areas of intensification or town centres that have good access to public transport. They should only be considered in areas whose character would not be affected adversely by the scale, mass or bulk of a tall or large building.

Figure 5.1 identifies Strategic Search areas in Islington based on the designations in the London Plan Policy.

These are the following:

1 Archway District Centre;

2 Finsbury Park District Centre;

3 Nags Head and Upper Holloway Major Centre;

4 Angel Major Centre;

5 Kings Cross Opportunity Area;

6 Tech City / City Fringe Opportunity Area;

7 Farringdon / Smithfield – Area for Intensification; and

8 The Central Activity Zone.

In addition this study identifies three other areas that should be included in the Strategic Search:

9 Corridor from Caledonian Road Station to Holloway Road and the Emirates Stadium – an area with high public transport accessibility and significant recent development of considerable scale and height including the Emirates Stadium and the Metropolitan University tower;

10 Highbury Corner – an important rail and underground station in the Borough that lacks prominence and legibility; and

11 Dalston Fringe – a non-designated area within Islington adjacent to Dalston Major Centre (LB Hackney), which has recently seen the delivery of a number of taller buildings.

NEW LONDON PLAN AND SEARCH AREAS

Although not yet adopted, the draft London Plan (2018) is a material consideration in the preparation of policy. Furthermore, it is prudent to ensure that the Tall Buildings Strategy is future-proofed to ensure compliance with a new policy context once the draft London Plan is adopted.

Policy D8 Tall Buildings of the draft London Plan states,

"…boroughs should determine if there are locations where tall buildings may be an appropriate form of development, subject to meeting the other requirements of the Plan. Boroughs should identify any such locations on maps in Development Plans and should indicate the general building heights that would be appropriate in these locations, taking account of:

1) the visual, functional, environmental and cumulative impacts of tall buildings

2) their potential contribution to new homes, economic growth and regeneration

3) the public transport connectivity of different locations."

The Strategic Search areas presented here are the areas with the most potential for tall buildings because they are identified centres, opportunity

areas and/or areas of the highest public transport accessibility with a character and mix of uses that in principle could accommodate taller buildings and where tall buildings could meaningfully contribute to a legible townscape. They offer high potential for the positive benefits of tall buildings and so are considered to be in compliance with Policy D8.

The reminder of the borough is low rise and residential in nature and so is not appropriate for tall buildings. Intensification in these areas is expected to be achieved with compact development of a height of up to ten storeys that can respond to the characteristics of the context without the need for tall buildings.

Public Transport Accessibility

Overlaying the Islington's Public Transport Accessibility Map with the potential search areas shows that all of the areas benefit from high public transport accessibility with the highest PTAL ratings of 6 and 7.

Only the northern part of the Kings Cross development sites, situated within the CAZ as well as the Kings Cross Opportunity Area, has a very low Public Transport Accessibility Level of 1 to 3. Curiously this particular area has recently seen the development of a number of taller buildings within the LB Camden. However, the accessibility rating of this area may improve in the future due to the implementation of better walking connection with the underground and rail hub at Kings Cross and St Pancras Station as well as improvements to bus services along York Way. The former York Road underground station on the Piccadilly Line, which was closed in 1932 due to poor use, might also be considered for reopening to help enhance the accessibility of this area.

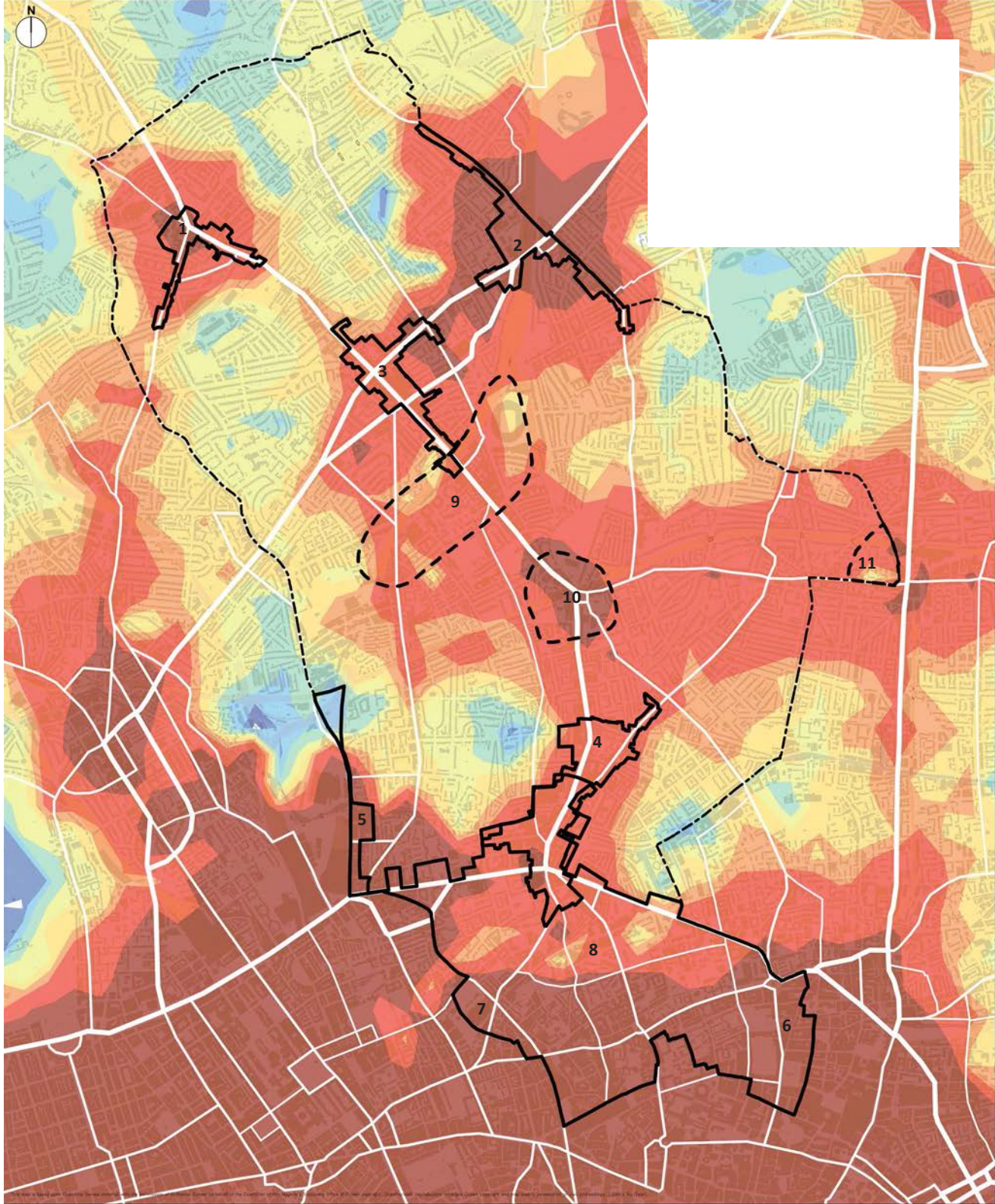


Figure 5.2: Plan indicating public transport accessibility of Strategic Search areas

5.3. SIEVING SENSITIVE AREAS

The potential search areas have been overlaid with the mapping of areas that are highly sensitive to tall buildings.

Topography

Archway is situated on land rising up to Highgate, and taller buildings here would be visually more prominent. Similarly, but to a lesser extent, land rises up at the western part of Angel town centre as well as the eastern end of Pentonville Road. Taller buildings in these locations would be visually more prominent. Topography is a less significant characteristics in the other search areas.

Figure 5.3: Plan indicating topography in relation to the Strategic Search areas

Listed Buildings

There is a significant concentration of listed buildings in parts of the CAZ, north and east of Angel, as well as around Highbury Corner. Most of the other search areas include a few listed buildings that will need to be considered locally.

Conservation Areas

Significant parts of the CAZ, Angel town centre and Highbury Corner are situated within conservation areas. Holloway / Holloway / Nag's Head, Finsbury Park and the Dalston Fringe are only marginally affected by Conservation Area designations.

Protected Vistas and Strategic Views

Metropolitan protected vistas and Islington's strategic viewing corridors to St. Paul's Cathedral affect the southern part of the Borough. These include views from Kenwood House, Parliament Hill, Dartmouth Park Hill, Archway Bridge, Archway Road and Alexandra Palace, which significantly affect the western portion of Islington's CAZ. Strategic viewing corridors also traverse Archway town centre, the eastern end of Holloway Nag's Head Centre, the Caledonian Road / Emirates Stadium Corridor, Angel town centre and the southern extent of the Tech City / City Fringe Opportunity Area. Only Finsbury Park, Highbury Corner and Dalston Fringe are unaffected by strategic viewing corridors. Local views to designated local landmarks will need to be considered by the Local Search.

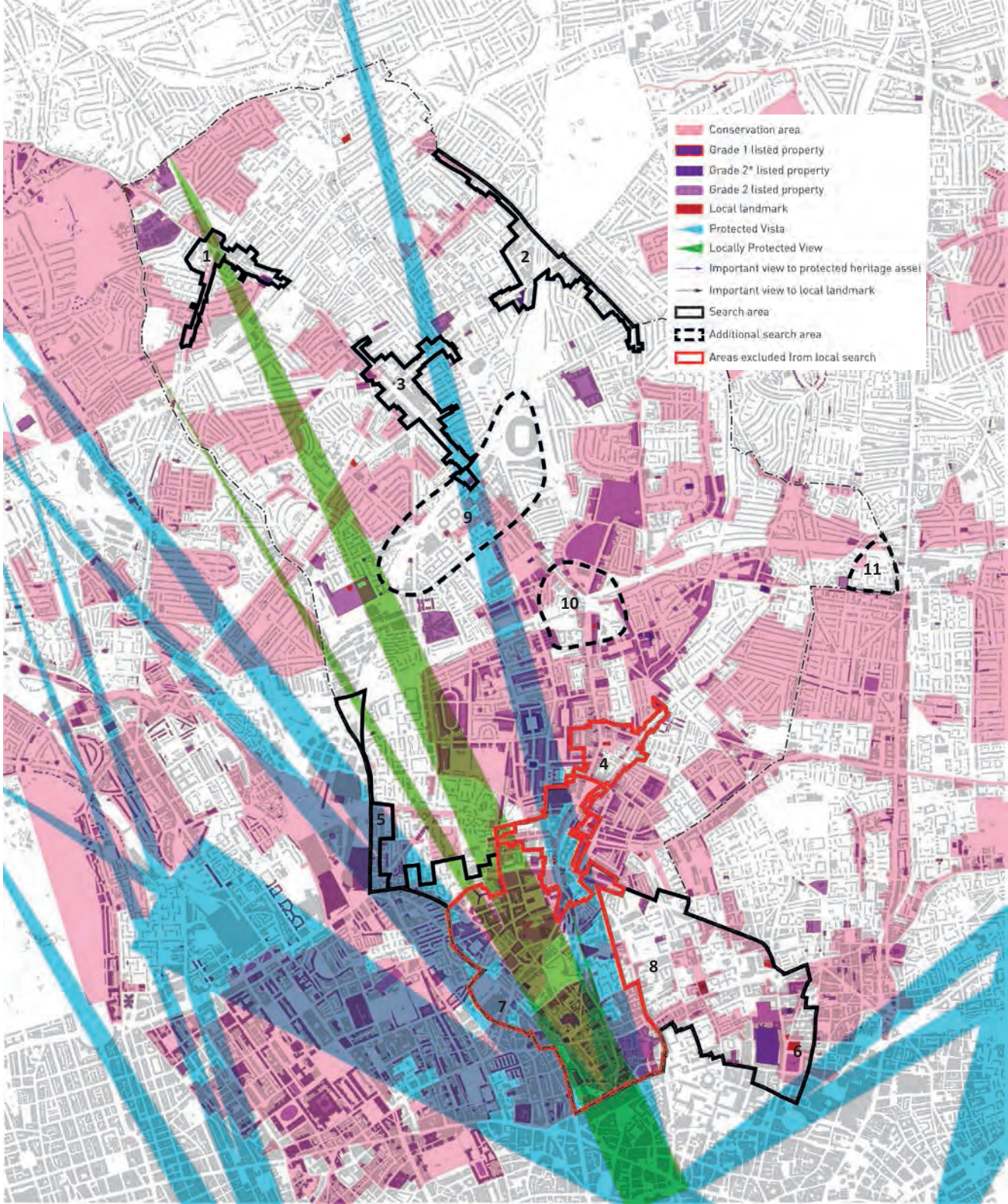


Figure 5.4: Composite overlay plan of listed buildings, Conservation Areas, protected vistas, local views, local landmarks and strategic search areas

5.4 EXCLUSION OF SEARCH AREAS

Figure 5.4 superimposes the areas that are sensitive to tall buildings with the Strategic Search areas. This highlights significant impacts for the two strategic search areas, the western part of Islington's CAZ and Angel Major Centre.

01 WESTERN PART OF ISLINGTON'S CAZ (SOUTH OF PENTONVILLE ROAD)

This area, which also includes the Farringdon and Smithfield Intensification Area, is almost entirely covered either by Conservation Area designations, strategic view corridors or both. Conservation Areas include, among others:

- **The Clerkenwell Green Conservation Area,** comprising a mixed use compact urban area with a historic streets and buildings dating back nine centuries;
- **The New River Conservation Area**, which include some of the finest terraces and squares in the Borough; and
- **The Hats and Feathers Conservation Area**, which includes a fine collection of 19th and 20th century commercial buildings; and the historic Charter House complex dating back to the 14th century.

Apart from Michael Cliffe House, which has 24 storeys, and three other 14-storey postwar housing estate towers, the area is consistently low to medium rise.

Areas not covered by Conservation Area designations, including the aforementioned tower blocks are within protected viewing corridors and may also form part of the setting of Conservation Areas.

Due to the extent of the area's sensitivity to tall buildings and its coherent low and medium rise character this part of the CAZ is found inappropriate for new tall buildings and therefor has been excluded from the tall building search.

02 ANGEL MAJOR CENTRE

Much of the Angel town centre and its immediate vicinity is covered by Conservation Area designations. These include:

- The Angel and Upper Street Conservation Area;
- Barnsbury Conservation Area;
- Chapel Market Penton Street Conservation Area;
- The New River Conservation Area; and
- Duncan Terrace/ Colebrook Row Conservation Area.

These Conservation Areas are generally characterised by low to medium rise largely Georgian and Victorian terraces of up to four storeys in height and a tall building would be incongruous with this character.

The strategic vista from Alexandra Palace to St. Paul's Cathedral passes right across Angel town centre and affects a significant number of sites around Angel Underground Station that are not covered by Conservation Area designations. Given the elevated topography of Angel even buildings that are modestly higher than the current development on these sites may impact adversely on this view.

Only a handful of smaller sites remain both outside a Conservation Area designation and the strategic vista within the town centre. However, they are peripheral to the main focus of the centre and therefore are not considered suitable as landmark locations that could enhance the character and legibility of the town centre. Given the close proximity to Conservation Areas a tall building on these sites is likely to have an adverse impact on the historic townscape and the setting of conservation areas and would be considered out of place. For the above reasons Angel Town Centre is found inappropriate for tall buildings and therefor excluded from the search for tall building opportunities.

Figure 5.5 shows the identified Strategic Areas of Search for tall buildings within Islington that are studied in greater detail in Section 6 of this report. These are as follows:

A	Archway
B	Finsbury Park
C	Upper Holloway / Caledonian Road / Emirates Stadium Corridor
D	Highbury Corner
E	Dalston Fringe
F	Kings Cross Fringe
G	Central Activity Zone and City Fringe

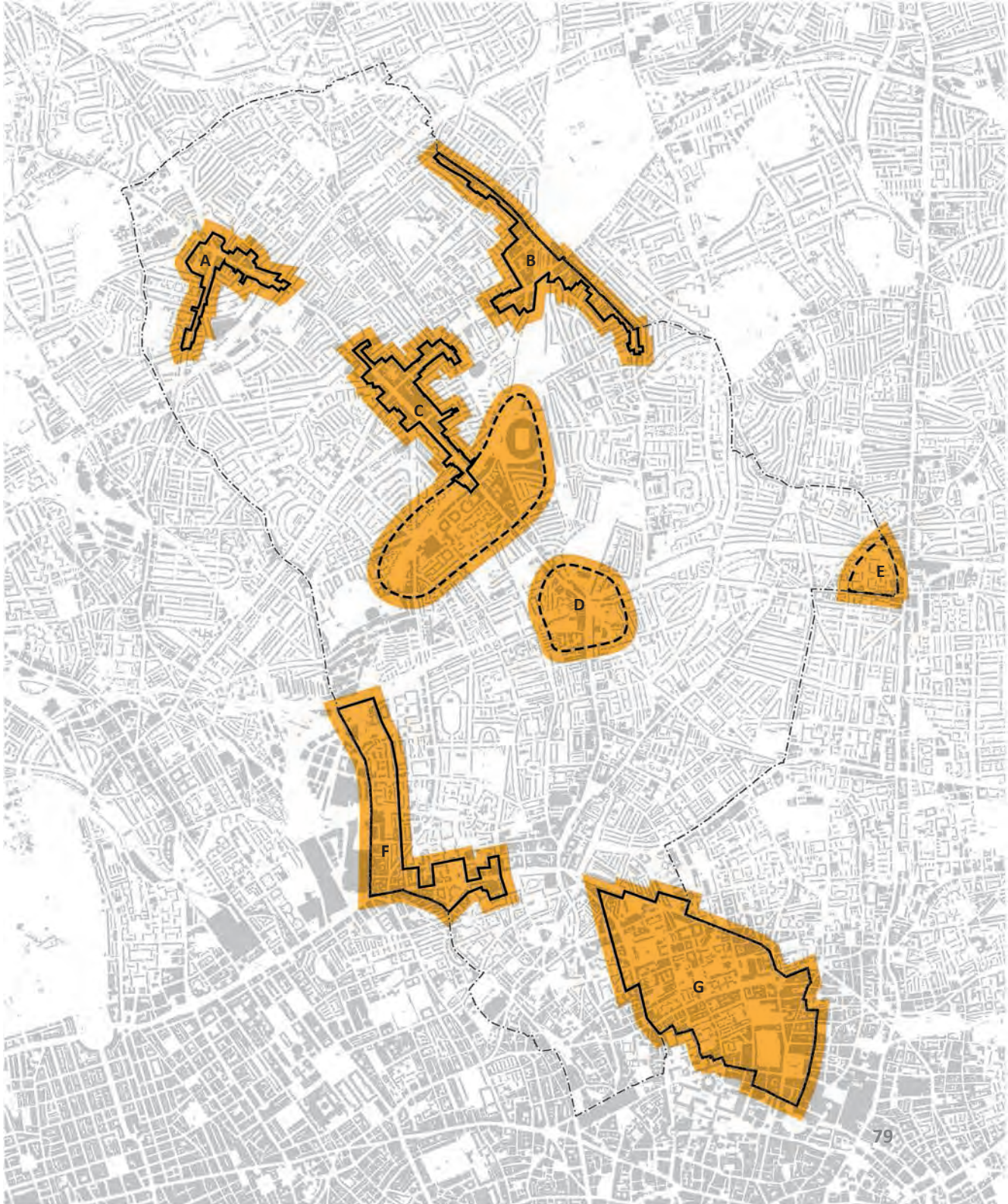


Figure 5.5: Plan indicating Strategic Search areas to be considered as part of the more detailed Local Search

View of the three Barbican Centre towers from the Shard's viewing platform. Islington is in the background including the Emirates Stadium.