

# Knowledge Quarter

## Policy KQ1 – Supporting growth in the Knowledge Quarter Innovation District

**3.1** Camden has a thriving knowledge economy with world-class academic, cultural, research, scientific and media institutions and organisations. In recent years, these institutions and organisations have started to cluster in the area surrounding King’s Cross, St Pancras and Euston Stations. Supporting the future development of these industries and ensuring that local communities and other businesses in Camden genuinely benefit from new proposals is a key priority for the Council.

**3.2** The Knowledge Quarter Innovation District spans from Camden Town to Holborn and Covent Garden and is home to a world-class cluster of scientific and knowledge-based institutions and companies that specialise in areas like life sciences, data and technology and the creative industries. In recent years the innovation district has seen tremendous growth due to its excellent transportation links, highly skilled workforce, high-quality office and lab spaces and enhanced retail, art and leisure offer.

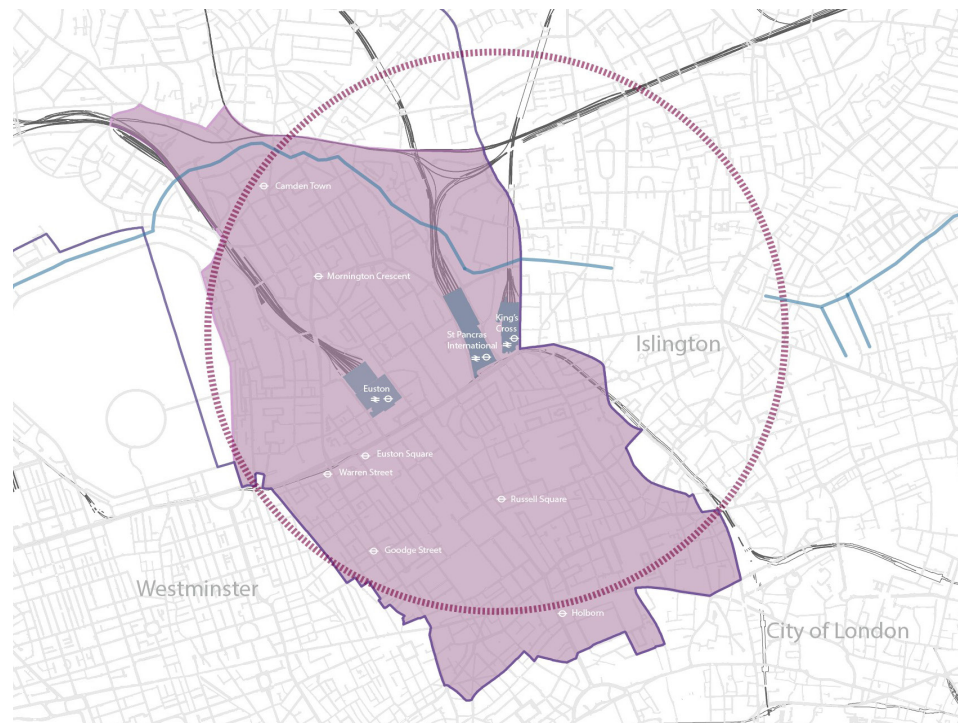
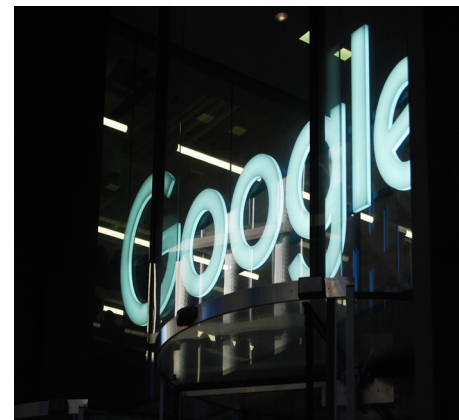


Figure 3.1: Knowledge Quarter Innovation District Map



## Policy KQ1

To ensure the sustainable growth and success of the Knowledge Quarter Innovation District, major proposals for additional employment, research and/or learning floorspace within it must:

- a. Demonstrate that they have been developed in a collaborative way with other key stakeholders in the wider innovation district and potentially beyond to meet the needs of the knowledge sector
- b. Be supported by evidence that the type of floorspace being provided appropriately reflects current and emerging needs of the knowledge economy and would complement and support other institutions and companies that contribute directly to the success of the innovation district
- c. Seek to prioritise the creation of suitable floorspace for priority growth sectors within the district such as life sciences, digital collections and machine learning
- d. Provide for a suitable mix of workspace types including business accelerators, start-up and move on spaces
- e. e. Ensure that buildings are designed to support future reconfiguration for different activities and where possible include flexible floorplates, plant room and mechanical and electrical systems that allow a change from offices to laboratories
- f. Ensure that at least 20% of additional employment floorspace is affordable workspace
- g. Ensure development and its occupiers contribute to reducing inequalities and increasing life chances in neighbouring communities and the borough generally through maximising social value at the planning, construction and end user phases, including supporting increased access to jobs, skills training and education opportunities. Social value frameworks should be used to secure commitments to ensure that nobody gets left behind
- h. Contribute towards the provision of new physical and social infrastructure to support the Knowledge Quarter Innovation District, such as new homes, public realm enhancements and transportation improvements including transforming pedestrian and cyclist movement within, around and across the Euston Road corridor

Development proposals for specific sites within the Knowledge Quarter Innovation District must also accord with any relevant individual site allocation. Development proposals on non-allocated sites within the area should contribute to the principles set out above where these are relevant to the development and commensurate with its nature and scale.



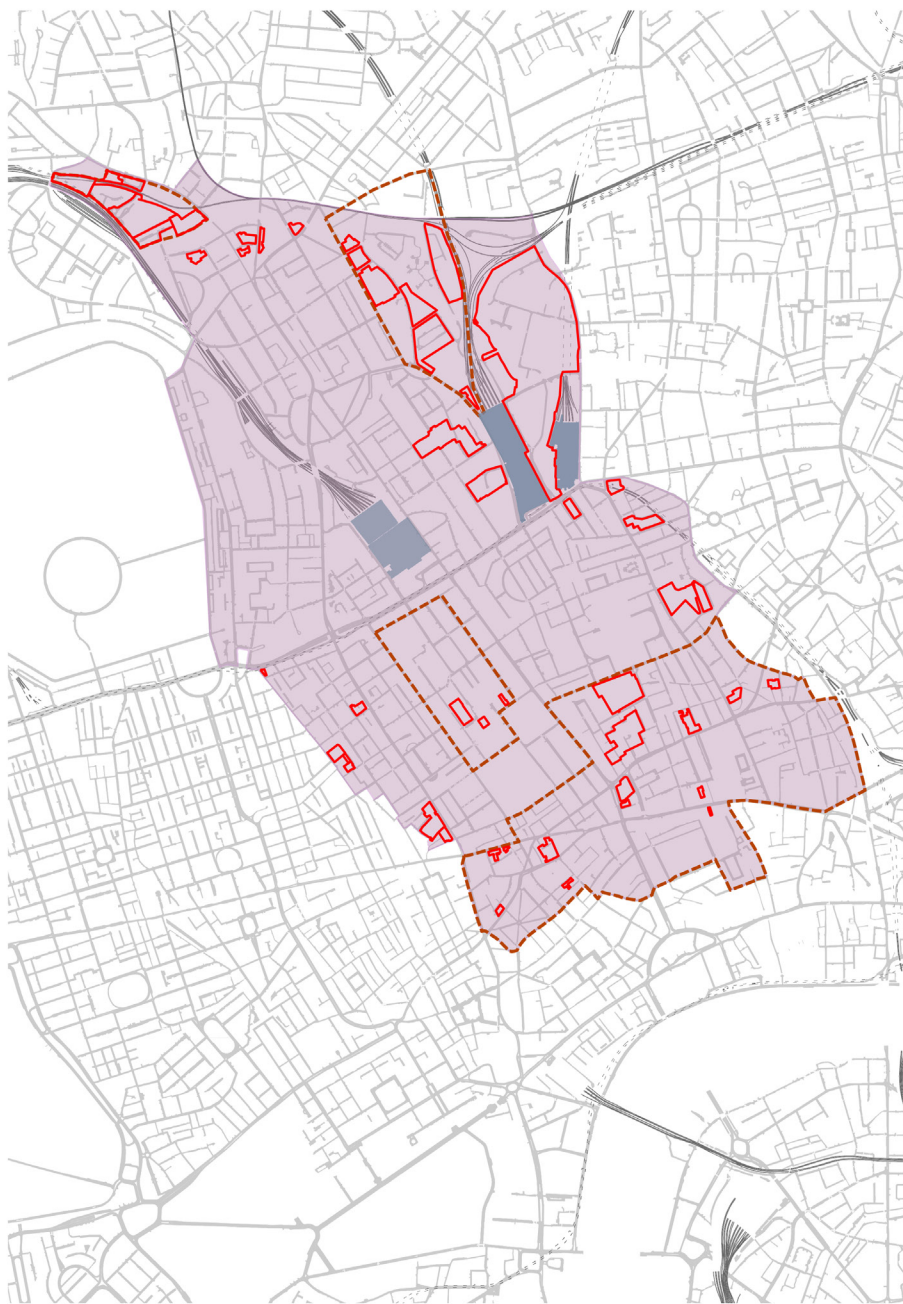


Figure 3.2: Knowledge Quarter Development Sites

**3.3** Major development proposals that involve the creation of 1000sqm or more additional employment, research and/or learning floorspace within the Knowledge Quarter Innovation District (Figure 3.2) will be considered having regard to Policy KQ1, any other relevant policies in this Site Allocations Local Plan, all relevant development plan policies and any other relevant material considerations.

### Knowledge Quarter Innovation District

**3.4** Innovation districts are urban areas that are home to a network of knowledge-producing organisations such as teaching hospitals, universities, research bodies, cultural institutions and knowledge-intensive businesses. They bring together innovators, entrepreneurs, researchers, creatives, knowledge workers and investors to work together, to collaborate, compare and compete, creating the conditions for business growth. Examples of cross-sector collaborative projects in the Knowledge Quarter Innovation District include:

- A strategic partnership between the Public Collaboration Lab at Central Saint Martins and Camden Council. The lab explores the potential for, and value of, strategic collaboration between design education and local government and how design research and teaching can contribute to service, policy and social innovation in the local government context.

- Through the Digital Music Lab project, City, University of London's Machine Learning Group is working with UCL and the British Library, alongside Queen Mary University, to develop research methods and software infrastructure to explore and analyse large-scale music collections.
- London Metropolitan Archives worked with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine on an activity with school children about the spread of infectious diseases.

**3.5** One way that we can ensure that new and existing businesses continue to benefit from collaboration opportunities is to make sure that new developments provide the type of floorspace which responds to both the current and emerging needs of the knowledge economy. These needs can only be identified by engaging with scientific and knowledge-based institutions and companies' and other key stakeholders in the Knowledge Quarter Innovation District and, if necessary, beyond.

**3.6** Collaboration in the innovation district is not just reserved for office and academic space. It takes place in places like public spaces, leisure facilities, cafes and restaurants,

which is why it is important that there continues to be a vibrant mix of uses within the innovation district.

**3.7** Improving the quality of place and ensuring that the Knowledge Quarter Innovation District continues to be recognised as a vibrant and distinctive place is fundamental to its success. In recent years the area around King's Cross station has been transformed, and a similar process of transformation is likely to be seen in the vicinity of Euston over the next 10-20 years. There have also been a number of smaller more incremental improvements as individual development parcels come forward. Going forward it is important that all developments, regardless of their scale, contribute towards improving the character of the area, through things like the use of innovative mixed-use building typologies, high quality architecture, enhanced public realm and the establishment of an integrated network of green and open spaces.

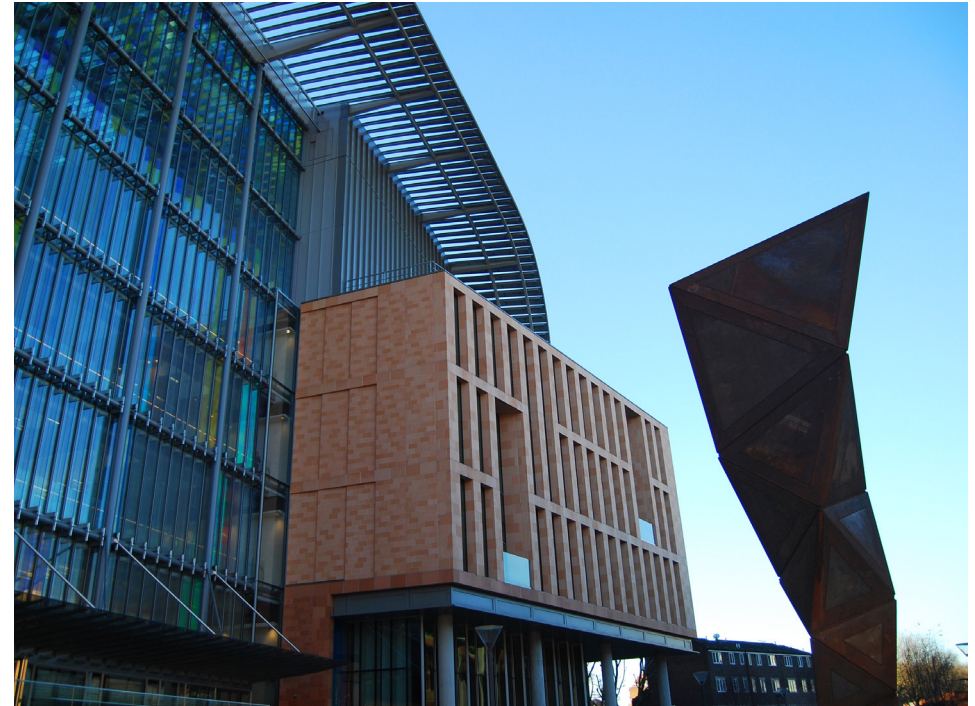
**3.8** The success of the place and the mix of uses within it are not just important in facilitating the exchange of ideas, it is also about attracting and retaining talent. The kind of people tech firms want to employ like to live and be based in dense urban areas because of the access to employment options, abundant amenities and services, and a vibrant social life. At the same time opportunities must be maximised for local people to access these jobs by nurturing local talent.

**3.9** The innovation district also needs to be seen as a place where people want to live. Housing matters to economic development and is seen as an essential form of supporting infrastructure within the innovation district. Access to the right type of housing, in the right location at the right price can enhance economic performance and place competitiveness.

**3.10** The majority of the innovation district is either within the Central London Area or the designated town centre of Camden Town. In these locations the Camden Local Plan 2017 seeks to ensure that 50% of the additional floorspace created as a result of new developments is provided as self-contained homes. Outside of these areas within the Knowledge Quarter Innovation District the Local Plan still prioritises the delivery of housing and encourages developers to include self-contained homes in non-residential floorspace, but there is no set target. This policy seeks to reinforce this point and ensure that all major proposals for employment, research and/or learning development within the innovation district contribute towards the provision of new homes.

#### **Science and Innovation Audit**

**3.11** A Science and Innovation Audit of the Knowledge Quarter area, sponsored by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, was completed in November 2018. The audit highlights the role of the Knowledge Quarter Innovation District as an 'incubator for the UK',



developing cutting-edge technology that is subsequently commercialised in towns and cities elsewhere. It also confirmed the area's reputation as an international player in:

- Life sciences: Emerging infectious diseases, including antimicrobial resistance; musculoskeletal pathology associated with ageing; dementia
- Cultural, scientific and heritage collections: Digital archiving, curation and publishing
- Data sciences: Machine learning, a form of artificial intelligence

**3.12** The audit found that the success of the innovation district has placed multiple pressures on its infrastructure including housing, public transportation, digital and

telecommunications networks. It also identified specific needs within the innovation district:

- Low availability and high cost of appropriate commercial sites and premises
- Shortage of innovation space, especially wet-laboratory space for Life Sciences start-ups and small businesses.
- Lack of suitable move-on space
- Lack of business accelerators for start-ups and other small firms



**Flexible and affordable workspaces**

**3.13** Workplace practices have evolved rapidly in the past decade to respond to greater use of technology, competition for talent, changes in working styles and pressure for increased productivity and cost efficiencies. Workplace flexibility has become a core part of this – but it no longer applies simply to organisational culture. Flexibility now also needs to apply to buildings themselves, which is why it is important that buildings are designed to be long life, low energy and loose fit enabling them to support future reconfiguration for different activities/users.

**3.14** One way to achieve this level of flexibility is through the use of a flexible floor plate. Flexible floor plates require careful consideration of the location of fixed building

components such as lifts, service risers, plant and bathrooms.

**3.15** One of the biggest barriers to new knowledge generating businesses/organisations looking to set up in Camden is the cost and availability of suitable commercial space – as well as the lack of business accelerators, move on space and sector-specific facilities such as wet labs. Ensuring that there are a range of different and affordable workspaces in Camden helps support new/emerging talent in the sector and enables existing businesses to expand and maintain an ongoing presence in the innovation district.

**3.16** Affordable workspace is where rent is maintained below the market rate for that space for a specific social, cultural, or economic

development purpose. There is a degree of flexibility in how affordability can be delivered – examples include:

- An element of the space could be provided in perpetuity at 80% or 50% of comparable market values (however, for many sectors and locations in Camden rents will need to be lower than this to make them affordable to target occupiers); and
- A sponsorship programme through which a number of local businesses are able to access space at reduced rents for an agreed period.

**Reducing inequalities and increasing life chances**

**3.17** Social value is about maximising public benefit and outcomes that support the public good. The first step in ensuring that new developments add social value is understanding the importance of local context and knowing what the needs and aspirations of local communities/users are.

**3.18** Within Camden a number of local residents do not have the

skills or qualifications sought by the borough’s key employers, particularly in ‘knowledge-based’ businesses. We want residents to benefit from the employment opportunities created by Camden’s economic success by linking the efforts of the Council, schools and employers to provide local people with the skills needed to gain employment.

**3.19** Opportunities for the integration of social value are usually just seen as a way of mitigating the impact of a development. However, the increased emphasis nationally towards the importance of maximising the social value of new developments has seen more developers striving to make a more meaningful contribution towards social infrastructure in the area surrounding the development.

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• Question box

• Q13. Do you support Policy KQ1? If not, what changes are needed and why?

• Q14. Do you think that Policy KQ1 should list specific infrastructure priorities for the innovation district? If yes, what priorities should be listed?

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