



**CAMDEN**

**FUTURE**

**HIGH STREETS**

**RE - IMAGINING  
HIGH STREETS**



# HIGH STREET PROSPECTUS

## THINKING BIG

## ACTING LOCALLY



# FUTURE OF CAMDEN'S HIGH STREETS

## WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

Camden's high streets play a crucial role in community life. They are the places where residents, workers and visitors shop, work, socialise, and access culture and services. They provide a range of jobs and employment opportunities and have an important role in supporting the health and well-being of our communities. However, Camden's high streets, along with those up and down the country, have been facing a range of challenges, trends and changing consumer habits which have been compounded by the extraordinary impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In response Camden Council has commenced the Camden Future High Streets programme to support our high streets through the pandemic and into a robust recovery and re-imagined future. High streets will have to change and reinvent themselves, but we see their crucial continued role as the focal point for community life. We want to support our high streets to be centres of creativity and innovation, providing goods, services and employment that retain value in our communities, and provide sustainable and accessible environments for the future.

In our Camden 2025 vision, developed through conversations with the community, we set out plans for the future of the borough where everyone contributes to achieving a safe, fair, creative and active community. 2025, Camden will be a place where everyone has a chance to succeed and where nobody gets left behind. Camden has a proud, rebellious spirit that throughout its history has seen communities come together to tackle problems, and to bring about real social change. We want to action this spirit now to support our high streets to recover from the pandemic and come back even stronger.

Camden has some of the most recognisable landmarks in the world. It is a place of activity, exchange and inspiration. We also know that Camden is more than that, it is also the diverse and active communities in our neighbourhoods that make Camden a great place to live, work and visit.

There are changing forces at play in our high streets. The shift away from traditional retail to online shopping has been accelerated by the pandemic. But this brings an opportunity to re-imagine the future role and experience of our high streets. In this moment we will embrace this change, creating places for the community to come together to meet, shop, socialise, and exchange ideas, and to create opportunities to learn and experience new things. We want to re-orientate and revitalise Camden's high streets so that they truly respond to the needs and lived experience of our communities as places that build social value, provide variety and add to community life.

High streets are an ecosystem and by creating more reasons to visit and spend time there, footfall will increase, businesses will do better and high streets will remain the dynamic heart of our neighbourhoods.

The Council cannot achieve this alone. This document is a call to action to businesses, residents, the voluntary sector, partners and government to join our mission to support high streets to recover and evolve into resilient centres for the future.



Cllr Adam Harrison  
Cabinet member for  
Improving Camdens  
Environment



Cllr Danny Beales  
Cabinet Member for  
Investing in Communities,  
Culture and an Inclusive  
Economy



Bloomsbury High street



Camden Town High Street

# OUR VISION

...is for Camden's high streets and town centres to be ready to face the **future**.

We want them to be at the **heart of their communities** with all residents able to reach their local centre by **walking or cycling in 15 minutes or less**.

The high streets and town centres of tomorrow will be **safe, family-friendly, environmentally responsible, diverse, accessible and vibrant places to shop, work, socialise, share knowledge and skills, network, learn, make, live and play**.

# OUR OBJECTIVES



## Community & Economy

High streets at the heart of community life and local economies: more jobs and training opportunities, increased innovation, entrepreneurialism and a greater role for local partnerships, collectives and community activity



## Diverse Uses

High streets with more diverse uses and less vacant space: increased leisure, workspace, community space, and culture; and appropriate activity day, evening and at night



## Sustainable & Accessible

High streets that are sustainable: better air quality, more greening, and accessible to everyone in the community within 15 minutes travel from their home

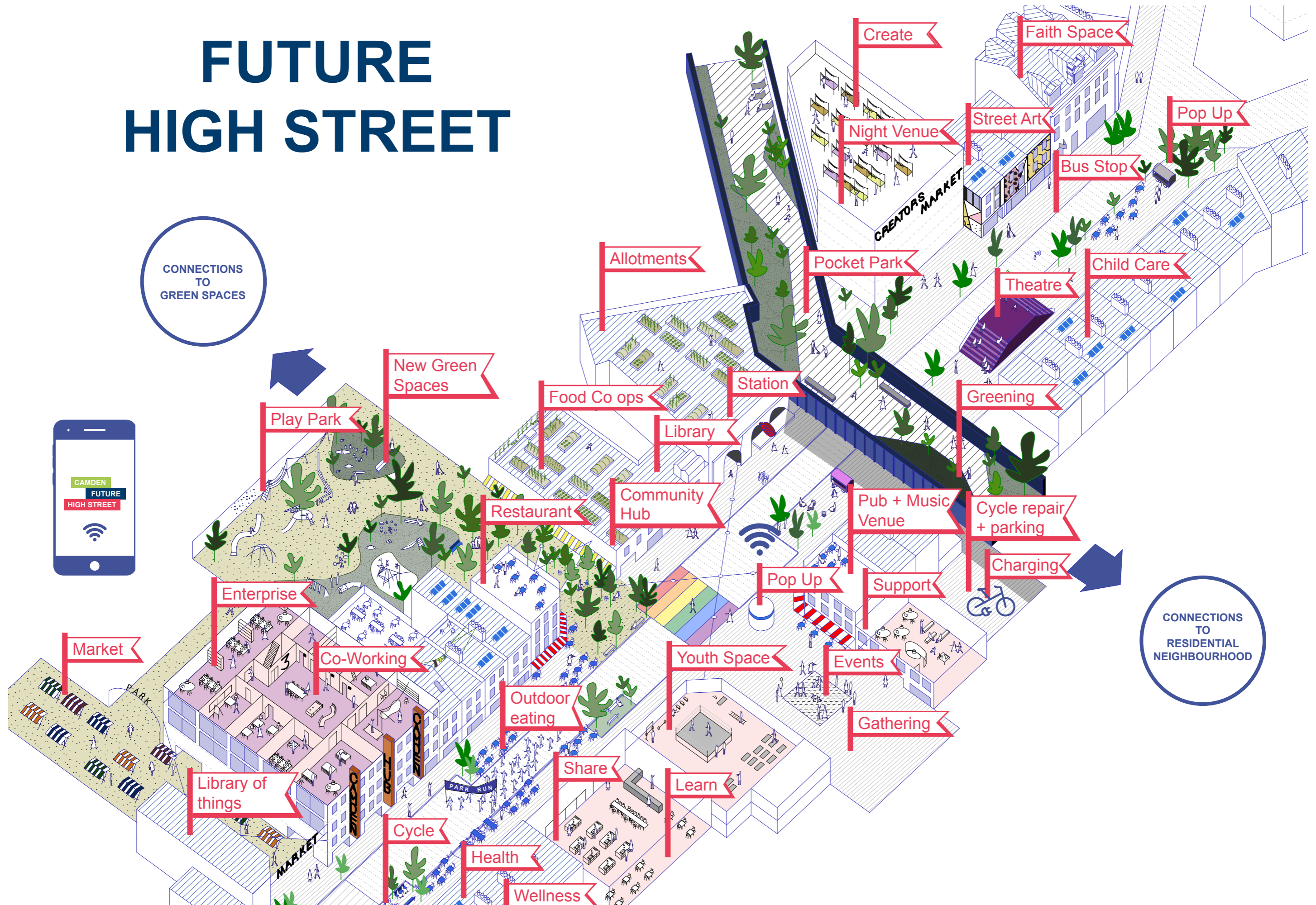
*(Photograph: Mark Kerrison/Alamy Stock Photo)*



## Inviting Public Realm

High streets that are inviting and enjoyable places to spend time: more space for people to meet, sit and socialise; more green, and less dominated by polluting vehicles

# FUTURE HIGH STREET



CONNECTIONS TO GREEN SPACES

CONNECTIONS TO RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBOURHOOD

# FUTURE HIGH STREET

## COMMUNITY & ECONOMY

- Local communities, businesses, and other partners have a say in shaping their high street
- Local businesses reflect local need, providing the goods and services required at a price residents can afford
- Strong connections and affinity between residents and local businesses, helping to support them to be resilient and to prosper
- As great places for innovative, sustainable businesses to locate themselves and to grow
- Championing equality of opportunity: providing jobs, training and opportunities for entrepreneurialism, particularly for younger people
- An increased role for innovative community partnerships, co-operatives, collectives

## INVITING PUBLIC REALM

- Creating new green space where possible, and improving those which already exist
- Creating more space: for pedestrians, to gather, dwell and for recreation, including informal places to sit and meet
- Reducing the space taken up by polluting vehicles and converting it to other community-minded uses
- Increasing space for outdoor eating, drinking, socialising and activation of the public realm
- An increased role for arts and culture on the high street: events, performance art and pop ups
- Design of the public realm which reflects the local community, its priority and identity, in keeping with and specific to each high street

## DIVERSE USES

- Diversifying from retail and supporting a wider range of uses and businesses in the high street that add to the vibrancy, draw and the social value they provide to their local community
- Creating destinations where people can come for experiences that can't be provided online.
- New and expanded opportunities for markets and street trading
- Greater emphasis on and support for Camden's important evening, night-time and cultural economy
- Tackling vacancy and working with landlords to bring spaces into active use
- Supporting more events and activation of the high street in suitable locations

## SUSTAINABLE & ACCESSIBLE

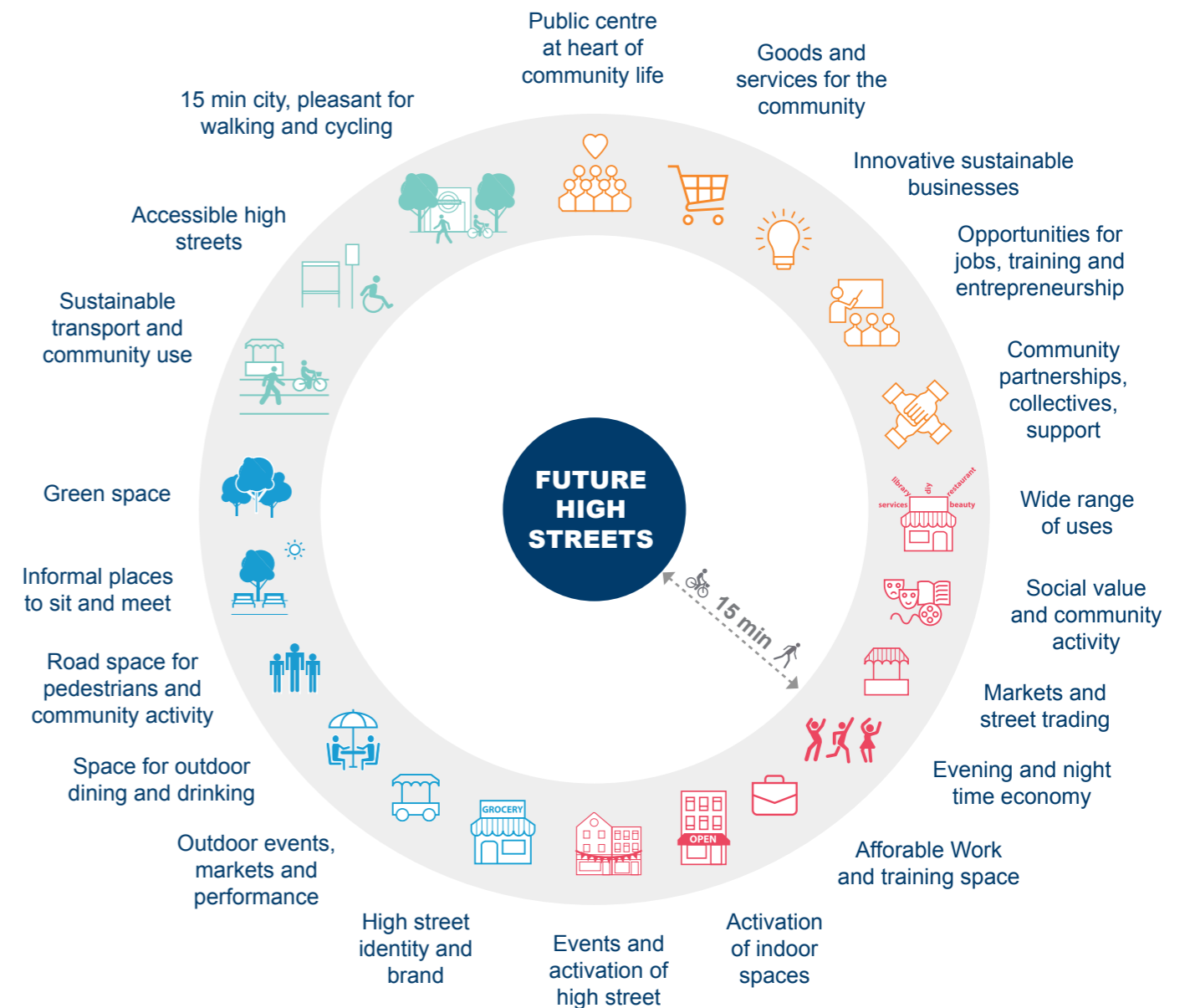
- Prioritising sustainable travel as the preferred mode of transport: supporting residents to access high streets by foot or bike within 15 minutes, with accessible options and public transport for those with other access needs
- Ensuring that our streets are accessible and that they meet the needs of people of all ages and abilities
- Reducing the impact of combustion engine vehicles by prioritising both active travel, but also the infrastructure for more sustainable modes of transport like electric vehicles and powered cargo bikes

## SUSTAINABLE & ACCESSIBLE

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## COMMUNITY & ECONOMY

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High streets with more diverse uses and less vacant space: increased leisure, workspace, community space, and culture; and appropriate activity day, evening and at night

# CAMDEN'S HIGH STREETS

## CAMDEN'S HIGH STREETS

The London Borough of Camden includes a great diversity of high streets, ranging from small local parades, to town centres and international visitor destinations. High streets are the public face of a neighbourhood and are what most people associate with a particular place. Each high street and town centre in Camden has its own particular function, character and identity. Here are just a few examples of the diversity of high streets in the borough.

## LOCAL SHOPS AND NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES

Smaller centres with a local catchment that serve the day to day needs of the community. Camden has approximately 38 of these across the borough.

*"As someone who lives on the high street without a garden, this small park has been a fantastic way to relax in the fresh air and enjoy the greenery close to home."*

## TOWN CENTRES

Larger centres, with a wider customer catchment and broader range of shops and services. Camden has 6 town centres- Camden Town, Kentish Town, West Hampstead, Hampstead, Finchley Road/ Swiss Cottage and Kilburn. Each of these centres has its own distinct identity. Camden Town, as well as serving the local community is also one of London's top visitor destinations.

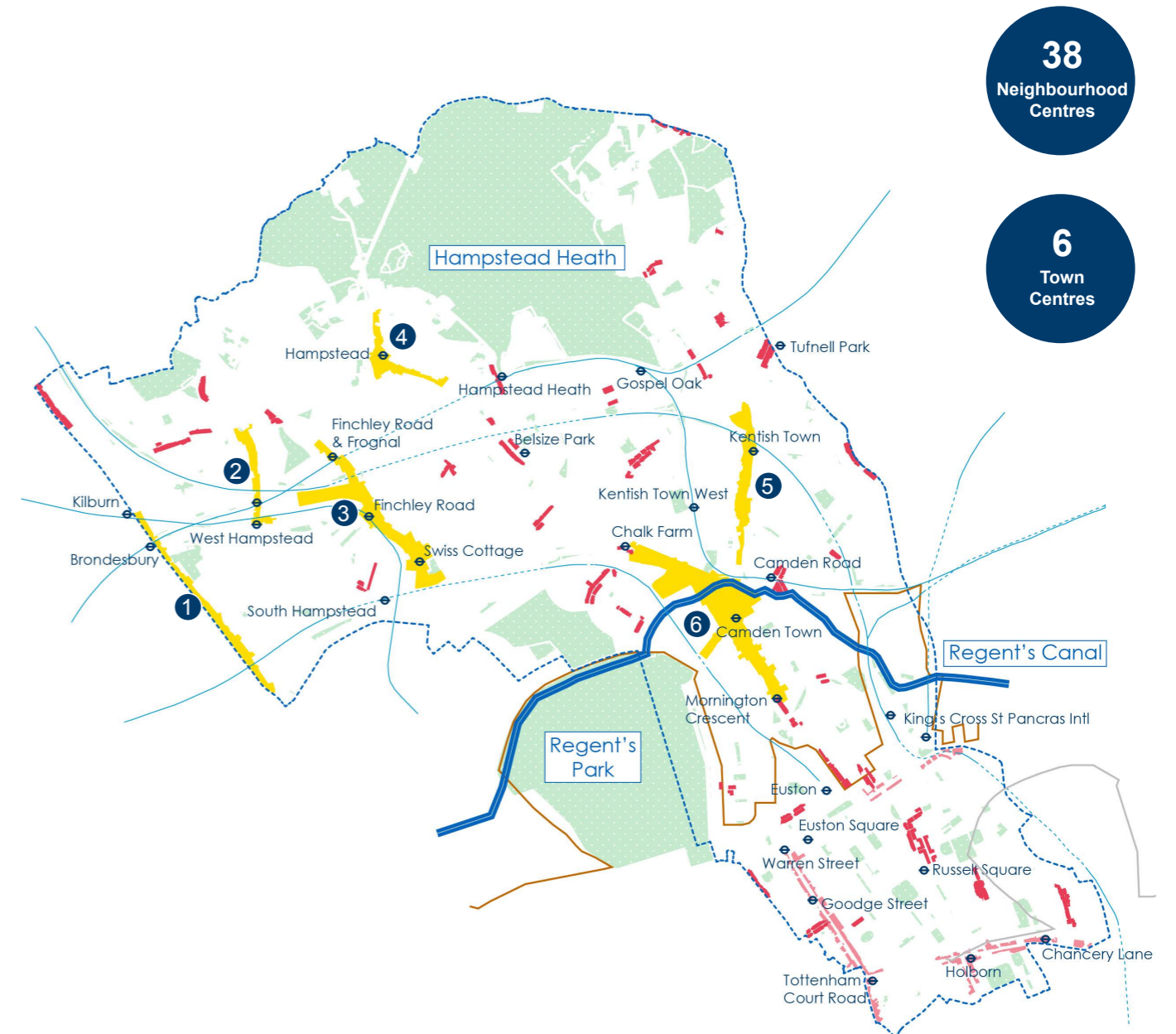
## CENTRAL LONDON AND SPECIALIST HIGH STREETS

The south of the borough is within London's 'Central Activities Zone'. Alongside neighbourhood centres, this area includes international/ national shopping, cultural and visitor destinations such as Covent Garden, Tottenham Court Road and Kings Cross Central. It also includes specialist shopping areas such as the jewellery quarter at Hatton Garden.



Seven Dials Covent Garden

## CAMDEN'S TOWN AND NEIGHBORHOOD CENTRES



**38**  
Neighbourhood Centres

**6**  
Town Centres

### CAMDEN HIGH STREETS

- Town centres
- Neighbourhood centres
- Central London frontages
- Green spaces
- Regent's Canal
- Central Activities Zone
- Railway

### TOWN CENTRES

- 1** Kilburn
- 2** West Hampstead
- 3** Finchley Road & Swiss Cottage
- 4** Hampstead
- 5** Kentish Town
- 6** Camden Town

# CAMDEN'S HIGH STREETS

## Local shops and Neighbourhood Centres



Local shops at the historic and leafy Hampstead Town Centre



People shopping and sitting at the Grade II listed modernist Brunswick Centre in Bloomsbury



Local market and shops serving the local community at Queen's Crescent in Gospel Oak



Specialist Bengali restaurants and food shops at Drummond Street (Photograph: Euston Town)



Shopping and walking along South End Green in the traditional Hampstead area



Local shops at Chalton Street, a high street in residential Somers Town

## Town Centres



Alternative culture, music and markets are a major visitor attraction at Camden Town



Activity at busy and multicultural Kilburn High Road



A wide variety of shops serve the local people and visitors at Kentish Town

## Central London and specialist high streets



A retailer in front of his hat shop in the specialist retail area of Covent Garden



Jewellery shops characterise the historic Hatton Garden (Photograph: Jane Stockdale for The New York Times)



Open air activities and shops in former industrial Coal Drop's Yard (Photograph: Coal Drop's Yard)

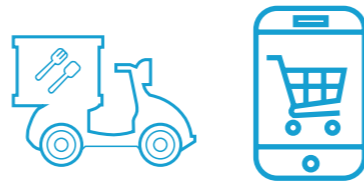


# WHAT'S HAPPENING IN CAMDEN'S HIGH STREETS

## TRENDS FACING CAMDEN'S HIGH STREETS

### Evolving consumer economy

Less spending in physical stores due to rise of online shopping and experience economy



### Higher business rates and rents are a challenge for businesses

Retail rates increased significantly in recent years, by 39% on average in Camden



### High levels of pollution and congestion

As important transport routes, many of Camden's high streets were above legal limits for air pollution (NO2) before the pandemic. Kilburn, Camden Town and Kentish Town are particularly affected by this.

They also often don't provide enough safe space for pedestrians and cyclists, or enjoyable public space for communities.

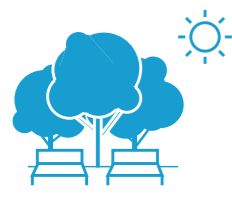


### Offer on some high streets does not reflect wider community needs

Diversity of the high street offer and opening hours do not always reflect changing consumer preferences or the needs of the local community



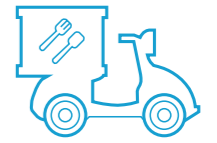
Introduction of Central Government measures to change high street premises into homes without planning permission from August 2021 a major threat to Camden's high streets



Lack of space for pedestrians and cyclist and enjoyable public spaces on high streets

## ADDITIONAL TRENDS CREATED BY THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC

The pandemic has created major changes in the way we live, some which may be temporary and some which are likely to have a lasting effect



rise of food delivery



**+22%** home working in Camden

### Increase in home working



decline in footfall in Central London



use of tube and train stations in the borough

Reduction in footfall in Central London since March 2020

More people staying local and increased importance of local centres and high streets



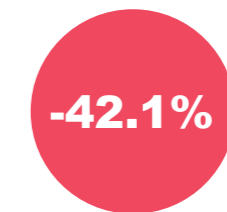
Holborn (CAZ)



Queen's Crescent

Spending on some of our neighbourhood high streets recovered better between lockdowns

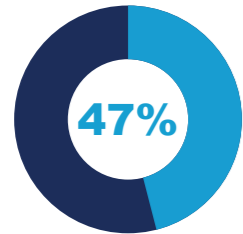
(stats showing spend on Camden high streets Aug-Oct against 2019)



Kentish Town (town centre)



Belsize Lane (neighbourhood centre)



of Camden businesses are 'not confident' of surviving the pandemic

There is a threat of further business closures as central government support such as business grants and the furlough scheme wind down

Increasing levels of vacant units in high streets, that are economically inactive and blight the high street



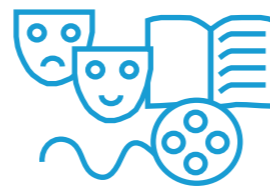
**+152%**

Increase in unemployment in Camden

Closures on high streets have put more people out of work, with black and asian residents and young people worst affected

Pre-pandemic, Camden had the 2nd largest night time economy in London, and a visitor economy worth £2.4bn a

year, but this sector has been hard hit by the pandemic with the impact of repeated lockdowns and tough restrictions



The pandemic has highlighted the importance of access to quality open space

The pandemic has forced us to think and act local, including finding more space in our high streets to allow for social distancing. We can re-think how this space is used in the future.



Traffic restricted on more than 15 streets



11 new or improved cycle lanes

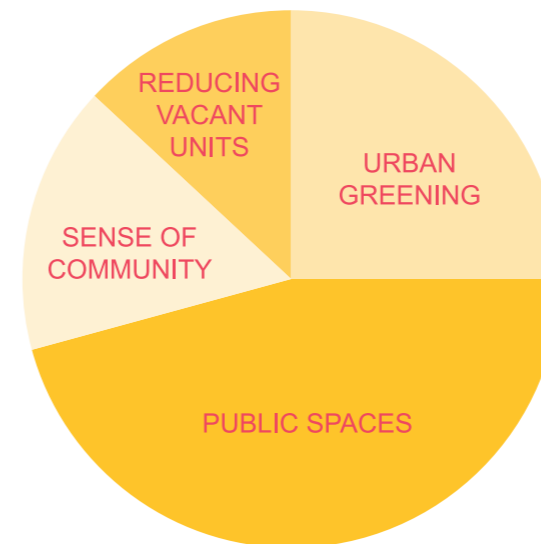
## WHAT THE COMMUNITY TOLD US

The Council launched a consultation in July 2020 through Commonplace to gather residents' and businesses' feedback and ideas for their high streets. In total, the Commonplace had 853 visitors with over 320 contributions. This feedback, combined with discussions with other stakeholders, helped shape the vision for our high streets and establish our objectives and places to focus on.

A selection of the key messages from the consultation are illustrated below.

"People will want to stay more local. So the high street should cater more for local residents and help building community."

What do you think needs to be improved the most?



What do you like the least?



"Pedestrian dwell time will be even more important than ever, so somewhere to sit and relax will be essential."

How will the high streets change?



# SUPPORTING THE RECOVERY AND RE-IMAGINING OF OUR HIGH STREETS

In 2020 we commenced the Camden Future High Streets programme to support our high streets through the pandemic and into a robust recovery and re-imagined future. We want to attract people back to their high streets, and to work together with businesses, residents and our partners to explore how our centres could be used in new ways and tackle the challenges we face.

We've had to work differently and be able to adapt quickly to respond to the unprecedented impacts of the COVID pandemic. We have been taking a "test and learn approach" to test interventions in our high streets now that can support businesses and high streets through the pandemic but that also pave the way towards the future vision for our high streets and a vibrant resilient future. This means being prepared to try new activities and interventions to see what works for businesses, community and each place and review and adapt as we go.

In the following pages is a summary of some examples of the exciting projects that are already underway.



Whitefield Gardens public realm



Belsize Village streetery

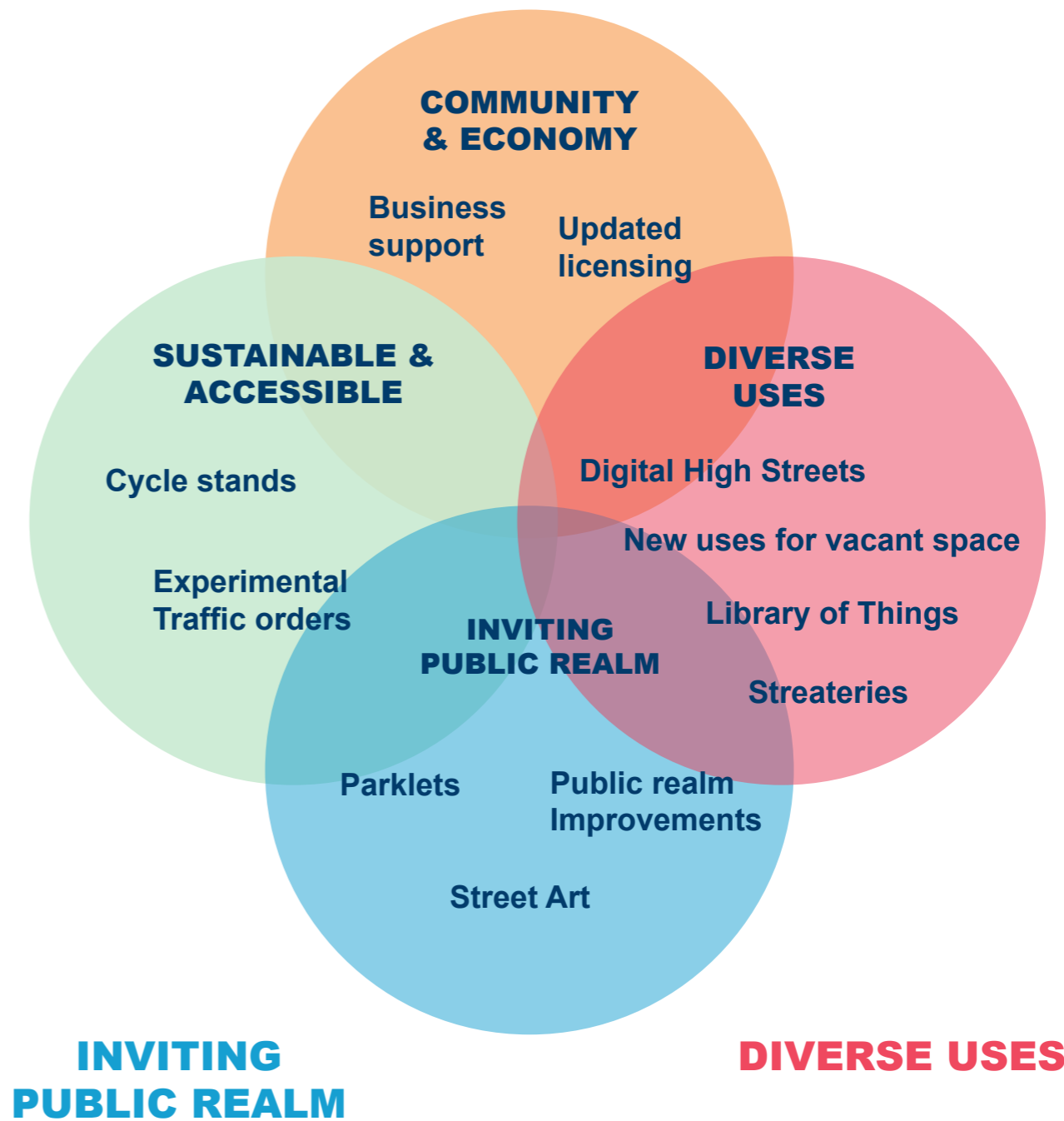


Queen's Crescent public realm

# PROJECTS

**SUSTAINABLE & ACCESSIBLE**

**COMMUNITY & ECONOMY**



# SUPPORTING THE RECOVERY AND RE-IMAGINING OF OUR HIGH STREETS



## BUSINESS SUPPORT

The pandemic has placed an unprecedented strain on our high streets. As well as distributing over £100m in government grants, we have also led on activities to help businesses continue to trade safely by widening pavements, licensing outdoor dining, and providing face to face and online advice and guidance. For businesses negatively impacted by COVID, and for people who have lost their jobs, we have arranged a wide package of business and employability support, including courses through the Pop Up Business School, 1-2-1 support and job creation, including more than 150 paid Kick starter placements.

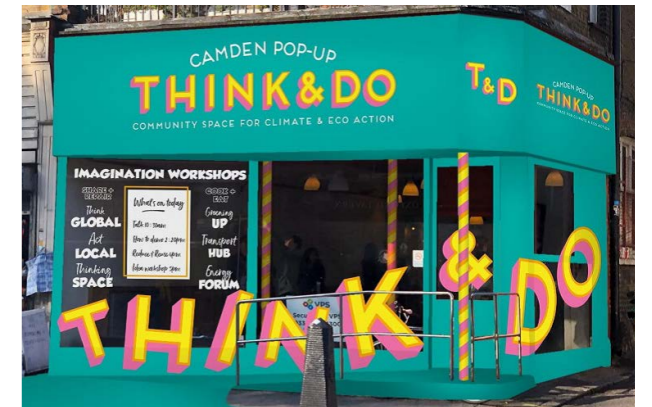


## LOVE YOUR CAMDEN HIGH STREET

We've launched a communications campaign to promote Camden's high streets, tell the stories of businesses on our high streets and to encourage footfall and residents to discover new things.

## DIGITAL HIGH STREETS

During the pandemic, the council has partnered with My Virtual Neighbourhood to support high street businesses to have an online presence as well as on the physical high street. Businesses were able to upload details of their offer and the website sign posted residents to businesses that were operating in their local area, including those offering click and collect.



We are working to create spaces on our High Streets that give residents, community organisations and business the opportunity to come together to bring new ideas to life within their local neighbourhoods. The Think & Do project was a pop-up community space set-up in 2020 to give people in Camden the chance to come together to develop ideas for climate and eco action, following Camden's Citizen's Assembly on the Climate Crisis in 2019. Number 19 Highgate Road is currently providing physical space that is shaped by the community and brings stakeholders from across the local area together to create projects, activities and initiatives that benefit the local area.



## NEW USES FOR VACANT SPACE

Vacant high street units offer nothing to the community or economy and blight the high street, making it look run down. We are looking at how to tackle increasing vacancy in Camden's high streets through temporary uses (sometimes called meanwhile uses) and attracting new permanent occupiers to the high street. We are particularly interested in uses that add vibrancy and diversity to our high streets and provide services, activities or products that benefits the local community (increases social value) or that support local groups, residents and partnerships. Unlocking access to private premises is a key challenge. We're exploring how we can work with landlords bids and other partners, including the Public Collaboration Lab at Central St. Martins, to tackle vacancy.

## LIBRARY OF THINGS

The future high street will be a place of sustainability, shared experiences, community collaboration. Supporting recycling and reuse to avoid unnecessary landfill is an important part of achieving our climate change commitments. As part of this, we are excited to be launching Camden's first Library of Things in Kentish Town, a borrowing library for your everyday household needs - helping to save money and the environment at the same time. (Photograph: Library of Things)



# SUPPORTING THE RECOVERY AND RE-IMAGINING OF OUR HIGH STREETS

Inviting environments that make high streets enjoyable places to spend time

## PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS

The West End Project is Camden Council's £35 million scheme delivering exciting improvements to the heart of Camden's busy West End. Now complete, major changes include Tottenham Court Road and Gower Street/Bloomsbury Street traffic changes reducing congestion and air pollution and speeding up bus routes. There are safer provisions for cyclists as well as new and regenerated public and green spaces.

The project provides safer, greener and more attractive streets for residents and



visitors helping to attract, sustain and boost local businesses. This includes wider pavements with new high quality materials, the removal of street clutter and new pedestrian crossings

In Queen's Crescent and Drummond Street, together with partners, we have secured funding for permanent high street improvements that support community and business life, and create healthier and greener streets. We have recently consulted on proposals in Queen's Crescent for the trial of a traffic-free zone on the street, which would create new public space, test how it could be used, and inform proposals for transformational enhancements to the street.



## ART IN THE HIGH STREET

Public art can make a real difference in how our high streets look and feel, provide a canvas for community expression and can bring people together. We are working on a number of interventions including community groups and Tactical Urbanistas, an all-female guerilla collective who use artistic interventions on the high street to

change attitudes towards public space. The first test project at Kentish Town is now complete. Also, working alongside local arts charity, the Sir Hubert von Herkomer Arts Foundation, funding was provided for a project to bring young people together in Gospel Oak and Haverstock by enabling them to colour the high street with a series of bespoke art works designed by them on the front shutters of shops and businesses along Queens Crescent and Lismore Circus.



## SPACE FOR OUTDOOR EATING AND SOCIALISING

The COVID-19 pandemic created the need for social distancing, reducing the number of customers a high street business could serve and creating additional demand for outside space. Hospitality businesses have been hit particularly hard by restrictions. To help support businesses to open and bounce back, we have implemented a streamlined street licensing process, enabling businesses to get access to outside space more quickly and easily.

We've also reclaimed road space to create a number of "streateries", spaces for outdoor eating and drinking, that support the recovery of local businesses, create destinations for residents and visitors to enjoy and add to the street life and vibrancy of our high streets. We're looking at adding

new streatory locations and improving existing spaces over the coming months and will be seeking feedback from customers, residents and businesses. These measures are temporary at the moment, but if they go well we would like to see greater use of outside space in our high streets in this way.

In total, 7 streateries have opened in April 2021 and 6 more are under consultation with more applications coming in.

High streets that are sustainable and accessible to everyone in the community

## SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL & AIR QUALITY

During the pandemic, we widened foot ways and created extra space for pedestrians and social distancing. We have also traffic orders on more than 15 streets, created pop up cycle lanes and installed over 40 new cycle hangers to make it easier and safer to walk and cycle. As people begin to move around more freely, we will build on the improvements we have made already and deliver more cycle routes, cycle parking and low traffic neighbourhoods.



# THERE'S MORE TO DO

We've only just started and there are many more ideas and interventions we'd like to explore. Here are some inspiring examples from our partners and elsewhere.

You can find more examples in the GLA High streets for all challenge possibilities playbook. <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/regeneration/funding-opportunities/high-streets-all-challenge>



## CO-PRODUCED STREET MARKET + COMMUNITY SPACE

London Borough of Southwark

Photograph: Jakob Priestersbach



## ACTIVATION OF THE HIGH STREET (Left) through improved public realm and spaces for play and events

London Borough of Walthamstow  
Photograph: East architects

## AFFORDABLE WORK SPACE (Right)

## CAMDEN COLLECTIVE

London Borough of Camden

Photograph: Camden Collective



## DIVERSITY OF USES, RE-USING BUILDINGS FOR INNOVATIVE SME ENTERPRISE,

Bussey Building  
London Borough of Southwark

Photograph: Tim Crocker via Turner Works



## COMMUNITY KITCHEN

London Borough of Hackney

Photograph: Surman Weston



## CAMDEN CULTURAL SEASON,

Camden is planning a cultural season to contribute to cultural social & economic recovery  
Photograph: J. Ligerio Loarte via Wikimedia



## PLAY AND GREENING FOR ALL AGES,

car-free streets and multi-generational design, Murrain Road  
London Borough of Hackney

Photograph: John Sturrock



## COMMUNITY EVENTS the Narrow way

London Borough of Hackney

Photograph: Studio Weave + Light Follows Behaviour



## PARKLETS Fitzrovia

Green space & seating in car parking bays  
London Borough of Camden

Photograph: Fitzrovia Partnership

# PARTICIPATION & COLLABORATION

## WORKING TOGETHER

To secure the future of our high streets, we want to tackle long standing challenges and create more resilient, equitable and sustainable centres. In Camden, we have a history of working and achieving together. The High Street programme can't achieve the vision on it's own and we want to empower our residents, businesses and partners to work together and take action. Through our Future High Streets Programme we aim to act as a facilitator and convener, bringing together the different groups with roles to play in town centres, and develop shared solutions.

## PARTNERS + CONTRIBUTORS

### RESIDENTS

Residents

Support their local high street with their custom and get engaged and involved in high street projects

### COMMUNITY

Community groups  
Neighbourhood forums + High Street Groups

Active involvement in supporting and delivering change

### HIGH STREET BUSINESSES

High Street Business Owners

Collaborate on new activities to develop our high street offer, offering employment and to be an active participant contributing to the high street conversation

### BIDS

Business Improvement districts BIDS

Engage businesses, curate the high street and direct delivery

### LANDLORDS

High Street Landlords

Take an active role in high streets, and engage in positive uses for vacant shops

### VISITORS

Visitors

Discover Camden's offer and how to visit by walking, cycling and public transport & supporting leisure economy

### INSTITUTIONS

Cultural, educational, Arts, research, charities

Engagement and participation with local neighbourhoods and authority

### NATIONAL / REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

Central Government  
Greater London Authority  
GLA

Set legislation and policy that supports high street to thrive, provide funding

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Camden Council

Set local policy act as enabler, facilitator, convener, custodian of place and direct delivery



Camden Collective offering affordable workspace  
(Photograph: Camden Collective)



Collaboration with the British Library. Story Garden located at the back of the British Library  
(Photograph: Global Generation)



Collaboration with businesses. Streeteries in Central London



Market stalls on Chalton Street design through partnership between Central Saint Martins and Somers Town Community Association



Market vendors



Buck Street Market

# WHAT'S NEXT

## A CALL TO ACTION

We're going to continue to support and champion Camden's High Streets to deliver the vision for the future.

Through working with Camden's communities and activating our incredible partnerships we can make a difference. This is our call to our networks and community to get on board with the vision for the future of our high streets and to each play our part in making it happen.

This work happens within the context of reduced resources within the economy, constrained council budgets and of our partners following the pandemic.

This means we'll have to be creative, make every penny count and combine our efforts. We will seek to use what resources we do have such as the 'Community Infrastructure Levy' (funds raised from developments) to support projects in our high streets. We will also seek to draw in match funding from central government and other sources where possible for projects that meet our objectives for the future and contribute towards the vision.

We are encouraging stakeholders such as businesses, community groups, business improvement districts and landlords to take action and work in collaborative partnerships with each other and the Council.

We'll continue to "test and learn" in our high streets and we want to hear from residents about what works and what doesn't and what else we can make happen.

Together we can think big and act locally and create the vibrant, sustainable high streets of the future.

Keep up to date by visiting our website and having your say on our active engagements.

<https://camdenfuturehighstreets.commonplace.is/>

Keep up to date with your highstreet at#

<https://www.myvirtualneighbourhood.com/camden>

You can spread the word and support your local high street or local business on social media by sharing it using the hashtag #loveyourcamden.







## High Street Prospectus

Produced by:  
**Regeneration & Place,  
London Borough of Camden**

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