

Section 2 - Housing

- 2.1 This section covers all development of additional residential units - new build, changes of use and the subdivision of existing housing. It contains policies on dwelling houses and flats, residential institutions (for example, nursing homes and residential schools), houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) and hostels (short-term accommodation for people who are homeless or on low incomes). Policies for hotels, B&B's and youth hostels are in section 8 - Community, Leisure and Tourism Uses.
- 2.2 Providing housing is one of the most important issues facing the Borough. The demand for housing in Camden exceeds supply, and a shortage of land, a growing population and high prices all contribute to housing pressures. Therefore, housing is the priority land use of the UDP.
- 2.3 This section seeks to meet the housing needs of the whole community by providing a choice of housing in terms of affordability, size and type. It includes policies to encourage new housing, including affordable housing for those on low and moderate incomes, and to protect the existing housing stock. Policies throughout the UDP seek to protect amenity and the residential environment and secure and retain facilities, such as shops, open space and community facilities in locations close to people's homes, to support Camden's residential communities.
- 2.4 The policies in this section contribute to achieving the Camden Community Strategy aim of creating strong communities and, in particular, to the target of increasing the supply of affordable housing in the Borough.
- 2.5 The aims of the housing section are:
- > to provide for and retain a range of high quality housing to meet housing needs;
 - > to encourage the provision of more affordable housing; and
 - > to promote housing that is accessible to all members of the community.

Increasing the supply of new housing

- 2.6 The draft London Plan sets a housing target for Camden of 16,940 homes between 1997 and 2016, an annual target of 850 dwellings per year. Based on monitoring information, Camden feels that a figure of 13,825 homes, 690 dwellings per year, is more realistic. The Council will seek to secure new housing to meet strategic demand. However, the number of dwellings that will be built in Camden is largely dependent on the level of activity in the housing market and the availability of land and premises with potential for redevelopment or conversion.
- 2.7 The Schedule of Land Use Proposals, in section 11 - Land Use Proposals, identifies major development sites within the Borough and gives guidance on appropriate uses. Housing is identified as a preferred use, either solely or as part of a mixed-use scheme, for a majority of the sites in the Schedule. Policy SD3 on mixed-use development in section 1 - Sustainable Development, also aims to increase the amount of housing development in the Borough.

H1 - New housing

The Council will grant planning permission for development that increases the amount of land and floorspace in residential use and provides additional residential accommodation, provided that the accommodation reaches acceptable standards. The Council will seek to secure the fullest possible residential use of vacant and underused sites and buildings, and may require suitable sites to be developed for primarily or wholly residential use.

- 2.8 To increase the supply of housing in the Borough, the Council will look favourably on schemes for new residential development, new build, conversions and extensions, that provide accommodation of an acceptable standard. However, objectives and standards contained in section 1 - Sustainable Development, elsewhere in the UDP and Supplementary Planning Guidance are applied to ensure that a good living environment is created. The Council will also apply the other UDP policies to protect a range of types of residential accommodation, and to protect other important land uses.
- 2.9 The Council will encourage vacant and underused sites to make a full contribution to meeting housing needs in the Borough. In order to maximise residential development, the Council may require a primarily or wholly residential development on suitable sites, subject to the other policies in this Plan.
- 2.10 Land is limited in Camden and all housing development in the Borough will be on previously developed land. In this way, Camden will make an important contribution to meeting the government's target of 60 percent of additional housing on previously used, "brownfield" sites.
- 2.11 High densities will be an important means of making the best use of the scarce amount of land available in Camden by increasing the amount of housing provided on a given site. This helps to meet overall housing needs and will increase the amount of affordable housing provided in the Borough. High densities can also contribute towards sustainable development, and contribute to the viability of local facilities and services by increasing their catchment population. Policy SD4 in section 1 - Sustainable Development sets out the Plan's approach to density.
- 2.12 The Council wishes to encourage housing developments with high densities that are sensitively designed with regard to amenity and its surroundings. This applies to all schemes involving increases in residential floorspace, including new build, changes of use and mixed-use schemes.
- 2.13 The density of development that makes the fullest use of a site's potential will relate to site circumstances. A minimum density figure of 50 dwellings per hectare (200 habitable rooms per hectare) will be used for guidance. High density development will be expected at locations in the Central London Area, Town Centres and other locations well served by public transport.

Providing affordable housing

H2 - Affordable housing

The Council will expect all residential developments with capacity for 15 or more dwellings and residential development sites of 0.5 ha or more to make a contribution to the supply of affordable housing. The Council will seek to negotiate 50% or more affordable housing in each development, taking into account factors that it considers to affect the suitability of the site. The Council will consider:

- a) a guideline of 70% as the proportion of affordable housing sought as social housing for rent;
- b) a guideline of 30% as the proportion of affordable housing sought as housing for essential workers and other intermediate occupiers;
- c) proximity of local services and facilities, access to public transport and parking;
- d) site size, and the economics of provision;
- e) any particular costs associated with the development of the site; and
- f) any other planning objectives which it considers to be a priority in development of the site, including comprehensive development of related sites and an appropriate mix of uses.

Where the development is able to contribute to the supply of affordable housing but this cannot practicably be achieved on the site, the Council may accept the provision of affordable housing off-site, or exceptionally a payment in lieu.

- 2.14 There is a general shortage of all forms of housing in London. This includes an acknowledged shortage of social rented housing for low-income households. The cost of housing in London is hindering recruitment to a wide range of jobs for key workers, including teachers and nurses. Planning authorities have a key role to play in securing affordable housing for low- and moderate-income households, and thereby securing the workers needed to maintain London's economic success.
- 2.15 The unmet need for affordable housing in Camden has been estimated at 11,400 households, compared with a total housing capacity of fewer than 1000 extra homes per year up to 2016 (London Borough of Camden Housing Needs Survey 1999, GLA London's Housing Capacity 2000). This excludes new housing needs arising from 1999 onwards. To meet the existing unmet need by 2016, almost 70% of all homes developed would have to be affordable. However, from 1996 to 2000, only 15% of new additional units granted permission were designated as affordable. Although a greater proportion would be required to meet the unmet need, the Council seeks 50% affordable housing in residential developments on the basis that this figure will maintain the viability of residential development and maximise the overall addition to the housing stock.

Definition of affordable housing

- 2.16 In accordance with the government's guidance on Local Housing Needs Assessment, affordable housing is housing that would allow a household in need of accommodation to access a suitable property by spending no more than 3 times their gross annual household income (if buying), or no more than 30% of their net household income (if renting). Government guidance indicates that affordable housing encompasses both low-cost market and subsidised housing (irrespective of tenure, ownership - whether exclusive or shared - or financial arrangements) that will be available to people who cannot afford to occupy houses generally available on the open market. Within Camden, open market values for private residential accommodation (for both rent and sale) are generally much higher than the London average. Low-cost market or shared ownership schemes may make a contribution to meeting affordable housing need, but often will not be affordable to local residents.
- 2.17 As a guideline, the Council seeks new affordable housing as 70% social rented accommodation managed by Registered Social Landlords, such as Housing Associations, and 30% intermediate housing affordable to those on moderate incomes, including essential workers. Intermediate housing may involve a variety of housing types and tenures, but should be available at significantly less than the local market price or rent for standard self-contained accommodation suitable for households in need. These proportions are consistent with the draft London Plan, the existing proportion of social rented housing in the Borough's housing stock, the priority given to housing people on the Council's Housing Register (Waiting List) and the need to provide balanced communities and including those not eligible for social rented accommodation. Detailed definitions of the different categories of affordable housing are contained in Supplementary Planning Guidance. In the cases of both social rented housing and intermediate housing, the Council will seek to ensure, through planning obligations and/or conditions, that housing is permanently affordable and is subject to nomination arrangements or, where appropriate, occupancy criteria, approved by the Council to target those most in need of such housing.
- 2.18 The Council may grant planning permission for developments led by affordable housing. Schemes are considered to be affordable housing-led if they provide substantially more than 50% affordable housing. Although the guideline proportions for social rented and intermediate housing will generally apply, schemes led by affordable housing may exclude social rented or

intermediate housing where this is warranted by the characteristics of the site or area or the economics of the development, provided that there is a demonstrable need for the type of housing proposed. Some forms of intermediate housing are being developed that require limited or no public subsidy, but are still offered for rent or sale at prices that are affordable compared with standard self-contained flats, and proposals that provide 100% dwellings of this type may be viable and acceptable. When considering proposals for development led by affordable housing, the Council will take account of their likely impact on the social balance of the local community.

Proximity of local services and facilities, access to public transport and parking

- 2.19 Generally, sites within the Borough have a sufficient level of access to local amenities and public transport to allow for on-site provision of affordable housing. The Council will not exempt a site from on-site provision on these grounds unless there is a demonstrable shortage of essential services.
- 2.20 Policy H8 will be taken into account when considering the appropriate mix of units on a site. There are very few opportunities for housing development in the Borough where all units have direct ground floor access. The Council will not consider a lack of ground floor access to justify exempting a site from providing a mix of affordable units, including large units.
- 2.21 Many of those in need of affordable housing, particularly existing social housing tenants, already own a private car. To make it possible for them to move to meet their housing need, parking spaces should be provided for some new social housing. The Council therefore considers that mixed schemes of social and market housing should provide equally for car owners in each type of housing, and any car parking spaces provided should be divided between the types in proportion. The Council also notes parking may sometimes be needed for intermediate housing, for example where occupiers have to travel some distance to work at night. The Council may therefore sometimes require a proportion of any car parking spaces in a mixed housing scheme to be available to intermediate occupiers.

Site size, economics of provision and other planning objectives

- 2.22 The Council's thresholds for site size are based upon government guidance, however the government encourages developers to consider providing affordable housing on smaller sites where it is feasible and appropriate. The strict use of thresholds can create an imbalance in the size of proposals coming forward. For example, the inflexible treatment of the 15 dwelling threshold can encourage development of 14 large units in a location suitable for 15 or more smaller units. To ease this effect, the Council will seek affordable housing on sites which are sufficient in size to accommodate 15 or more dwellings. Given the highly urban nature of the Borough, this will apply to all sites of 0.5 ha or more, and all developments that would provide a built residential floorspace of 1,500 sq m or more. The Council will also consider mechanisms in Supplementary Planning Guidance to reduce the impact of affordable housing contributions on schemes close to the threshold.
- 2.23 The Council acknowledges that a public subsidy may not always be available for each type of affordable housing, and will negotiate with developers in the light of prevailing funding arrangements. The Council recognises that achieving 50% affordable housing on some sites will require public subsidy. The Council will therefore regularly review Supplementary Planning Guidance to indicate how it will negotiate provision in the light of government funding, the extent of the Council's own affordable housing fund, and prevailing land values and construction costs.
- 2.24 In negotiating the provision of affordable housing and the level appropriate to a particular site, the Council will consider the full range of costs, benefits and planning objectives associated with a development. These may include costs associated with contaminated land, heritage considerations (such as restoration of a listed building), and environmental considerations (such as environmental improvements for regeneration of an area). They may also include objectives such as seeking comprehensive development of related sites, giving priority to

housing and affordable housing in mixed use schemes (policy SD3) and making the fullest possible residential use of underused sites and buildings (policy H1). The Council will seek to prevent sub-division and separation of sites between uses or phases where this reduces the contribution of the site to affordable housing without achieving other planning objectives of similar importance.

- 2.25 The Council will enter into negotiations with developers to seek the maximum contribution that can be achieved, but accepts that where the level of subsidy expected by the Council is not available, or there are other particular planning objectives and costs that a development must meet, it may be necessary to accept a lower proportion of affordable housing than 50%.
- 2.26 Different circumstances and policies apply in the King's Cross Opportunity Area. Housing policies for the King's Cross Opportunity Area and the special opportunities it presents for a range of housing types and tenures are set out in Section 9.

Contributions to the supply of affordable housing off-site

- 2.27 There is an acute shortage of housing sites in the Borough relative to need for affordable housing. Consequently, developer contributions to affordable housing should generally be made on-site (including on mixed-use sites). However, the Council acknowledges that there may be occasions when "off-site" provision by the developer of, or exceptionally a financial contribution to, affordable housing may be appropriate because:
- there are physical constraints within the site or premises which would make on-site affordable elements impractical for management purposes;
 - the management or service charges of an on-site scheme would be too costly for a Registered Social Landlord to meet;
 - there are particular costs associated with the development that would require an excessively high amount of subsidy for provision of affordable housing on site, but these are not considered to be so great as to preclude making off-site affordable housing provision. The precise level will be negotiated having regard to the viability and individual circumstances of the scheme;
 - on-site provision, for whatever reason, does not amount to the percentage required by policy. In this case an off-site contribution will be sought to top up the shortfall;
 - there is no likelihood of securing, within a reasonable time scale, Housing Corporation (or other) funding for an on-site scheme.
- 2.28 In order to achieve balanced communities, where off-site provision of affordable housing is to be made by the developer, the Council will seek planning obligations to ensure that the provision is made in reasonable proximity to the proposed market housing. The formula for calculating an appropriate level of financial contribution is available as Supplementary Planning Guidance, subject to the need for regular review.

Protecting existing housing

- 2.29 The Council wants to increase the amount of housing in Camden and provide a range of residential accommodation. Conversion or redevelopment of residential space for other uses will undermine these aims. Therefore, as well as encouraging new housing, the Council also seeks to retain existing housing, both in terms of units and floorspace. To achieve this the Council will resist development that involves a net loss of permanent residential accommodation. Permanent residential accommodation is generally within Use Classes C2 and C3, and includes dwellings, sheltered housing, residential care facilities, houses in multiple occupation, and student accommodation or nurses homes that provide for stays exceeding 90 days.
- 2.30 The Council is also keen to make the best use of existing housing by bringing empty properties back into use. This can increase the choices available to those in housing need. The Council's approach to this matter is set out in its Empty Property Strategy.

H3 - Protecting existing housing

The Council will resist proposals that lead to a net loss of residential floorspace, except if the loss is to provide small-scale health care facilities that are needed locally and cannot be provided on an alternative site. The Council will seek, so far as practicable and reasonable, to protect land considered suitable for housing.

In proposals for redevelopment or re-use of residential institutions (within Use Class C2) for a different use, the Council will expect the retention or replacement of existing residential floorspace.

The Council will not grant planning permission for development that would involve the net loss of two or more residential units unless the development:

- a) creates large affordable housing units; or
- b) creates large housing units in a part of the Borough with a relatively low proportion of large dwellings; or
- c) creates one or more units that comply with the Council's space standards where one or more of the existing units do not comply.

- 2.31 The Council aims to increase the amount of housing in Camden and provide a range of residential accommodation. The net loss of residential accommodation and the loss of potential residential development sites would undermine this aim and the strategic objective to increase the supply of housing set out in the draft London Plan. The retention of permanent residential floorspace in all uses (including dwellings in Use Class C3, residential care homes in Use Class C2, sheltered housing, houses in multiple occupation, and nurse and student accommodation that provides for stays of over 90 days) will help to provide a range and variety of accommodation. Sites that have already been identified for future residential use are included in the Schedule of Land Use Proposals. Additional sites suitable for new housing may come forward during the plan period and, if necessary, will be the subject of planning briefs. The absence of a site from the Schedule does not imply that it is not suitable for housing.
- 2.32 As an exception to policy H3, the Council will permit the development of health care facilities that result in the loss of residential accommodation, provided that: there is no alternative non-residential site in the local area; the Primary Care Trust have identified a local need for the use; and the facilities are small in scale (that is, are for a single or small number of practitioners and serve a local catchment area). If there is no longer a need for these health facilities, then the site is expected to return to residential use.
- 2.33 Proposals for the development of residential institutions (within Use Class C2) for a different use will be considered using a floorspace assessment of the part previously in permanent residential use. The floorspace assessment includes staff housing, dormitories, residential patients' accommodation, and the internal communal and circulation space associated with them. Only these areas will be regarded as attracting the general presumption against loss of residential floorspace. An increase in residential accommodation above that existing on the site will be welcomed in line with policies H1 and H3. In appropriate cases, 50% of any additional floorspace created may be sought for housing as specified in policy SD3. All market housing (retained or additional) will be subject to affordable housing requirements for 15 or more dwelling schemes under policy H2.
- 2.34 To achieve the Borough housing target, it is important that, as well as providing new dwellings and preventing any loss of residential floorspace (see policies H1 and H3), the Council controls the loss of existing housing units. Schemes that would reduce the total number of residential properties in the Borough will be resisted unless they contribute to the supply of affordable housing units suitable for families, add to a more balanced mix of housing in the Borough by creating larger units in appropriate locations, or to combine units so that all replacement units meet the Council's residential space standards where one or more previously did not. Residential space standards are given in Supplementary Planning Guidance.

- 2.35 Households who require large homes, such as families, tend to have to wait longest for Council housing as there is a shortage of such properties in the Borough. The Council will consider granting planning permission for schemes that involve a net loss of residential units where large units (three or more bedrooms) are created that are affordable to households on low incomes. In such circumstances, the Council will use planning obligations to secure the units as affordable housing.
- 2.36 The nature of the housing stock varies throughout the Borough. Some areas have a high proportion of smaller units while others have more larger properties. A mix of large and small units in an area can help to create more balanced communities (as different size dwellings meet the housing needs of different parts of the community) and increase housing choice within the Borough. To achieve a more varied mix of housing, the Council will consider granting planning permission for proposals which create large units out of smaller units in parts of the Borough where there is a relatively low proportion of large dwellings (that is, the wards of Bloomsbury, Holborn and Covent Garden, King's Cross, Kilburn, Regent's Park and St. Pancras and Somers Town). The Council will resist the loss of residential units, including proposals to convert three or more flats into a single unit, elsewhere in the Borough.
- 2.37 Where development involves the demolition or other loss of housing, the Council will require replacement dwellings of a similar or greater number to be provided. The standard of the new dwellings should be same or better than those replaced.

H4 - Protecting affordable housing

The Council will resist proposals that lead to a net loss of affordable housing floorspace, and will expect the retention or replacement of existing affordable housing floorspace in proposals for redevelopment or re-use of residential institutions (within Use Class C2) for a different use. Where the affordable housing cannot practicably be replaced on the site, the Council may accept the provision of affordable housing off-site or, exceptionally, a payment in lieu. The Council will consider the form of any replacement affordable housing taking into account:

- a) a guideline of 70% as the proportion of affordable housing sought as social housing for rent;
- b) a guideline of 30% as the proportion of affordable housing sought as housing for essential workers and other intermediate occupiers;
- c) any demonstrable need for a different mix to allow replacement of existing social housing or intermediate housing; and
- d) any other planning objectives which it considers to be a priority in development of the site.

- 2.38 The redevelopment of sites that include affordable housing, including renewal of housing estates, could potentially worsen the critical shortage of affordable housing referred to in the supporting text to policy H2. The draft London Plan supports a strategic approach to estate renewal involving no net loss of existing affordable housing, but taking into account regeneration benefits and the amount of existing and proposed affordable housing in the area and the Borough as a whole. In the Borough, many healthcare institutions within Use Class C2, such as hospitals, make an important contribution to the stock of affordable housing, particularly nurses' homes and housing for other essential health workers. Where affordable housing is replaced (whether or not it is in Use Classes C2 or C3), the new accommodation should be better quality and provide at least as much floorspace. Replacement affordable housing may take the form of refurbishment of existing floorspace, provision elsewhere on site, or exceptionally, under the circumstances set out in the supporting text to policy H2, a contribution to the supply of affordable housing off-site.

- 2.39 As a guideline, the replacement affordable housing should be apportioned as 70% social rented accommodation and 30% intermediate housing affordable to those on moderate incomes, including essential workers, as set out in the definition of affordable housing accompanying policy H2. However, a loss of housing for essential workers would not be appropriate where there is a continuing intermediate housing need, and a loss of social housing would not be appropriate where there is a continuing demand for it in the locality and it can be replaced without harming regeneration prospects. Consequently, a different mix may be acceptable where the need for it can be demonstrated.
- 2.40 In considering the form of affordable housing appropriate for a particular site, and any case for off-site replacement, the Council will consider the full range of planning objectives for the site, and the benefits and costs involved, as set out in the supporting text to policy H2. However, the Council considers that all sites that currently provide affordable housing in the Borough are suitable for continued provision of affordable housing in terms of access to local services, facilities and public transport, and that housing managers have a responsibility to ensure that they remain suitable for continued provision in terms of the maintenance and condition of the property.

H5 - Conversion to short stay accommodation

The Council will not grant planning permission for the conversion of permanent residential accommodation into hotels or guesthouses, "time-share" flats, holiday accommodation or other short-stay accommodation intended for occupation for periods of less than 90 days.

- 2.41 The provision of short term and temporary forms of accommodation is needed in the Borough. These include accommodation for visitors, but also specialised provision, such as hostels for the homeless. However, housing and other permanent residential accommodation (generally within Use Classes C2 and C3) should not be lost to uses that are generally intended for stays of less than 90 days.

H6 - Protection of houses in multiple occupation

The Council will not grant planning permission for a change of use or conversion that would result in the loss of housing in multiple occupation of an acceptable standard, unless it is replaced by permanently available affordable housing.

- 2.42 Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) provide non-self contained units with shared facilities. They are a valuable source of accommodation in the Borough, meeting a need for low-cost housing, especially among young people, those on low incomes and single person households.
- 2.43 HMOs experience pressure for conversion into self-contained units, which are generally made available at higher rents or sold for owner-occupation. When lost, such accommodation is unlikely to be replaced. The falling number of HMOs has reduced the supply of low-cost housing and, therefore, reduced the choice available in the Borough to those on low incomes, who have few housing alternatives.
- 2.44 Therefore, the Council will generally seek to resist proposals which would result in the loss, without replacement, of a house in multiple occupation of an acceptable standard, i.e. which complies with, or is capable of reaching, the appropriate standards under environmental health legislation. The conversion or change of use of a HMO may be considered acceptable where it is for the benefit of existing residents or where the use is replaced by permanently available

affordable housing. The conversion of non-self-contained units to self-contained flats may be allowed if a planning obligation is secured that prevents the new units being sold separately or converted into larger units, sets a maximum rent level to maintain affordability, which should be no more than 30% of average net household income, and, where appropriate, maintains an agreed layout of the property.

Improving the accessibility of housing

- 2.45 There is a shortage of housing in Camden, and throughout the country, to meet the needs of those with mobility difficulties and other disabilities, who find much of the existing housing stock does not meet their needs. The Council wants to increase the amount of housing in Camden accessible to everyone, regardless of their ease of mobility.
- 2.46 The Council believes that new housing should allow less mobile residents, including the elderly and people with disabilities, to live as independently as possible. Accessible homes give them greater choice about where to live and mean people are less likely to need to move when they become less mobile. The less mobile can include the elderly, people with disabilities, people with injuries, and pregnant women. Improved accessibility in the housing stock can also help people with small children who need to use pushchairs or prams.
- 2.47 Accessible housing also increases opportunities for people with disabilities to visit other people's homes. Increasing the availability of accessible housing means more people with disabilities can live independently and will help give them a choice in the location and quality of their accommodation.

H7 - Lifetime homes and wheelchair housing

The Council will encourage all new housing developments, including changes of use and conversions, to be accessible to all. In larger schemes, the Council will only grant planning permission for developments where 10 percent of units are constructed, or are capable of being easily adapted, to lifetime homes standard. Where possible, housing that meets the needs of wheelchair users should also be provided.

The Council will grant planning permission for proposals designed to improve existing properties to make them suitable for people with disabilities.

- 2.48 The demand for accessible housing is increasing as a result of an ageing population and increasing recognition of the rights of people with disabilities. The Council will seek to increase the amount of housing that is accessible to all through policy H7. It applies to all housing schemes, whether new build, conversions or changes of use, and whether market, social or intermediate housing is provided.
- 2.49 Part M of the Building Regulations requires new build housing to be built to mobility standards. This includes features such as downstairs toilets, ramped or level access and wide doors, which allow people with mobility difficulties and other disabilities to visit and use new dwellings.
- 2.50 Part M does not require mobility standards to be met in conversions or changes to residential use. The Council will encourage developers carrying out conversions and changes of use to construct units to mobility standards where this is practicable.
- 2.51 Lifetime homes are more flexible and adaptable than those required under Part M. They are designed to be capable of meeting the different requirements created by changing life circumstances, such as having a family and old age. This lets people continue living in the same house for as much of their life as possible. The lifetime homes standard is defined in the

Joseph Rowntree Foundation publication “Meeting Part M and Designing Lifetime Homes” (1999). The Council will require larger schemes (generally those of 25 or more dwellings) to provide housing to a lifetime home standard in accordance with policy H7. When assessing whether a scheme is suitable to provide lifetime homes on site, the Council will consider how easily the site can be reached and the availability of local services and facilities.

- 2.52 The Camden Housing Needs Survey found that three percent of households in the Borough contain someone who uses a wheelchair. It is important for the independence and quality of life of wheelchair users that housing is provided that specifically meets their needs. Therefore, a proportion of new dwellings should be designed for wheelchair users. Ideally, 10 percent of units in large housing schemes should be wheelchair housing.
- 2.53 Such housing should be on one level and provide more space than a standard dwelling to allow a wheelchair to be manoeuvred. It should also have adjacent parking and a level entrance. When assessing whether a scheme is suitable to provide wheelchair housing on site, the Council will consider the ease of access by wheelchair to the site and local facilities and services.
- 2.54 Where listed buildings are being altered for the provision of access for people with disabilities, the Council will balance their needs with the interests of conservation and preservation (see policy B6 in section 3 - Built Environment).

Providing a range of housing

- 2.55 The Council wants the housing stock in the Borough to support balanced and sustainable residential communities. This requires a range of housing in terms of size and type to meet housing needs and to help maintain flexibility of movement within the housing stock.
- 2.56 Schemes for development, either new build or conversions, generally result in a change in the nature of the housing stock. It is important that a mix of unit sizes is provided so that those who require larger dwellings, as well as those in smaller households, can find suitable housing in the Borough.
- 2.57 A variety of housing is needed for people who may have particular difficulties in finding appropriate places to live. This includes hostels and accommodation for those who require an element of care. The policies in this section that seek to increase the amount of housing accessible to people with mobility difficulties also contribute to the aim of providing a range of housing types.

H8 - Mix of units

The Council will only grant planning permission for residential development that provides an appropriate mix of unit sizes, including large and small units. The Council will consider the mix and sizes of units best suited to site conditions and the locality, and the requirements of special needs housing.

- 2.58 Camden’s Housing Needs Survey 1999 identified a need for a range of size of dwellings. The Council wants to secure a range of housing in terms of size of units to meet this need. Policy H8 applies to new build housing schemes, the sub-division of residential properties and all changes of use to housing (in Use Class C3) from other uses. It aims to secure housing developments with both large and small units.
- 2.59 In assessing the appropriate mix for units within a housing scheme, the Council will consider the requirements of special needs housing, and the size and suitability of the property,

including whether it is listed or in a conservation area. It will take into account the view of its Housing Department, Camden's Housing Needs Study, any relevant supplementary guidance and site location and conditions.

- 2.60 Conversions make an important contribution towards meeting the need to increase the supply of new housing in the Borough and they should also contribute to the Council's aim of securing a range of dwelling sizes. Where possible, conversions should include at least one unit of three bedrooms or more, and a mix of smaller units.
- 2.61 Larger units of three or more bedrooms provide flexibility and can be used by a range of household sizes, including families. Where possible, large units suitable for families should be provided on the ground floor and should have access to gardens or public open space where children can play in safety. Where they are provided above the ground floor and do not have access to a garden, units should be within 400 metres of public open space; or with access to alternative external amenity space.
- 2.62 Schemes for conversion of residential properties will generally be required to retain units with three or more bedrooms, as these are suitable for families and other large households. The conversion of a large dwelling with four or more bedrooms will generally be considered acceptable where a three bedroom unit plus smaller units are provided. The conversion of a property to provide one bedroom flats will generally be considered acceptable provided this does not involve the net loss of units with 3 or more bedrooms.
- 2.63 All schemes for conversion (including the further sub-division of existing flats and maisonettes) should provide a good standard and quality of accommodation without causing any deterioration in amenity for any existing tenants and residents. It is important that adequate and secure arrangements can be made for access to each household space and for off-street refuse storage.
- 2.64 Further information on residential space standards can be found in Supplementary Planning Guidance.

H9 - Hostels

A - New hostels

The Council will grant planning permission for new hostel accommodation or for the expansion of existing hostel facilities provided there is no loss of residential floorspace within Use Class C3, or the displacement of a use in the Central London Area that supports the residential community.

B - Loss of hostels

The Council will not grant planning permission for proposals for the loss, without adequate replacement, of hostel accommodation.

New hostels

- 2.65 Hostels meet the need for short-term accommodation for people who are homeless or on low incomes and who do not have access to permanent housing. Increased provision of hostels can reduce pressure on the private rented sector, especially at the cheaper end of the market.
- 2.66 In order to be able to assess fully the land use implications of any change in requirements, the Council may consider imposing conditions when granting planning permission, or seek a planning obligation, to restrict the occupation of the hostel accommodation to a named organisation or institution. Examples of these include colleges where provision for students

needs to be located close to the educational establishment, housing associations, charities, and employers providing staff accommodation for those who need to reach their place of work at short notice or outside business hours.

- 2.67 The Council gives high priority to sustaining residential communities. Therefore, it seeks to prevent the loss of permanent residential accommodation and uses that support the residential community in Central London (such as service and community uses).

Loss of hostels

- 2.68 Hostels can make a valuable contribution towards meeting the housing requirements of people in the greatest need. The loss of such accommodation without replacement where there is an established need can lead to an increase in homelessness for people for whom alternative sources of accommodation are severely limited. Therefore, policy H9B seeks to protect hostels, unless alternative provision is made to an equivalent or greater amount. Replacement hostels should be appropriately located in relation to the needs of occupants (for example, in terms of access to workplaces or educational establishments). Where hostels in listed buildings are being upgraded, the Council may consider a small decrease in the numbers of units where this would prevent damage to the internal layout of the building.
- 2.69 Where such accommodation becomes genuinely surplus to requirements, the Council will seek the provision of an alternative form of housing, and affordable housing in particular.

H10 - Accommodation providing an element of care

The Council will grant planning permission for permanent residential accommodation within Use Class C2 provided that:

- a) the premises are suitable for the proposed use;
- b) services such as shops and public transport are available locally; and
- c) there would not be an over-concentration of such uses in the local area.

- 2.70 It is important that provision is made to meet the housing needs of people who require an element of care and support. Policy H10 relates to the provision of development providing permanent residential accommodation within class C2 of the Use Classes Order, which includes nursing homes and homes for elderly people. Policies relating to C2 uses that provide temporary accommodation, such as hospitals, are in covered in section 8 - Community, Leisure and Tourism Uses.
- 2.71 Where the proposal involves a change of use from a residential property in Use Class C3, the Council will need to be satisfied that the requirement for C2 accommodation within the area outweighs any harm which would be caused by the loss of the C3 use.

H11 - Gypsies and travellers

The Council will only grant planning permission for a site for accommodation for gypsies and travellers provided that:

- a) the development would not cause harm to residential amenity, the local environment or local transport conditions;
- b) suitable vehicular access can be provided;
- c) the site is located close to shops and community services; and
- d) basic on-site facilities are provided.

- 2.72 The Council recognises the needs of gypsies and travellers within the Borough, many of whom will have local connections and may have developed links with local schools, nurseries and other services.
- 2.73 Applications for new sites to accommodate gypsies and travellers will be considered against the criteria in policy H11 and the other policies in the Plan. The Council will seek to ensure that sites are equipped to provide satisfactory living conditions for travellers and that there is minimal disruption to the local community.