MAYOR OF LONDON

London Plan Guidance

Characterisation and Growth Strategy

June 2023

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London Plan Policy	Policy D1 London's form, character and capacity for growth
	Policy D2 Infrastructure requirements for sustainable densities
	Policy D3 Optimising site capacity through the design-led approach
	Policy D9 Tall buildings
	Policy HC1 Heritage conservation and growth
	Policy SD9 (Part B) Town centres: Local partnerships and implementation
Plan making	Planning authorities and neighbourhood planning groups should undertake a borough or neighbourhood-wide character assessment to understand the characteristics, qualities and value of different places within their plan area. This assessment should inform plan making for documents that form part of the development plan for an area, including neighbourhood plans, forming the foundation of area-based placemaking strategies. These should also assess the capacity for change and growth in the different parts of the plan area. This includes identifying the different character types and character areas within an area, and identifying if there are locations where tall buildings may be appropriate.
Planning Application type and how the London Plan Guidance will be applied	Not directly applicable; however, a character assessment and growth strategy should be used to inform the design and capacity of a site (see Optimising Site Capacity: A Design-led Approach and Small Site Design Codes LPGs).
Who is this guidance for?	Planning authorities and neighbourhood planning groups should use this guidance at the plan-making stage to undertake a borough or neighbourhood-wide character assessment, and formulate a growth strategy and future area-wide vision for their local area. Specialists in urban characterisation, including social and built heritage and conservation officers, should be involved in the process set out in this document, and as such should refer to this guidance.

1   About this document

1.1   What is a characterisation and growth strategy?

1.1.1   This guidance sets out the first step to a character-based, design-led approach to planning for development, and managing how a place changes over time. This includes identifying both the social and physical character of a neighbourhood or area within a borough to determine its capacity for growth. London Plan Policy D1 (London's form, character and capacity for growth), part A, requires boroughs to undertake an area assessment to define the characteristics, qualities and value of different places within the plan area to develop an understanding of different areas' capacity for growth. For the purposes of this guidance, this area assessment is referred to as a 'character assessment'. This process is a key part of the evidence base for local plans. A borough/neighbourhood-wide character assessment and growth strategy can be broken into three stages. These are shown in Figure 1.2.

1.1.2   **Character assessment (or study):** the process of urban characterisation created by considering the physical, social, cultural, perceptual, aesthetic and economic elements of a place. These combine to create a local identity for areas that share memories, association and activity. The assessment uses both qualitative and quantitative methods and is made up of:

   1)   a character survey and analysis (stage one)

   2)   evaluation and appraisal of this information (stage two).

1.1.3   **Growth strategy:** Reflecting on the character assessment, a growth strategy (stage three) should be developed. This will form the basis of future local or neighbourhood plans, design codes, town centre strategies and site capacity assessments. This process involves identifying areas suitable for different levels of change and their capacity for growth; and should include the development of area-wide design visions and policies, with the involvement of local communities. Locations where tall buildings may be appropriate should also be identified as well as locations where they are not.

Figure 1.1   Relationship between the design LPGs

1.1.4 A character assessment and growth strategy should be used to inform development plan policies and the design-led approach to potential site allocations (see Optimising Site Capacity: A Design-led Approach LPG) and development of small sites (see Small Site Design Codes LPG). As the look, feel and use of places changes around the clock, the process of characterisation should also identify and reflect the changes in character that occur through the day and night, and across the week. This could mean considering how the use, character and accessibility of a place (e.g. operating hours of businesses, access to public transport, parks and public spaces) change to understand the needs of those who work at night and sleep during the day.

Figure 1.2   Stages of a character assessment and growth strategy

Community engagement

Stage one: Character survey and analysis

This involves the collation and analysis of character elements listed in Policy D1, part A, through engagement with local communities. This information and data should be used to identify and define the character types, character areas and tall building definitions within the plan area.

Stage two: Character evaulation

This involves the evaluation and appraisal of local character to understand its sensitivity to change.

Character assessment

Stage three: Growth strategy

In consultation with local communities, and through the evaluation of character at stage two, the level of change and capacity for growth should be determined for different areas. Area-wide design visions, policies and codes should be developed, and locations identified where tall buildings may be appropriate.

1.2   Digital approach to data collation and mapping

1.2.1 Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping and digital interactive tools should be used when undertaking a character assessment to assist public involvement and the presentation of findings. In particular, GIS software can be used to gather, manage, analyse and present the character of their local authority area in a single, layered digital map. This will allow maps and data to be updated on a periodic basis, as well as being easily and publicly accessible on interactive web-based maps.

2 Stage one: Character survey and analysis

2.1 Collation of character elements

2.1.1 The first stage is to collate information and evidence relating to the borough or neighbourhood's character. This may include existing information/data that is held or the identification of gaps in this data. A character assessment should cover the following elements listed in Policy D1, part A, of the London Plan (2021), as set out in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1   Character elements listed in Part A of Policy D1

Elements of character	GLA available data source
1) Demographic make-up and socio-economic data (such as Indices of Multiple Deprivation, health and wellbeing indicators, population density, employment data, educational qualifications, crime statistics) 2) Housing types and tenure 3) Urban form and structure (for example townscape, block pattern, urban grain, extent of frontages, building heights and density) 4) Existing and planned transport networks (particularly walking and cycling networks) and public transport connectivity 5) Air quality and noise levels 6) Open-space networks, green infrastructure, and water bodies 7) Historical evolution and heritage assets, including an assessment of their significance and contribution to local character. See the National Heritage List for England and the Greater London Historic Environment Record. 8) Topography and hydrology 9) Land availability 10) Existing and emerging Development Plan designations 11) Land uses 12) Views and landmarks 13) Social, cultural and commercial characteristics. This includes identifying the places and spaces that are valued by the community/different groups that contribute to a sense of place and identity. These are often intangible, but may also include commercial activity, town centres or business clusters that are not identified through the broad Development Plan designations, but which contribute to a sense of place, e.g. Green Street in Newham. The presence of formal and informal social infrastructure should be identified as part of this element.	Demographic analysis Demographic projections Planning Data Hub Census information scheme COVID-19 Resilience Dashboard Population Projections Explorer Long Term Labour Market Projections London's Economy Today Medium Term Economic Forecast Safestats London Rents Map London Public Land Map London Building Stock Model London EV charge points London Air Quality Map London Heat Map London Climate Risk Map London Cool Spaces Map London Urban Heat Island Map London Solar Opportunities Map London Street Trees Map London Green Cover Map London Green Infrastructure Focus Map London's Natural Capital Map London Schools Atlas High Streets Data Service and Partnership London Street Market Map Night Time Observatory London Cultural Infrastructure Map Young Londoners Fund WebCAT/TfL cycle routes
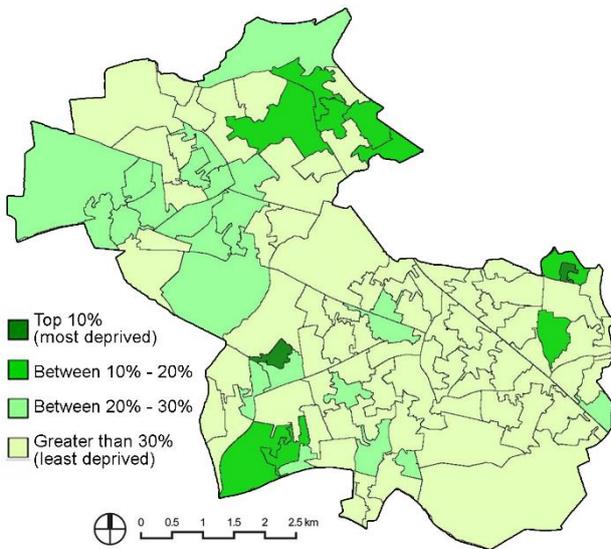
Figure 2.1 Demographic make-up and socio-economic data

Understanding local demographic make-up and socioeconomics is important to understanding the character, identity and needs of a place. This should include statistics on socioeconomics such as the Indices of Multiple Deprivation; population density; Joint Strategic Needs Assessments data; employment data; qualifications of the population; crime data; and demographics.
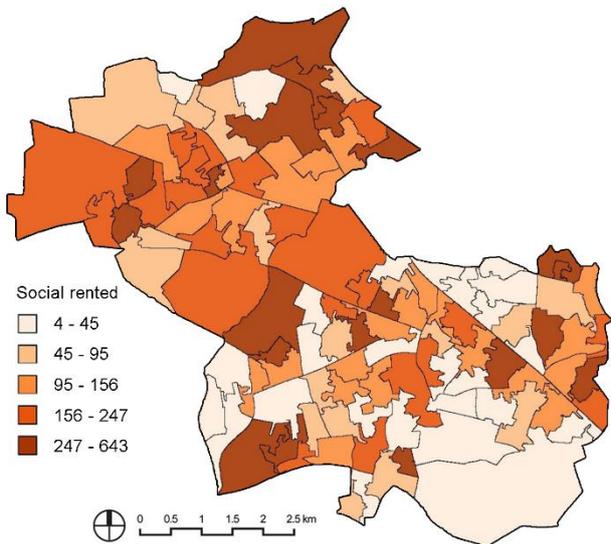
Figure 2.2 Housing type and tenure

Housing type and tenure can provide insight into an area's identity, character and history. The provision of a mix of housing types and tenures is important for delivering mixed and inclusive communities.

Figure 2.3i Urban form and structure – Built form

Data on the built form of an area should be surveyed and collated. The use of figure-ground plans can be helpful in understanding the relationship between built and unbuilt space. These can support an understanding of the existing urban grain, building coverage and built form of an area.
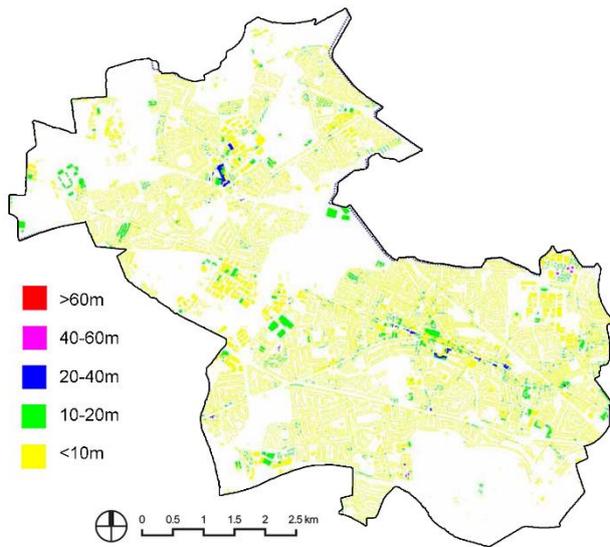
Figure 2.3ii Urban form and structure – Building height

A detailed assessment of building heights is important to understand the physical character of an area. Heights are also significant when determining the sensitivity of areas to different building heights of proposed future development. This information should inform the definition of a tall building in all parts of the borough (see section 2.4).

Figure 2.3iii Urban form and structure – Housing density

Density is an important characteristic of the built environment. In addition to an assessment of building heights, typologies and building pattern, it can provide a useful analysis of an area's built form. Housing density can also identify areas where greater intensification may be feasible and appropriate.

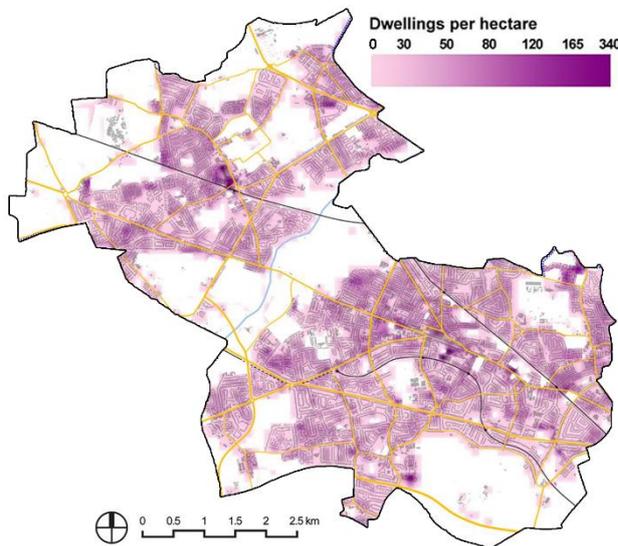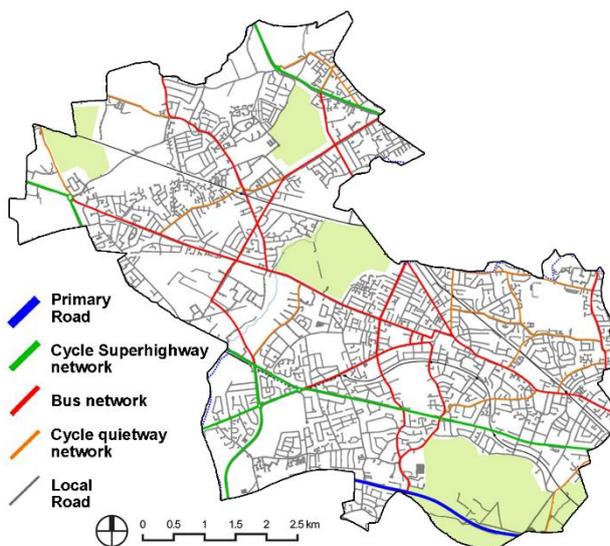## Figure 2.4i Existing and planned transport networks

Understanding the existing street patterns and hierarchies, in relation to how important streets are both for movement and as places, is critical to assessing the potential of linking new development with existing streets and infrastructure. This should include mapping the cycle and bus network, and future planned transport projects (See TfL's Strategic Cycling Analysis). Road safety data can identify where action is needed.
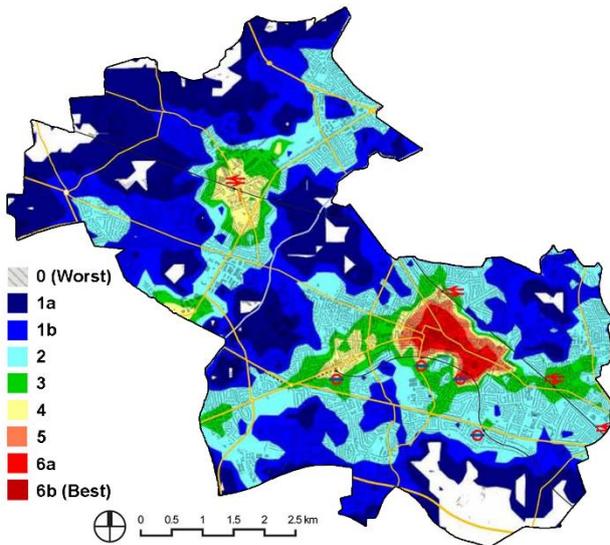
Figure 2.4ii Public transport connectivity

Connectivity measures such as Public Transport Access Level (PTAL) and Time Mapping should be used to identify opportunities or potential barriers to site optimisation. While areas of good connectivity tend to be suitable for higher levels of growth, identifying areas of poor connectivity may be useful in understanding where additional infrastructure is needed to unlock growth in these areas.
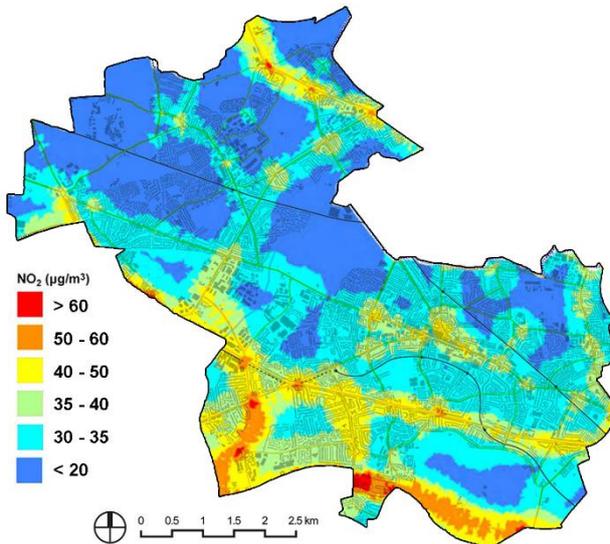
Figure 2.5i Air quality

Mapping local air quality can identify the risks, opportunities and constraints imposed by local air quality conditions. In areas of poor air quality, boroughs should identify ways in which new development and infrastructure can improve these conditions.
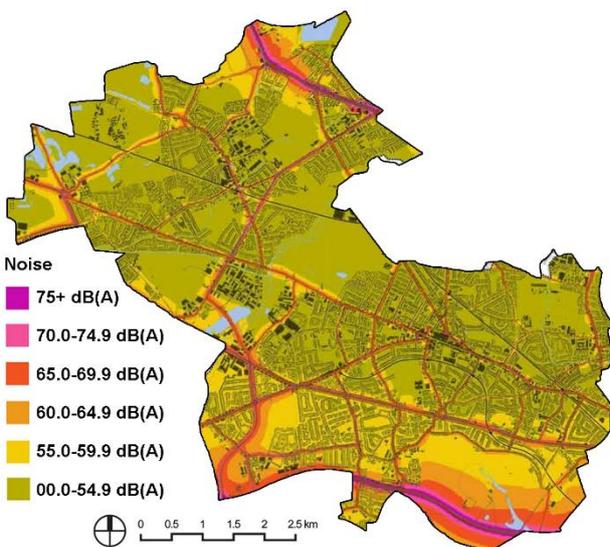
Figure 2.5ii Noise/sound levels

Places have "soundscapes", just as they have "landscapes", which can be of high or low quality. Sound can be positive or negative depending on the listener and the context. Sound type and level, from a range of sources, should be measured and its impact on the character of a place should be mapped, with 'tranquil' or 'vibrant' areas identified. In areas with high levels of unwanted sound, boroughs should identify ways in which new development and infrastructure can improve these conditions.

Parks & playing fields
National green spaces
Public gardens
School playing fields
Outdoor sports fields
Green corridors
Allotments

0 0.5 1 1.5 2 2.5 km

Rivers
Canals, manmade water bodies
Flood risk areas

0 0.5 1 1.5 2 2.5 km

c1860
c1890
c1920
c1940
c1970
c2000

0 0.5 1 1.5 2 2.5 km
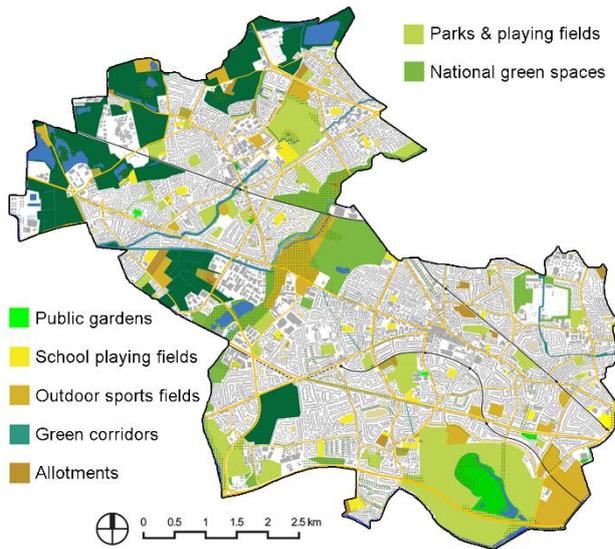
Figure 2.6i Open space networks and green infrastructure

Mapping green infrastructure can assist in understanding the locations that have a lack of green open space, or may be at risk of the urban heat island effect. It may also help identify areas that are important for well-being, social interaction, supporting biodiversity, sustainable urban drainage and reducing the urban heat island effect. This includes areas of formal and informal urban green spaces.
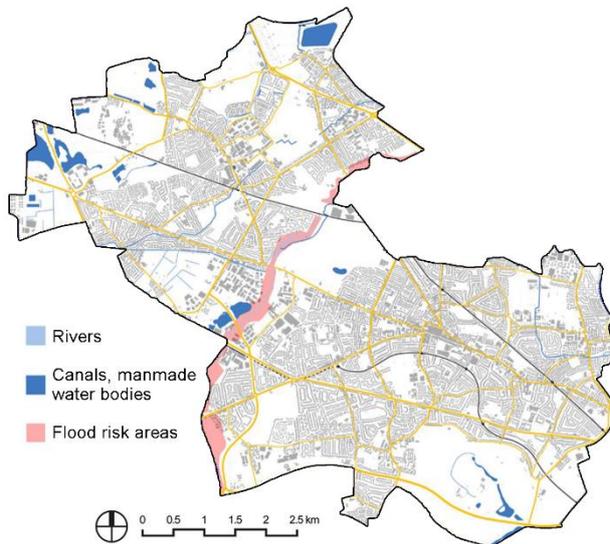
Figure 2.6ii Blue infrastructure and flood risk

Mapping waterways and blue infrastructure is important in understanding the landscape, ecology and local amenity of an area. This can be influenced by business, culture and leisure activities associated with waterways. Flood-risk mapping can help determine the relative probability of flooding, the location of water courses, existing flood defences and areas benefiting from flood defences.
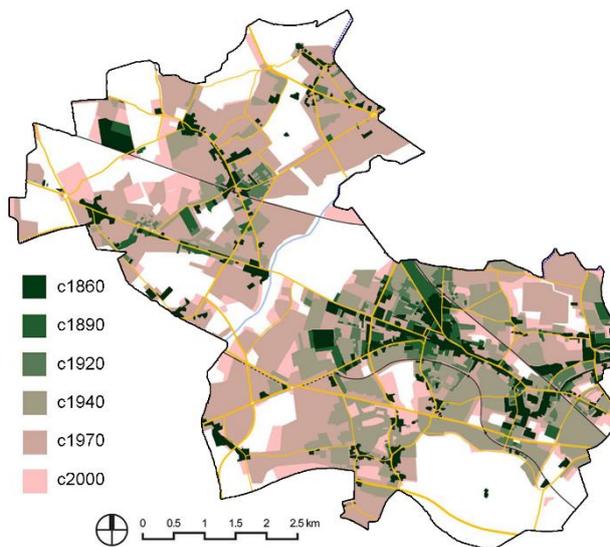
Figure 2.7i Historic evolution and urban growth

Historic maps of urban growth provide insight into how street patterns and urban centres have developed and evolved over time. This understanding can help identify relevant heritage assets requiring conservation and enhancement, and enhance future developments. Overlaying historical information with other forms of evidence may help reveal valued characteristics, or how new development may offer an opportunity to reinstate historic street patterns.
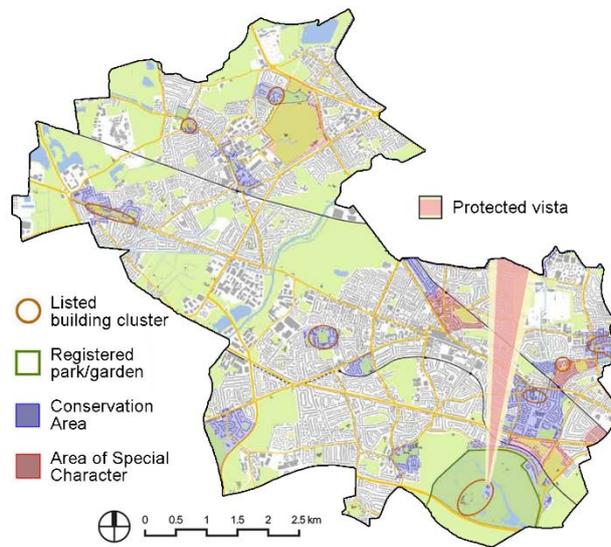
Figure 2.7ii Heritage assets

Heritage assets provide valued traces of the development history of an area; and contribute to the continuity of an area's identity and people's sense of belonging. Identifying and mapping social and built heritage assets and strategically protected views (including their extended background setting) are significant in providing an insight into an area's sensitivity to change. Mapping should include all non-designated and designated heritage assets.
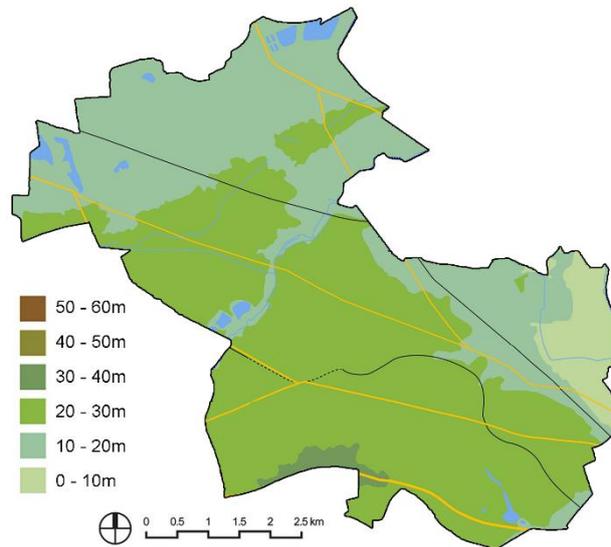
Figure 2.8 Topography and hydrology

Topography underlies and often determines the morphology of development in an area. This can also aid understanding of where and what building heights may be sensitively and practically accommodated. Where slopes are significant, they can limit street orientation. The identification of geological deposits can also assist in understanding natural hazards such as flooding and ground instability.
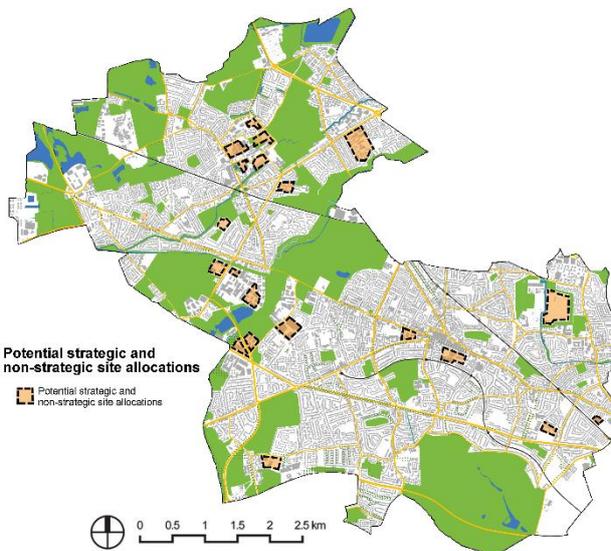
Figure 2.9 Land availability

The availability of land for residential development should be carried out through a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). This process will determine the quantity and suitability of land potentially available for housing development (shown as the potential strategic and non-strategic site allocations opposite).

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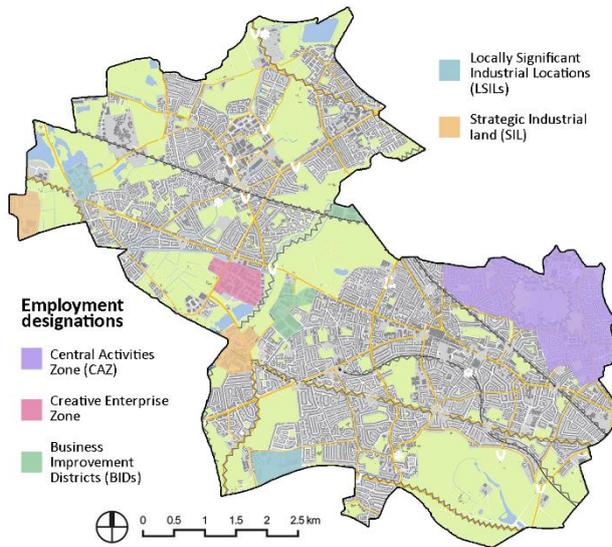
Figure 2.10 Existing and emerging Development Plan designations

Adopted and emerging Neighbourhood, Local and London Plan designations should be mapped. This map should be kept up to date throughout the analysis, and incorporate any aspects that are changed. It should include town centre, industrial or other commercial designations; Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land (MOL); and local designations such as areas of special character or clusters.
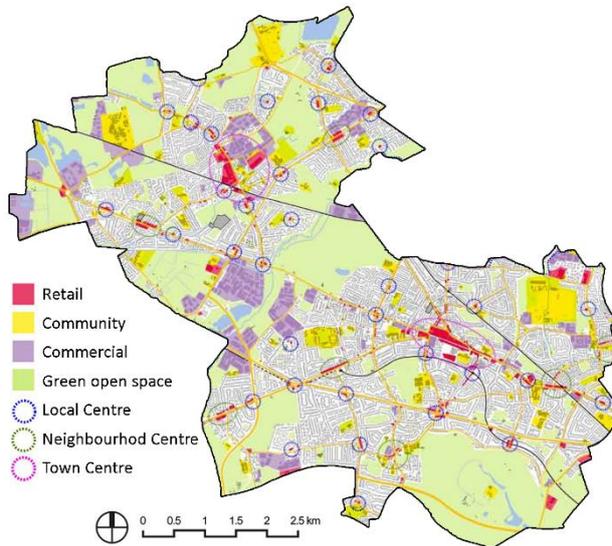
Figure 2.11 Land uses

Mapping land use and how land use activity varies over the day and night can be an important tool in understanding the character of an area. Insights into the mix of uses, at both ground and upper levels, can help identify local centres that are important to the '15-minute city' concept, and the liveability and sustainability of an area. Mapping land use and use classes can also highlight locations of industrial land, as well as community uses.
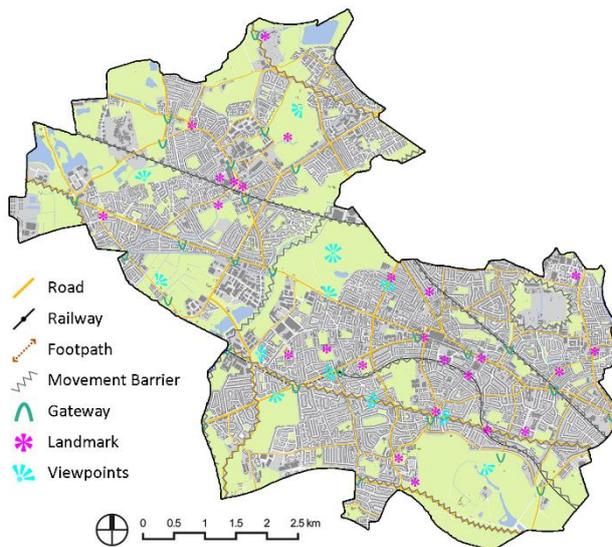
Figure 2.12 Views and landmarks

Legibility is the degree to which a place can be easily understood, remembered, described and, above all, moved through. This includes important landmarks and viewpoints, which are locally valued and provide a sense of location and local distinction within the larger townscape. Mapping movement can be important to identify key barriers to movement such as railway lines and roads.

Social, cultural and commercial characteristics

2.1.2   The social, cultural and commercial characteristics of a place are important contributors to its sense of place and identity. These can be compiled through the collection of 'Active Data'[1] and displayed on social value maps.

2.1.3   **Active data:** co-created community maps and data gathered from engagement with communities and stakeholders. It includes the collection of community-generated insight and dynamic data from engagement methods such as sentiment analysis and digital consultation platforms.

2.2   Character types

Typological approach to characterisation

2.2.1   Having collated the elements of character related to the built form of an area, practitioners should follow a typological/type-based approach within their character studies. This is a system of classification applied to urban fabric according to physical characteristics, e.g. land use, built form and historic origins, rather than a purely area-wide analysis that reviews the history of an area. This offers the most flexibility in terms of both the information that can be presented, and the uses to which it can be put.[2] A typological approach will enable the identification and mapping of 'character types' that will occur in several different places within the same borough or neighbourhood (see Figure 2.14).

2.2.2   Character types: the basic unit of historic characterisation, and the building types or typologies within an area. Types are generic, not geographically specific, and can occur in more than one location in the borough or neighbourhood. These types should be identified via the London Historic Character Thesaurus (LHCT). Examples include the *Metroland Estate* (see Figure 2.13 for the definition) and *Basic Terrace* types.

2.2.3   Each character type shares common features and characteristics such as their historical origins; block pattern/urban grain; and architectural styles and details. Where appropriate, these types will also form the basis of a coding plan for a borough or neighbourhood-wide small site design code.[3] Each of the identified character types should be analysed to identify its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

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[1] See Better Places Toolkit for further information on active data.

[2] LUC, Historic England: London Plan review – Project No. 3: Characterisation of London's historic environment, August 2016

[3] See Small Site Design Codes LPG for further information on area-wide design codes.

London Historic Character Thesaurus

2.2.4   Practitioners should use the LHCT when identifying character types. This allows holistic consideration and monitoring of character, and how it is changing, across Greater London. This aims to address issues of inconsistency between boroughs' assessments (for example, giving different names for the same thing or boroughs being characterised at different levels of detail) by providing a clearly defined set of terms with which to record London's character. Articulating the character of different building types, and adopting a consistent approach and shared language, will facilitate an understanding of context, distinctiveness and what is truly significant about an area. This will also lead to detailed London-wide characterisation data. For further details on how to use the LHCT, see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

Figure 2.13 Screenshot of the Metroland Estate definition within the LHCT

Broad type	Intermediate type	Narrow type
Urban Settlement	Housing Estate	Metroland Estate

Narrow type scope note

Development of private houses on large tranches of land with easy access to suburban rail. Consisting of semi-detached dwelling houses with private front and rear gardens, inspired by the Garden Suburb movement. Typically in an applied half-timbered 'Tudorbethan' style, although Art-Deco inspired, restrained Moderne also features. Details and material finishes often higher quality or more decorative than contemporary estates designed for the working class, such as stained and leaded windows, 'sunburst' glazed doors. They were constructed from the 1910s with the majority built in the interwar period. Initially they were built by the Metropolitan Railway Country Estates (a subsidiary of the Metropolitan Railway Company founded to develop land owned by the company near their lines) but other speculative developers took up the style and built similar estates around the fringes of London near rail or underground lines.

Figure 2.14 Example map of character types
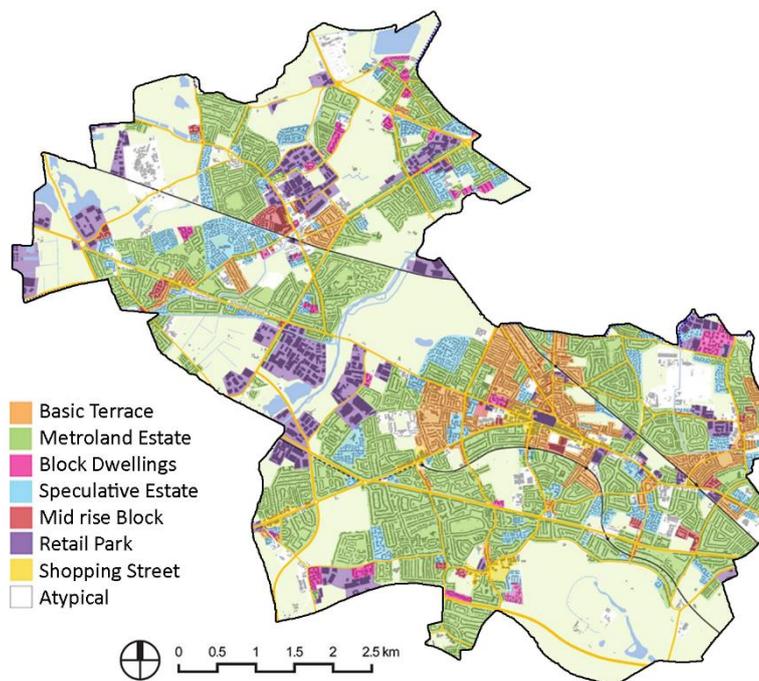
2.3   Character areas

2.3.1   Following the collation and analysis of character elements, and the defining of character types, the information should be reviewed, interpreted and evaluated to establish a set of distinct character areas or unique places within the plan area. This should involve an analysis of how the different elements of character interrelate and overlap, to reveal the distinct features and qualities which, in agreement with local communities, define each of those places as unique. The mapping of character areas in this way is critical for assessing an area's sensitivity to change and developing an area-wide vision with which local communities can identify (see section 4.5).

2.3.2   **Character areas:** single unique geographical areas and places that may contain a number of character types. Their boundaries tend to be based on a locally recognisable community, neighbourhood or town centre (such as Brixton town centre). Where a neighbourhood area has been designated, character area boundaries should be consistent with neighbourhood area boundaries.

2.3.3   When identifying character areas, the social, cultural and commercial elements of character are as important as the physical characteristics. This includes both the 'macro' socioeconomic data and the 'micro' social, cultural and commercial data (such as 'active data' – see paragraph 2.1.3). This can also highlight issues of segregation, exclusion and inequality, and the risks of displacement, which will be important to address when planning for change.

Figure 2.15 Example map of character areas

Character areas

0   0.5   1   1.5   2   2.5 km
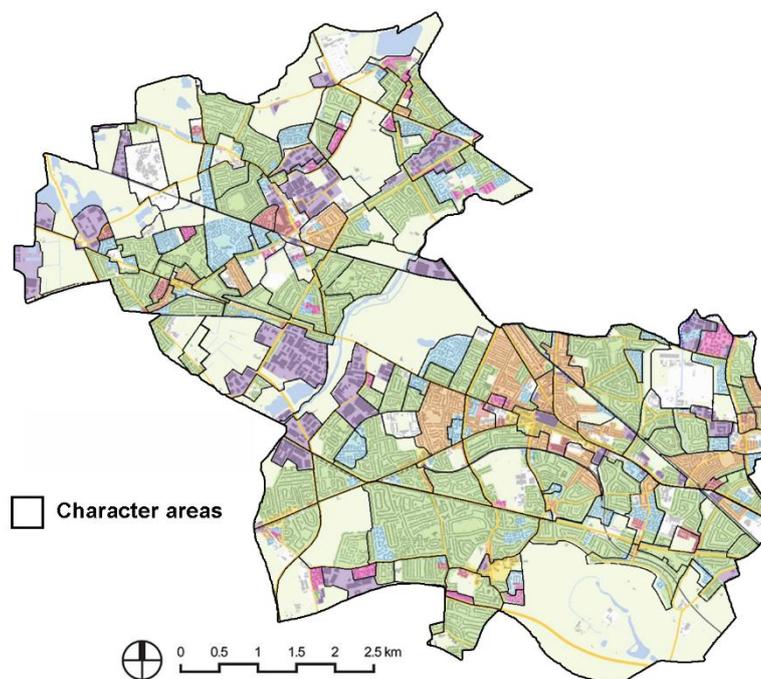
Defining boundaries of character areas

2.3.4   As set out above, practitioners should consider both physical and social characteristics when defining the boundary of each character area. These boundaries may be in places where, for instance, there are hard edges such as a river, stream, road or open space; but may also be in places where there is a noticeable change in the identity, sense of place, or association within an area. While this is a subjective process, surveying the opinions of local residents, businesses and other users of an area is an important part of it (see section 2.5). Other boundaries may be in locations where there is a noticeable change in the land use, character type, age of buildings or architectural style. The boundaries of character areas do not need to align with local ward boundaries if the character area assessment dictates otherwise. Given the role of conservation areas to manage areas of special character, these may also be appropriate boundaries of character areas.

2.4   Tall building definition

2.4.1   Boroughs should use the analysis of building heights across the borough to define in their development plan what is considered a tall building for their area, as required by part A of Policy D9 of the London Plan on tall buildings. This definition should identify the height at which a building becomes substantially taller than its surroundings, and causes a significant change to the skyline. Where there are areas or clusters of existing tall buildings within a borough, the height of these buildings should not be considered in isolation from the height of the wider area when considering what height is 'substantially taller than its surroundings'. This is because these building are already considered tall, and basing a definition solely on what is considered tall in relation to them would result in an inappropriately high definition.

2.4.2   Boroughs are not encouraged to use the definition as a way to control the height of buildings that are slightly higher than the prevailing height. It will be more effective to use design policies other than a tall building policy to manage these heights.

2.4.3   The whole borough needs to be covered by a tall building definition and this should be shown on a digital map. Often this can be in the form of one borough-wide definition; but, where considerable variations in context heights exist, different definitions can be used for different regions to reflect changes in building height across the borough. However, it is expected that boroughs will not have more than a few different tall building definitions for the whole borough. As a result, it must be clear if a proposed development in any part of the borough is a tall building or not, and thus determine if Policy D9 of the London Plan or any local tall building policy apply.

2.4.4   The definition should be stated as the total height of a building in metres from ground level to the top of the building including any rooftop equipment. A height expressed as an Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) level can also be

used, but this is likely to be less practical in boroughs with significant changes in elevation. The definition should not be less than 6 storeys or 21 metres[4] as measured from ground to the top of the building.

2.4.5 Tall building definitions should avoid using a relative height (such as 'twice the prevailing height') or subjective terms (such as 'substantially higher than the neighbouring buildings'). Not only are such definitions unclear, they could also result in a building of less than 6 storeys being considered a tall building, which would not be in accordance with Policy D9 of the London Plan. Multiple definitions should not be used for the same area. The tall building definition should not be misinterpreted to mean that all buildings up to this height are automatically acceptable. Such proposals will still need to be assessed in the context of the whole of Policy D9, together with the rest of the development plan as a whole and any other material considerations.

2.4.6 Boroughs should also consider the cross-borough/boundary implications of their tall building strategy, and collaborate with relevant boroughs where necessary. This process should consider views including strategic and local views (including their extended background setting areas), World Heritage sites, other heritage assets and the character of nearby neighbourhoods.

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[4] This figure of 21m assumes a floor-to-ceiling height of 3 metres for the uppermost storey, and is equivalent to the London Plan definition of 18m from ground level to floor level of the uppermost storey.

2.5 Engaging local communities

2.5.1 Boroughs and neighbourhood planning groups should engage with local communities and interested parties at key milestones throughout the plan-making process when undertaking a character assessment. This should include engagement during the collation of character elements, and when checking and refining the findings of a draft character assessment. This collaboration offers the opportunity to learn from local knowledge and gather evidence about what people value within an area. It may identify aspects of urban character and identity that might otherwise have been missed. Workshops, surveys and digital tools and apps can be used to capture and map the opinions and contributions of local communities on the character, identity and lived experience of an area. This may include, for instance, visual preference surveys for understanding preferences in street scenes, architecture and character at different times of day and night. This process can help identify the boundaries to different character areas (see paragraph 2.3.4); aspects such as locally valued heritage, cultural and community assets; and less tangible characteristics, such as light and soundscapes, which may be unique and valued within an area by different community groups. Following the analysis of information collated, further engagement with local communities will allow an opportunity to verify the findings with those who live and work within the area.

2.5.2 Practitioners should consult and engage with a diverse range of participants from local communities, including businesses, landowners, interested parties and groups that are usually under-represented. Using a range of techniques, and scheduling activity at different times of day and night, and in different locations, to reduce barriers to participate and target under-represented groups can assist in gathering feedback from, and therefore planning for, the whole community.

2.5.3 Where statutory neighbourhood planning groups exist, boroughs must work with them and should have a clear, co-designed and managed process to arrive at a shared characterisation and growth strategy. This process, and the role different participants can play, will depend on the stage of neighbourhood planning that has been reached.

3 Stage two: Character evaluation
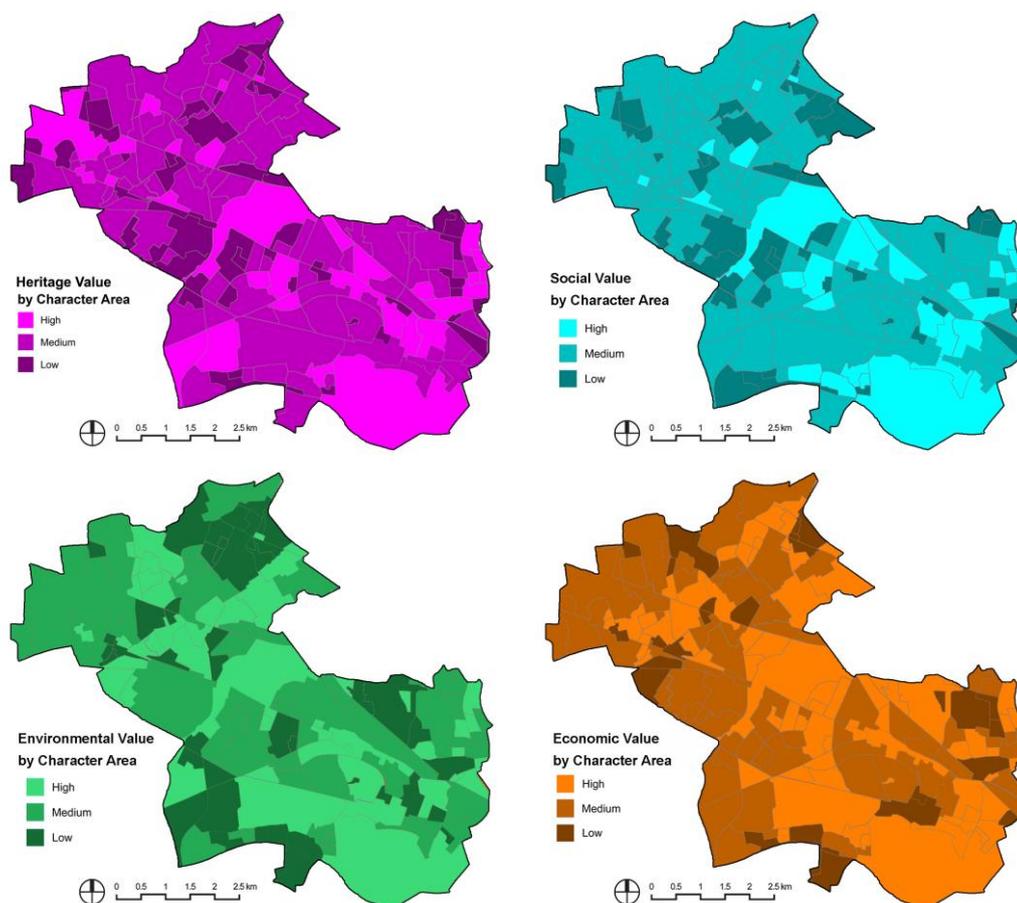
3.1 Sensitivity assessment and mapping

3.1.1 This stage involves carrying out a local character appraisal on the different character areas to assess their qualities and sensitivities to change.

3.1.2 This assessment should be carried out on each character area identified during stage one rather than the character types. This should inform, and be followed by, an assessment to understand each area's sensitivity to change. This will help define the extent to which different areas of the borough or neighbourhood have a capacity to change.

Step one: Local character appraisal

3.1.3 Step one involves the appraisal of evidence and information collated at stage one to determine the current quality of place of different areas. Boroughs are encouraged to assess the heritage, environmental, social and economic value of each character area. These values are detailed below:

    i) **Heritage value:** This relates to the coherence and extent of the historic environment, and can be split into evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal value.

    ii) **Social value:** This relates to the tangible and less tangible cultural and social characteristics and landscape that contribute to a sense of place.

    iii) **Environmental value:** This relates to the coherence, quality and extent of the local environment, people's sensory experience of a place, and its natural assets.

    iv) **Economic value:** This relates to the scale and diversity of economic activity and businesses in an area.

3.1.4 Using the criteria in Appendix 3, each area can be rated low, medium or high for each element of value. This should take into account the coherence and extent of the criteria listed; and help give an overall picture of the heritage, social, environmental and economic value of a place. This process should draw out the valued features and assist in understanding the liveability, sense of place and community, urban environmental quality, urban design and sustainability of different places to determine their qualities. Assessments of these elements of value can be mapped as shown in Figure 3.1. When undertaking this appraisal, practitioners should consider the interrelationship between these different elements of value, as the presence of certain characteristics may be valued differently, from multiple perspectives and/or may be mutually supportive/valued. For instance, heritage assets may have not only a heritage value, but social, environmental and economic value too.

Figure 3.1   Local character appraisal

This appraisal involves evaluating the heritage, social, environmental and economic value of different character areas

Step two: Sensitivity to change assessment

3.1.5   Step two involves a sensitivity assessment for each area using the criteria from step one. This assessment weighs the different criteria, and the value they bring to an area, to understand the type/s of change that each area may be sensitive to. Different areas will be sensitive to different types of change, and these should be determined and clarified at this stage. For instance, in an area of high heritage value, its built form and physical appearance will be particularly sensitive to change. In an area of high social value, its community infrastructure, assets and social cohesion and fabric of the area will be sensitive to change. Areas evaluated as 'high value' for each of the four elements will be the most sensitive to change, while those areas that have been evaluated as 'low value' for each element may be less sensitive to change. For areas evaluated to have a combination of high and low-value criteria (such as high heritage value and low economic value), they may be more sensitive to change in respect of certain types of change but less to others. This assessment should directly inform the identification of areas suitable for different levels of change (see section 4.2).

4 Stage three: Growth strategy

4.1 Consulting the local community

4.1.1 Following completion of a borough or neighbourhood-wide character assessment, local communities and businesses should be engaged and collaborated with on a series of design visioning, placemaking exercises to identify the following for each character area:

i) areas suitable for different levels and scales of change

ii) each area's capacity for growth

iii) if and where tall buildings may be an appropriate form of development.

iv) area-wide vision and policies for these different areas.

4.1.2 This process of community engagement and consultation is separate from the engagement on character and identity in stage one. At this stage, boroughs and any neighbourhood planning groups should work with communities and local businesses on how to accommodate change and growth in different areas. This collaboration should seek to ensure that any changes to the physical environment achieve an overall positive contribution. An area's growth strategy should help deliver strong and inclusive communities, and provide access to good-quality community spaces, services, amenities and infrastructure. This can be assisted through the use of data-led tools to understand the community's opinions on an area's local amenities and preferences in street scenes, architecture and character. Boroughs and neighbourhood planning groups should also ensure that all parts of a community are engaged with and their views taken account of.

Neighbourhood planning

4.1.3 Where an area has a neighbourhood planning group, development of the growth strategy must be a co-designed process informing both local and neighbourhood development plan documents (DPDs). Where a neighbourhood plan has been made for an area it takes precedence over non-strategic local plan policies where they are in conflict, unless they have been superseded by strategic or non-strategic policies that are adopted subsequently. The agreed growth strategy should also inform the housing requirement for designated neighbourhood areas.

4.2   Identifying areas suitable for different levels of change

4.2.1   Findings from the character assessment and evaluation should be used to identify a strategy for change in which the suitable level of change for each character area is defined. Areas can be categorised into one of the three scales of change: *conserve, enhance* or *transform*. This process should be based on the evaluation of character and results from the sensitivity assessment. A central component of a growth strategy will be to plan how an area's strengths will be further enhanced, and weaknesses mitigated or addressed. This categorisation of areas of change should be mapped to show the spatial distribution of these categories, so it is clear which category a particular location falls under (see Figure 4.7).

4.2.2   These categories are intended to be a useful indicator of the potential for an area to support different degrees of change; they are not intended to be a policy designation. This exercise should be used to support and inform in the setting of design visions, policies and parameters for different areas within the borough or neighbourhood, and should focus on placemaking as the long-term outcome. It should also inform the design-led approach to potential site allocations (see the Optimising Site Capacity: A Design-led Approach LPG). In particular, this exercise can help inform the form and massing of site allocations, and help indicate the scale of development that should come forward on windfall sites in these areas.

Conserve areas

4.2.3   These are areas of consistently high quality and coherent character such as conservation areas and designated green spaces (such as MOL and greenbelt). These will include areas that are deemed to be of highly positive character. In *conserve* areas, change must be undertaken particularly sensitively to enhance the valued qualities and character of the area.

4.2.5   Development coming forward in *conserve* areas should draw on the predominant typology and architecture in the area and reflect this in its proposal. Materiality and detailing should reflect the local vernacular while development heights should closely resemble the prevailing height. For areas with a particularly rich diversity of architectural styles, Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans will also be useful.

Figure 4.1   Example of a conserve area

Figure 4.2   New development in a conserve area (before and after)

Enhance areas

4.2.4 These are areas of mixed design quality in which moderate change should seek to enhance the overall character of the area. The attributes that contribute to the positive character within these areas should be identified and articulated in an area-wide vision. This should inform development coming forward in these areas to ensure that these attributes are reflected in proposals. It may also be appropriate to identify existing aspects that negatively impact the character and, therefore, what new development should not reflect or repeat. While there is an opportunity for new forms of design and architecture in these areas, any proposal should respect and draw on the special and valued features of the existing area. The height of a new development should be sensitive to the prevailing heights in the area, although there may be opportunities for a transition in height on appropriate sites; and there is the opportunity for, for example, the materials and detailing to reflect the local vernacular. References should be drawn genuinely from the local context, where these positively contribute to the area.

Figure 4.3   Example of an enhance area

Figure 4.4   New development in an enhance area (before and after)

LB Tower Hamlets

Transform areas

4.2.5   These are areas that have low-quality development of ill-defined character, and where an opportunity exists to establish a newly coherent character. New development should both enhance positive elements, where they exist, and improve the physical character through placemaking to create attractive new places. The new character should reflect the area-wide vision, which may be significantly different from the existing character. It should not result in car-dependent, sprawl-type development – indeed, there are important opportunities to change such developments that currently exist. *Transform* areas should intensify land use when accommodating change – and it is vital that the approach to higher-density development reflects good urban design principles. *Transform* areas will not necessarily be locations where tall buildings may be appropriate. Where an area includes heritage assets, or is within the setting of heritage assets, this does not exclude it as a *transform* area. Similarly, areas that have pockets of intact, high-quality urban fabric should not be excluded, but clear guidance should be given as to how the transformation of the area will retain and enhance these valued features.

Figure 4.5   Example of a transform area

Figure 4.6   New development in a transform area (before and after)

King's Cross Central Limited Partnership

Figure 4.7   Example of an areas-of-change map
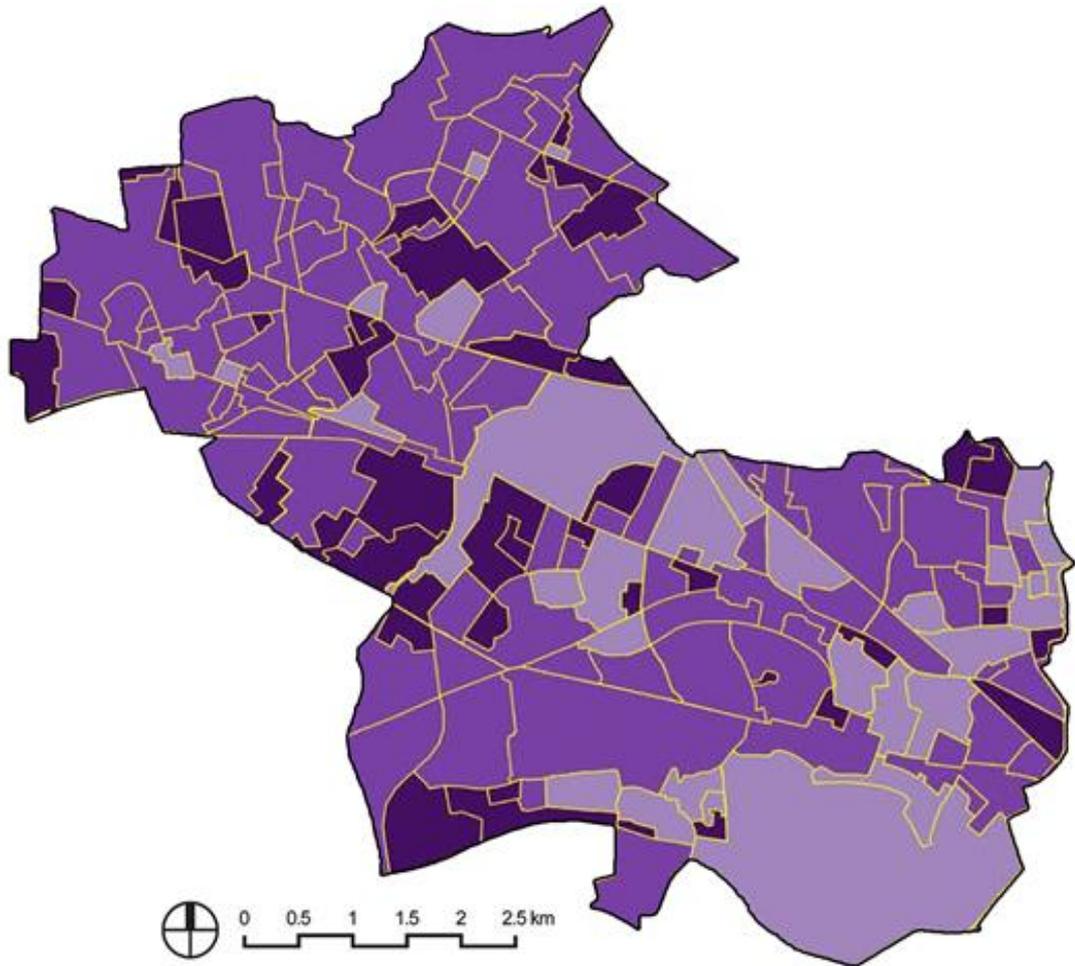
⬤ Conserve: areas that have a high-quality, well-established and coherent character that is sensitive to change

⬤ Enhance: areas that have a medium-quality, mixed character that would benefit from sensitive improvement through intervention

⬤ Transform: areas that have a low-quality, poorly defined character and/or where an opportunity exists to establish a new coherent character by enhancing positive elements

4.3 Capacity for growth

4.3.1 Following the identification of areas suitable for different levels of change, practitioners should determine each area's capacity for growth. An area's capacity for growth is different to the level of change envisioned, as it considers an area's capacity for greater or lesser levels of intensification. For instance, in certain areas where there is an opportunity to transform the character, there may be an extensive capacity for growth while in others there may be a more limited capacity. Similarly, there may be significant scope for growth in *enhance* areas, particularly where good transport connections exist. This will be dependent on the information determined during the character assessment (stage one) such as the scale and height of existing buildings and its transport connectivity (see Figure 4.8). This process will ensure that an area will optimise the benefits of good existing public transport or planned investment. The potential scale of growth should be assessed on a scale from limited to extensive growth using the criteria in Table A4.1 (in Appendix 4). This should overlay an area's level-of-change category to assist in determining the appropriate scale and form of development for an area. Areas with a higher capacity for growth will not necessarily mean tall buildings are appropriate – this will depend on the degree of change envisioned for an area (see section 4.2), and on whether it is subsequently identified as an area where tall buildings may be appropriate (see section 4.4). In the majority of areas with an extensive growth capacity, dense forms of mid-rise typologies are likely to be more appropriate.

Figure 4.8   Different capacities for growth

Development sites near these two conserve areas have significantly different growth capacity due to their existing urban form and accessibility to public transport

4.4 Determining if and where tall buildings may be appropriate

4.4.1 Policy D9 (Tall buildings) in the London Plan requires boroughs to identify locations where tall buildings may be an appropriate form of development in principle and their appropriate heights, subject to meeting the other requirements of the Plan. Having developed a tall building definition (see section 2.4) and identified potential areas of change, boroughs should conduct a tall buildings evidence base and a 'sieving' exercise to determine if and where buildings above this height may be appropriate. For boroughs that apply a relatively low definition of tall buildings, there are likely to be more locations where tall buildings may be an appropriate form of development, including in particular areas with good public transport accessibility (in accordance with Policy D3 B). Therefore, this stage in the process is likely to be a more extensive exercise than in areas that have a higher tall building height threshold definition.

4.4.2 This 'sieving' exercise should draw on the evidence provided by the character assessment and evaluation. Mapping where sensitivities lie will establish areas that need to be discounted from the outset, alongside areas with fewer sensitivities. The 'less' sensitive areas should then be 'sieved' to discount those areas where tall buildings are not envisioned. Where tall buildings are not appropriate due to sensitivities, or are not envisioned, the reasons and evidence for this should be recorded in a publicly available document. For the remaining areas, a suitability scoping exercise should be carried out to identify a finalised set of locations with associated appropriate heights, which could be expressed as maximums, in accordance with paragraph 3.9.2 of the London Plan. This suitability scoping stage should also include consideration of the likely effect of tall buildings upon the significance of relevant heritage assets and protected views (including extended background setting areas). These steps are set out below.

Step one: Sensitivity screening assessment

4.4.3 A sensitivity screening assessment should be carried out to identify locations where tall buildings would be inappropriate, and which therefore do not warrant further consideration. This should be carried out, with specialist input,[5] by ruling out locations where the existence of various planning constraints would mean that they are highly vulnerable and sensitive to tall buildings. This step is a high-level assessment of sensitivity to tall buildings and evidence gathering exercise and does not require a significance-based assessment of heritage harm. Boroughs should use the list of criteria in Table 4.1 together with any other criteria that is of local importance, to map the areas that each criteria cover and combine them into a single map. By visually illustrating these on a map, these criteria help to identify where tall

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[5] This input may come from, for example, conservation or heritage officers.

buildings are likely to be inappropriate; and to indicate where tall buildings are not an appropriate form of development.

4.4.4 Generally, in areas where sensitivities to tall buildings have been identified through this 'sieving' exercise, they should be regarded as inappropriate and should be discounted. Boroughs should document the reasons and evidence why tall buildings are inappropriate in these areas, as this will be useful for determining any planning application for a tall building outside designated tall building areas. The locations shown to have limited sensitivity can then be carried forward to the next step in the assessment process.

Table 4.1   Sensitivity to tall building development criteria[6]

Elements of character	GLA available data source
• Areas that do not have any buildings that exceed the area's tall building definition[7] • Within or near Areas of Special Local Character • Within a Conservation Area or likely to affect the setting of a Conservation Area • Affecting a protected viewing corridor or its Wider Setting Consultation Area and the extended background • Within Green Belt or MOL • Within green open spaces and nature reserves • Within the Thames Policy Area	• Physically affecting or within the setting of any designated heritage assets; this may apply to some non-designated assets too • Poor levels of public transport accessibility (for example, PTAL score 0-3) • Within the setting of a World Heritage Site • Within a Civil Aviation Authority Public Safety Zone

Step two: Alignment with area-wide aspirations

4.4.5 Next, boroughs should align remaining areas of their borough with the aspirations of each character area. These aspirations should be informed by the evaluation of character (stage two), level of change, capacity for growth and local community feedback for each area. In areas where tall buildings are not envisioned, either due to sensitivities or a consensus through the plan-making process, the reasons and evidence for this should be documented, and alternative typologies should be planned for. This documentation will be useful evidence in circumstances in which a tall building is proposed within an area where it is not envisioned.

4.4.6 Mid-rise developments can often offer an optimum design solution for delivering higher-density development in both areas where tall buildings are and are not appropriate. Mid-rise developments may also provide better opportunities for different households – for example, children and young

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[6] Where necessary, boroughs may wish to add additional criteria.

[7] In circumstances where a large area is low-rise, and of poor urban character and form (such as some industrial/distribution sites or big box retail parks), there may be fewer sensitivities. In these cases, boroughs may wish to carry these areas forward to step two.

people's access to suitable play and amenity space. An example of where a mid-rise design solution has better optimised a site is shown in Figure 4.9.

Figure 4.9   Site optimization

Two planning applications for Hook Rise South, Tolworth, Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames

18 storeys – 705 dwellings	10 storeys – 950 dwellings
Refused (2016)	Approved (2018)

4.4.7   In areas with existing tall buildings, an assessment should be made as to whether further tall buildings (including the redevelopment of existing tall buildings) may be appropriate. This should follow the same process as above using the aspirations for each character as a basis for this assessment. Where a tall building or buildings negatively impact the character of an area, this existing tall building/s should not be used as a justification for the area being appropriate for tall buildings. Where further tall buildings are not appropriate, the sensitivity of any further tall buildings in these areas should be clearly set out when documenting the reasons for excluding them (see 4.4.4 above). These are likely to be isolated point blocks, such as the example shown in Figure 4.10.

Figure 4.10   Existing tall building/s

In this location, the mid-rise built form is a positive characteristic, and the existing tall building is an outlier. As a result, this existing tall building is not a justification for further tall buildings in the area.
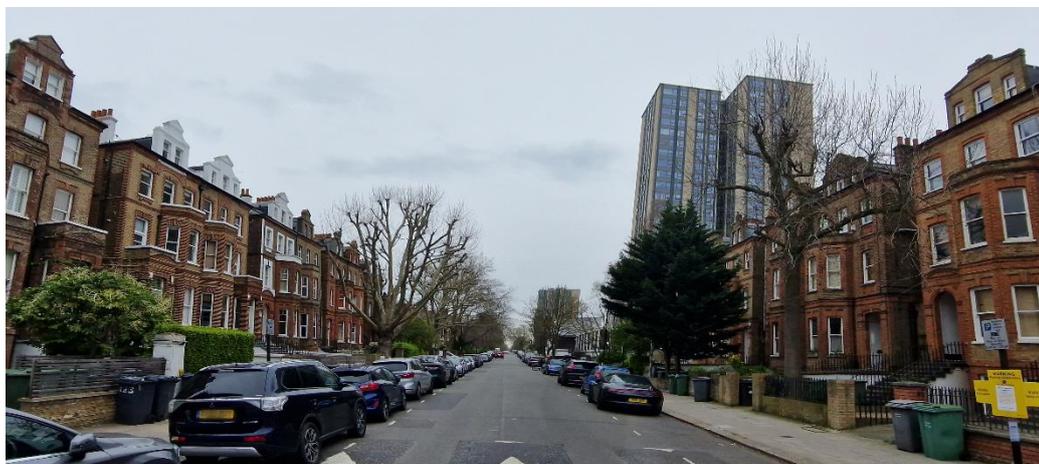
4.4.8   If an existing tall building is considered acceptable in principle to be redeveloped, it should be identified in the development plan and maximum acceptable height for the site should be specified.[8]

4.4.9   For locations that have been identified as potentially suitable for tall buildings in their area-wide vision and policies, and that are not in areas sensitive to tall buildings (under step one and two), these areas should be taken forward to the suitability scoping exercise step below (step three).
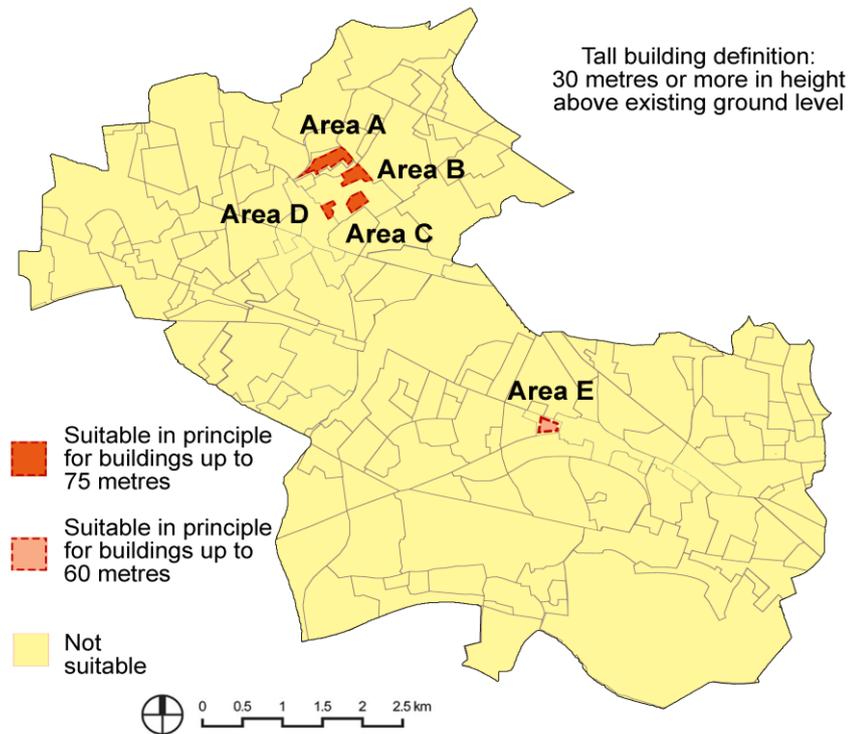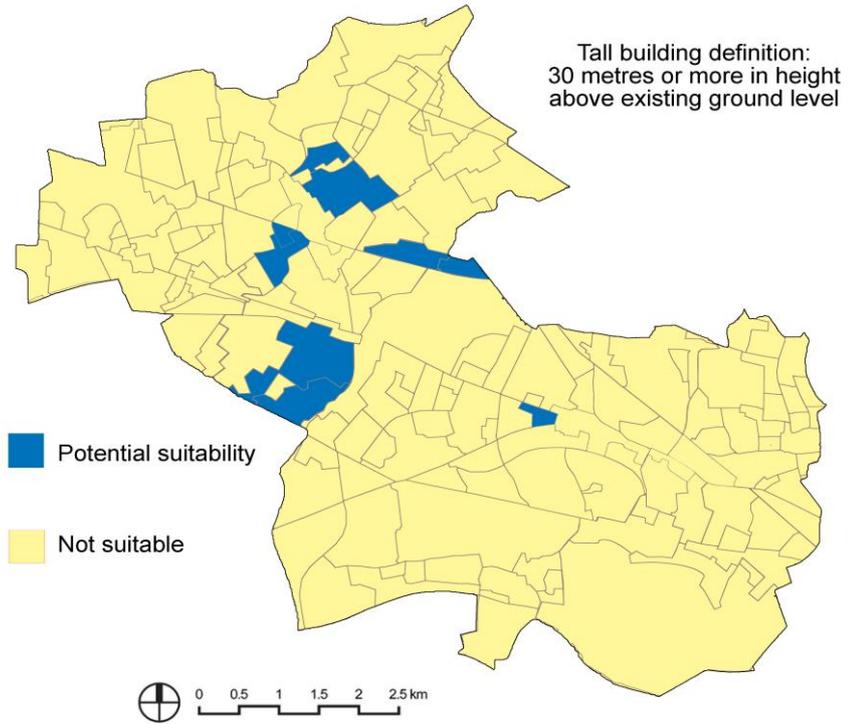
Step three: Suitability scoping exercise

4.4.10   Having discounted areas of the borough where tall buildings are inappropriate for development, boroughs should assess the remaining areas (see top map in Figure 4.11) to identify where tall buildings would be detrimental; and, where relevant, to undertake an area-specific, heritage-led assessment of significance. Boroughs should determine the harm of tall buildings within these areas; and only identify areas where tall buildings could contribute positively to the character of an area. Where harm is identified, it should be documented as part of the borough's evidence base and included, or linked to, in the local plan. Information on harm will be important for development management decision-making if tall buildings are proposed in these areas.

4.4.11   Carrying out visual impact assessments, through the use of 3D modelling software, is encouraged when identifying any potential impact or harm. This should include an analysis of sensitive long-range, medium-range and immediate views. Boroughs should pay close attention to an area's location in respect to conservation areas, strategic views and London's World Heritage Sites. This includes a consideration of any impacts to the backdrop of any strategic views. The greater the height of a tall building, the wider the area in which the building will be visible; and, therefore, the wider the area that will need to be taken into consideration.

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[8] Redevelopment of a tall building will need to be carefully considered, weighing up the benefits of demolition, with circular economy principles in mind.

Figure 4.11   Tall building 'sieving' exercise

This exercise should identify locations inappropriate for tall buildings; and result in the identification of locations that may be appropriate for tall buildings (to be taken forward to step four)

Tall building definition:
30 metres or more in height
above existing ground level

Potential suitability

Not suitable

0   0.5   1   1.5   2   2.5 km

Tall building definition:
30 metres or more in height
above existing ground level

Area A

Area B

Area D

Area C

Area E

Suitable in principle
for buildings up to
75 metres

Suitable in principle
for buildings up to
60 metres

Not
suitable

0   0.5   1   1.5   2   2.5 km

Step four: Define locations and heights

4.4.12   Once locations where tall buildings may be appropriate have been identified, the appropriate heights for these locations, likely to be expressed as maximums, should be determined and identified on the Policies Map and within a DPD. These heights should preferably be expressed as both height above ground level and AOD to provide clarity for local communities, as well as accuracy for designers. Locations and heights should be defined as precisely as possible within DPDs, preferably on digital online maps, to provide as much clarity as possible for the decision-makers, the local community, landowners and applicants. Where there are different tall building definitions for different parts of a borough, these should also be shown on the Policies Map. In some cases, it may be appropriate to identify broad locations (see Figure 4.12) while in others, a more detailed approach may be necessary (see Figure 4.13). When undertaking this, practitioners should consider whether a cluster of tall buildings is envisioned; and if so, how height parameters should be set in order to preserve or create harmony within the skyline of the tall buildings cluster. Where limited evidence on an absolute maximum building height has been gathered, boroughs may choose to define an 'appropriate' rather than maximum building height. However, setting maximum heights is considered preferable, as this will provide greater clarity at the planning application stage. In addition, heights can also be stated as a range instead of a single maximum height. In all cases it should be clear in plans that these heights are not minimums to be exceeded.

Figure 4.12 Detailed height parameters for 'Site A' showing where tall buildings may be appropriate

Key
- Up to 36 metres
- Up to 45 metres
- Up to 75 metres

Heights measured from existing ground level
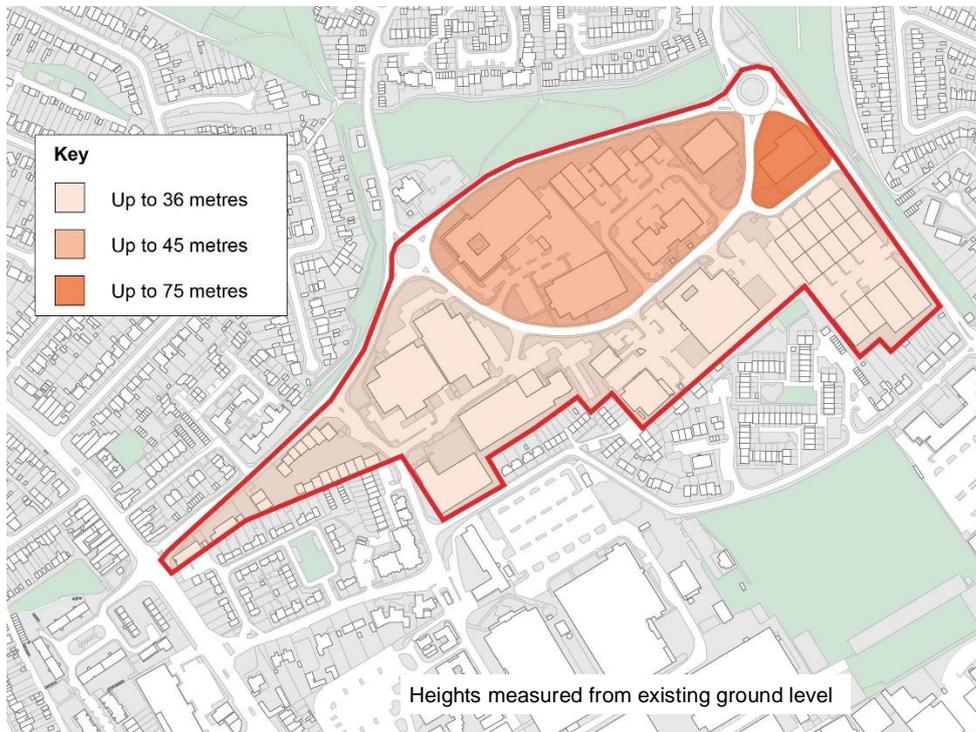
Figure 4.13 Boroughs are recommended to provide further detail on block locations and heights where necessary

Heights measured from existing ground level
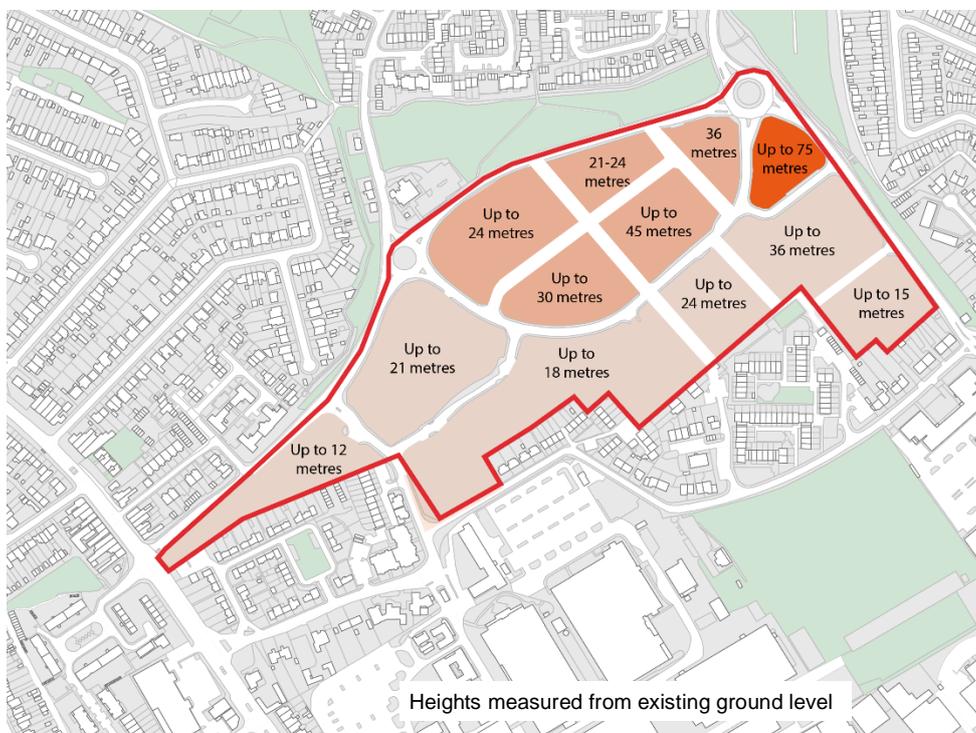
4.5 Area-wide vision and policies

4.5.1 The last stage in a borough's growth strategy is the determination and clarification of an area-wide design vision and set of policies for each character area. This may include a set of design codes or parameters for an area. These should reflect an area's assessment and evaluation of character (stages one and two) and strategy for growth (stage three). Once determined, they should be contained within a Development Plan or a neighbourhood plan, and should set out the specific aspirations for future development – as well as setting parameters for the scale of development and change that is planned for. Accommodating the borough's growth requirements, including its overall housing target, needs to be considered in this process. These parameters, or in some case design codes, should be used to provide clarity and certainty about what is considered acceptable and/or desirable, in principle, in different areas within the borough or neighbourhood. They may include limitations on building heights, typologies and land uses; and the identification of retrofitting or refurbishment of notable landmarks, as well as changes to the transport infrastructure. Locations where tall buildings are, and are not, appropriate should also be reflected in the vision, policies and parameters for an area. This process must take account of the design-led approach in Policy D3, with higher-density development promoted in locations that are well connected to jobs, services, infrastructure and amenities by sustainable transport modes. This should be accompanied by embedding a Healthy Streets approach, such as the reallocation or repurposing of public realm to pedestrian-focused purposes.[9] While area-wide visions, policies and design codes or guides are encouraged for all areas, this will be particularly significant for areas where substantial change is envisioned.

4.5.2 Area-wide visions should be informed by an understanding of the demographic make-up and socio-economic data identified during the character assessment. Visions should take into account the different needs of specific groups within the community and the potential future population, with a particular focus on creating neighbourhoods that are inclusive and accessible (as required by Policy D5 of the London Plan) and, as a minimum, informed by equality impact assessments, as required under the Public Sector Equality Duty. They should also be informed by the community engagement and consultation that has taken place.

4.5.3 Using the information and evidence gathered throughout the characterisation and growth strategy process, boroughs and neighbourhood planning groups should ensure that new development respects, enhances and utilises these assets of character that contribute towards the local identity. Being a *transform* area is not the same as being an area identified as a location where tall buildings may be appropriate. Greater capacity and contribution

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[9] See London Plan Policy T3 and the Sustainable Transport, Walking and Cycling LPG

towards the local character may be achievable through mid-rise development rather than tall buildings (see Figure 4.9 for an example). In areas undergoing significant change, or where there are multiple development sites, a coordinated approach or masterplan should be considered to optimise individual site development and opportunities to improve the wider area.

Boundary conditions

4.5.4   The potential for expanding existing areas of higher density in locations that are well connected to jobs, services, infrastructure and amenities by public and active transport modes should be explored before boundaries are finalised (Policy D3 part B). Once boundaries are decided, the treatment and management of boundary conditions between different levels of change should be carefully considered. This is to ensure that the character and setting of areas sensitive to change are not harmed; and that there is a transition between different character areas. In particular, the edges where *transform* and *conserve* areas meet should be carefully planned to ensure there is appropriate transition between the two areas. This also includes the boundary edges between boroughs, and therefore there is a need for close collaboration with neighbouring boroughs.

5   Stage four: Application of a character assessment and growth strategy

5.1.1   A character assessment and growth strategy should inform the spatial strategy within a local, or an area strategy such as an Opportunity Area Planning Framework. As such, it will be consulted on as part of the relevant statutory consultations.[10] Where it has been jointly developed with a neighbourhood planning group, it should also inform any neighbourhood plan.

5.1.2   The character assessment and growth strategy should also inform the following:

- town centre strategies

- heritage strategies and conservation area appraisals

- housing and economic land availability assessments

- the housing requirements for designated neighbourhood areas

- any design codes, including small site residential development (sites up to 0.25 hectares) design codes. For further information on this process, please see the Small Site Design Codes LPG.

- identifying a borough or neighbourhood's site allocations. As part of this process, a call for sites may also be useful to understand the availability and suitability of land. The capacity testing and future redevelopment of these sites should follow the design-led approach to determine the extent of development that can be accommodated sustainably. For further information on this process, please see the Optimising Site Capacity: A Design-led Approach LPG.

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[10] For a local development plan document, this is Regulation 18 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. For Supplementary Planning Documents, this is Regulation 13 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. For Neighbourhood Plans, this is Regulation 14 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

Appendix 1   London Historic Character Thesaurus

A1.1   Scale and resolution of data collection

A1.1.1 Boroughs and neighbourhood planning groups should follow the approach set out in the LHCT user guide to collect and record the character types within their boundaries. Historic characterisation has several key principles underpinning the way in which it approaches understanding and mapping the landscape. These are outlined in Appendix 2.

A1.1.2 A list is contained within the LHCT of all the character type terms that have been developed for Greater London, along with scope notes that explain what each term covers (Appendix B of the document). These are broken down into three levels (e.g. broad, intermediate and narrow) in which the narrow level should be predominantly used when collecting and recording the character types. It may not be necessary or possible to identify the character type of every single building; however, boroughs and neighbourhood planning groups should aim to identify areas where there is a predominant character type. The intention is that this analysis should be carried out at scales below that of neighbourhood, i.e. several urban blocks. Defining the character type/s of finer grain areas such as town centres and the Central Activities Zone may take more time than in areas of recurring urban form (such as outer London suburbs, for instance). For these areas, previously commissioned character studies or appraisals may be useful when identifying the character types.

A1.2   Common character types

A1.2.1 To assist in defining the character types within an area, some of the most common character types have been included below in Figure A1.1. Images of these types have been included for ease of use and identification. Buildings that are the same character type, but differ in height, should be differentiated from each other. For example, the 'basic terrace' character type may include terraces of two or three storeys, etc, and a differentiation should be made between them. It is also encouraged, where possible, to differentiate between large areas where the built form of the same character type differs in architectural detailing or form. For instance, the images below show two two-storey terraces that differ in architectural form and roofline. This differentiation will assist in the development of area-wide design codes (see Small Site Design Codes LPG).

Figure A1.1 Examples of common character types

Examples of Metroland Estate character type:

Examples of Basic Terrace character type:

Examples of Mid-Rise Block character type:

Examples of Block Dwellings character type:

Examples of Shopping Street character type:

Appendix 2   Historic characterisation – key principles

A2.1.1 Key principles of historic character[11] are as follows:

i)   That all of the landscape is historic, i.e. influenced by the direct and indirect actions of people. This includes apparently natural areas, such as woods, rivers and marshes, since these are always influenced in some way by human action.

ii)   Historic characterisation is a 'complete coverage' approach; the whole of the area under consideration (not simply the obviously noteworthy components) is to be characterised.

iii) The character of an area, known as its 'current character', is recorded by analysing it and breaking it down into smaller areas that share a coherent developmental history.

iv)   Previous character is recorded where it either influences current character (e.g. a recent housing development is the shape it is as it occupies the site of a former factory) or is important to understand the evolution of an area (e.g. a former dockland where docks have been infilled and can no longer be appreciated on the ground, but has still conditioned the overall development of the surrounding area, including factors such as the layout and shape of streets).

v)   There is no inherent 'value' ascribed in the terms used for characterisation. Understanding of the value of areas or character types comes from analysing them and understanding their evolution, context and survival.

vi)   Character type terms do not normally embed information on date in the term name. Many types are not explicitly tied to a specific period (e.g. terraced housing, wharves); greater flexibility in analysis can be achieved by recording date of origin as a separate attribute.

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[11] As outlined in the London Historic Character Thesaurus (2021). These key principles have also been outlined by other studies and authors including: Clark, J., Darlington, J., and Fairclough, G., "Pathways to Europe's Landscape: European pathways to the cultural landscape 2000-2003", 2003; published by EPCL.

Appendix 3   Sensitivity assessment criteria

A3.1.1 Boroughs and neighbourhood planning groups should use the following criteria to assess the heritage, social, environmental and economic value of each character area identified.

Table A3.1   Assessment criteria

Heritage value
- Near or within a concentration of heritage assets including listed buildings, local heritage assets, buildings at risk or recently lost buildings of merit; or otherwise likely to affect the settings of such assets.   - Likely to affect a protected viewing corridor. This includes both strategic and local views, as well as the extended background of strategic views.   - Near or within an area of archaeological value or historic importance; the setting of a World Heritage Site or conservation area; or the setting of high-quality and significant townscape features.   - The quality, extent and variety of architectural periods evident and consistency of style. High-quality materials, detailing and surface treatment.   - Evidence of a historic urban grain and street pattern still intact.   - The range, quality, age and use of materials, detailing and surface treatment evident.
High value
Moderate value
Low value

Economic value
- Presence of businesses and economic activity including those that provide a diverse range of jobs. i.e., specific manufacturer, employer or centre that is responsible for a substantial proportion of local economic activity.   - Diverse range of businesses and economic activity. This should include activity that takes place at night as well as during the day.   - Clusters of a specific sector or interrelated businesses – for example, art galleries and antiques, performing arts or media clusters.   - Businesses that are valued by a particular community – such as an ethnic or religious community or, for example, the LGBTQ+ community.   - Presence of independent businesses or a 'localised economy' including local community shops and local markets.   - Presence of Strategic Industrial Land.   - Presence of a night-time economy.
High value
Moderate value
Low value

Social value

- Intangible assets – presence of positive intangible characteristics that make a place unique or distinctive, and that foster a sense of belonging and identity.
- Cultural assets – presence and significance of attributes, spaces and activities that celebrate a place's artistic, historic, cultural and creative character.
- Community assets – presence and significance of highly valued community uses, spaces, services or infrastructure that meet the needs of the local community (such as pubs, community centres and public spaces).
- Local features – presence and significance of physical features that are unique and that have local significance and meaning (e.g. public art, murals etc) to the local community.
- Health and wellbeing – a place that encourages active travel and has overall positive benefits for the mental and physical health and wellbeing of Londoners.
- Need and deficiency – a place with a wide range of economic opportunities, where the benefits of economic success are shared equitably.
- Demography and density – sustainable densities supported by sufficient levels of infrastructure and access to amenities.
- Employment – a place with a strong and diverse range of employment opportunities. A place with variously sized business units and affordable workspaces.
- Town centres and high streets – presence of a vibrant town centre or high street that provides varied economic, civic and cultural offers throughout the day and night.
- Presence of a protected Gypsy and Traveller site.
- A soundscape that impacts positively on people's enjoyment of an area.
- Education – presence and significance of high-quality and renowned educational and training facilities.
- Housing types and tenure – a place with a variety of housing suitable to the needs of diverse communities, including affordable housing.
- Best use of land – presence of successful places that make the best use of well-connected land. Low presence of unsuccessful, underutilised and poorly managed land.
- Safety – a place that feels safe, secure and inclusive.

Environmental value

- Within Green Belt, MOL or green open space.
- Concentration of high-quality green spaces, parks, gardens, mature street trees and other rich and varied biodiversity. This may include the presence of registered parks and gardens.
- A place that enhances and celebrates its natural features, has a pleasant microclimate and is rich in biodiversity.
- Efficient and resilient buildings and places.
- A place with a strong sense of stewardship, which is made to last and can easily adapt future needs and lifestyle demands.

High value
Moderate value
Low value

High value
Moderate value
Low value

Appendix 4   Capacity for growth criteria

A4.1.1 Boroughs and neighbourhood planning groups should use the following criteria to assess an areas capacity for growth.

Table A4.1   Capacity for growth criteria

Capacity for growth
- Existing urban form such as density, height and urban grain   - Existing high PTAL and connectivity   - Planned or current infrastructure improvements, including improvements to PTAL and connectivity   - Amount and extent of development sites/ areas (either in pipeline, planned or prospective)   - Regeneration projects and initiatives in place or planned   - Identified as an Opportunity Area, growth area or regeneration area   - Recent development pattern and past levels of growth (likelihood this will continue)   - Planning policy constraints limiting capacity for growth e.g. MOL or London Heathrow Airport Public Safety Zone
Limited capacity for growth
Moderate capacity for growth
Extensive capacity for growth