

Putting the Community First



# Mill Hill East

Area Action Plan



## Local Development Framework



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# Foreword



As a thriving suburb of a world class city, Barnet plays a major role in London's success, by attracting people to the city with the necessary skills to enable it to compete effectively at a global level. Barnet is the fastest growing outer London borough, and

there are three strong attractors stimulating this growth: great open spaces, a strong local economy and excellent schools. Situated in the heart of the borough, Mill Hill East incorporates all three of these assets.

Mill Hill East has been highlighted by the Mayor for London and the adopted Unitary Development Plan as an area that could support development. Our aim is to ensure that this key site is developed in a coherent way that ensures we create a high quality, new suburban quarter where people will want to live and work. It must also be sympathetic with the surrounding Green Belt land, in line with Barnet Council's Three Strands approach.

Following lengthy public consultation and a formal Examination in Public this document forms the Area Action Plan (AAP) for Mill Hill East.

The AAP provides the planning framework until 2016 for an important site which we believe can deliver high quality new housing, improvements to local services and new employment opportunities. Mill Hill East will play a key role in achieving the kind of development which will be required to support the continuing success of our suburbs.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Melvin Cohen'.

Councillor Melvin Cohen

Cabinet Member for Planning and Environmental Protection



# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of the Area Action Plan

1.1.1 Barnet Council has prepared a Local Development Scheme (LDS) setting out how the council will develop its LDF over a three year period (and beyond). The document provides a schedule of the proposed Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents. Priority has been given to the preparation of the Mill Hill East Area Action Plan (AAP). It is recognised that Mill Hill East is an area where more detailed policies are required to guide future development.

1.1.2 The Mill Hill East AAP is a statutory planning document which forms part of the Barnet LDF. A key feature of the AAP is the emphasis placed on implementation. It seeks to:

- Deliver planned growth in accordance with strategic planning policy;
- Stimulate strategic development and economic growth;
- Protect areas sensitive to change;
- Focus on the delivery of sustainable development and comprehensive infrastructure improvements; and
- Ensure the effective delivery of Barnet's Three Strands Approach.

1.1.3 The AAP area covers a total area of approximately 48 hectares currently under the ownership of seven different landholders, the largest being the Ministry of Defence (MoD) who vacated the existing barracks in 2008, releasing 20.5 hectares of land for development.

1.1.4 The AAP seeks to ensure that development takes place in a balanced and coordinated manner by setting out a comprehensive framework to guide the delivery of housing, employment, leisure and associated community facilities, infrastructure, transport initiatives and environmental protection and enhancement.

Figure 1.1 Mill Hill East Area Action Plan: Location



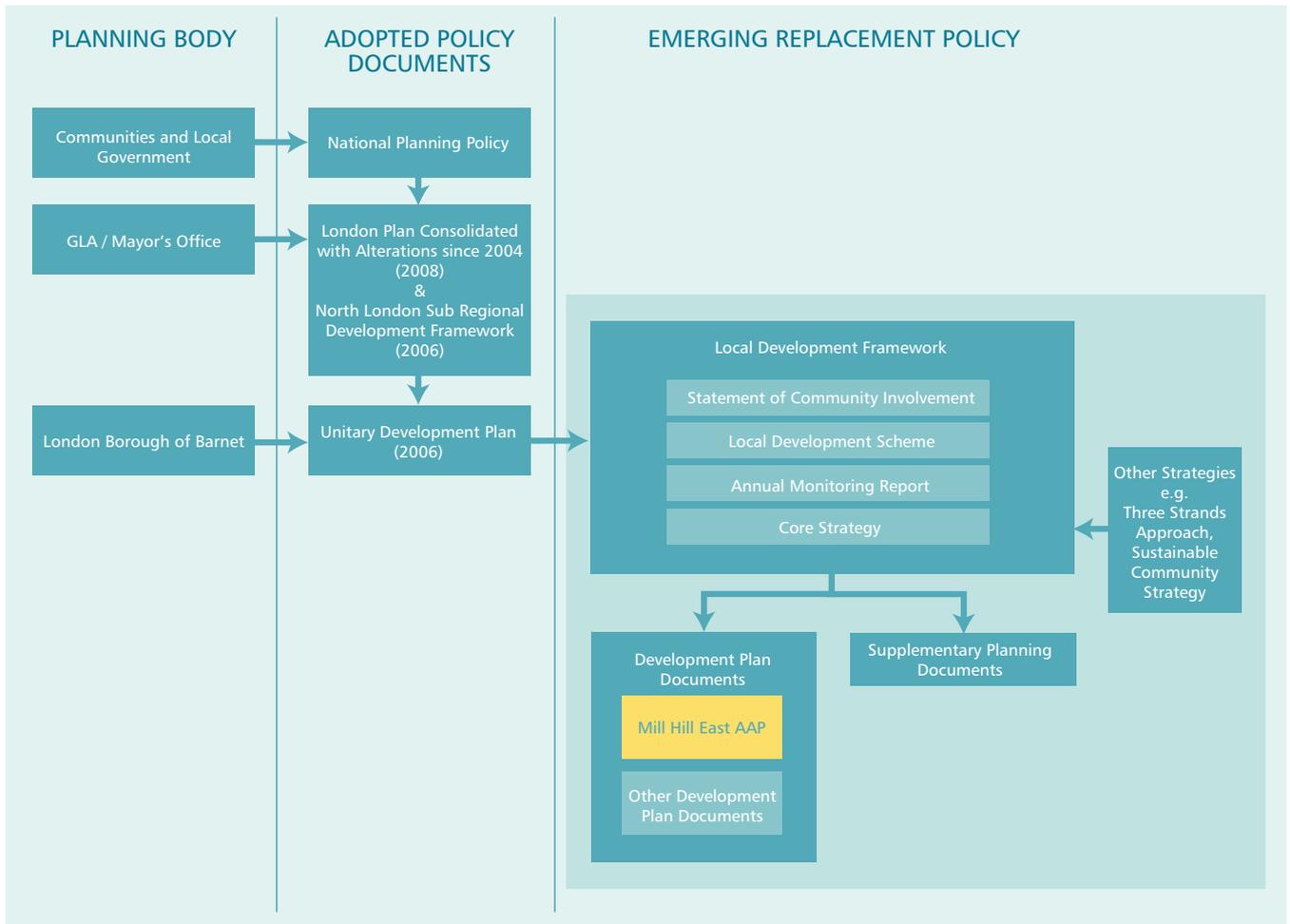


Figure 1.3 Relationship of the AAP to Adopted and Emerging Policy

## 1.2 Relationship of the AAP to the Unitary Development Plan

1.2.1 Preparation of the AAP has been based on the policies and proposals set out in the Barnet Unitary Development Plan (UDP) which was adopted in May 2006. However, it also reflects recent national planning policy statements and regional planning policy objectives as set out in the Mayor's London Plan. Of particular importance is the increasing emphasis placed on sustainable design and development and the delivery of housing.

## 1.3 Community Involvement

1.3.1 Barnet Council is committed to comprehensive consultation and to involving local residents and organisations in drawing up its planning policies and development plans. The AAP was produced in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement which sets out its commitment to public engagement.



Public consultation on emerging development options.

# Part 1: Background to the AAP



Existing housing on Drew Avenue.



## 2 Policy Context

### 2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 National, regional and local planning policies place particular importance on the creation of sustainable communities and on ensuring an appropriate mix of development and range and level of facilities to meet community needs. Planning policies place particular emphasis on sustainable transport and the use of public transport, especially bus and train services and walking and cycling as alternatives to car use. In addition, increased importance is being placed on reducing carbon emissions and incorporating renewable energy technologies and the promotion of high standards of design in new developments.



2.1.2 Barnet Council is seeking to promote Mill Hill East's strategic role whilst protecting the essential suburban character of its setting through UDP policies and a number of related strategies including the Sustainable Community Strategy, the Corporate Plan and the Three Strands Approach. In accordance with these policy documents, the AAP seeks to strike a balance between policies which seek the protection and enhancement of the suburban character of the area; the objective of building a sustainable community; and the strategic development targets set by the London Plan.

## 2.2 National Planning Policy

2.2.1 A series of National Planning Policy Statements (PPS's) and Planning Policy Guidance (PPG's) promote high quality and sustainable development. Sustainable communities require a range of good quality housing and tenures to meet the needs of the community, a flourishing local economy supported by adequate infrastructure, a high quality safe and healthy environment and community facilities and amenity space. PPS 3: Housing also establishes the need to maintain a 15 year supply of housing land.

## 2.3 The London Plan, Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London

(2004), Early Draft Alterations (2005) and Draft Further Alterations (2006) now the London Plan (Consolidated with Alterations since 2004) (2008).

2.3.1 The London Plan (February 2008) provides the regional planning policy context for Barnet and together with the Barnet UDP, forms part of the adopted Development Plan.

2.3.2 Key strategic priorities of relevance to the future development and role of Mill Hill East may be summarised as follows:

- Creating sustainable, safe and well designed development and a new high quality 'suburban place';
- Promoting increased use and improvements to public transport;
- Promoting more intensive forms of development in areas well served by public transport;
- Realising the environmental and wider value of open space;
- Promoting high quality architecture and urban design in character with the quality suburban location; and
- Supporting sustainable communities.

2.3.3 The London Plan places particular emphasis on the need to ensure that development proposals achieve the maximum intensity of use compatible with local context, design principles for a compact city and with public transport capacity.

2.3.4 The role of the AAP is to have tested the targets contained within the strategic guidance. The AAP has assessed the scale of development which can be accommodated on the site taking into account the overall objectives of developing a balanced, sustainable community, maximising development whilst minimising impacts on the environment and the surrounding areas.

## 2.4 Barnet Unitary Development Plan (UDP) May 2006

2.4.1 The UDP policies will be saved until May 2009 (three years after adoption). The Mill Hill East AAP area is highlighted in the UDP as a Strategic Development Area, a major brownfield site complementing other major regeneration projects within Barnet such as Cricklewood / Brent Cross and Colindale. Policy H21 states:

'The council will favourably consider proposals for higher density, residential development within Barnet's major and district town centres, together with the West Hendon local centre, Cricklewood and Brent Cross, Mill Hill East and Colindale provided that such proposals comply with Policy D1 and relate satisfactorily to their surroundings'.

2.4.2 Policy D1 relates to high quality design and states:

'All new development should represent high quality design and should be in keeping with the council's objectives of sustainable development and ensuring community safety'.

2.4.3 The UDP sets out several key designations and associated policies to ensure their protection, notably:

- Green Belt in and around the site and other nearby landscape designations (Policies O1 and O7);
- The historic and locally listed Officers' Mess Building, other nearby listed buildings, and the Mill Hill Village Conservation Area (Policies HC1, HC14 and HC15); and
- Bittacy Hill Industrial Park (a primary industrial site), providing local employment (Policies GEMP1 and GEMP4).

2.4.4 The Area Action Plan seeks to protect and enhance these existing features and uses.

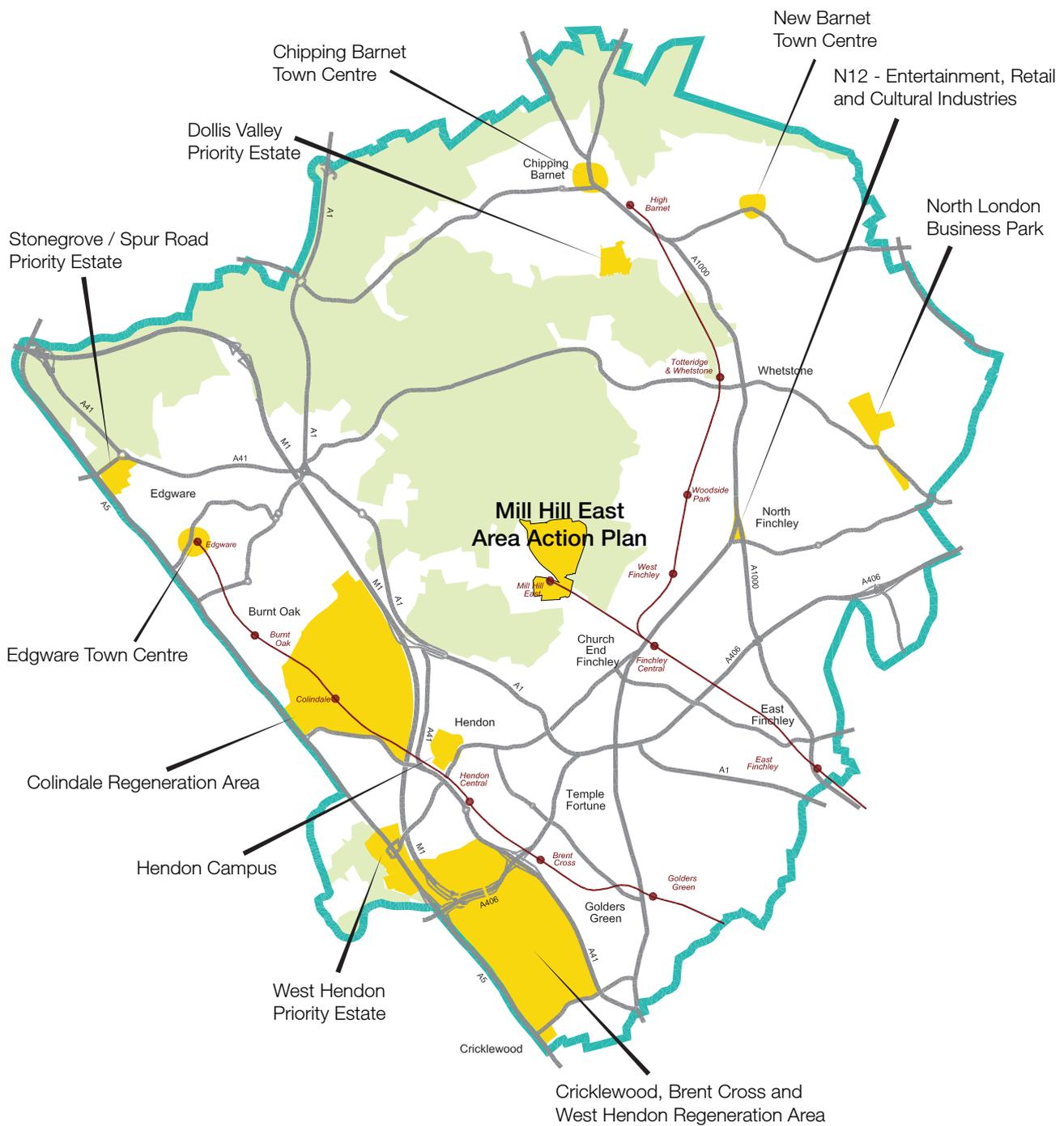


Fig 2.1 Strategic Development Sites in Barnet

# 3 Existing Site Characteristics

## 3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 This section summarises the key characteristics of Mill Hill East

## 3.2 Location

3.2.1 Mill Hill East occupies a central location within Barnet, a northern, outer borough of Greater London. The AAP area is located within the existing neighbourhood of Mill Hill East which is currently focused around local shops at Holders Hill Circus / Kelly's Corner and Mill Hill East Underground station, a branch of the Northern Line which is included within the site boundary.

3.2.2 The AAP area is bordered to the west by Bittacy Hill, to the east by Frith Lane and to the north by Partingdale Lane. Both Frith Lane and Partingdale Lane adjoin high quality Green Belt and open space.

Views from the site towards North Finchley.



### 3.3 Landownership

3.3.1 The AAP area falls under a number of separate land ownerships at the present time. These ownerships are illustrated in Figure 3.1. A collaborative approach between the landowners listed below is being pursued in order to achieve a comprehensive redevelopment.

#### Annington Homes

3.3.2 Annington Homes was granted outline planning permission in August 2002 for the redevelopment of the north-eastern corner of Inglis Barracks (7.72 hectares) for 360 residential units with the main access from Frith Lane and a secondary access for a small number of units from Bittacy Hill. Under the existing planning consent, housing will comprise 204 flats and 156 houses including 25% affordable housing. Heights will vary from two storeys for houses to four storeys for apartments. A first phase development of 104 dwellings with access from Frith Lane commenced construction in 2008. The remaining undeveloped area is included in the AAP to enable development proposals to be reviewed and to achieve optimum integration with the larger development area.

#### MoD / VSM Estates

3.3.3 The MoD vacated Inglis Barracks as part of the MoDEL project and the relocation of existing operations to RAF Northolt in 2008. VSM Estates have been granted a lease of the land (20.5 hectares) and plan to bring forward development within the next three years.

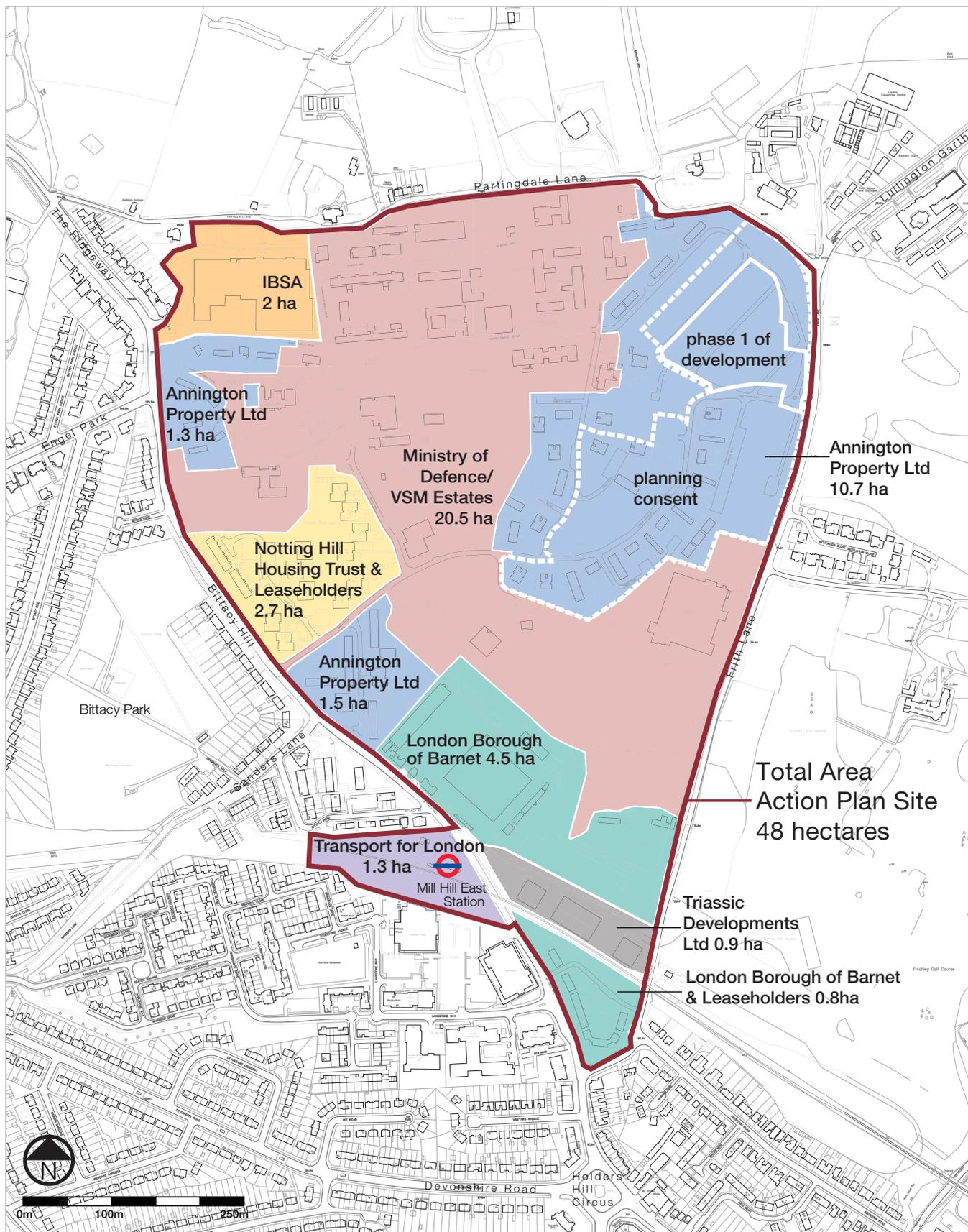
#### London Borough of Barnet

3.3.4 The council-owned depot on Bittacy Hill is located within the AAP area. The site will be available for redevelopment subject to satisfactory relocation of the depot activities.

#### Notting Hill Housing Trust (NHHT)

3.3.5 The NHHT ownership consists of 2.7 ha of land containing an estate of socially rented housing. The inclusion of the NHHT estate for redevelopment is subject to the satisfactory re-housing / relocation of existing tenants.

Figure 3.1 Landownerships



## 3.4 Physical Characteristics

### Landscape Character

3.4.1 A key feature of the site is its steep topography with a fall of 44 metres in height from the northwest to the southern corners of the site. The steepest slopes are in the centre of the site with gradients of around 1:12. This creates a number of challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, the steep topography can provide a good setting and views for open spaces and new housing, but the topography also affects accessibility and the development potential of some parts of the site. The site is visible from parts of the adjacent Green Belt, with limited views from residential neighbourhoods of Woodside Park and North Finchley to the east.

3.4.2 The landscape is characterised by mature trees and lawns in the northern part of the site, part of the former MoD Barracks, and sloping grassland to the south. The southern area incorporates the MoD recreation ground, sports pitches and sports pavilion, a Scout Camp site and the Council Depot. These areas are bordered by thick broadleaved woodlands.

3.4.3 Approximately eight hectares of recreational open space are currently located within the Mill Hill East AAP area, although most is in the ownership of the MoD and therefore historically has not been available for public access. There are substantial areas of open space and leisure facilities within 1.5 kilometres of the site, including Bittacy Hill Park to the west of the AAP area. In addition, public access from Mill Hill East into the surrounding Green Belt is available via a network of public footpaths (see figure 5.4, page 53).

3.4.4 Local footpaths in the area connect Mill Hill East with the Dollis Valley Greenwalk, London LOOP and Capital Ring long distance footpaths.

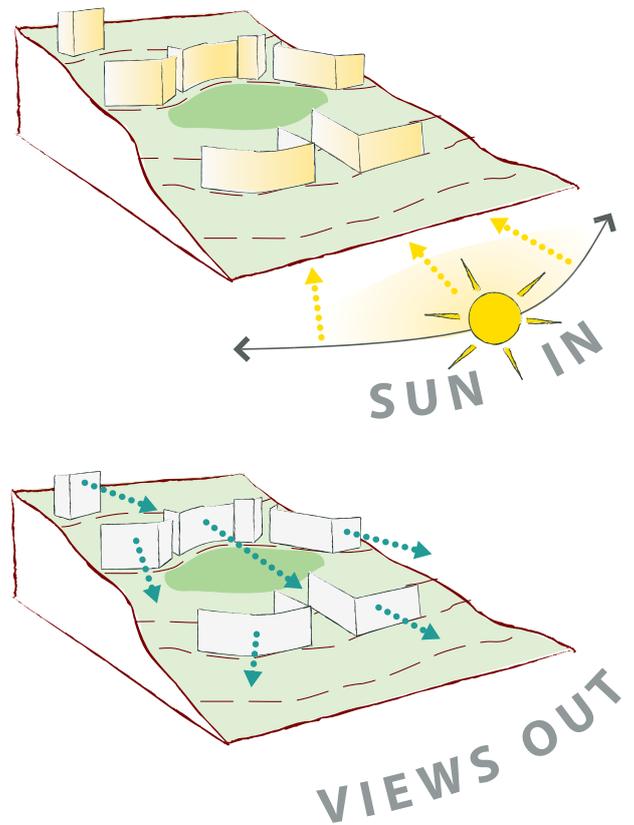


Figure 3.2 Responding to Site Topography

## Ecology

3.4.5 Ecological surveys have shown the AAP area to be dominated by amenity grassland of limited botanical and ecological interest. However, small isolated areas of scrub and broadleaved semi-natural woodland are interspersed within the managed grassland areas and provide some ecological interest at a borough scale. The main value of these habitats is in terms of the shelter and foraging opportunities they provide for wildlife that inhabit the site, notably garden and woodland birds and foraging common pipistrelle bats.

3.4.6 In recognition of the ecological value of these habitats, a core framework of habitats should be retained and enhanced within any future development to create wildlife habitat corridors.

## Contamination

3.4.7 Due to the existing and historical uses on site including the depot and MoD Barracks, there is a potential for some contamination on the site. Whilst it is understood that a significant part of the MoD land has been successfully remediated, further investigation and appropriate remediation will be required prior to development.

## Built Character

3.4.8 The area has a suburban character and adjoins areas of Green Belt to the north and east of the site. Further north and outside the AAP area is Mill Hill Village which is a Conservation Area. While examples of vernacular architecture of historical interest can be seen in Mill Hill Village, much of the Mill Hill East area was developed in the 20th Century and comprises a mix of traditional semi-detached and terraced suburban housing and three to five-storey apartment blocks with large gardens and off-street private parking.

3.4.9 Existing buildings have been assessed based on their quality, potential for re-use and heritage value:

- **Inglis Barracks** - Constructed from 1900 by the MoD. The site, known simply as 'The Garden' due to its location and setting, was home to the Middlesex Regiment Training Depot from 1905 to 1961. Thereafter, Inglis Barracks became the Postal and Courier Depot RE (of the Corp of Royal Engineers). The buildings today range in age, height and building material, reflecting piecemeal development. Only the locally listed Officers' Mess building offers potential reuse, possibly for community, commercial, residential or other appropriate uses. Most 'barracks' buildings are of poor quality institutional design and are no longer required for military use.
- **Annington Homes / Notting Hill Housing Trust** –The ex-MoD married quarters comprising a series of 1970s three to four storey apartment blocks and two storey terraces occupy the central steep section of the AAP area. The housing does not sit comfortably in the landscape, leading to awkward level changes to gain access and extensive areas of poorly used amenity grassland. A proportion of the terraced properties accessed off Frith Lane have been demolished in preparation for the redevelopment of the site.
- **Council Depot and Recycling Area** – The depot occupies a highly visible site opposite the entrance to Mill Hill East Station. As a gateway to the area it is extremely poor, consisting of parked council refuse fleet, vehicle servicing yards and warehousing. The site offers potential for redevelopment subject to the successful relocation of the depot.
- **Bittacy Business Centre** – The layout and appearance of the business park is poor and there is a need for improvements to the quality of accommodation available to businesses. The business centre occupies a good location and should be retained for employment use.

- **Bittacy Court (Barnet Homes)** –These flats are separated from the core of the AAP area by a railway bridge. It is not anticipated that significant change will occur in this area during the first phases of the AAP, although in the longer term the site may be reviewed given its prominent location at the entrance to the AAP area from the south.
- **IBSA House** – A large, multi-storey brick building in the northwest corner of the AAP area currently occupied by the Jehovah's Witnesses. The rear of the building abuts the MoD land and forms an unattractive vista to Reading Way. Development should seek to mitigate the visual impact of this building, although it is not anticipated that major change will occur to this area given existing uses.

## Transport and Accessibility

3.4.10 The development area is well-connected to the strategic highway network being located in close proximity to the A406 North Circular and A1 trunk road as well as the M1 motorway. However, the lack of a satisfactory east-west route in the area means that traffic is forced to make use of either the Bittacy Hill / Frith Lane junction and/or Holders Hill Circus gyratory which have limited capacity, thereby placing considerable pressure on both junctions during peak times.

3.4.11 To the north of the AAP area is Partingdale Lane, but due to its character it has limited capacity.

The mature landscape of Inglis Barracks.



3.4.12 The site has a public transport accessibility level (PTAL) of 1 to high 2. Three bus services pass along the perimeter roads of either Bittacy Hill or Frith Lane and much of the site is located within 400m of an existing bus stop. The site is adjacent to Mill Hill East Underground station, providing direct access to Central London. The London Underground station is a terminus for a secondary branch off the main High Barnet branch of the Northern Line.

3.4.13 A range of community facilities are located nearby, many within walking or cycling distance of the AAP area. The challenge in terms of access and movement is to develop suitable road, cycle and pedestrian links through the site in a way which promotes sustainable travel and at the same time alleviates pressure on the local highway network.

## 3.5 Existing Social Characteristics

3.5.1 A full assessment of the social characteristics of the existing population has been undertaken as part of the AAP Baseline Report. The key issues and needs which have influenced development of the AAP may be summarised as follows:

- The population in the southern part of the AAP area and the surrounding area experience relatively high levels of deprivation. The site currently scores poorly on the deprivation index in relation to housing stock and services.
- Local people in the southern area suffer from poor health indicators.

- The young demographic profile of the Mill Hill East area (especially 0-14 years) gives rise to a requirement for appropriate facilities and services (e.g. children's services, playgrounds and facilities for young people).
- The Mill Hill East area has the workforce and education base, supported by Barnet's qualifications profile, to attract high profile knowledge based businesses and a resident base to support them. Such businesses will require good quality office space, adequate employment land and good infrastructure and transport links.

3.5.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been undertaken which has identified a number of key equality target groups that have the potential to be most significantly affected by development. The EqIA has informed the preparation of the AAP and the inclusion of mitigation measures to ensure these groups will benefit from the proposed development.

3.5.3 Educational requirements arising from the development of the area have been assessed and it has been concluded that there would be a need for a new primary school and additional secondary school places in new or existing facilities. Further demand for increased health care provision is also anticipated. Provision of other community facilities and open space will be required to take into account access to existing provision in the area in order to ensure the needs of residents of the development are adequately served.

# 4 The Vision for Mill Hill East

## 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Mill Hill East has been identified in the London Plan as a place with significant potential for intensification in residential, employment and other uses through development of sites at densities to reflect the characteristics of the area.



Testing options at a stakeholder workshop.

4.1.2 Development will be required to deliver all aspects of the Three Strands Approach: protection of the environment; enhancement of the suburban character of the area; and sustainable growth. Development will also be required to accommodate education, recreation and community facilities on site.

## 4.2 The Vision for Mill Hill East

4.2.1 The vision for Mill Hill East has been developed in collaboration with stakeholders and members of the local community. Extensive consultation has ensured that the vision addresses the aspirations and needs of the local area and of the wider borough.

4.2.2 Mill Hill East represents a major regeneration and development opportunity in the heart of Barnet. In 10-15 years time, Mill Hill East will be transformed into

one of the highest quality sustainable developments and successful suburbs in this part of North London. Developing an appropriate mix of uses within a well designed layout is vital to ensure that real benefits to the community will be delivered. It will provide within a green suburban context, new homes and business opportunities with high quality community services, transport and access to green open space and leisure facilities. All development must be of the highest quality in public realm design, landscape design and architecture to create a thriving and attractive place in which people will choose to live and work, which sits comfortably with its surroundings, protects the adjoining Green Belt and enhances neighbouring areas.

4.2.3 The key purpose of the AAP is to provide a robust framework that can deliver this vision.

## 4.3 Development Principles

4.3.1 A series of development principles have been developed through consultation with stakeholders and the local community. These may be summarised under five key themes:

### A Successful 21st Century Suburb

- Creating a vibrant and attractive place in which to live, work and play;
- Seeking to accommodate the targets of the London Plan for a residential led development;
- Providing within the new development the mix of uses required for communities to work in the long term, socially, environmentally and economically;
- Taking an exemplary approach to energy use and sustainability.

### An Appropriate Character and Scale

- Ensuring that development is sensitive to the variations in character from Green Belt edge to station surrounds and reflecting this in a range of development densities;
- Ensuring high quality design to maximise the opportunities presented by the development.

### A New Heart for Mill Hill East

- Ensuring that the existing and future populations on site will have adequate social and community infrastructure and access to services through the creation of a local hub;
- Providing a range of opportunities for job creation within the site.

### A Green and Leafy Hillside

- Ensuring functional and attractive public open spaces are provided for the community and increased biodiversity is encouraged;
- Retaining the leafy character of the site, making the most of its steep topography, views out, and links into the wider green network.

### Making the Right Connections

- Making use of and improving the existing public transport in the area to encourage sustainable modes of travel;
- Providing mitigating measures to deal with increased traffic which will be produced as a result of the development;
- Connecting the new development into the surrounding area with new streets, bus, cycle and pedestrian links.

4.3.2 These development principles provide the basis for the policies and proposals set out in the AAP.

Public consultation on issues & opportunities.

