



West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan

Evidence Base Document A – Heritage and Character Assessment

For Submission to London Borough of Barnet

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On behalf of West Finchley Neighbourhood Forum

West Finchley Heritage and Character Assessment

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Quality information

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1. Introduction

This report presents a summary of the history and character of the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area, which lies within the London Borough of Barnet. It has been prepared by consultants at AECOM on behalf of Locality, working closely with the West Finchley Neighbourhood Forum and is based on a detailed appraisal of the area carried out through desk study and fieldwork.

Landscape is a broad, collective term that encompasses natural, rural, urban and semi-urban areas. It is defined by the European Landscape Convention as “... an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.” Landscape character assessment is used to describe and articulate what is special and distinctive about a particular place. The principles of landscape character assessment apply to all types of landscape, including urban townscape. It is used to identify recognisable patterns of elements or characteristics that make one place different from another. This report is focussed on the character of the urban townscape and its rural landscape context.

The information generated through the process of characterisation can be used as evidence to support the planning and design process. This approach is supported by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which states that design policies should be “grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area’s defining characteristics” and that “Neighbourhood plans can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development.”(MHCLG, 2018). In doing so, policies can ensure that development responds to local character and history, and reflects the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.



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Figure 1. Location and context

2. Approach

The approach of this study follows well-established character assessment techniques. The detailed desk study and fieldwork carried out to inform this assessment underpins the classification and description of character areas and broadly follows the process set out in the “Approach to Landscape Character Assessment” (Natural England, 2014). This approach has been tailored to meet the specific needs of the neighbourhood planning process and draws on further best practice guidance including:

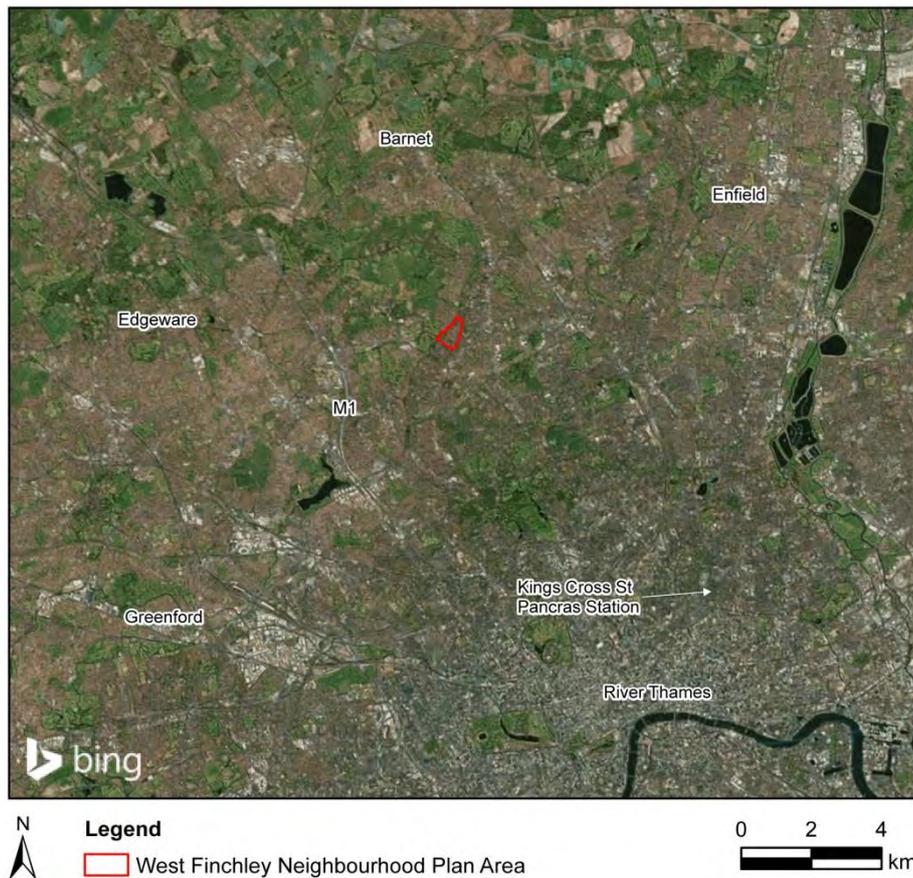
- Townscape Character Assessment, TIN 05/17 (Landscape Institute, 2017);
- Historic Environment: Good Practice in Planning Note 3 (Historic England, 2017);
- Shaping Neighbourhoods: Character and Context (GLA 2014);
- Character and identity Townscape and heritage appraisals in housing market renewal areas (Historic England and CABE 2008);
- Understanding Place Historic Area Assessments: Principles and Practice (Historic England 2010); and
- Using Historic Landscape Characterisation (Historic England 2004).

3. Context

This section of the report describes the location and context of the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area and summarises current planning policies which are relevant to the study.

3.1 Location

The West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area is located in north London, as shown in Figure 2.



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Figure 2. Wider Location and context

The West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area covers approximately half a hectare and is situated approximately 8.4km south of the M25 and approximately 10km north of central London. The Northern Line provides quick access into central London.

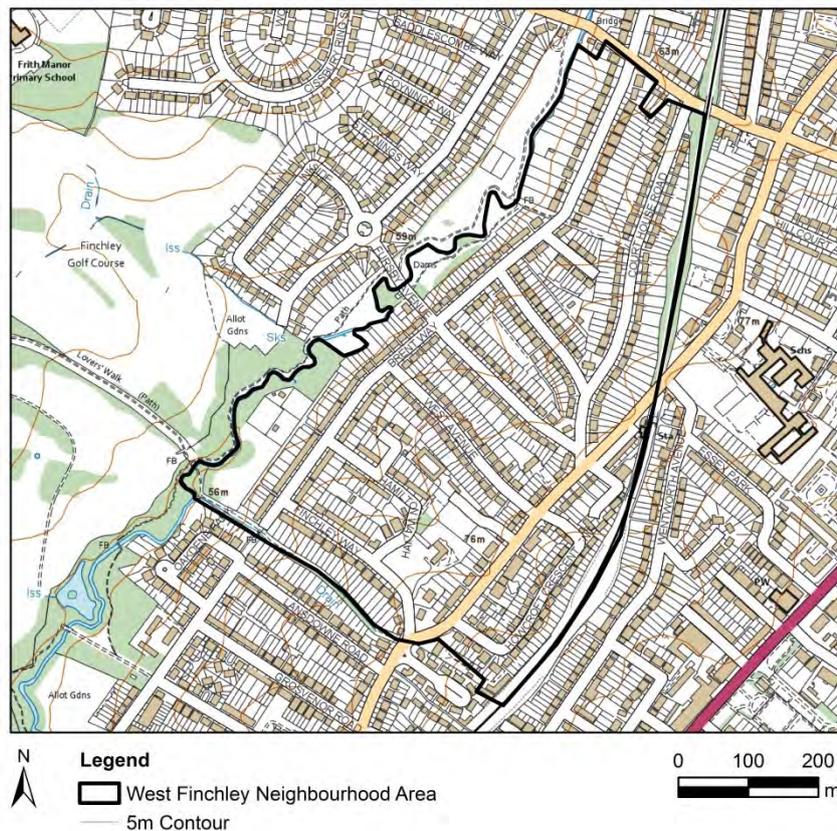


Figure 3. Street Plan

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3.2 Planning Policy Context

3.2.1 National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2018

The NPPF sets out that a key objective of the planning system is “to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development”, which will be achieved through three overarching objectives including “an environmental objective-to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment...” (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2018).

Part 12, Achieving well-designed places, states that “Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area’s defining characteristics. Neighbourhood plans can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development”. Part 12 goes on to state: “policy and decisions should ensure that developments... are visually attractive... (and) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities). An understanding of history and heritage is therefore important in developing neighbourhood plans to explain how this should inform future development.

Part 16, Conserving and enhancing the historic environment, states that “Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment... (taking) into account: ...the desirability of new

development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of place”.

Planning Practice Guidance

Planning Practice Guidance was reviewed, catalogued and published on the internet by the government in 2014 (DCLG, 2014). The section on design includes guidance on promoting landscape character (Paragraph: 007Reference ID: 26-007-20140306). It states that “*development should seek to promote character in townscape and landscape by responding to and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development*” and that the “*successful integration of new development with their surrounding context is an important design objective*”.

3.2.2 Regional Planning Policy

The London Plan, Consolidated Version 2016

The London Plan is the overall strategic plan for London, and it sets out a fully integrated economic, environmental, transport and social framework for development within the capital to 2036. Policy 7.4 of the London Plan, which has a bearing on the assessment of planning applications by LBB, clearly states that “*development should have regard to the form, function, and structure of an area, place or street and the scale, mass and orientation of surrounding buildings. It should improve an area’s visual or physical connection with natural features.*”

The Draft New London Plan 2018

The draft New London Plan showing Minor Suggested Changes was published on 13th August 2018. Although the New London Plan has not yet been adopted, it is a material consideration in planning decisions. Policy D1 states that proposals should “*respond to local context by delivering spaces that are positioned and of a scale, appearance and shape that responds successfully to the identity and character of the locality, including to existing and emerging street hierarchy, building types, forms and proportions*”. Proposals should also “*respect, enhance and utilise the heritage assets and architectural features that make up the local character*”. (GLA, 2018)

Shaping Neighbourhoods: Character and Context Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), 2014

This SPG sets out an approach and process to help understand the character and context of a place (GLA, 2014). The results can inform the planning and design process and guide changes in ways which are responsive to place. The SPG states “*buildings, streets and open spaces should provide a high-quality design response that:*

- has regard to the pattern and grain of the existing spaces and streets in orientation, scale, proportion and mass;
- contributes to a positive relationship between the urban structure and natural landscape features, including the underlying landform and topography of an area
- is human in scale, ensuring buildings create a positive relationship with street level activity and people feel comfortable with their surroundings
- allows existing buildings and structures that make a positive contribution to the character of a place to influence the future character of the area; and
- is informed by the surrounding historic environment.”

3.2.3 Local Planning Policy

The London Borough of Barnet (LBB) Local Plan

The London Borough of Barnet Local Plan (the Local Plan) comprises a suite of Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Guidance (LBB 2018). Those relevant to this report are considered in turn below:

The Core Strategy sets out the vision, objectives and policies that the local authority will seek to deliver. The following policies are relevant to this report:

Policy CS1: Barnet’s place shaping strategy- protection, enhancement and consolidated growth- the Three Strands Approach.

- *“The council... will focus major housing and economic growth in the most suitable locations... while continuing to conserve and enhance the distinctiveness of Barnet”.*
- *“Only support proposals for tall buildings in the strategic locations... identified in Core Strategy Policy CS5 subject to them not having an unacceptably harmful impact on their surroundings.”*

Policy CS5: Protecting and enhancing Barnet's character to create high quality places.

- *“...ensure that development in Barnet respects local context and distinctive local character creating places and buildings of high quality design. Developments should:*
 - o *...provide vibrant, attractive and accessible public spaces;*
 - o *Respect and enhance the distinctive natural landscapes of Barnet;*
 - o *Protect and enhance the gardens of residential properties;*
 - o *Protect important local views...*
 - o *Enhance the borough's high quality suburbs and historic areas through the provision of buildings of the highest quality...*
 - o *Proposals affecting heritage assets would be required to “respect and enhance the asset”*

Policy CS7: Enhancing and protecting Barnet's open spaces

- *Protect and enhance open spaces, “ensuring that the character of green spaces of historic significance is protected”.*

The Development Management Policies document “sets out the policy framework for decision making on planning applications”. (LBB 2012)

Policy DM01: Protecting Barnet's character and amenity

- *All development should represent high quality design...*
- *be based on an understanding of local characteristics... preserve or enhance local character and respect the appearance, scale, mass, height and pattern of surrounding buildings, space and streets.*
- *...ensure attractive, safe and, where appropriate, vibrant streets which provide visual interest, particularly at street level and avoid blank walls... should retain outdoor amenity space having regard to its character.*
- *Conversion of dwellings into flats in roads characterised by houses will not normally be appropriate.*
- *Loss of houses in roads characterised by houses will not normally be appropriate.*
- *Development proposals will be required to include hard and soft landscaping that:*
 - o *is well laid out in terms of access, car parking and landscaping*
 - o *considers the impact of hardstandings on character*
 - o *achieve a suitable visual setting for the building*
 - o *provide an appropriate level of new habitat including tree and shrub planting*
 - o *make a positive contribution to the surrounding area*

Policy DM05: Tall buildings

- *Tall buildings outside the strategic locations identified in the Core Strategy will not be considered acceptable.*

Policy DM06: Barnet's heritage and conservation

- *All heritage assets will be protected in line with their significance. All development will have regard to the local historic context.*

3.2.4 Historic Development

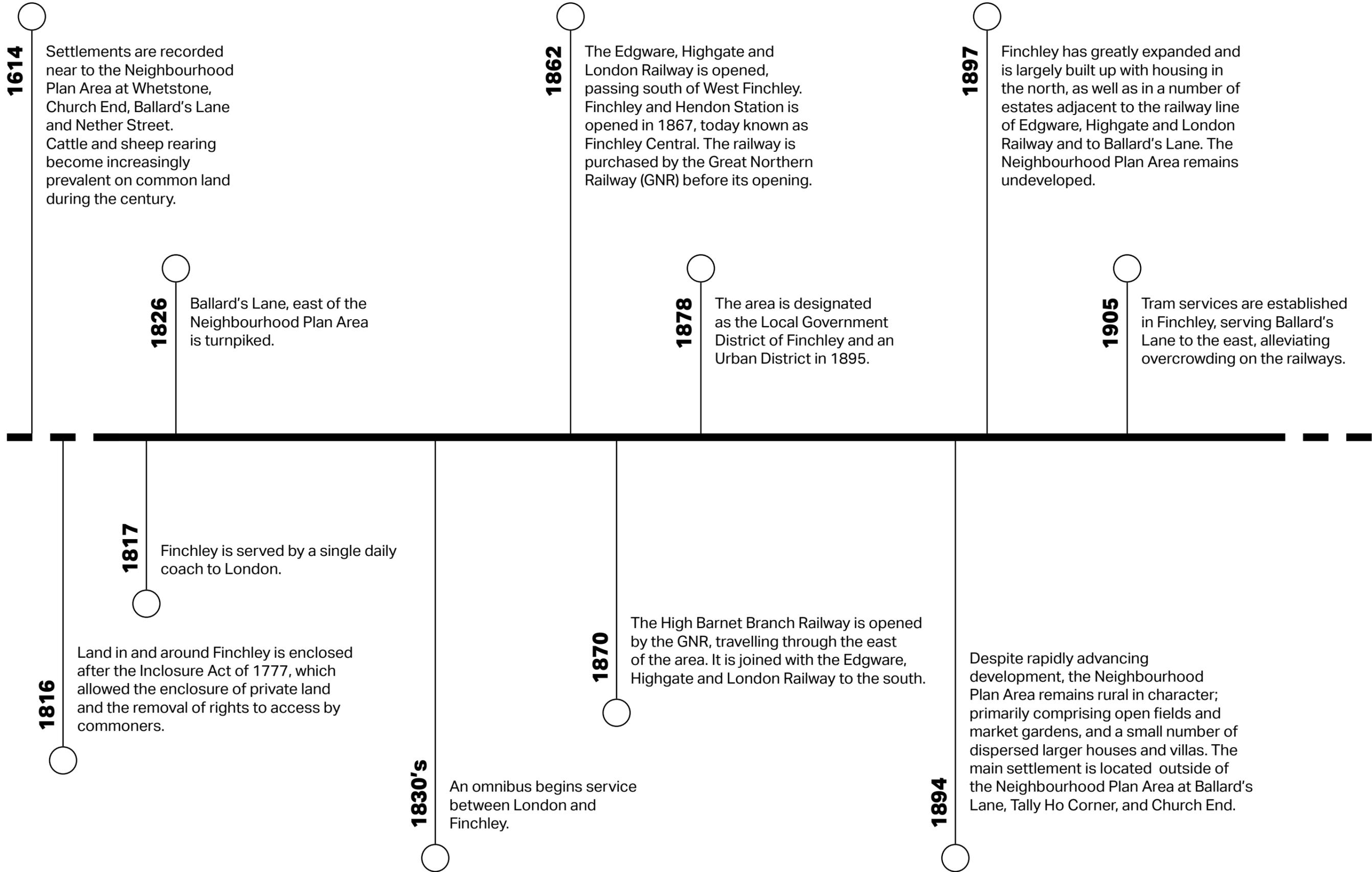
The place name Finchley is thought to have derived from Finch's clearing in Anglo Saxon which referred to the clearing in the woodland which once covered most of northern Middlesex and southern Hertfordshire; known then as Finchley wood. However it is not recorded until the 13th century by which time a church had been established at the present day site of St Mary-at-Finchley Church in Finchley Church End. Much of the area in and around the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area remained part of the extensive woodland until the 17th century.

Throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods the area remained rural, and the local economy was focused around woodland management and pig husbandry to provide the city of London with fuel and food. Other small scale industries are evident on historic maps, including marl extraction and clay pits for brick making.

Throughout the 19th century fruit growing and the creation of market gardens and nurseries became increasingly common in the area to meet the growing demands of London.

West Finchley, as seen today, was principally developed in the inter-war years. Development in the area comprises almost exclusively three bed semi-detached properties giving a clear identity and consistent character. This was influenced by, and typical of, the garden city movement and Metroland style developments of that period; residential estates of three bed semi-detached houses. The resulting townscape comprises of semi-detached houses and tree-lined streets with front gardens and regular breaks between buildings. It is this style of development which emerged during the inter-war period and defines the distinctiveness of the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Nether Street, in the east of the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area, is identified as an 'Area of Archaeological Significance' in Barnet's Development Plan Document. As such, development proposals within the area would be required to detail how they would '*investigate, catalogue and where possible preserve the remains in situ or in a museum*'. (LBB, 2012)



1909

Large swathes of land in the west of Finchley (south of the Neighbourhood Plan Area), are leased to the Hampstead garden Suburb Trust for house building. Leases to the Co-Partnership Tenants followed in 1911.

1920

North Finchley is near entirely built up by speculative private development.

1921

The GNR is subsumed into the London & North Eastern Railway (LNER) by the 1921 Railways Act.

1931

The Finchley area emerges as a middle class suburb, attested by the census which records 17% and 21% of men working as clerks or in banking and insurance respectively. 23% of women were employed as typists, gradually replacing employment locally in domestic service.

1933

West Finchley Station is opened on the High Barnet Branch Railway.

1933

Finchley is designated as the Municipal Borough of Finchley.

1938

West Finchley has been entirely developed by middle class housing, consisting primarily of three bed semi-detached houses reflecting the styles of the buildings in garden cities and Metroland.

1940

LNER railways in the area are served by Northern Line trains after integration into the London Underground Network in the late 1930s. LNER services continue until 1941.

1965

The Municipal Borough of Finchley is subsumed into the London Borough of Barnet.

3.2.5 Landscape Designations

The West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area is not subject to any specific landscape designations.

The south western edge of the area, outside the built up extent of the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area, is designated as Green Belt. This is a non statutory designation and, whilst not specifically a landscape designation, Green Belt does have a bearing on the character of the area. Paragraphs 133 – 141 of the NPPF explain that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy should be to “*keep land permanently open*” and that the “*essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence*”. Paragraph 141 goes on to state that Green Belt should “*retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity*”. (NPPF, 2018) The north western edge of the area is bound by Metropolitan Open Land, which in planning policy terms is considered equal to the Green Belt.

3.2.6 Existing Landscape Character Assessment

Existing character assessments have been reviewed to provide some context to this more detailed assessment. The study area falls within National Character Area (NCA) 111, Northern Thames Basin as defined by Natural England (Natural England, 2013). This NCA is broad but provides some context to the character of the study area. The key characteristics of this area which are of particular relevance to this assessment are:

- “*Market towns have expanded over time as have the London suburbs and commuter settlements...*”
- “*Brick-built dwellings are characteristic from the from the late 17th century onwards*”

The area is also covered by a borough level assessment, namely the Characterisation Study of London Borough of Barnet (Urban Practitioners, 2010). The study identifies five typologies throughout the Borough. The study area falls within the ‘Residential Streets’ typology, key features of which are listed below.

- “*Residential streets are... often associated with interwar housing*”;
- “*Characterised by a simple loose grid of streets forming a permeable network, with each plot having frontage directly onto the street.*”; and
- “*Typically regular plots are allocated to individual dwellings*”.

On account of the varied form covered by the ‘Residential Streets’ typology the characterisation study defines six ‘secondary typologies “*in order to gain a better understanding of how urban character varies across these streets*”. The West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area is located within the ‘Suburban’ secondary typology, which is defined as being:

- “*low density coupled with an overall level of architectural coherence*”.
- “*streets are lined with both detached and semi-detached houses*”
- “*building heights are predominantly two storeys*”
- “*broad, open street profile with medium to large front gardens*”
- “*dominance of housing built during the interwar period*”.

The study also defines 16 character areas within the borough, the boundaries of which “*relate closely with the typologies... and ...are organised around clearly identifiable centres*”. The West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area is located within the ‘Finchley’ character area. Key characteristics that relate to the land within the boundary of the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area are recorded below:

- “*The street layout follows a predominantly linear form of connected streets*”;
- “*housing is predominantly detached and semi-detached*”; and
- “*...an overall consistency of massing within the built form, with most residential units rising to two or three storeys*”

4. Character Assessment

Key Characteristics

Natural England defines key characteristics as “*those combinations of elements which help to give an area its distinctive sense of place*” that would result in significant consequences for the current character if they were changed or lost. As a result, they form important evidence to support the development of planning and management policies and a reference point against which to monitor change. The key characteristics of the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area are as follows:

- Wide linear tree lined streets;
- Almost exclusively residential in land use;
- A quiet area benefiting from few main connecting roads;
- Terrace and semi-detached two storey interwar homes set back from the road by front gardens;
- Channelled westerly views afforded from the higher land to the east;
- A distinctive band of red brick work lines the pavement through residential streets;
- Bay windows and gable roofs form frontal projections on many properties;
- Surrounding infrastructure and watercourses create a verdant backdrop; and
- An area of homogenous and unified character.

As set out above, the character of the landscape is the result of the action and interaction of a range of natural and/or human factors. These are considered in turn below in relation to the neighbourhood plan area.



Figure 4. View of interwar properties with varied form along Finchley Way

4.1 Natural Factors

4.1.1 Geology and Soils

The underlying geology of an area is often largely hidden from view but has a strong influence on its character, having been shaped by natural processes including erosion and sedimentation over millions of years. These processes help to define the landform, soils, vegetation, drainage and building materials which are common in an area.

The bedrock in this area is London Clay Formation which comprises clay, silt and sand. It is a sedimentary bedrock formed between 56 and 47.8 million years ago during the Palaeogene period. (Geology of Britain, 2018).

The soil in the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area is typically a slowly permeable, slightly acidic, loamy and clayey soil with moderate fertility. (Soilscapes, 2018).

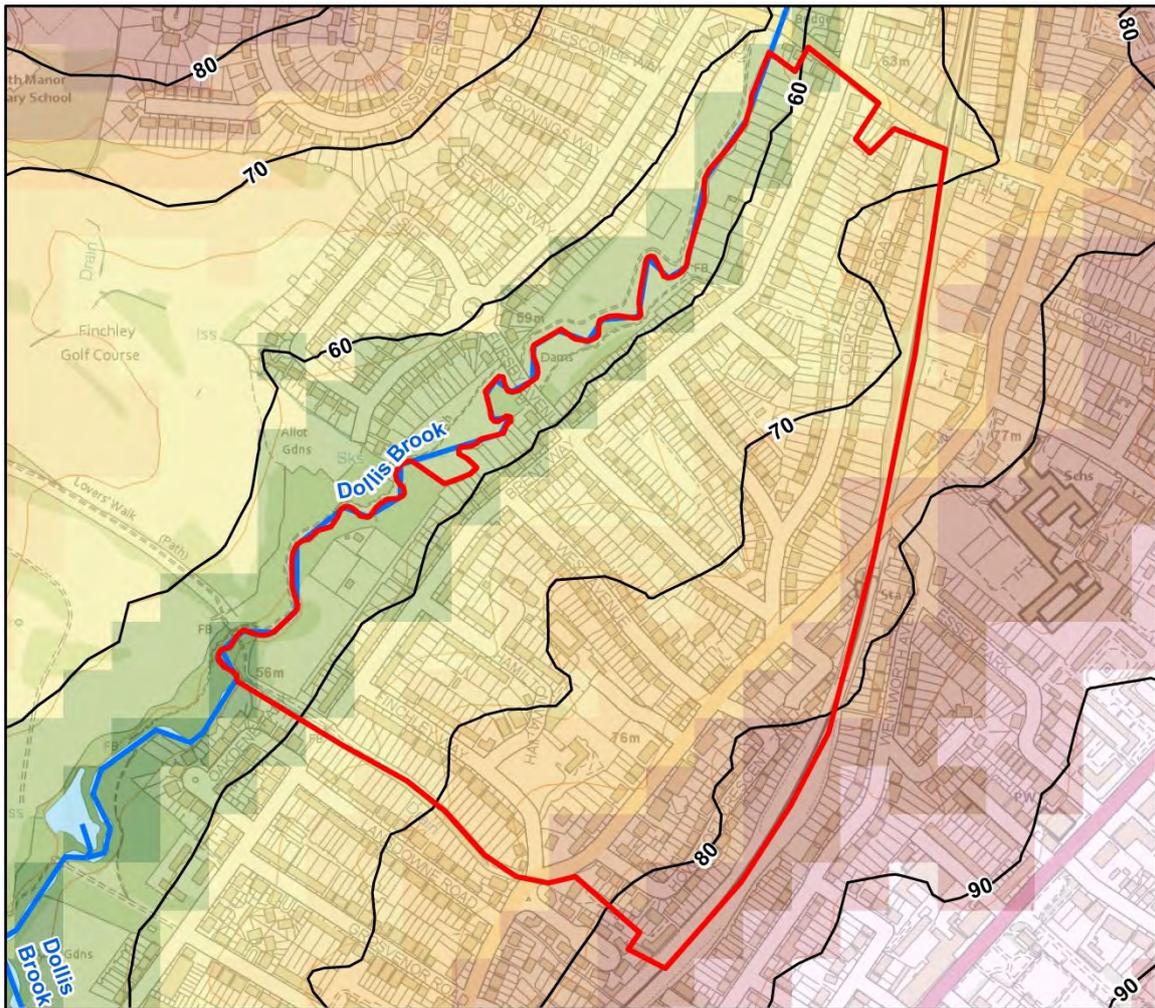
4.1.2 Topography and Hydrology

The West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area is situated on the eastern side of a shallow valley formed by Dollis Brook which meanders through the valley floor at approximately 55m above ordnance datum (AOD). From here, the land steadily rises eastward toward the Northern Line railway which sits at approximately 85m AOD, forming the eastern boundary of the area. Many of the residential streets in the area run east / west, affording channelled views westward toward the opposite side of the valley.

A small stream flows along the area's southern boundary, at Lovers Walk, This feeds the Dollis Brook.



Figure 5. View of Dollis Brook from the Riverside Walk



Legend

West Finchley Neighbourhood Area

Watercourse

Contour

Surface Water

Elevation (m above ordnance datum)

50 - 55

55 - 60

60 - 65

65 - 70

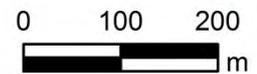
70 - 75

75 - 80

80 - 85

85 - 90

90 - 95



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Figure 6. Topography and hydrology

4.2 Cultural Factors

4.2.1 Land Use

The West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area is primarily a residential area comprising linear residential streets. The absence of commercial or industrial uses results in a quiet and local character.

West Finchley Station is located in the east of the area providing quick links into central London via the Northern Line. A short parade of shops and local services, set back from Nether Street, extends south from the underground station. This area represents a key hub of activity.

In contrast to the busy station and parade of shops, the south western corner of the area is occupied by Brent Way Allotments. This is a calm and quiet area of the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area, resulting from its recreational land use and its location on the valley floor, away from transport corridors. Finchley Lawn Tennis Club, comprising five hard courts, is also located in the south western corner of the area.

The western boundary of the area is formed by Dollis Brook. The Dollis Valley Greenwalk lines the bank of the brook, providing a recreational resource.



Figure 7. Pedestrian approach to Finchley Tennis Club



Figure 8. Brent Way Allotments



Figure 9. Bridge over underground railway line at West Finchley Station (locally listed)

4.2.2 Movement and Connectivity

The eastern boundary of the area is formed by the Northern Line railway. West Finchley Station is located approximately mid way along the eastern boundary and forms a key gateway into and out of the area. A pedestrian crossing over Nether Street provides access between the station and the body of the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area.



Figure 10. Entrance to West Finchley Station

Vehicular movement through the area is facilitated by two main routes running broadly north / south, namely Nether Street / Court House Gardens / Court House Road in the east, and Brent Way / Chesterfield Road / Westbury Road in the west. A series of residential streets run east / west between the two main routes, providing access to a number of cul-de-sacs. Fursby Avenue and Argyle Road form the primary east / west routes, providing access across the valley floor, to a residential area located west of Dollis Brook.

Nether Street, in the south of the area, and Argyle Road in the north, both provide wider connectivity, tying into the A598 which joins the North Circular Road, located approximately 1.5km south of the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area.

As the area is contained to the south and west by Dollis Brook, and to the east by the Northern Line railway, Many of the roads in the area are internal link roads, rather than connecting through roads. Gateways and nodes are created as a consequence and are listed below:

- Finchley Way / Nether Street roundabout forms a key gateway from the south; and
- Argyle Road junction with Westbury Road and Court House Road form a key gateway from the north.



Figure 11. **Entrance into the area from the south east** **Exit from the area to the north east**

The Public Right of Way (PRoW) network comprises the Dollis Valley Greenwalk that follows Dollis Brook on the valley floor, and a local footpath that forms the southern boundary of the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan area. The Dollis Valley Greenwalk comprises a tarmac path with mown grass verges either side to maintain sight lines. Mature woodland edge vegetation encloses the footpath, opening occasionally to allow glimpses of the Dollis Brook to the west. Toward the south of the area, the vegetation lining the Greenwalk opens out to create an area of amenity grass and parkland trees. Footbridges cross the Dollis Brook providing access to land west of the watercourse.



Figure 12. **Series of four photos showing the variety of spaces along the Dollis Valley Green-walk**

4.2.3 Urban structure and built form

Residential development throughout the area comprises interwar, semi-detached housing creating a uniform character. Properties are typically two storeys with generous roof space. Frontal projections are common, in particular entrance porches and bay windows extending into the roof space terminating in a pitched roof.



Figure 13. Consistent frontal projections with variety of detailing



Figure 14. Houses arranged with equal spacing with a strong rhythm resulting from consistent form and projections

The properties are typically arranged in a uniform, evenly spaced pattern with bay windows or gable ends protruding a consistent distance from the building footprint, forming a clear building line set back an unvarying distance from the street. A consistent palette of colours and materials, including pale rendered walls and red tiled roofs accented by red brick detailing further unifies the street scene. As a result of the regular building form and regular use of materials and colour, the streets have a coherent identity. Subtle differences in detailing provide interest to the townscape. For example, some properties display exposed timber frames whilst others exhibit overhanging brickwork on the corners of projections. Many properties are partly or fully rendered white. The variety of detailing reflects a range of styles including Tudorbethan (a mix of Tudor Revival and Elizabethan Revival styles), domestic revival and art deco.



Figure 15. Variety of detailing on residential frontages providing interest across the area



Figure 16. Example of neighbouring properties with similar form but different detailing, contributing to a varied and interesting townscape



Figure 17. **Example of properties with well-maintained scale, proportion and symmetry with subtle differences in detailing**

Amendments to the original built form through extensions and conversions are made are an apparent contrast to the otherwise consistent building design throughout the area. As a result, such features have greater potential to detract from the coherent character of the streets. This is often seen most clearly in the 'boxing off' of roof lines, thereby removing the symmetry of semi-detached properties. Chimney stacks are also regularly lost as a result of such conversions.



Figure 18. **Series of three photos demonstrating the effect of loft conversions on the composition of the roofline of semi-detached properties**

UPVC windows are commonplace throughout the area. Many have been integrated successfully; however such installations have a negative effect on the character of the streetscape when large expanses of glazing fill the space once occupied by multiple side hung windows. Smaller panels and detailing tend to contribute toward the successful integration of alterations and modern materials.



Figure 19. Photo demonstrating the contrast between the effect of divided glazing and large panes of glazing

The topography also brings diversity to the area, particularly on the roads that run north / south, such as Westbury Road. In such locations properties on the eastern side of the street are elevated above road level and those on the west sit slightly below.



Figure 20. Photos showing elevated and lower properties

Properties are generally outward looking- set within generous plots with small front gardens and large back gardens. Many rear gardens sit back-to-back with those on the parallel street, such as those belonging to properties on West Avenue and Fursby Avenue. Where space permits however, infill development or alternative land use has occurred; for example properties located on Penstemon Close and Maple Close have been built on land between Hamilton Way and West Avenue. Likewise, a linear stretch of allotments occupies land set between Fursby Avenue and Nethercourt Avenue. Access to such land is via tracks or roads between properties. Such access requires a wider gap than that typical between the semi-detached homes. Whilst occasional occurrences have limited scope to disrupt the pattern established by the regular spacing between buildings, the cumulative effect of multiple accesses may have potential to disrupt the otherwise consistent form.



Figure 21. Access to Maple Close

Front gardens are a consistent feature throughout the area. Many include a driveway and some have been completely paved to accommodate more car parking. The presence of such gardens, whether paved or vegetated, results in a more open character and provides some defensible space for properties. Where multiple front gardens have been converted to driveways, the cumulative effect tends to create a more urban, rather than suburban, environment.



Figure 22. Photo demonstrating the urbanising effect of multiple front gardens converted to driveways



Figure 23. Photo demonstrating the integration of driveways, maintaining boundary treatments and planting

This openness of the streets is furthered by the presence of mostly low boundary treatments. Both red brick walls and hedgerows rarely exceed c.1.5m, thereby retaining the openness and natural surveillance throughout the area. Such openness and visibility throughout the area is limited where taller boundary treatments are present.



Figure 24. Example of where taller evergreen hedge, on the right of the view, limits the openness of the view, compared with the left of the street which is occupied by lower boundary treatments.

Although the style of built form described above is the dominant vernacular throughout the area, the built form associated with Nether Street and Howcroft Crescent shows a number of differences.

Penstemon Close leads west from Nether Street to Salix Court which appears to be of late 20th century construction. Standing on the site once occupied by a Nursery, Salix Court comprises low, two storey, buff brick houses arranged around a central courtyard. The layout and materiality of the public realm give rise to a semi private character.



Figure 25. **Courtyard at Salix Court**

Further 'Court' developments are located on Nether Street, including Carlton Court and Chilvins Court. Such developments tend to be constructed from red brick and comprise three to four storeys of flats, presenting a civic character highlighted by the communal grounds in contrast with the private front gardens of the surrounding private houses.

Houses on Howcroft Crescent tend to be post war semi-detached homes, predominantly constructed of red brick. Front driveways are often present in the place of front gardens giving rise to a more urban character. A number of more recent builds front onto Nether Street. Such properties take reference from the interwar housing style but lack the varied detailing and frontal projections that are characteristic of the wider area.



Figure 26. **Top left: Carlton Court, top right: Chilvins Court, bottom left: contemporary homes, bottom right: Howcroft Crescent.**

4.2.4 Heritage Assets

The West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area was developed from the 1930s as a suburban commuter settlement of London, connected by rail. Development in the area is strongly influenced by the Metroland developments. These estates comprise grid patterned streets, on a looser curvilinear network than earlier development, lined with trees and with the typical semi-detached house set back from the street by ample front gardens.

Planning philosophy during the period was centred on the concept of 'zoning', and areas of residential development were to be separate from other use types. Development was usually accompanied by a small local centre, however, tertiary to primary urban centres. These included local amenities, a laundromat and mixed use shops which originally had a restrictive covenant limiting the shops from directly competing with one another when they were first built in 1932. West Finchley's local centre can be found within the Neighbourhood Plan Area on Nether Street. Public houses were often not included in such schemes, due to divided opinion regarding the consumption of alcohol at the time, and a public house is not included in local amenities in the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area.

A single heritage asset is located in the Neighbourhood Plan Area, comprising a listed building.

Listed Buildings

Historic England, the government's statutory advisor on the historic environment, undertakes listing on behalf of the Secretary of State. Listing is the act of identifying the nationally important parts of heritage so they can be protected by law.

The list of protected buildings or sites is known as the National Heritage List for England or NHLE. It is the official and up to date record of all nationally protected historic buildings.

Barnet Borough Council has prepared information and guidance on listed buildings which can be found on the Council's website: <https://www.barnet.gov.uk/citizen-home/planning-conservation-and-building-control/conservation/Statutory-Listed-Buildings.html>

A single listed building is located in the area, and is considered of special interest and designated as grade II. Cedar Court (NHLE 1119706) is a block of flats constructed for the Brent Garden Village Society in 1912, in a Queen Anne Revival style to appear as a country house.



Figure 27. Cedar Court, Grade II listed building

Locally Listed Buildings

A locally listed heritage asset is a building, structure or designed space which is deemed to be of local architectural or historic interest and is included on the local list drawn up by the local planning authority. It is a local designation that provides no additional planning controls and is separate from national listing which is undertaken by Historic England.

Barnet Borough Council has adopted a formal list of local buildings. A single locally listed asset is located within the neighbourhood plan area, comprising Fursby House on Nether Street. A further locally listed asset, the West Finchley Station Bridge, is partly located in the area. As part of this assessment, the buildings within the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area have been assessed to determine whether there are any further buildings that are considered to be of historic interest.

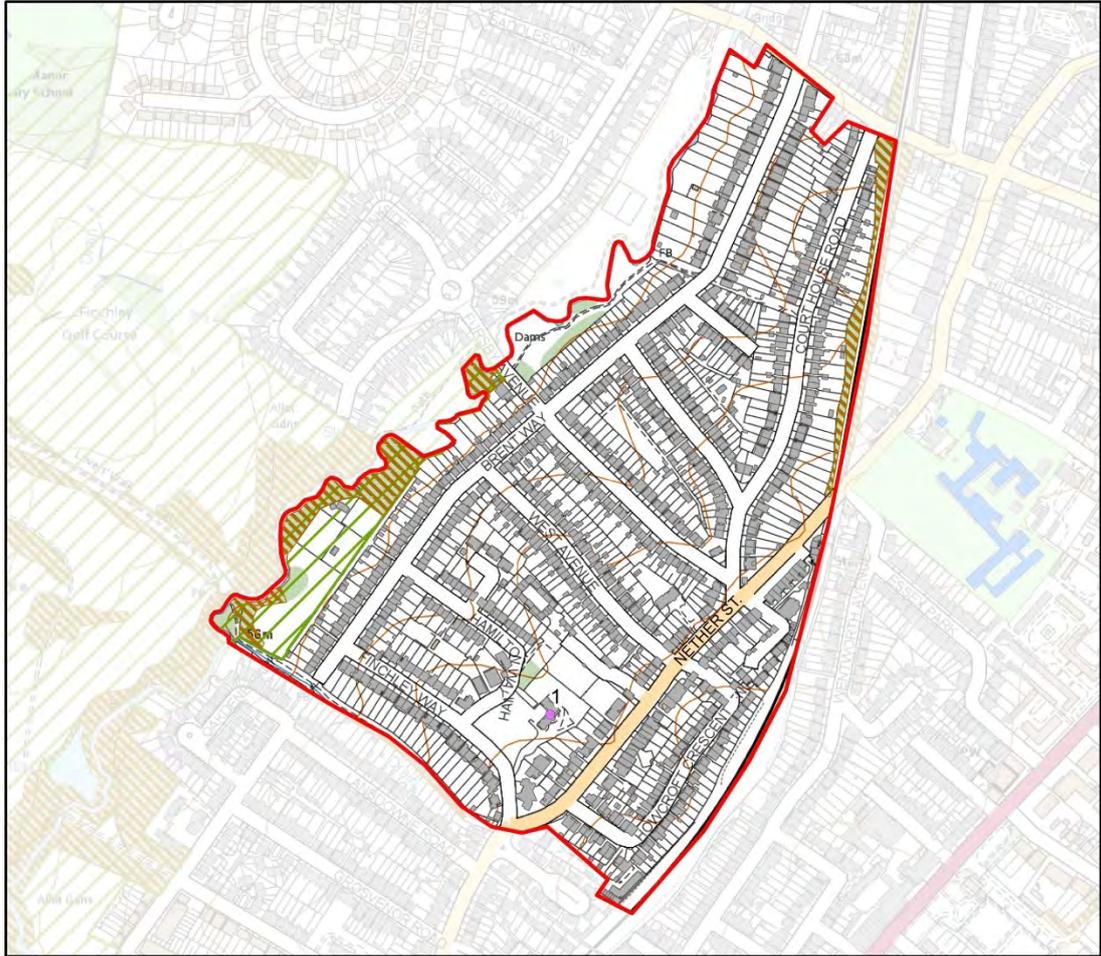
Nos. 82-84 Westbury Road is considered to be of historic interest and positively contributes to the local distinctiveness of the area. This comprises a semi-detached pair of houses dated to the 1930s, constructed of rendered brick painted white, in the art deco style. No. 84 is unusually well preserved and the exterior is largely original. Of note are original steel framed windows, which include a curved bay window. No.82 has not retained its original windows, and has been subject to unsympathetic extension.



Figure 28. Photo of 82 Westbury Road



Figure 29. Photo of 84 Westbury Road



Legend

- West Finchley Neighbourhood Area
- 5m Contour
- Building
- Listed Building Grade II
- Green Belt
- Woodland

0 100 200
m

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Figure 30. Land use, built form, heritage assets

4.2.5 Green space and public realm

Roads are typically wide and include a range of deciduous street trees, many of which are young specimens that have been recently planted. A linear stretch of red brick paving lines the roadway. The c.0.5m wide strip is sometimes laid to a basket weave, sometimes to diagonal herringbone and sometimes to a running bond. This use of material creates a consistent feature across area giving continuity and identity to the Neighbourhood Plan Area; whilst the subtle differences in paving layout, or in some instances grassed verges, gives identity to the individual streets.



Figure 31. View showing the typical street layout with two storey homes set back from the public realm by small front gardens. Young street trees line the highway and a linear stretch of red brick work delineates the edge of the pavements.

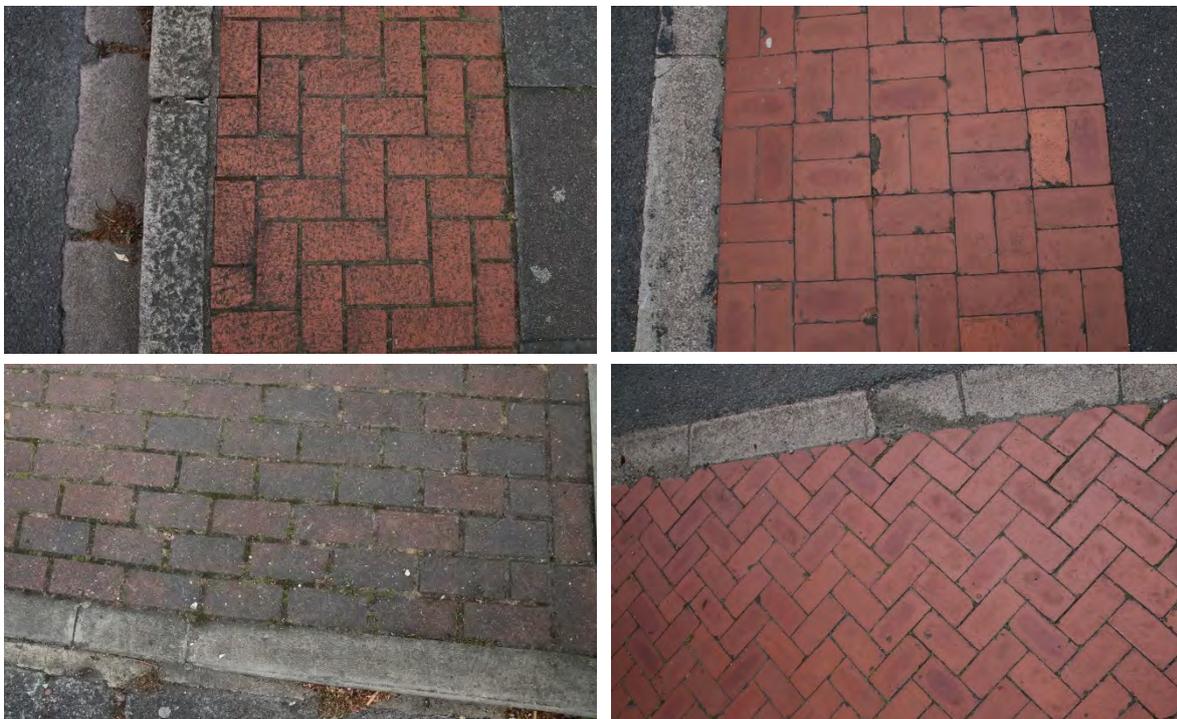


Figure 32. Collection of four images showing different brick formations stretching the length of residential streets

The area is contained to the east, west and south by trees associated with the Northern Line and Dollis Brook. A wooded backdrop is therefore present and apparent on the periphery of the area.

The area is almost void of street furniture, reflecting its residential identity. Five low planting beds are located adjacent to the parade of shops on Nether Street. These planters, containing mature deciduous trees and low shrub vegetation, provide a degree of separation between the commercial frontages and the highway. Civic style street furniture is also located here, including bins, timber benches, cycle stands, post box and phone box.



Figure 33. Example of street furniture on Nether Street, outside West Finchley underground station

The open space accessible from Finchley Way and Hamilton Way comprises an area of open undulating lawn surrounded by a wooden fence and a belt of mixed tree planting which separate the space from the surrounding residential area providing a sense of tranquillity. Brent Lodge once stood on the site. Purchased by Augustus Cooper in 1922, the Italian style mansion was left in trust to his sister Rosa Helen MacCallum who died in 1960. Upon her death, Augustus' will stated that the house and grounds, including the green, the copse and the orchard, were to be given to Finchley Borough Council. The will gave permission to pull down the house, with the condition that the "gardens and grounds shall be retained always as an open space and that the said gardens and grounds shall be open for the use and enjoyment always of the public...". Today the site provides 0.64ha. of open space, enhancing the visual amenity of the area and providing opportunity for recreation.

1) That the gardens and grounds shall be retained always as an open space and that the said gardens and grounds shall be open for the use and enjoyment always of the public under such reasonable regulations as may be made by the said Council from time to time for the care and upkeep thereof; and

ii) That the Council shall have power at their absolute discretion to pull down if they desire to do so the said house known as Brent Lodge in which case the site thereof shall be thrown into the gardens thereof and be subject to the conditions hereinbefore contained appertaining to the said gardens

Figure 34. Extract from the will of Augustus Cooper. Provided by West Finchley Neighbourhood Forum

Alongside the modern signage there is a suite of heritage signage and street names is present throughout the area, alluding to its history. Such signage is an important addition across the area, adding more to the identity of the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area than the predominant standard road signage.



Figure 35. Collection of signage from the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area

The primary green space in the area is the Green-walk that borders Dollis Brook. The space is accessible via a tarmac path that runs alongside the eastern side of the brook. Managed amenity grass with parkland trees follows the eastern side of the path. Recreational areas are located along the Green-walk on the western side of the brook, outside of the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan area. The green space provides a valuable ecological asset for the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area and is well connected to the wider green network that lies to the west of West Finchley. The London Green Belt abuts the western boundary of the Neighbourhood Plan area.



Figure 36. Left: Photos showing entrance to, and view within, open green space



Figure 37. Right: Riverside Walk Green Space

A plot of amenity grass enclosed by woodland and shrub vegetation is located off Finchley Way. The plot forms the only public green space within the area outside of the Dollis Valley.

4.2.6 Views

Views across the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area are mid-range and channelled along residential streets. The most open views are typically looking west since the topography affords longer distance views, across the valley, to the wooded ridgeline extending north from Mill Hill East. The background of the view typically comprises rising land with residential development set within woodland.



Figure 38. **Westerly view from Finchley Way**

4.2.7 Cultural Associations

Harry Beck, the designer of the 1933 London Underground map, lived in West Finchley from 1936 – 1960. A blue plaque is set on the house where he lived on Court House Road.



Figure 39. **Blue Plaque, 60 Court House Road**

Brent Lodge, an experiment in communal living as part of a co-operative system, was built on land which had been part of the charitable estate 'Warren's Gift' between 1817 and 1824. The house was demolished in 1962 despite efforts by the comedian Spike Milligan. West Finchley Station was opened in 1932.

5. Managing Change

The character of the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area, described above, is the result of a range of interactions between natural and human processes. This evolution is supported by the section on historical development, which describes how the structure and character of the area have changed over time. Together this provides a baseline against which change can be monitored and managed.

The evolution of the landscape will continue and therefore the management of change is essential to ensure that sustainable social, environmental and economic outcomes are achieved. This section, therefore, considers various factors which may influence change and inform the policies set out in the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan.

5.1 Positive aspects of character

There are a number of positive aspects of character which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced. These primarily relate to the local vernacular and consistency of built form.

- A high proportion of buildings are of good architectural quality, primarily dated to the 1930s;
- Standard heights and massing of buildings establishes a clear identity and preserve a human scale and sense of domesticity across the area;
- A number of styles are reflected in semi-detached houses in the area. These include Tudorbethan (a mix of Tudor Revival and Elizabethan Revival styles), domestic revival, and art deco;
- Subtle detailing on houses prevents the area from becoming monotonous;
- Generous front plots, and breaks in building frontages created by semi-detached houses, provide an open character and enhance the green element of an area which lacks public green spaces;
- Front gardens with low boundary treatments provide clear delineation between the public and private realm, whilst retaining a sense of openness and natural surveillance;
- Westerly views channelled along residential streets allude to the setting of the area on the edge of the Green Belt;
- Mature deciduous vegetation that surrounds the area to the east, west and south provide a verdant backdrop;
- Original paving treatments survive in many parts of the Neighbourhood Plan Area; comprising granite kerbstones, terracotta brick set within varying patterns and concrete paving slabs. Examples can be found at the junction of Nethercourt Avenue and Chesterfield Road. These paving treatments give colour and texture to the floor, and enhance a sense of cohesion with buildings in the area by referencing patterns and materials found in contemporary houses. This acts to break the division between house and street, unifying the streetscape;
- The consistent inclusion of frontal projections on houses throughout the area gives a strong rhythm to the street scene;
- Mature trees in the area provide a sense of privacy and intimacy in an otherwise open and low density area;
- Younger street trees are present throughout the area which help to ensure the longevity of tree lined streets;
- The 'barriers' or Dollis Brook and the Northern Line prevent the development of numerous access points, thereby retaining a quiet and local character;
- The Green-walk provides an important ecological and recreational resource; and
- A number of historic metal road signs survive in the area, for example that of Chesterfield Road.

5.2 Issues to be addressed

The following issues have been identified which could be addressed through new development or active management. These are principally related to the unsympathetic replacement of original features.

- Front and rear gardens, as well as soft landscaping, are a historic characteristic of 1930's suburban development and provide a high proportion of green space in the area. Therefore the loss of this to create driveways and hard standing severely detracts from the positive character of the area;
- The installation of large expanses of glazing, where multiple windows once hung, erodes the architectural quality of the area;
- Loss of original roofing materials has resulted in a loss of cohesion in the built form;
- Flat roof extensions and loft conversions disrupt the designed symmetry of semi-detached properties and disrupt the flow of the roof line across the area;
- Infill development has resulted in the loss of green spaces between buildings, and has increased the density of the urban grain; and
- A number of trees, which are an original designed feature of the suburban landscape of the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area, have been removed and not replaced.

5.3 Sensitivity to change

There are also some elements which are particularly sensitive to change. These relate to the retention of the coherent and unified character of the street scene.

- The rhythm of the streets results from the standardised widths of plots and buildings. The introduction of wider buildings would threaten to erode this characteristic;
- Conformity in scale and mass of houses in the area leaves them vulnerable to changes in scale in new development, which will alter the character of the area. Large roof additions can similarly impact upon scale and detract from the area's character;
- Access roads to infill development between residential streets disrupt the rhythm of the streets. Whilst this is not currently to the detriment of the area, the cumulative effect of increasing breaks in the building pattern has potential to erode the rhythm of the streets;
- Isolated conversion of front gardens to driveways has little effect on the character of the area, particularly when some vegetation is retained. The cumulative effect of new driveways has an urbanising effect, eroding the suburban character of the area and can result in the loss of original paving, verges and front boundaries; and
- As most buildings in the area (semi-detached houses) were designed as pairs, they are particularly susceptible to the effects of unsympathetic alterations to one of the pair.

5.4 Character Design Principles

Overall, the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area presents a unified and coherent character born from the original design intent of the interwar housing, much of which remains intact. Wide linear residential streets are occupied by two storey interwar houses which present interesting and varied form including bay windows and gable roofs. Such properties are set back from the road, promoting a sense of order and openness. Subtle differences in detailing make important contributions to the street scene, promoting variety and interest. Street trees and vegetated front gardens give rise to a suburban character. The area has few main roads and land uses outside of residential. As a result, there is a quiet and calm character. The Dollis Brook is a key asset in the area, contributing to the ecological and recreational network.

Principles for managing change in this area should focus on sustaining, reinforcing or enhancing those aspects which contribute to the distinctiveness of the local vernacular. The following principles should be considered when defining policies with respect to heritage and character:

- New residential development which takes a considered and appropriate approach to design, in an innovative or contemporary style, is more sympathetic to the historic fabric and townscape of the area than poorly executed historically referenced designs. Therefore new builds which employ the imitation of historic architectural styles, using cheaper modern materials and a lack of consideration to proportion and massing of local historic buildings, should be considered less appropriate in these instances;
- Equally infill development should aim to militate against the loss of open spaces between building plots by incorporating planting into potential schemes, and reducing hard landscaping;
- Residential conversions and extensions should consider their effect on the character of the streetscape, and seek to be sensitive to the original design intent of semi-detached properties;
- Seek to retain the openness afforded by the relationship between building heights and road widths;
- Soft landscaping and hedges for boundary treatments at the front of properties should be considered more responsive to the historic character of the area than hard landscaping;
- Surviving 1930s paving treatments should be conserved where possible, to enhance a sense of cohesion across the Neighbourhood Plan Area;
- Continue to ensure the longevity of street trees throughout the area;
- Seek to improve the character of the landscape outside West Finchley Station, in recognition of its position as a key gateway into, and out of, the area; and
- Article 4 directions applied to individual properties could be an appropriate measure to restrict permitted development rights and prevent incremental change which may negatively impact upon the character and appearance of the area. More information can be found at:
<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/historic-environment/article4directions/>

In addition to policy protection, this assessment has identified projects or initiatives which could be financed through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 (S106) contributions, or if the project is not eligible for these mechanisms, through other means of funding or delivery. CIL is a tool for local authorities to levy contributions from developers to help deliver infrastructure projects which benefit the local community – for more information, see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/community-infrastructure-levy>.

Section 106 agreements are site-specific and put in place to make it possible to approve a planning application that might not otherwise be acceptable in planning terms – for example, the provision of new green space. It is recommended to seek advice from the Local Planning Authority on what types of project can be funded through CIL and S106.

Projects and initiatives identified as having the potential to be brought forward by CIL, S106 or other means include:

- Conduct a green infrastructure and open space audit to seek protection for current assets and identify opportunity for expansion and connection; and
- Develop a strategy for rationalising the public realm to the front of West Finchley Station.

6. Next steps and sources of further information

This study is intended to provide evidence to support the development of policies with respect to heritage and character for the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan Area. As such, it does not provide a comprehensive overview of the contribution of individual buildings, streets or spaces to the character of the area. It should be considered alongside other evidence gathered through the plan making process, such as detailed policy reviews, consultation responses and site options assessments and the evidence base of the London Borough of Barnet Local Plan.

A wealth of further information and support is available to assist the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan in applying the principles set out in this assessment. The Locality website is a useful starting point and is updated regularly. Current guidance which may be of interest includes:

- Community Rights and Heritage, July 2016: <https://mycommunity.org.uk/resources/community-rights-and-heritage/>
- Design in Neighbourhood Planning, July 2018: <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/good-design-neighbourhood-planning/>

Further technical support is also available to priority neighbourhood planning groups and forums through Locality, funded by DCLG. The other packages of support currently available are:

- Housing Advice and Assessment
- Site Options and Assessment
- Masterplanning
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)
- Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)
- Evidence Base and Policy Development
- Plan Health Check Review

Further information is available in the Neighbourhood Planning Grant Guidance Notes produced by Locality: <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/>

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Appendix A - Historic maps



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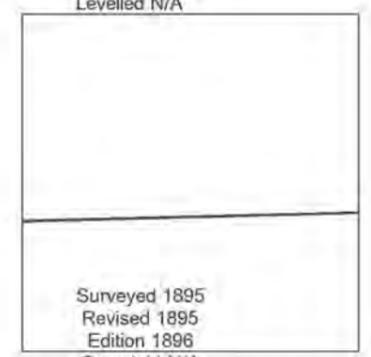
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Revised 1895
Edition N/A
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Surveyed 1895
Revised 1895
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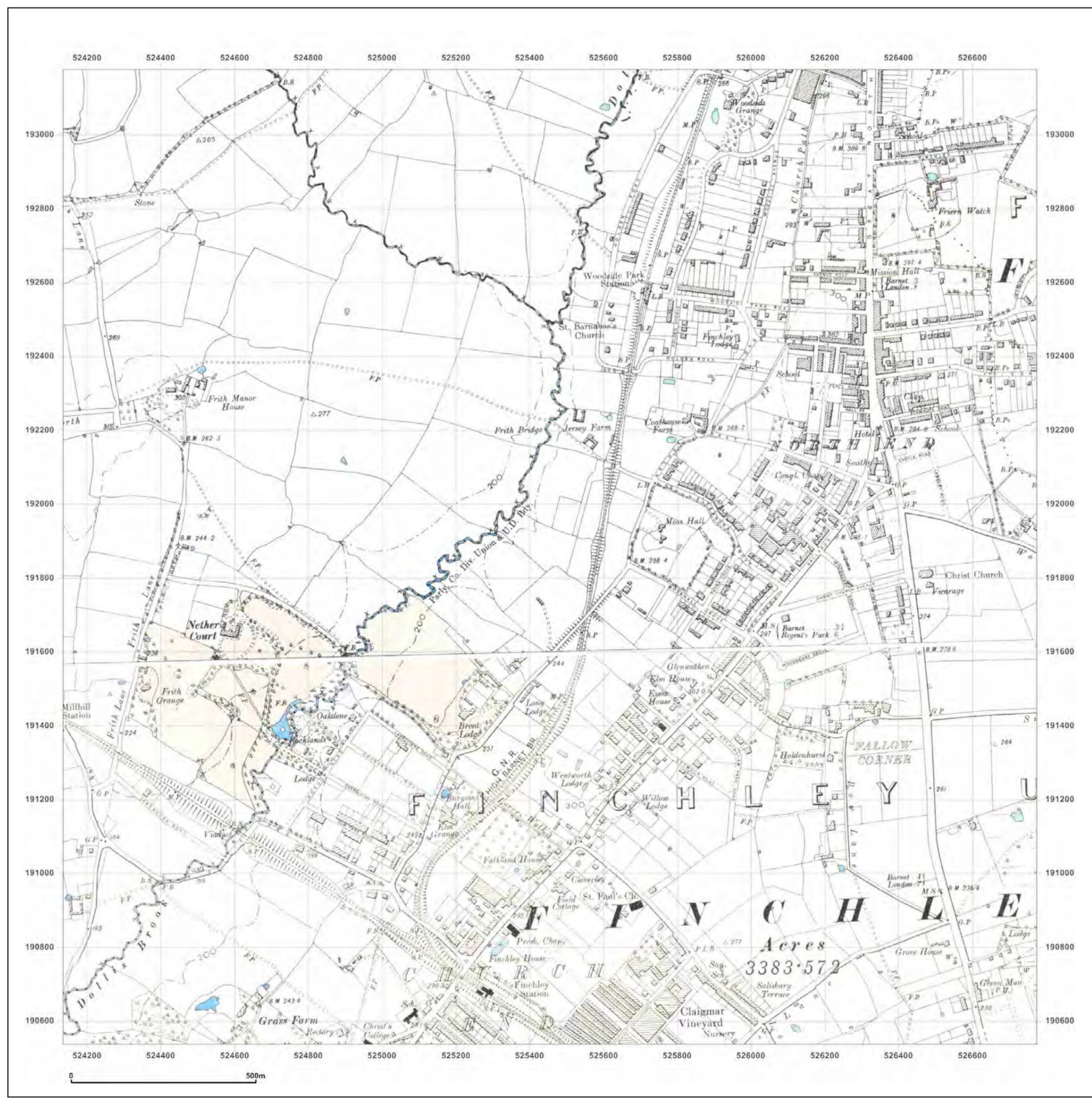


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Production date: 25 July 2018

Map legend available at:
www.groundsure.com/sites/default/files/groundsure_legend.pdf





Site Details:

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Report Ref: CMAPS-CM-729782-44494-250718
Grid Ref: 525228, 191521

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Map date: 1951

Scale: 1:10,560

Printed at: 1:10,560



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