



# 4 ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES AND OBJECTIVES

## Issues and opportunities

### Issues

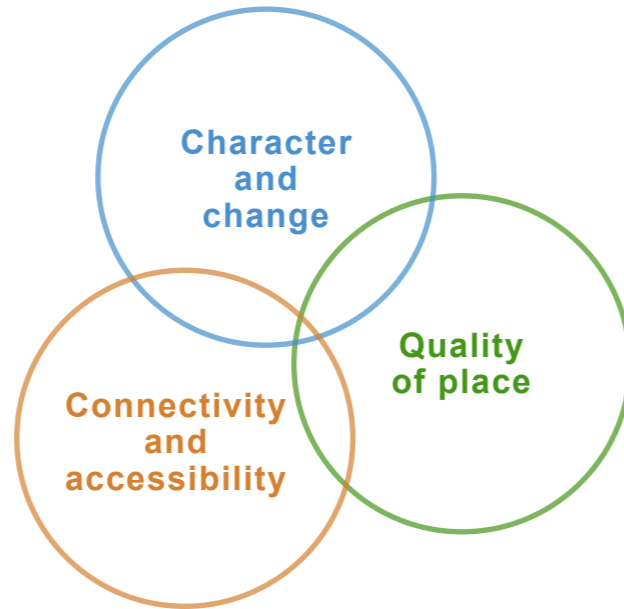
Whilst the area sits in a wider area of major transformation, it feels divorced from it. Redevelopment has the potential to integrate the area with the wider surrounding areas of change, whilst helping it become a more attractive and recognisable place in its own right – and a more successful neighbourhood and place for living and working.

For an area so close to Central London, and next door to Camden Town and Kings Cross Central, there are many cases of inefficient and poorly designed uses of scarce land, which offer significant and beneficial redevelopment opportunities.

The area has significant barriers to convenient and accessible movement; where in places it is difficult to navigate and get around and often impenetrable.

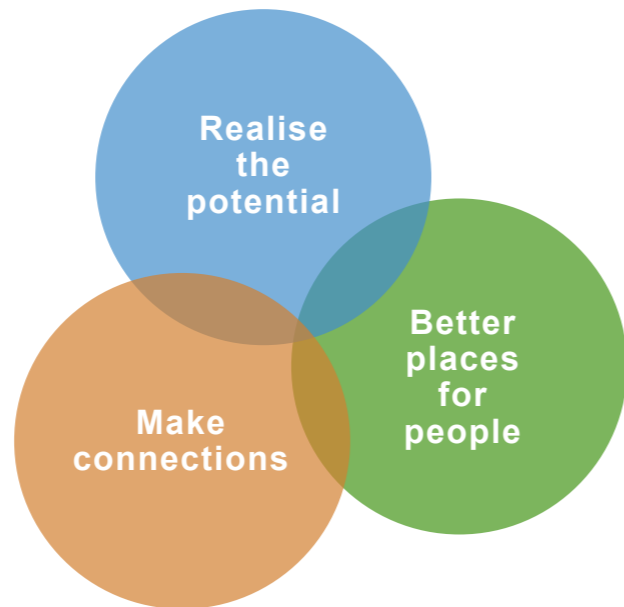
The area also has significant variations in the quality and attractiveness of its streets, public realm and spaces; contributing to people unfriendly and unsafe feeling environments.

This section starts by setting out in more detail some key issues that need to be addressed. Focussed on our Local Plan priorities these issues can be broadly characterised as:



### Opportunities

The resultant opportunities and objectives that aim to promote the areas role as a place to deliver the highest quality new development, meet Local Plan priorities and support neighbourhood plan aspirations are then broadly characterised as:



## Character

The present environment and character of the area is a strong product of the associated development focussed around the canal and railways land. This has resulted in a mixture of building styles, heights, massing and site plots to accommodate a range mix of uses, with employment a strong feature. Whilst this variety contributes to the character and appearance of the area in places, post war development has had many negative impacts, compounded in parts by the constraints of large impermeable sites and canal and railway infrastructure.

A Council commissioned boroughwide Camden Character Study (Urban Initiatives 2015) describes the area around south Camden Town, that includes Camley Street and St Pancras Way, and this highlights a number of issues and factors which affect the area, although a number of these are now starting to be addressed through new development.

- Infrastructure has a major impact on the area isolating some parts; in places employment uses adjacent to this infrastructure reduces access and permeability further and accessibility to the canal is restricted by large sheds, depots and by St Pancras hospital.
- The eastern part of the area is fractured by the rail lines emanating from St Pancras mainline station and the Regents Canal
- The London overground line crossing east–west creates a further barrier to movement through the area
- To the east, and either side of the canal, the environment is less well integrated and poorly planned
- Housing to the east is sandwiched between the canal and by storage and distribution facilities on Camley Street
- The opportunity to create waterside living has not been fully exploited and has been developed with relatively low density inward looking housing
- Further north, Agar Grove and Maiden Lane estates are isolated by both railway infrastructure and their internalised layouts.
- Whilst the current identity of the area turns towards Camden Town as a centre it is becoming more linked to Kings Cross
- The canal feels like an underutilised asset
- Housing around Barker Drive has an illegible network of streets and mixed quality of public realm
- Poor frontages to Camley Street
- St Pancras Way contains poor frontages and some incongruous uses next to residential uses and the canal

ISSUES

Character and Change

- An area of transition - facing both Kings Cross and Camden Town
- Change already underway and a “pipeline” of future development - needs to be managed and integrated so that comprehensive area benefits are achieved
- Inefficient and poorly designed uses of land on the edge of Central London
- Number of large, inward looking and impermeable single use sites
- Streets have weak and inactive street level frontages - created by servicing points, walls and blank elements of buildings
- The quality of St Pancras Way is heavily compromised by a disordered character; exacerbated by the one-way system
- Camley Street was designed in isolation from the wider area - segregating low-density housing to the west and employment sites to the east – with limited permeability, street activity and overlooking
- Granary Street, with the blank elevation of the Ugly Brown Building and long wall around the hospital site creates another inactive and poorly overlooked street
- Unlike more recent schemes, many canal-side developments failed to realise the opportunities of the canal to create views and improve access



Buildings turning their back to the canal



Buildings turning their back to streets



Large, inward looking and impermeable sites



Large inactive and blank frontages

OPPORTUNITIES

Realise the Potential

- The location: creating a distinct and interesting place in its own right connecting Kings Cross Central and Camden Town
- Local neighbourhoods see tangible benefits from “Good Growth”
- Value and use the best of the character and assets of the existing place
- A more connected mixed use area – with more effective and intensive use of land, creating activity and variety in higher quality developments
- Reinforce an employment role for the area –supporting Camden’s growth sectors including creative and cultural industries of Camden Town and “Knowledge Quarter” around Euston and King’s Cross
- New employment spaces of different types and sizes
- Optimising the amount of new housing and genuinely affordable housing through redevelopment across the area - with more of a housing focus to the north



Caxton Works, by Studio Egret West - residential above light industrial space (image: Benedict Luxmoore)



The Timberyard Deptford, by Hawkins Brown - Mixed uses reflected in a varied architecture (image: Hawkins Brown)



Hawley Wharf, by AHMM - using industrial and railway heritage in new design (image: AHMM, ref 2014/7458/P)



Goodluck Hope Scheme, Leamouth, by Allies and Morrison - human scale buildings at front of street, with set back taller buildings (image: Allies and Morrison)

## Our Vision

**A more sustainable and distinctive neighbourhood**

**A more identifiable place, with its own character and qualities, where more people will be able to pass through, live and work**

**Development makes far more effective uses of land, with a mix of new workspaces for different types of businesses and job opportunities and a range of new homes, all creating a richer mix of activities serving a diverse residential, working and visiting population**

## Our Objectives: Realise the Potential

- **Make the area a more distinctive and identifiable place that evolves successfully in its own right alongside Camden Town and Central London, and sees benefits from growth and change in the wider area**
- **See the more efficient, effective, better designed and sustainable use of land with a richer mix of uses serving a diverse residential, working and visiting population**
- **Create an ambitious mixed-use neighbourhood that connects and integrates well with surrounding neighbourhoods; economically, socially and environmentally**
- **Increase the residential role of the area by supporting a significant number of new homes and a range of housing types, particularly genuinely affordable homes**
- **Maintain and enhance the employment role of the area as a place to do business and have access to a range of job opportunities**
- **Create a more vibrant and safe place**

## How can these be met?

- Promote a more intensive and sustainable mix of land uses at higher densities to optimise the use of land and deliver the uses and scale of development appropriate for the local context.
- Create a denser, more innovative and compatible mix of uses which can exist side-by-side as good neighbours.
- Meet Camden's housing needs through a significant increase in the number, mix and affordability of new homes.
- Maximise opportunities from public sector land.
- Improve and add to connectivity and the physical and social infrastructure of the area for existing and new residents and workers; from shops and open spaces to better links and access to community facilities.
- Expect a mix of new employment spaces of various sizes and types for uses that support Camden's economy and Central London's role and functions including:
  - \* Spaces that meet the needs of Camden's knowledge and growth sectors;
  - \* Smaller spaces suitable for SMEs and start-ups;
  - \* Spaces suitable for light industry, studios and workshops and other complementary employment uses;
  - \* Spaces that are well designed with a clear purpose: whether for specific sectors/uses and suitably adaptable, flexible and future proofed to accommodate new businesses; and
  - \* Spaces that are affordable
- Expect proposals to provide additional employment benefits in terms of access to jobs and training for local people and contribute to regeneration in neighbouring communities.
- Protect and enhance historic and ecological assets and improve and promote the canal in connecting Kings Cross to Camden Town and linking neighbourhoods.
- Demand the highest quality architecture and sustainable design solutions that are right for the context and character of the area; with variety, detail, interest and flexibility.

ISSUES

Connectivity and Accessibility

- A disconnected place in a great location
- Streets and main routes in and out of the area are shaped by rail infrastructure and the canal and large sites create barriers
- Inaccessible, uninviting and unsafe feeling routes
- Complicated to find your way around - with unclear and uninviting east-west and north-south routes and between Maiden Lane and Agar Grove Estates
- Camley Street is wide and tree lined - but divides uses and like St Pancras Way and Granary Street feels more like a service road than a street for people
- Poor links and accessibility to the community and cultural offers of Kings Cross Central and Camden Town



Level changes and poor legibility around the area



Open spaces and assets such as St Pancras Gardens are not fully accessible



Visual and physical barriers created by parking and fences



Dark and uninviting streets

OPPORTUNITIES

Make Connections

- A more connected place - new developments and new routes improve accessibility and integration with the wider area
- A more connected place - to local shops, public transport, the canal, community infrastructure and places of work
- Enhance quality of Camley Street and St Pancras Way as “proper” streets and foot/cycling routes
- Integrate Elm Village better into surrounding change
- New and improved railway and canal bridge(s) eg. Agar Grove to Maiden Lane, lighting
- Facilitate a future Camden Highline
- New uses, activities and passive surveillance create a more attractive and safer feeling area to walk around and pass through
- Put “Healthy Streets” principles into practice
- Create more permeable development



High Line, New York - re-using existing infrastructure as green routes and active spaces



Camden Lock - pedestrian bridge to improve connectivity within and around the area



New Road, Brighton - more active and overlooked streets (image: © Gehl Architects)



Animating railway arches and bridges through lighting and art to indicate routes and create more inviting routes

## Our Vision

**A more attractive and accessible area of transition between Camden Town and Kings Cross, complementing and building on the change already happening in the area**

**Better connected with Camden Town, Kings Cross and surrounding neighbourhoods and local facilities, with improved walking and cycling with surroundings and local public transport networks**

## Our objectives: Make Connections

- **Make the area more pleasant for walking/and cycling; connecting areas and activities and integrating the area better with surrounding neighbourhoods**
- **Create safe, well-overlooked, attractively designed streets and spaces for residents and visitors, pedestrians and cyclists**
- **Ensure site development designs and layouts add to permeability and where feasible allows for potential future connections to be established**
- **Improve accessibility and routes to neighbourhood facilities and public transport networks**
- **Improve perceptions of community safety and reduce opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour**

## How can these be met?

- Design and deliver new homes and workplaces to increase activity, passive surveillance and reasons to visit and pass through.
- Use redevelopment to create a network of safer and attractive new and improved routes and streets.
- Activity and pedestrian movement within well-defined streets with clear private/public domains.
- Improve pedestrian and cycle links including between Camley Street and Agar Grove alongside estate renewal and through Elm Village and St Pancras Way to Camden Town.
- Improve routes to existing public transport facilities and support bus route accessibility and connectivity improvements in the area.
- Deliver a new canal bridge linking Camley Street and St Pancras Way.
- Replace or improve the bridge link over the railway between Agar Grove and Maiden Lane estates.
- Improve and create routes connecting Euston, Somers Town and Kings Cross including links through the hospital site and through St Pancras Gardens to Camley Street and Pancras Road.
- Enhance existing streets by reducing clutter and barriers to movement and improving crossings and lighting.
- Promote high quality design and site layouts that can facilitate and future proof connectivity.
- Support and promote the Camden 'High-Line' route from Camden Town to Kings Cross Central.

ISSUES

Quality of Place

- Inaccessible, uninviting and unsafe feeling places
- Camley Street is wide and tree lined - but lacks activity and a clear identity
- Environmental issues – including unmanaged parking, dumped cars, poor waste management, and fly tipping
- Underappreciated and underutilised assets – like the canal and Camley Street
- Ambiguous ownership and responsibility for areas of land and spaces
- Quality of the public realm - eg. poor lighting, areas dominated by parked cars
- Waterside activities and access has not been fully realised



Weak "gateways" across the area



Lack of activity and people



Hostile and people unfriendly design



Inactive street frontages

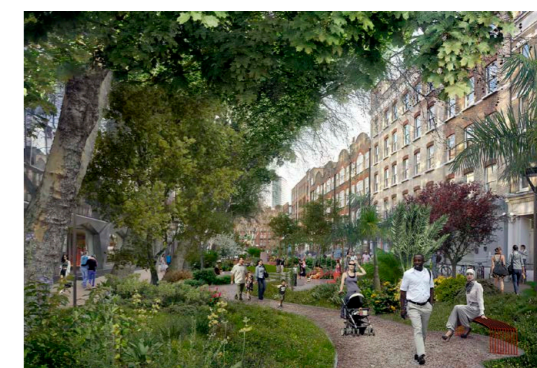
OPPORTUNITIES

Better Places for People

- Change that values and harnesses existing positive character and assets to create a strong sense of place
- More outward looking developments creating more active streets and frontages
- Create a network of new spaces - with different forms and functions
- Improved public realm - remove unnecessary clutter, walls and barriers to movement
- Enhance the appreciation and accessibility of existing parks and spaces, such as St Pancras Gardens
- Camley Street as a strong north-south green "spine"
- Better utilise the role of the canal - in terms of environmental quality, accessibility, safety and health and wellbeing
- Sustainable solutions - eg to enhance biodiversity, sustainable drainage and links to energy networks
- Clearer management and responsibility of public realm and spaces



Battle Bridge Place, King's Cross - public spaces for temporary activity and rest



Alfred Place, by DSDHA - green public spaces, routes and more active streets (image: DSDHA)



Elephant and Castle - Increased biodiversity and permeable materials incorporated into small public spaces



Granary Square steps, Kings Cross - access, open spaces and activity along and around the canal

## Our Vision

**A more vibrant and interesting area, with animated streets, welcoming and safe public spaces and varied and high quality designs**

**The canal, green infrastructure and spaces play their roles in health and well-being and in the enhancement of the urban and natural environments**

## Our Objectives: Better Places for People

- Maximise and enhance the multiple benefits of green infrastructure in the area to develop a higher quality, inclusive and accessible green environment
- Integrate green infrastructure into new development in a range of forms to contribute to environmental quality (biodiversity, sustainable drainage, improved air quality and energy infrastructure)
- Provide a variety of types and scale of improved and new public and private spaces with clear management strategies to support sustainable and healthy communities, economic growth and address any deficits in local open space
- Creatively enhance the existing public realm, spaces and routes to create a stronger, safer and more identifiable place; from the canal to open spaces; from streets to bridges
- Improve the living, pedestrian and cyclist experience through greening and associated measures to alleviate air and noise pollution
- Preserve and enhance the biodiversity roles of the canal, other SINC sites and existing open spaces

## How can these be met?

- Create a series of well-connected and well-managed green routes and spaces from Kings Cross and St Pancras through to Agar Grove.
- Protect and enhance features of historic and ecological significance and meet the highest environmental standards including enhancing Camley Street as a “green spine” through the area, the canal and bridges.
- Support a variety of spaces and public realm areas with different purposes, forms and materials including:
  - \* Larger public open spaces for recreation and play in major developments
  - \* Smaller neighbourhood spaces close to new housing and other uses which are safe and attractive places to sit and stop to talk
  - \* Landscaped and publicly accessible areas near the canal and bridges
  - \* Gardens, balconies, green roofs and seating areas/terraces around new uses
  - \* Greening projects- eg wildlife habitats and gardening/food growing areas
  - \* Urban spaces eg for local events and street-side activities
- Ensure that new spaces are well overlooked and have clear functions with well-considered and robust designs and materials and clear management and maintenance strategies.
- Create inclusive and accessible environments including step-free access across St Pancras Gardens and to the canal path.
- Use green infrastructure, including sustainable urban drainage on new and existing public spaces (where feasible), to achieve greenfield run-off rates and reduce surface water flood risk.
- Use development and improvement opportunities to create or facilitate links into existing energy networks or new networks.
- Creative use of planting, art, lighting and water features.
- Support the continued role and resilience of the canal, other SINC sites and spaces as wildlife habitats and corridors and exploit new development to create new areas of habitat and add “stepping stones” to existing habitats and corridors.

## Development Opportunities

With a location close to the centre of London and Camden Town and a number of significant developments in the pipeline there is a real opportunity to achieve ambitious and transformational benefits for the area and local neighbourhoods.

This ambition is supported through our Local Plan priorities and aspirations for positive growth by promoting the more efficient use of land, and the opportunities for mixed use development, including new housing and employment floorspace. The Council want to ensure that growth and change takes place in an integrated and sustainable way and enhances and benefits existing communities in which they are happening.

Our vision aims to build on the best elements of the area to bring about a more connected network of new uses and activities, and higher quality spaces and streets that have a much clearer purpose and help people move around more easily and safely.

### Land uses

We want to add to the housing and employment mix that already exists in the area, but in a more intensive, varied and better-designed way.

Redevelopment schemes to the south of Camley Street are beginning to create a more animated and urban street edge, addressing the street and canal more positively and improving integration with the surrounding area.

Proposed mixed use schemes at the “Ugly Brown Building” and St Pancras Commercial Centre sites would open up new pedestrian routes and public spaces. Emerging proposals for other sites will add to a variety of uses, such as new health and research facilities on the St Pancras Hospital site.

A key objective is to realise the Local Plan priority for significant new self-contained housing and affordable housing. Rather than land uses being segregated we want to achieve higher density mixed use development to incorporate a mix of new homes and an enhanced stock of employment premises.

An appropriate mix of uses will depend on factors such as the location, size and existing use of sites, but optimising the amount of housing in redevelopment schemes will be a key objective, especially where significant floorspace uplifts are proposed or sites have become surplus to requirements.

The Council will also support the continued employment role of the area and proposals for intensification of employment sites will be supported where these provide additional and new employment opportunities and other

benefits such as affordable housing and open space.

Camden has a thriving knowledge economy with renowned institutions in science and creative industries. Our Local Plan and draft SALP support the development of these industries and the investment plans and development of Camden’s health and education sectors. It also promotes the development of the Knowledge Quarter around Euston and King’s Cross.

We will particularly support workspaces that will sustain a successful Camden and central London economy and local growth sectors and that are distinct from the larger offices being delivered in Kings Cross Central and other areas of the CAZ.

We will support a mix of workspaces of different types and sizes to accommodate a range of business uses, re-providing existing employment floorspace where feasible and providing affordable spaces for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Other ancillary and smaller scale uses to support increased activity and additional workers and residents, such as shops, cafés and facilities accessible to the wider community, should be part of the more vibrant mix being sought.

We will also work with partners to reduce inequality and see local residents benefit from inclusive growth and new employment opportunities with local people provided with the skills needed to access existing and new employment opportunities.

New workspace can take different forms and, depending on the nature and hours of activities, can sit compatibly alongside new homes. New employment space will need to be well designed to minimise the negative impacts identified previously.

Proposals which would diminish the ability to deliver our priority land uses and other policy objectives for this area will not be supported.



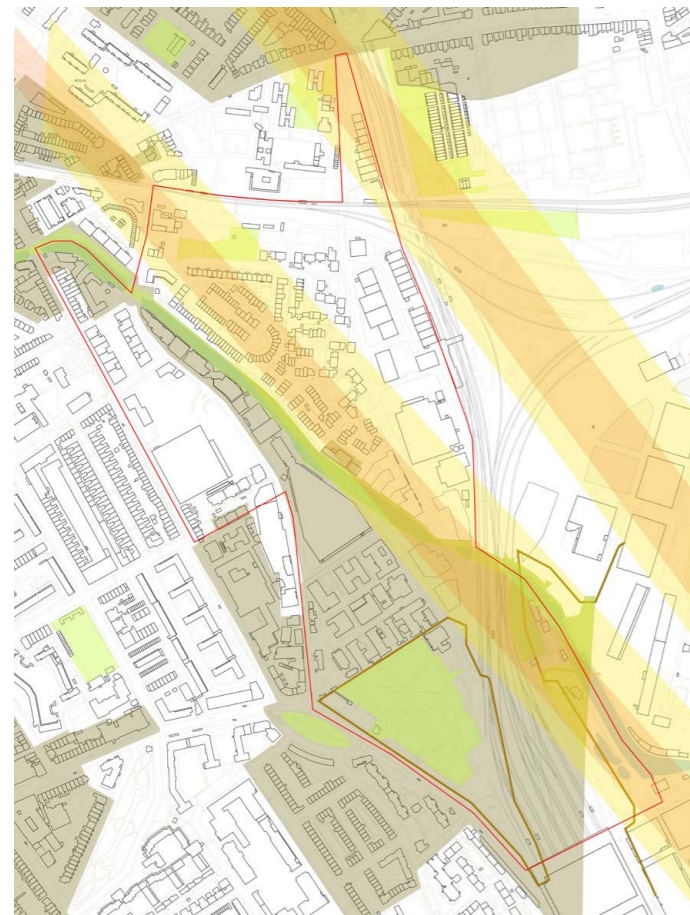
Knowledge Quarter (image: Knowledge Quarter Science and Innovation Audit, by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, June 2018)







**Realising the potential of sites**

There are opportunities to optimise the use of land and achieve an increased development density in this area. However, this must be accompanied through thoughtful and high quality design; not only of buildings on individual sites, but also the quality of the townscape, spaces and connections around them.

Two strategic viewing corridors pass over the area from Parliament Hill and Kenwood towards St. Paul's Cathedral and these will shape the acceptable nature, height and scale of new development. Some parts of the area and individual sites offer more opportunities for taller buildings than others, particularly those outside conservation areas and more distant from more sensitive local contexts, such as adjacent to the railways.

However, tall buildings will only be acceptable if they are part of a coherent design approach that has properly assessed and responded to local character, context and views and shows exemplary design qualities and other efficient high-density building forms could be equally successful in the local context.



-  SPD Area boundary
-  Conservation Area
-  Open Space
-  Viewing corridor
-  Wider corridor setting consultation area
-  Archaeological Priority Area

**Realising the potential of the area's assets**

The industrial legacy of the canal and railways has brought positive attributes to the area with parts falling within the Regents Canal and Kings Cross conservation areas. The context includes important assets such as open spaces and the canal where their value and character should be complemented and enhanced through development in the area.

The historic assets of the area should be preserved, enhanced and, where necessary, be sensitively and positively adapted so they will continue to add value and a sense of continuity to an otherwise rapidly changing area. The potential impacts of new development, such as on important views, setting of heritage assets and through overshadowing, will be carefully scrutinised. Significant change must respect and positively work with and utilise the assets of the area.

Where there are opportunities to open up new canal side access in conjunction with developments this should have a clear and inclusive purpose, and could bring additional forms of activity and natural surveillance, business, leisure and residential opportunities created through additional moorings and facilities (such as water and charging points).

Rather than deliver these kind of improvements in a piecemeal way and to inform the priorities for the area, an aim of this SPD is to establish a framework for Camden and other stakeholders to both continue and start to work together to identify the complementary package of desirable and deliverable ideas and projects that could improve local infrastructure, physical permeability and connectivity across sites and through and beyond the area. Some of the principles and priorities for these improvements are set out in later sections.



**Activity of businesses** - the employment role of the area should be retained and enhanced (image: Hawkins Brown)



**Camley Street** - existing mature trees along the street provide an opportunity for reinforcing the street as a strong "green spine" (image: Hawkins Brown)



**Maiden Lane Estate** - improving the bridge link to this architecturally renowned estate (potentially as part of the Camden Highline proposals) (image: Tim Crocker)



**St Pancras Hospital** – a number of heritage assets, but with opportunities for redevelopment and improvement to make it more outward looking and connected



**Elm Village** - finding ways to make this distinct residential community more connected into the wider area



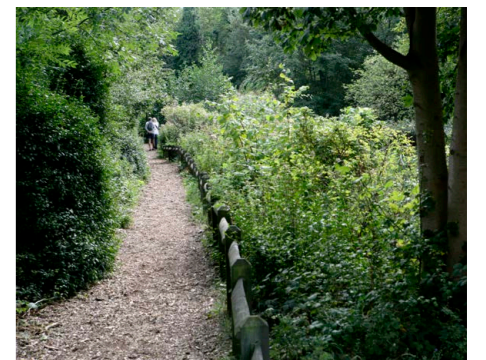
**The Canal** – as a heritage asset and quieter walking route, but key connection between Camden Town and King's Cross



**St Pancras Way/Granary St** – new development should make streets more active, inviting and attractive for pedestrians to use (image: KSR, ref 2014/4385/P)



**St Pancras Old Church and gardens** – a distinct tranquil space, but needing improved accessibility to create routes from Kings Cross to Somers Town



**Camley Natural Park** – a distinct green space at the gateway to Camley Street and a more accessible visitor destination with new facilities being built