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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

• MUCH OF THE SCOPE FOR TALL BUILDINGS HAS ALREADY BEEN UTILISED WITH A NUMBER OF MAJOR APPLICATIONS ALREADY APPROVED OR UNDER CONSTRUCTION.

• THE FOCUS FOR TALL BUILDINGS SHOULD BE RESTRICTED TO KEY NODES AND AROUND THE PEDESTRIAN SPINE BETWEEN WEMBLEY HIGH ROAD AND WEMBLEY PARK STATION DUE TO ITS ACCESSIBILITY, TOPOGRAPHY AND THE LOCATION OF EXISTING AND CONSENTED TALL BUILDINGS.

• AREAS DESIGNATED AS ‘APPROPRIATE’ WILL STILL BE REQUIRED TO DEMONSTRATE HOW THEY DO NOT NEGATIVELY IMPACT ON KEY VIEWS OF THE STADIUM.

• AREAS DESIGNATED AS ‘SENSITIVE’ MAY HAVE SOME SCOPE FOR A TALL BUILDING, BUT DUE TO ADJACENT PROPERTIES, SITE ASSEMBLY OR LOCATION OF THE SITE (ORIENTATION ETC.) WILL REQUIRE FURTHER WORK TO ESTABLISH AN APPROPRIATE FORM OF DEVELOPMENT.

• PROTECTION OF VIEWS OF THE STADIUM SHOULD FOCUS ON LOCAL VIEWS AND THE ROLE OF THE STADIUM IN ENHANCING LOCAL IDENTITY.
INTRODUCTION
**INTRODUCTION**

**BACKGROUND & CONTEXT**

**Brent’s Local Development Framework**

Brent’s adopted Core Strategy identifies Wembley as the borough’s core Growth Area, delivering the majority of the borough’s development and employment growth, including retail, office, hotels, visitor attractions and an estimated 11,500 new homes between 2007 and 2026. In order to accommodate such an increase, Core Strategy policy CP6 identifies Wembley as an acceptable location for tall buildings.

In order to build on the principles set out in the Core Strategy the council is undertaking the production of the Wembley Area Action Plan (AAP). As part of the Issues & Options stage consultation, the production of a tall buildings strategy was identified as necessary in order to provide a robust evidence base to support proposals set out within the Urban Design & Placemaking chapter.

**Brent’s Unitary Development Plan (2004)**

The Wembley AAP will supersede the Wembley Regeneration Area chapter of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP). Policy WEM19 of the UDP sought to protect a range of short, long and middle distance views of the National Stadium. These established views were based on the original Wembley Stadium and are due for reassessment as a critical element of the production of the Wembley AAP.

A number of SPD’s have been produced in recent years that provide guidance on appropriate building heights in different locations throughout Wembley, these include:

- Wembley Link SPD (July 2011)
- Wembley Masterplan SPD (June 2009)
- Wembley West End SPD (November 2006)

The production of the Wembley Area Action Plan provides an opportunity to consolidate this guidance and create a coordinated strategy for tall buildings across the Wembley area.

The scope of this document is to provide a strategy for the location of tall buildings across the AAP area. Based on a comprehensive analysis of the area, the Strategy will provide the local authority with the locations considered to be acceptable, unacceptable and sensitive for the development of tall buildings.

Given the plethora of guidance available for the physical design of tall buildings, this document will not attempt to set site specific parameters or be overly prescriptive about the form of development on individual sites.
INTRODUCTION

STUDY AREA

01

TALL BUILDINGS IN WEMBLEY 9
There are widely varying opinions about what is considered to be a tall building. Fundamentally, a buildings height will be considered relative to its context. For example a 15 storey building in Manhattan is unlikely to be considered to be tall, whereas the same building in suburban Brent will raise significantly more issues.

It is important to define what is considered to be a tall building for the purposes of this study. The London Borough of Brent currently defines tall buildings within the Unitary Development Plan as ‘more than 25m high (82 feet or 9 storeys) or of any height which significantly exceeds that of the surrounding development’.

In order to provide some context, an analysis of other London borough’s definitions was conducted:

LB Barnet UDP (2006)
‘buildings which are 30 metres or more in height, or buildings which significantly exceed the height of surrounding development’.

‘buildings or structures which exceed 20m (65ft) in height or which are significantly higher than their surroundings’.

LB Hackney Tall Buildings Strategy (2005)
“Buildings or structures that are significantly taller than surrounding development”.

The London Plan defines tall buildings as ‘those that are substantially taller than their surroundings, cause a significant change to the skyline or are larger than the threshold sizes set for the referral of planning applications to the Mayor’ (30m—stated in Mayor of London Order, 2008).

Given the diversity of buildings within the Wembley AAP area, it is not viewed as appropriate to provide a blanket height above which buildings will be regarded as tall. Buildings on the suburban fringes of the area are likely to have a greater impact than those in the comprehensive development area around the Stadium.

Given the Wembley context and the common thread that runs through the majority of definitions in regional policy documentation, the definition of ‘Tall Buildings’ for the purpose of this study will be as follows:

“Buildings or structures that are more than 30m in height or significantly taller than surrounding development”.

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS A TALL BUILDING IN WEMBLEY?
The overarching methodology for this document broadly follows the approach outlined in the CABE and English Heritage Guidance on Tall Buildings (2007)

Using these themes as a starting point, a ‘sieve’ or ‘layered’ approach to urban analysis was undertaken. This approach has been used on a number of studies across the country and is broadly recognised as providing a robust evidence base for the appropriate location of tall buildings.

The process involves plotting the appropriateness for tall buildings against each theme on a separate map ‘layer’ then combining all of the layers together to identify those areas that have the highest potential for tall development as well as accurately plotting those that should be seen as areas of exclusion.

The key themes or ‘layers’ were identified through an initial analysis of the area and from a number of precedent studies. The layers have not been prioritised or given a quantitative value in the development of the Strategy for Tall Buildings. However, the layers have been generally ranked in order of relative importance.
EXISTING TALL BUILDINGS
The key drivers for the increasing presence of tall buildings across London are the scarcity of developable land, coupled with a buoyant housing market in the 1990’s and early 21st Century. This was supported by a permissive local, regional and national policy context which sought to intensify development as a means of revitalising cities as part of an 'Urban Renaissance'.

The first layer in the analysis will outline the areas in which tall buildings already exist in order to understand where the conditions exist to support such development.
Although the wider context of Wembley is predominantly a suburban residential location, much of the AAP area has historically been developed with larger footprint buildings with a greater variety of uses and some areas where tall buildings have been allowed.

As well as the tall buildings that have been in existence for a number of years, there are some recently completed buildings and three significant tall buildings currently under construction.

Given the general heights of recently completed development at that which is currently under construction it is clear that there is a shift in the scale of development from a relatively suburban and low level industrial format to something more akin to a metropolitan urban centre.
02
EXISTING TALL BUILDINGS

AYER 1
It is clear that the current pattern of development for tall buildings in Wembley is principally based on the corridor from Wembley Central Station to Wembley Park Station.

The relatively recent completion and current construction of a number of tall buildings would suggest that the correct conditions exist in order to make such buildings a viable proposition.

The economic conditions may be an important factor in determining the height range within this area as there have been a number of applications for significantly taller buildings (approximately 28 storeys) at Copland School and Chesterfield House which have failed to materialise on the ground. Although there may have been a number of other causes (such as the lack of an office market) for the lack of development.

The policy framework for protection of Strategic Industrial Locations to the east of the Stadium appears to have prohibited the development of tall buildings in this area. The demand for tall buildings is principally based on commercial (office) and residential uses—restricting development to industrial use has removed any demand in these areas.

Given that the western corridor of the AAP Area is already characterised by tall buildings, there is an opportunity to focus on this location for further tall building.

This clustering of development has the potential to create a stronger skyline, and the co-location of buildings could help to consolidate services and relieve pressure on other, more visually sensitive areas.
18 tall buildings in Wembley
In 2009 Brent Council adopted a masterplan for 69Ha of land to the north and east of the Stadium with a range of core objectives:

- The creation of 10,000 extra full time jobs (not only in the retail and hospitality sectors);
- Training for local people to compete for locally created jobs;
- To play a leading role in the provision of sustainable homes and businesses that enable progress towards a low-carbon future;
- To enable Wembley Stadium, Wembley Arena and other existing businesses to coexist harmoniously with current and future neighbours;
- New large scale visitor attractions, hotels and conferencing will be encouraged;
- A new shopping street that develops and complements the existing High Road offer;
- New parks, open spaces and squares will provide vital amenity for all;
- Exciting new development that will meet community, cultural and sporting needs;
- Providing affordable and creative spaces for creative people;
- A pedestrian focussed network of living streets that give priority to sustainable modes of travel;
- To create high quality, affordable homes.
The Wembley Masterplan set out a number of key principles in relation to building heights and the spatial arrangement of development to the north and east of the Stadium. They can be broadly summarised as follows:

• The protection of views of the Stadium on the processional route from Wembley Park Station down Olympic Way by restricting building heights to 70m AOD.

• A Design Code for the massing of development flanking Olympic Way.

• Building heights must reflect the suburban scale and context at the western side of the area (Empire Way).

• A limit of 20 storeys.

• Majority of development to range from 4-10 storeys.

• In all applications for tall buildings the council will require a full three dimensional analysis of the impact of the building on its site and neighbours.

• A sunlight and daylight assessment will be required to ensure that the location and height of tall building will not create adverse effects on existing and future residents.
A key strand of this document is focused on creating a fresh approach to building heights within Wembley Town Centre. There are two major extant planning permissions in the Wembley Link area, for a 17 storey office development at Chesterfield House and for a 28 storey mixed use development at Copland School. Neither of these developments has materialised on the ground and, during this period, development has been completed at Central Square and Elm Road.

With a greater understanding of the economics and urban design impacts of taller development, the council has looked at the issue of building heights afresh and proposed a departure from the Copland 28 storey approval and the large office block consent on Chesterfield House.

These proposals for very high buildings do not sit comfortably within the suburban context of the area and schemes with permission for such high buildings appear even less likely to be built. The Central Square, Elm Road and Elizabeth House developments show a new mid range height that appears both developable and comfortable in the context of the High Road and the surrounding housing.

A key consideration of this SPD is the identification of taller buildings at either end of the Wembley Link as part of a co-ordinated strategy for Wembley.

Any new building on the sites identified for taller development (Chesterfield House, the Triangle) should reflect the heights of Wembley Central Square and Elm Road rather than significantly depart from them.

The prominence and height of the new Central Square development should be greater than the buildings within the Wembley Link area to reflect its location next to Wembley Central Station and square.
The fundamental aim of this document was to stimulate the regeneration of the west end of Wembley Town Centre through the comprehensive redevelopment of a large and complicated site covering a number of different ownerships.

The document recommended a height of 4 storeys plus an additional 2 storeys stepped back for development fronting the High Road with potential to develop up to 9 storeys at the junction of Ealing Road and High Road, assuming a reasonable set back from pavement edge.

Given the scale of the adjacent Lodge Court, it was viewed as acceptable to develop to a similar scale as Lodge Court towards this section of the site although any higher element should be subservient to Lodge Court and proposals must demonstrate how they function at ground level and show how they maintain a human scale appropriate for the comfort and wellbeing of users.

Due to the highly complicated nature of this site, development has not been forthcoming and given the experience of new development since the production of this SPD, the Wembley AAP represents an opportunity to review the proposals set out in this document.
In 2004 the London Borough of Brent granted outline planning permission to Quintain Estates and Development plc for a major mixed-use regeneration scheme covering 42 acres of land surrounding the new Wembley Stadium.

The permission represents a significant change in building typology from the adjacent suburban residential development and the commercial premises to the east. The general pattern of development approved in this location is broadly based on 8-10 storey perimeter blocks, with two primary locations for taller development—at the southern end of the Boulevard (W10: 127m AOD, 24-26 storey equivalent* and W11: 109m AOD, 20-21 storey equivalent*) and either side of Olympic Way at the gateway to the stadium (W03 & E01: 85m AOD, 16 storey equivalent*).

Much of the approved scheme within Stage 1 is still to be delivered, including some of the planning obligations attached to the phased delivery of the development.
The proposed Stage 2 development represents a different approach to building heights to that taken in the Stage 1 development. Whereas the Stage 1 proposals represent broadly consistent heights of 6-10 storeys across the site with two locations for taller development at key nodes, the Stage 2 scheme has a much wider range of building heights with a significant increase in the amount of ‘tall’ buildings in the context of the Stage 1 proposals.

The buildings fronting Olympic Way range from 14 to 17 storeys, consistent with the taller Stage 1 buildings at W03 and E01 as discussed in the previous section.

There are 3 ‘accent’ buildings in the area that range from 15-20 storeys in height. Although they appear to broadly mark gateways into the site itself, the rationale for the siting of tall buildings in such locations is less clear than in the Stage 1 area.

The approval of the Stage 2 proposals represents a significant departure from the adopted Wembley Masterplan SPD which sought to focus tall buildings in a limited number of locations. The approved building heights are also significantly higher than those within the SPD, for example the SPD proposed buildings of 7-10 storeys fronting Olympic Way, whereas building heights of up to 17 storeys have been approved.

The approval of the Stage 2 masterplan necessitates a re-evaluation of the approach to building heights within the Wembley area.
PLANNED REGENERATION

LAYER 2
The amount of guidance and planning documents produced for Wembley over recent years has been significant. There have been a number of master-plans and supplementary planning documents that provide relatively detailed guidance on building scale, form and appropriate heights.

Whilst the principles set out within these documents are clear and considered, they tend to address specific sites rather than working within an overarching framework.

Much of the recently approved development within the AAP area would be classified as tall buildings. The location of the majority of these tall buildings broadly follow the same pattern as the existing tall buildings— the corridor from Wembley High Road to Wembley Park Station.

Given the scale and quantum of approved development and the protection of Strategic Industrial Locations to the east, there is not a significant amount of scope for further tall buildings.

The character of Olympic Way as a wide formal processional route necessitates a strong and balanced building form.

The Council should require future developments on Olympic Way to reflect the heights of new or proposed buildings on the opposite side of the street.
tall buildings in wembley
The Stadium is undoubtedly the most significant building in Wembley. It simultaneously creates a strong and distinct identity for the area, whilst also being somewhat alien to its suburban residential context in terms of scale and function. Views of the Stadium contribute a significant amount to the perception of Wembley as a whole, performing a range of functions that add a layer of depth to the visual experience of the area.

These functions include:

- **Civic pride**
- **A sense of local identity**
- **A prominent local way finding device**
- **Stimulating sporting aspiration**
- **A sense of arrival: event crowds**
- **Aiding legibility across the wider area**

Given that a significant amount of development has either been permitted, or is under construction, it will be necessary to re-assess the relevance of the protected UDP views.

The following section will explore the significance of each of these views, recommend whether or not they should be retained and identify the potential of additional views for protection.
04 VIEWS & VISUAL EXPERIENCE

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT: VIEW 01
VIEWS & VISUAL EXPERIENCE

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT: VIEW 02
04 VIEWS & VISUAL EXPERIENCE

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT: VIEW 03
VIEWS & VISUAL EXPERIENCE

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT: VIEW 04
VIEWS & VISUAL EXPERIENCE

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT: VIEW 05
VIEWS & VISUAL EXPERIENCE
IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT: VIEW 06

TALL BUILDINGS IN WEMBLEY
04

VIEWS & VISUAL EXPERIENCE

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT: VIEW 07
VIEWS & VISUAL EXPERIENCE

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT: VIEW 08
04 VIEWS & VISUAL EXPERIENCE

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT: VIEW 09
1 Barn Hill, Wembley
Probably the best view of the Stadium outside the AAP area, this view creates a strong visual connection between this public open space and the Stadium Area.
Recommendation: Retain

2 St Mary’s Church, Harrow-on-the-Hill
A historic landmark and prominent feature of the wider landscape. Although it is not in the Borough and not on public space.
Recommendation: Remove

3 Elmwood Park, Sudbury
A wide ranging panorama from a public open space where Wembley can be viewed in its entirety
Recommendation: Retain

4 Horsenden Hill, Perivale
Reasonable elevated views from a municipal golf course although often restricted by vegetation.
Recommendation: Retain

5 One Tree Hill, Alperton
Good open views from the south of the area of the rear of the Stadium and Wembley High Road.
Recommendation: Retain

6 Hanger Hill Park, Ealing
Long range views from outside the borough often highly restricted by vegetation.
Recommendation: Remove

7 Station Road, Hendon
An interesting townscape view where the Stadium forms a backdrop at the termination of the road. Limited to one side of the road due to vegetation and outside of the borough, so development may come forward that negates the view.
Recommendation: Remove

8 Honeypot Lane, Harrow
Strong linear view along a long straight avenue. Outside the borough therefore limited scope for protection.
Recommendation: Remove

9 Gladstone Park, NW2
Long distance view from public open space, often highly restricted by vegetation.
Recommendation: Remove

An analysis of the protected Long/Middle Distance Views within the UDP has identified a number of key issues:

- The absolute protection of views outside the borough boundary may not be feasible;
- The overall legibility of the new Stadium has increased significantly in comparison to the previous Stadium due to the presence of the iconic arch.
- Given the necessity for regeneration around the Stadium, protection of views of the main body of the building (as opposed to the arch) may not be achievable;
- The presence of soft landscaping (trees) in many of these locations has more of an impact on views than tall buildings are likely to have.
01 The Ironbridge, North Circular Road
02 Wembley Park Station
03 South Way at the River Brent Bridge
04 South Way/Wembley Hill Road
05 Engineers Way/Empire Way
06 Bakerloo Line Stonebridge Station
07 Jubilee/Met Line north of Neasden
VIEWS & VISUAL EXPERIENCE

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT: VIEW 01

TALL BUILDINGS IN WEMBLEY
04 VIEWS & VISUAL EXPERIENCE

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT: VIEW 02
04 VIEWS & VISUAL EXPERIENCE

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT: VIEW 04
VIEWS & VISUAL EXPERIENCE
IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT: VIEW 05
04 VIEWS & VISUAL EXPERIENCE

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT: VIEW 06
1 The Ironbridge, North Circular Road
A relatively long distance view from beside the North Circular Road. Low impact due to low numbers of pedestrians and poor visibility from the road.
Recommendation: Remove

2 Wembley Park Station
Probably the most important view due to the character of Olympic Way as a processional and the role that this plays as the main arrival point to the Stadium Area.
Recommendation: Retain

3 South Way at the River Brent Bridge
Another key view due to its nature as a gateway into the area. The Stadium sits at the termination of a long vista—South Way/Stadium Access Corridor.
Recommendation: Retain

4 Junction of South Way and Wembley Hill Road
This key area marks another local gateway into the Stadium area, but the current description does not match the preferred location of the view.
Recommendation: Retain—Revise to ‘White Horse Bridge’

5 Engineers Way at the junction with Empire Way
New development has obscured all but the Stadium arch, which sits comfortably within a cohesive urban experience and is unlikely to change.
Recommendation: Remove

6 Bakerloo Line and Railtrack Railway line north of Stonebridge Station
A linear view that unfolds as part of the experience of entering Wembley by train. Whilst this is an extremely valued part of the urban experience it is difficult to pinpoint a specific location that is preferable. Given the suburban residential character of development between the train line and the Stadium it is unlikely that a significant tall building would impact on this experience.
Recommendation: Remove

7 Jubilee Line and Metropolitan Line north of Neasden Station
A linear view that unfolds as part of the experience of entering Wembley by Underground. Given the sense of arrival from this route it is considered to be an important part of the ‘Wembley’ experience although industrial sites adjacent to the tracks have the potential to obscure such views with equipment/storage etc.
Recommendation: Retain
The view of the Stadium from the pavement on the Eastern side of Bridge Road offers perhaps the best linear view of the processional route of Olympic Way with the Stadium terminating the vista. Although it does not fulfil the same function as the view from Wembley Park Station as a sense of arrival, its elevated and unobstructed position is considered to be extremely valuable to the visual experience of the area.
Given the importance of Olympic Way and its role in the visual experience of Wembley (particularly on event days) the protection of key views of the Stadium is considered vital. This view taken from just north of Fulton Road is a key point at which the Stadium will be framed by new development and the trees create a balanced composition.
The view from Brent Town Hall (a Grade II Listed Building) provides a fantastic panorama of the Stadium and its immediate environs. Although this may provide an interesting view, particularly considering the civic nature of the building, the Council is currently in the process of selling the building therefore protecting a view from a private building is unlikely to be supported.
The long range view of the Stadium from the Welsh Harp Reservoir just within the borough boundary provides an interesting addition to the natural landscape. It helps to build a sense of local identity in one of the boroughs' key open spaces.
This area is currently under construction as a new public park within the Wembley area. The current view of the Stadium is particularly good due to the proximity, location and topography. Once complete it will be a space regularly used by the local community and it is considered that the strong visual connection has the potential to foster local identity and aspiration amongst one of the less affluent communities in the area.
Although there is already a protected view from further down this road, for those arriving in Wembley by motor vehicle from the east, this is the first clear and close up view of the Stadium down a long linear route. It has been referred to as the ‘Eastern Gateway’ as it marks a clear arrival point into the Wembley area.
This view juxtaposes the industrial character of the estates east of the stadium with a great view of the Stadium. It is positioned at the entrance to the Brent River Park—one of the only green spaces in the area so has the potential to add interest and variety to a place currently lacking a degree of legibility and cohesion.
04 VIEWS & VISUAL EXPERIENCE

LAYER 3
An analysis of Stadium views has identified a number of key issues:

- Protection of views of the Stadium should focus on local views (within the borough) and the role of the Stadium in enhancing local identity. The absolute protection of views outside the borough boundary may not be feasible;

- The presence of soft landscaping (trees) in many of these locations has more of an impact on views than tall buildings are likely to have;

- The overall legibility of the new Stadium has increased significantly in comparison to the previous Stadium due to the presence of the iconic arch;

- Given the necessity for regeneration around the Stadium, protection of views of the main body of the building (as opposed to the arch) may not be achievable.
60 tall buildings in Wembley
TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE
The capacity of Wembley’s movement infrastructure will play a significant role in determining appropriate locations for tall buildings. Tall buildings are likely to increase the urban density whilst also placing significant additional pressure on the local transport system. Given the sustainability agenda and the shift in government policy away from the reliance on private motor vehicles, it will be essential for such development to be fully integrated with a variety of modes of transport.

One of the most positive attributes of the Wembley area is its public transport accessibility. Wembley is connected to Central London via the Metropolitan, Jubilee and Bakerloo Underground lines running from Wembley Park and Wembley Central stations and National rail services from Wembley Central and Wembley Stadium stations run into central London in as little as 13 minutes.
The adjacent map depicts the 2010 Public Transport Accessibility Levels produced by Transport for London. This is used in conjunction with London Plan standards (set out in Table 3.2 of the LP 2011) as a means of assessing the appropriate density level for developments throughout London.

It is clear from the PTAL map that areas to the west and north of the AAP area would be considered more appropriate for higher density levels (4-6 in this location would imply a range of 200-700 habitable rooms per hectare (hr/ha) or between 45 and 260 units per hectare (u/ha) dependent on the format of the development.

Whilst the west and north of the area are relatively well served by public transport, conversely the majority of the area to the east of the stadium has a low accessibility level. Unless significant improvements to the public transport infrastructure are made, it is unlikely that tall buildings will be considered appropriate in these locations.

Although a tall building may not necessarily have a higher density than a medium rise development once an entire site area is taken into consideration (proposals for a tall building could include a large open space within a site boundary), given the constrained nature of land in Wembley it is likely that tall buildings will fall into the upper density range.

The PTAL’s across Wembley give a clear indication of the locations that are likely to be considered more appropriate for tall buildings in policy terms. This however does not automatically mean that taller buildings are appropriate in these areas, it merely provides further justification as part of the wider analysis.
TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

LAYER 4
Locating tall buildings around key public transport nodes will help to concentrate people in the localities where accessibility is highest. As well as reducing social exclusion for those without access to cars, the increased choices for transportation should contribute to reducing traffic congestion, air pollution and energy consumption.

An additional benefit of focusing tall buildings close to rail stations is that the financial contributions stemming from development can be put towards other improvements to the locality such as enhancing the public realm, rather than costly road widening schemes.

Given the high level of predicted future development (11,500 new homes up to 2026) and the potential transportation implications of tall buildings, the case for locating such development close to the existing public transport hubs is even stronger.

Although Neasden Underground lies within close proximity of the eastern part of the AAP area, the pedestrian connections are such that it is not considered to provide the same benefits as the other, more accessible stations.
66 tall buildings in Wembley
TOPOGRAPHY
06
TOPOGRAPHY

LAYER 5
The topography of the Wembley area raises some important considerations for the location of tall buildings. The levels within the AAP area have a range of 38m - from 28m AOD in the east, up to 66m AOD at the Chiltern Cutting. Such a rise in levels from the River Brent towards the Stadium and central part of the High Road means that the visual impact of development will be more prominent when approaching from the east.

The land falls away to the south of the AAP area which means that the visual presence of taller buildings on the High Road and to the south and west of the Stadium will be more pronounced when viewed from areas to the south.

There are two significant high points bordering the AAP area which raise some further considerations for the location of tall buildings. Barn Hill to the north of the AAP provides an elevated position for views across the AAP area, such as those from Brent Town Hall and Barn Hill Open Space. The impact of tall buildings is likely to be less pronounced due to this elevated position.

Rising to approximately 70m AOD, Wembley Hill is an important feature of the local landscape. As well as providing elevated views into the area, it also serves to screen wider views from the west and north-west and provide a backdrop for views from the south and east.

There are some unique opportunities and potential constraints presented by the topography of the local area. When considering the impact on views of the Stadium, taller buildings located to the north of the AAP area and to the west of the Stadium are less likely to cause major impacts due to the elevated nature of the adjacent areas.

The fact that much of the area, particularly around the High Road and the Stadium is higher than surrounding localities provides an opportunity to create a unique skyline that would strengthen the identity and presence of the Wembley throughout the wider area.

Given that the visual presence in these locations will be high, the potential negative impacts of a poor quality tall building will be heightened. Therefore the quality of tall buildings in these locations will need to be scrutinised more rigorously than in other less sensitive locations.
tall buildings in Wembley
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT
Historic buildings provide a depth of character to the urban experience that cannot be underestimated. The continuity and connection with an area’s past provides the building blocks for developing local identity and establishing a unique character in an area.

Wembley has a tradition of masterplanning and design. The 1924 Empire Exhibition layout introduced a strong formal character to the area. A broad avenue was established on a north-south axis from Wembley Park Railway Station to the Empire Stadium. Cutting across this route was a large rectangular lake and garden/park running in an east-west axis.

The Empire Exhibition closed in 1925 and subsequent development has slowly moved away from the Exhibition layout. The historic east-west grain is still in evidence, particularly along Engineers Way and Fulton Road but the park has been lost and the formal ceremonial route to the Stadium – Olympic Way – has no sense of enclosure.

The AAP area does not have a significant amount of historic buildings or buildings that are considered to be of an exemplary architectural quality. There are three Statutorily Listed buildings within the area: St Andrew’s Presbyterian Church - Grade II Church of St John - Grade II The Empire Pool (Wembley Arena) - Grade II Brent Town Hall - Grade II

Although there are only three Listed buildings in the area, it is the significance of these buildings and their role in the townscape, that has a real impact on the character and future development of Wembley.

There is also one Locally Listed building, the Greyhound Public House, within the AAP area. Although not statutorily protected, this building is considered to be of sufficient merit to warrant a degree of protection within the boroughs UDP.
Although there are few listed buildings in the area, there are a number of locations where a building or a collection of buildings are considered to add to the richness of the urban fabric, and any redevelopment proposals will need to fully justify the removal or replacement of such buildings.

There are two Conservation Areas on the immediate fringes of the AAP area:

- Barn Hill Conservation Area
- Wembley High Street Conservation Area

And three other Conservation Areas within relatively close proximity:

- Lawns Court Conservation Area
- St Andrews Conservation Area
- Neasden Conservation Area

As well as the Conservation Areas in the vicinity, directly to the north of the AAP area lies the Keswick Gardens/Princes Court Area of Distinctive Residential Character (designated in the UDP 2004).
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

LAYER 6

AAP Boundary
Conservation Area
ADRC
Listed Building (Statutory)
Listed Building (Local List)
The only significant historic building that is likely to be directly impacted upon by the development of tall buildings is Wembley Arena. Development has either taken place, is under construction, or has permission on all sites surrounding the Arena, therefore it is considered that the impacts of such development have been fully considered.

The two other significant Listed buildings (Brent Town Hall and Church of St John) are situated on the suburban fringes of the area, where the location of tall buildings is unlikely to be supported, therefore there is considered to be little direct risk on the historic character of these buildings.

With regards to the impact of tall buildings on Conservation Areas, again there is likely to be little direct impact due to the location of the areas on the edges of the AAP area. As well as possible development within close proximity to these Conservation Areas, consideration should also be given to the impact on views into and out of these areas.

Views of the Stadium from Barn Hill Conservation Area are likely to be impacted upon by tall buildings in the AAP area due to its position and orientation.

Due to the aspect of most of the properties Wembley High Street Conservation Area is unlikely to be significantly impacted upon.

Conservation Areas to the north east (St Andrew’s & Neasden) are considered to be sufficient distance from the area that there are likely to be no impacts from the development of tall buildings.
tall buildings in wembley
TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER
It is essential to have a firm understanding of the component elements of urban form that make up the defining character of a locality in order to assess the suitability of tall buildings in such a location.

By identifying characteristics such as the building typologies, key nodes and urban grain it is possible to obtain a deeper understanding of the visual and physical experience of an area, which will in turn provide clarity on appropriate locations for tall buildings.

For this part of the study the AAP area has been divided into 5 localities with broadly distinctive characteristics. The following section will provide an analysis of the existing townscape in each area and the opportunities that may arise for tall buildings.
The Wembley High Road locality comprises the existing town centre and it’s immediate context. Although the area developed incrementally since the 1920’s, the majority of the High Road frontage development happened post-war.

The pattern of development is broadly focussed on the east-west spine of Wembley High Road with three key junctions (Ealing Road, Park Lane and Wembley Hill Road) which mark out the beginning, middle and end of the town centre and provide a visual narrative to the experience of the area.

Although the predominant character is that of a suburban town centre, there are a range of building typologies across the area which display different characteristics and add to a multifaceted experience of the urban realm.

Perhaps the most obvious development in the town centre is the newly created Central Square development based around Wembley Central Station. As well as the refurbishment of the existing 1960’s blocks, a new 13 storey mixed use tower provides a focus to the town centre and dominates the High Road streetscape. The presence of a large public square mitigates the impact of the scale of the building to the west, but the difference in form and scale is rather apparent when viewed from the east and surrounding residential streets.

The core of the High Road area is made up of 3-4 storey buildings with ground floor retail and storage or residential uses on upper floors. There are also a number of larger format retail buildings with wider and deeper plots.

The area known as the ‘Wembley Link’ (due to it’s potential role in linking the existing town centre with the Stadium regeneration area) has a slightly different urban grain and character to other parts of the High Road.

The strong retail frontage breaks down due to the presence of Copland School and Brent House to the south and there are a number of larger scale (5-9 storeys) office buildings.

At either end of the High Road the scale and form (brick, pitched roof shopping parades) of buildings tend to mark the transition from the town centre into the suburban residential hinterland.
Ealing Road Junction/Wembley West End

Given the role of this junction as an arrival point to the High Road, there is scope for a signature building, however the nature of the landownerships, the traffic dominated junction and narrow footways all mean that the scope for a tall building is extremely limited. Any proposals for tall buildings, particularly on the South side will necessitate a significant setback, which is likely to make development unviable unless a comprehensive approach is undertaken to include Curtis Lane Car Park. Given the change in levels between Curtis Lane and the High Road and the scale of adjacent buildings at Central Square, there is scope for taller development at Curtis Lane Car Park.
Park Lane Junction/Chesterfield House

The existing Chesterfield House plays an important role on the High Road. It roughly marks the centre point of the town centre and delineates the Café Quarter/Wembley Link area, with its wider pavements and more open character, from the western end of the High Road. Given this important townscape function and the fact that it sits on the northern side of the High Road, this site is considered appropriate for a tall building. The scale of any building on this site needs to be carefully designed to respond the adjacent residential tower at Elm Road and would still necessitate a reasonable setback from the existing back of pavement.
**TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER**

**WHR: OPPORTUNITIES**

**Triangle Junction/Wembley Link**

Development around the Triangle (High Road/Wembley Hill Road/Harrow Road) junction is pivotal to the success of Wembley as a whole. The visual and physical connection between the High Road and the Stadium area along the axis of the White Horse Bridge is a long standing aspiration of the Council which would enable the creation of a cohesive urban experience.

A new tall building at Elizabeth House at the termination of this vista is currently under construction. There may be potential for a cluster of taller buildings around this, given the scale of Brent House and the key role of the junction as an arrival point into the town centre. However, the scale of the new building, its proximity to the pavement edge, and the proximity of the suburban interface means that the scope for further tall buildings is somewhat limited.

The scope for a tall building on the north west side of the Triangle is severely limited by the number of ownerships and the presence of a terrace of two storey houses at Ecclestone Place to the rear. There is potential for a taller building in this location, but it would only be possible as part of a comprehensive development. It is recommended that the newly developed Elizabeth House remains the principle focus and any taller element in this location should be lower than this.

Given the larger road and pavement widths in the Wembley Link area it is clearly more appropriate for a larger scale of development than sites west of Park Lane. However, it is recommended that the built frontage remains relatively consistent in height in order to provide a comfortable and suitable level of enclosure, whilst taller elements are focussed on sites that can be offset by open spaces at ground floor to provide an appropriate setting.
The area directly surrounding the National Stadium contains comparatively few buildings. The Stadium itself is clearly the dominant feature in the townscape due to its scale, size and civic function.

The general pattern of development is comprised of buildings with large footprints surrounded by a significant amount of surface parking and vehicular servicing space.

The area contains a range of building forms that generally appear to operate in complete isolation to one another. This is primarily due to the disparate uses and that much of the buildings are inward facing, resulting in poor definition of streets and a low quality public realm.

There is a small cluster of tall buildings (York House, Wembley Plaza Hotel, Ibis Hotel and MG House) to the south west of the area which face outward to Wembley Hill Road and South Way.

The majority of this area already has permission for a significant amount of tall buildings. Given that such permissions are relatively recent it is viewed that such proposals are considered to be acceptable in townscape terms. Any significant departure from these parameters will need reconsideration.

The Quintain Stages 1 & 2 will dramatically alter the overall character and urban form of this locality into a much more rigorously planned, dense urban townscape as discussed earlier in this report.

As well as those recently completed (Quintain’s new Hilton hotel and student accommodation) there are a number of tall buildings under construction—the new outlet centre in Quintain Stage 1, Brent Civic Centre and 5 Olympic Way (Shubette House).
Olympic Way (South of Fulton Road)
The importance of Olympic Way as a key route and major public space cannot be underestimated. In light of the approval of the Quintain NW Lands development it was considered necessary to assess the potential impact of development on the adjacent side of Olympic Way (Invista sight).

Given the formal use and character of Olympic Way as a strong, linear, processional route, it is viewed that the scale of any new development on the eastern side should reflect that which has already been permitted. This is a common technique used in urban design to strengthen the formal character of the street and create a balanced enclosure to the space. Although less of the Stadium itself will be visible, this approach will enable the creation of a balanced composition, where the Stadium forms the focus of the vista down the strong linear axis of Olympic Way.

Given the scale of development permitted on Olympic Way and its implications for the eastern side, this will have knock on effects on the scale of development appropriate on plots further east. Having replicated the scale and form of Quintain’s proposed development, it is clear that any development fronting Rutherford Way will need to be adequately set back.

Although there is certainly potential for tall buildings to the east of Olympic Way, it is recommended that the general pattern of development east of Rutherford Way should be lower in height than Olympic Way.

A gradual reduction in scale eastwards will have the dual benefits of integrating new development with the lower level industrial development, whilst increasing the emphasis on Olympic Way as an important townscape feature.
Olympic Way (North of Fulton Road)

For sites north of Fulton Road and east of Olympic Way (3-5 Olympic Way, Apex House & Karma House) the scope for tall buildings is also limited by an extant permission on Karma House and a new development at 5 Olympic Way.

There may be some scope for a tall building on the site of the Stadium Retail Park in coordination with the newly planned shopping street—perhaps as a termination to the street. The site will need to be carefully designed to ensure that any taller elements is sufficiently set back from Olympic Way so as not to affect the view of the Stadium. It is recommended that the current building line to Olympic Way is maintained, this will broadly replicate the setback of buildings on the opposite side of the street and should enable the creation of a balanced streetscape. Given the suburban scale of development of the adjacent shopping parade, any taller element would also need to be set back from Wembley Park Drive.
The area designated as Wembley Park Corridor contains a wide variety of building typologies generally organised around the north/south spine of Wembley Hill Road/Empire Way/Wembley Park Drive.

Although there are a number of key buildings in this locality, Wembley Park Station is the main activity generator and principle focus for the area - Brent Town Hall is spatially disconnected from the heart of the area whilst Asda is geared towards vehicular access and Fountain Studios contributes little to the public realm.

The building typologies on Wembley Hill Rd/Empire Way vary between low quality office development and residential mansion blocks with a landscape setting. Both typologies serve a similar purpose as a transition in scale from the large format development in the Stadium area and the wider residential suburbia.

Tall buildings in this locality are generally clustered around Wembley Park Station, although Dexion House and Quality Hotel represent an increase in scale from buildings to the west of Empire Way.

Directly to the north and south of Wembley Park Station are the local shopping facilities which are suburban in scale and character.

The residential enclave of mansion blocks at Empire/Danes Court has also been included in this area because it is more functionally connected to Wembley Park than the industrial development to the east and south.
St Joseph’s Social Centre  
As this locality is primarily on the fringes of the regeneration area, any new development will need to be fully considerate of the immediate suburban context.

One potential opportunity for a tall building is the site of the Community Centre on the apex of Wembley Hill Road and Empire Way. Given the scale of new development, the prominent corner site and the proximity of a newly landscaped open space, there is scope for the creation of a tall building. The proximity of residential dwellings to the rear of the site will necessitate a careful design solution.
Crescent House

The role of Wembley Park Station as the key gateway and activity hub of the area and the location of existing tall buildings around this hub (1 Olympic Way, Victoria Halls, Premier Inn) mean that there is a clear opportunity to build on this role by the incorporation of additional tall buildings.

The formal boulevard/processional character of Olympic Way necessitates a strong and relatively consistent height and it is recommended that development of the Crescent House site responds to the scale of (should be no taller than) the adjacent building on 1 Olympic Way. Maintenance of the existing building line on Olympic Way (a set back from the edge of Olympic Way of 11-12 metres) will ensure a strong formal character is developed.
**Arena House**

The Arena House site also offers a significant opportunity for a tall building given its proximity to Wembley Park Station and its position away from Olympic Way. It is however in a raised position in relation to the buildings in the Comprehensive Development Area, which means that it will be more prominent in the townscape particularly when viewed from areas to the north, including Barn Hill Conservation Area. Given it’s proximity to the street edge, the surrounding suburban character and the scale of Wembley Park Station it is recommended that a tall building in this location should step down from the height of the adjacent Victoria Halls building.
The Wembley Eastern Lands locality lies on the eastern fringe of the Comprehensive Development Area. To the north of the area is Watkin Road – a tight grained, small scale industrial estate, whilst the remainder of the area is predominantly made up of larger scale industrial uses with some storage and cash and carry. The quality of buildings is generally low with poor public realm.

Although the quality of existing development is generally low, many of these buildings are likely to change in the medium-long term. The northern part of this locality (Watkin Road & Amex House) does not provide significant scope for tall buildings due to the proximity and location of the residential development (Empire/Dane Court) to the north.
Access Storage/ Popin Centre

These two key sites at the south of the Eastern Lands area are located at the end of the Stadium Access Corridor, at the key junction between South Way and First Way. There is a clear opportunity for a signature building to mark the transition from the protected industrial area into the higher density, mixed use area around the Stadium. The current road layout also means that the Access Storage site is particularly prominent from First Way in the north. Given the long, linear nature of the Stadium Access Corridor and it’s role as a point of arrival to those coming to Stadium events, it is recommended that development in this location does not exceed the height of the base of the Stadium (Approx 78.5m A.O.D.).
Kelaty House
The other site within this area that offers some potential for the location of a tall building is Kelaty House. The site lies at the termination point of Engineers Way, which acts as a long straight east-west spine connecting the core development area with the wider industrial area. The proposal for a new park running along the north of Engineers Way will make the importance of this site even more apparent. There are also emerging proposals to upgrade the role of the roads around this site by introducing two-way functioning which is likely to give this site an even more pivotal role in townscape terms.
The buildings in this area range in typology and scale, including large scale retail units near the North Circular Road, but are predominantly large footprint industrial units. The public realm is traffic dominated with an extremely poor pedestrian experience. Brent River Park runs through the area but is difficult to find and is thus under utilised as a valuable resource for the area.

Given its current designation as a Strategic Industrial Location this area will remain principally focused on the provision of a range of relatively low rise commercial activities. The scope for tall buildings across the area is therefore relatively limited.
TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER

08

LAYER 7

TALL BUILDINGS IN WEMBLEY
The Wembley area is made up of several different localities, each with their own character. There is clearly some scope for additional tall buildings in the area, although many of the opportunities have already been undertaken.

The main opportunities for tall buildings lies at key nodes within the townscape such as major junctions and around Wembley Park Station as a major transport hub and key gateway into the area.

Given the significant change in character and scale of buildings within the Comprehensive Development Area, much of the scope for tall buildings will be in this locality, principally around Olympic Way.

Given the existing suburban character of the High Road and the impact of new tall buildings on the streetscape, it is recommended that a more conservative approach is taken to the consideration of tall buildings than some of the previous schemes that have been approved in the past (Copland School & Chesterfield House).
96 tall buildings in Wembley
A STRATEGY FOR TALL BUILDINGS
This section represents the culmination of the analysis of the local conditions that exist within the Wembley area that will impact on the location of tall buildings. Based on all of the evidence gathered the Area Action Plan area has been divided into sites that are appropriate, sensitive and inappropriate for the development of tall buildings.

The scope of this document is not to provide a detailed design guide for the form and exact scale of tall buildings, but simply to identify areas in Wembley where there is potential for them. For site designated as appropriate for tall buildings, this does not preclude a detailed analysis of an individual sites’ constraints (including key Stadium views) and the creation of innovative design solutions.

Areas designated as ‘sensitive’ to tall buildings are considered to have some scope for the development of tall buildings, but there are clear constraints such as complicated land ownership arrangements, proximity to existing residential buildings or general orientation of plots.
A STRATEGY FOR TALL BUILDINGS

STRATEGY PLAN

09
A STRATEGY FOR TALL BUILDINGS

CONCLUSIONS

The evidence gathered throughout this study has led to a clear pattern for the location of tall buildings throughout the Wembley AAP area.

The location of existing and proposed tall buildings is important for the location of new development as the potential negative impacts are reduced when tall buildings are clustered together.

Given that a significant amount of development has either already been permitted or is currently under construction, there are only a limited number of sites that offer scope for new tall buildings in the area.

The axis of the three stations and the existing and proposed pedestrian spine that runs through the core of the regeneration area should be regarded as the principal location for tall buildings in Wembley.

As well as reducing potentially negative impacts, this should be seen as a unique opportunity to develop a strong skyline which enhances and complements the prominent National Stadium.

Much of the sites on the fringes of the AAP area are considered to be inappropriate for tall buildings due to the suburban residential character of the surrounding context.

Areas to the east of the Stadium are also considered inappropriate due to the protected nature of the industrial land and the predominance of low level buildings.