

Euston Area Plan

BACKGROUND REPORT

Executive summary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This Background Report provides the context for the Euston Area Plan, summarising the evidence base that will be used in the production of the plan, and setting out some of the existing policies and guidance which are most relevant to the plan and its development. The report is being prepared to enable the plan itself to focus on setting out the objectives, policies and proposals for the area.

The Euston Area Plan is being prepared to shape change in the Euston area over the next 15-20 years. Government proposals for High Speed Two (HS2) could have significant impacts on communities and the environment around Euston. Potential HS2 impacts are included where relevant in each section of this document. The Euston Area Plan is being produced to respond to the proposed new HS2 rail link, as well as reflecting and updating previous plans and aspirations for development in and around the station. Whilst strongly opposing HS2, Camden Council recognizes the need to plan ahead to get the best possible results for local people and businesses, and to make the most of any potential benefits a new station and rail link could present if the scheme does go ahead.

Strategic context

Euston is located in the Central London area and is identified as a growth area in the London Plan (identified for 5,000 new jobs and 1,000 new homes) and the Camden Core Strategy (around 1,500 new homes and 70,000 sqm of business space as well as significant retail space). The Camden Core Strategy sets out a range of aspirations for the Euston area, including a comprehensive and integrated approach to deliver a high quality mixed use development and (pre-HS2) station interchange, improved walking links and public realm, and ensuring that change brings benefits to local communities as well as visitors and wider London

The Government has stated that the London terminus for the proposed HS2 rail scheme would be at an expanded Euston Station. The expansion of Euston station and tracks would result in significant impacts on the local area, including the loss of homes, business premises, community facilities and open spaces. It would also raise significant issues in terms of the need for the onward movement of significant additional passengers.

The report highlights the role of Planning Obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy as the means to ensure that adequate infrastructure and other measures are secured to support developments and make them acceptable.

There are a range of land ownerships in the study area, including the London borough of Camden (in particular its Regent's Park, Amptill and Somers Town estates), Network Rail (Euston Station), Euston Estates (land to the south of Euston Station), University College London and University College Hospital (land in Bloomsbury) and nearby developers.

People and population: key issues

- The population is projected to experience comparatively high population growth over the next 15 years due to existing development proposals in the area

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- Deprivation, unemployment and poor health are significant issues for communities to the north of Euston Road in St Pancras and Somers Town and Regent's Park wards
- The Euston area has a relatively young population
- The study area also has a comparatively high Bangladeshi population
- There are lower levels of educational attainment in St Pancras and Somers Town and Regent's Park wards

Housing: Key issues

- There is significant need for new housing in Camden, especially for affordable homes
- Housing is therefore the priority land use in Camden's planning policies, which also seek to ensure that half of Camden's borough wide target for new homes is provided as affordable housing
- The Euston area has a very high proportion of social housing (and a low proportion of private ownership) compared to the Camden average
- At least 216 (mainly affordable) homes would be lost as a result of HS2. The Euston Area Plan needs to plan how these homes could be re-provided in the Euston area

Economy and employment: key issues

- National and London-wide policy places a strong emphasis on economic growth, with a particular focus on the knowledge economy
- A number of significant knowledge based economic clusters surround Euston, including the creative industries and the knowledge economy
- The Transport and storage and Professional, scientific and technical sectors are the largest employment sectors in the study area
- An Economic Visioning Report for Euston highlights its potential role as a focus for an innovation cluster potentially focusing on creative industries and the life sciences
- The Report also highlights the importance of creating a characterful, attractive place with a mix of uses in order to generate the most economic value and opportunities for Euston
- It is important to ensure that local people are able to take advantage of potential future employment opportunities at Euston. This could be achieved in part through the use of focused training and apprenticeships

Town centres and retail: key issues

- The study area contains a number of centres, including King's Cross/ Euston Road Central London Frontage and Drummond Street and Eversholt Street neighbourhood centres
- Core Strategy Policy CS7 promotes in the range of 20-30,000 sq m of additional retail at Euston and Camden Town, with the majority expected to be located at Euston
- A revised Camden retail study (GVA for LB Camden, May 2013) indicates there could be the potential for Euston to accommodate a net increase of between 1,500 and 16,500 square metres of retail and food and drink uses (use classes A1-A5), around half of which would be retail
- Drummond Street is a vibrant neighbourhood centre, but could be significantly affected by the arrival of HS2
- Eversholt Street and Chalton Street neighbourhood centres (south and north) are currently performing relatively poorly. Whilst creating potential issues in the short to medium term, the redevelopment of Euston Station may offer the opportunity to enhance their vibrancy and vitality over the longer term

Heritage: key issues

- The area has a number of distinct character areas, reflecting the varied nature and heritage of the area
- Parts of the study area are covered by three conservation areas.
- There are over 50 listed buildings and features in the study area as well as five designated London Squares.
- There are also undesigned assets that have historic significance, in particular the Drummond Street area, Chalton Street area, and St James's Gardens
- Other open spaces of historic significance are St James's Gardens and Cumberland Market
- A number of areas in the study are of high historic sensitivity where a greater degree of protection is needed, whilst other areas have low sensitivity
- Whilst historic areas have been lost, there are opportunities to enhance the historic environment, for example by re-creating lost routes and ensuring that redevelopment provides an enhanced setting for existing heritage assets
- HS2 will impact on existing heritage assets in the Euston area, and these impacts should be mitigated where possible

Urban design: key issues

Key issues

- The varying character and urban form of the area will influence the form of any new development in the area
- There are significant permeability and public realm issues, which should be addressed through the Euston Area Plan
- A significant part of the Euston Station area is within London's strategic view corridors. It is likely that this will limit potential building heights for new development in the study area
- Different approaches to station design significantly affect the form of development above and around the station and its ability to integrate with the surrounding townscape. The potential for new development above the station and tracks is also limited by significant engineering constraints and the cost of providing decking structures to support new development above the station. If Euston Station platforms and tracks could be built below ground level across the whole site, this would potentially enable new at-grade development, along with an above ground station concourse. The current HS2 proposals only involve lowering platforms and tracks for the new HS2 station, whilst retaining the existing station platform arrangements largely as they are.

Urban design opportunities include:

- Improvements to east-west connectivity as part of any redevelopment of the Euston Station site;
- Improvements to north-south connectivity and to the pedestrian environment across Euston Road
- Improvements to the legibility of Regent's Park Estate;
- Introduction of more active frontages and uses, including new streets with ground floor as part of any redevelopment of the Euston Station site, where opportunities emerge in the Regent's Park Estate, and along Hampstead Road;
- Ensuring that new development respects the viewing corridor that covers the area, and responds appropriately to the scale and height of existing buildings.
- Improvements to the design of Euston Square, its surroundings and to the quality of pedestrian routes through it;
- Reduction of negative impacts of bus infrastructure on the quality of the public realm

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- Opportunity to introduce new public squares where station entrances meet local streets
- Support and enhance the historic neighbourhoods close to the station as destinations and as part of restored long distance east west routes.

The potential to improve east-west permeability and to provide new streets with active frontages on the Euston Station site (as well as additional homes, employment uses and other uses) relies on the ability to build on top of a lowered Euston Station as mentioned above.

Transport and Movement: Key issues

- There is a strong policy emphasis at national, London-wide and local levels on promoting sustainable transport modes (public transport, walking and cycling)
- Euston is extremely well connected, with excellent National Rail, London Underground, and bus routes, as well as proximity to key destinations such as Central London, Bloomsbury, West End, Camden Town.
- Euston Road and Euston Station present barriers to north-south and east-west pedestrian movement and create a poor local environment, which detracts from the potential benefits of the area in terms of proximity to nearby destinations
- While Euston Station provides an interchange for rail, tube and bus modes, there is currently a poor environment for users and pedestrians and the quality of interchange could be significantly enhanced
- There has been a notable increase in cycling in the borough of Camden in recent years, whilst car use has reduced. Camden expects developments in the Central London area to be car free.
- The Mayor of London and Camden Council seek to promote walking and cycling by improving infrastructure and the public realm. Key initiatives include the Legible London wayfinding scheme, and Cycle Hire.
- Existing transport pressures, general growth in the use of Euston Station and additional passenger numbers in association with High Speed Two will create a need for significant infrastructure enhancements to enable the onward movement of additional passengers.
- In addition to planned tube enhancements, the Mayor's Transport Strategy promotes the delivery of Crossrail 2 (The Chelsea Hackney), a new line which would provide significant new rail capacity and help to mitigate the transport impacts of HS2.

Social and community infrastructure: key issues

- There are a range of community facilities and services within and surrounding the study area, including education and health facilities, community centres and libraries, and open spaces
- Maria Fidelis Lower School is very close to the proposed HS2 construction work. There are aspirations to consolidate the school with the upper school on Phoenix Road in advance of the construction of HS2 which HS2 Ltd is assisting with.
- Bloomsbury is home to a significant cluster of Higher Education institutions, including the main campus for University College London
- There is a nationally significant cluster of medical and specialist medical research uses in and around the study area including University College Hospital, and research uses such as the Francis Crick Institute and the Wellcome Trust
- Key community organisations operate in the area include the Bengali Workers' Association and the West Euston Partnership

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- HS2 would result in the loss of two thirds of St James's Gardens open space as well as half of Hampstead Road open space: the Euston Area Plan will seek to set out how this space could be re-provided
- Improvements to the quality of and accessibility to existing open spaces may form an important part of future open space strategy in the Euston area.
- The London Borough of Camden applies a standard of 9 sq m per person when assessing the appropriate contributions to open space from residential developments

Environment: key issues

- There is a pressing global need to reduce CO² emissions. Mitigation of and adaptation to climate change is a key priority at national, London-wide and local levels
- The energy hierarchy requires us to use less energy; then supply energy efficiently; and then use renewable energy
- The government aims to progressively improve energy/carbon performance set in Building Regulations to achieve zero carbon housing from 2016, and has also announced proposals to deliver zero carbon standards in non-domestic buildings from 2019.
- Decentralised energy is established as a key measure for Camden to achieve its challenging borough-wide CO² reductions targets to 2050 and the Euston Road corridor is identified as having strong potential to deliver a new decentralised network
- Surface water flooding is an issue in the area, with particular risks around Euston Station. Potential measures to mitigate this include sustainable urban drainage schemes in existing and new open spaces, and green roofs and other rainfall harvesting processes in new development
- Euston Road is recognised as experiencing significant problems with air quality and noise as a result of traffic emissions and vehicle noise. Hampstead Road is also recognised as a priority in relation to noise
- St James' Gardens Local is a local Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. In addition, there are numerous species records for the area, including a number of protected and priority species
- Existing biodiversity in the area could be enhanced through enhancements to existing open spaces, provision of new open spaces, living roofs and walls, provision of additional street trees and other greening of the streetscene

The Background Report also sets out the main policy alternatives that were considered in developing the Euston Area Plan, and an assessment of their sustainability, compared with the proposed policy approach taken in the draft Euston Area Plan.