



# Holborn & Covent Garden Area

## Policy HCG1 – Holborn and Covent Garden Area

7.1 The Holborn and Covent Garden area covers the ward of the same name. It is the most southerly ward in the Borough of Camden and forms part of London’s Central Activities Zone (CAZ). It is a key destination that links the West End to the City of London.

7.2 The area is home to major businesses and institutions, as well as small businesses, shops, and a significant housing population. The area also has a thriving cultural scene and some of London’s most iconic historic architecture which attract visitors year-round.

7.3 Holborn and Covent Garden is going through a period of development and change with some major businesses choosing to locate and invest in the area. The area has excellent public transport provision, which will be improved further with the opening of the Elizabeth Line stations at Tottenham Court Road and Farringdon and the Holborn underground station upgrade and capacity increase. The Council will seek to ensure that development and change in the area are coordinated to maximise benefits to the area, its businesses and its communities.

7.4 Holborn and Tottenham Court Road (which also includes part of Westminster) are identified as growth areas in the London Plan. The Holborn intensification area is expected to deliver a minimum of 200 new homes and 2,000 additional

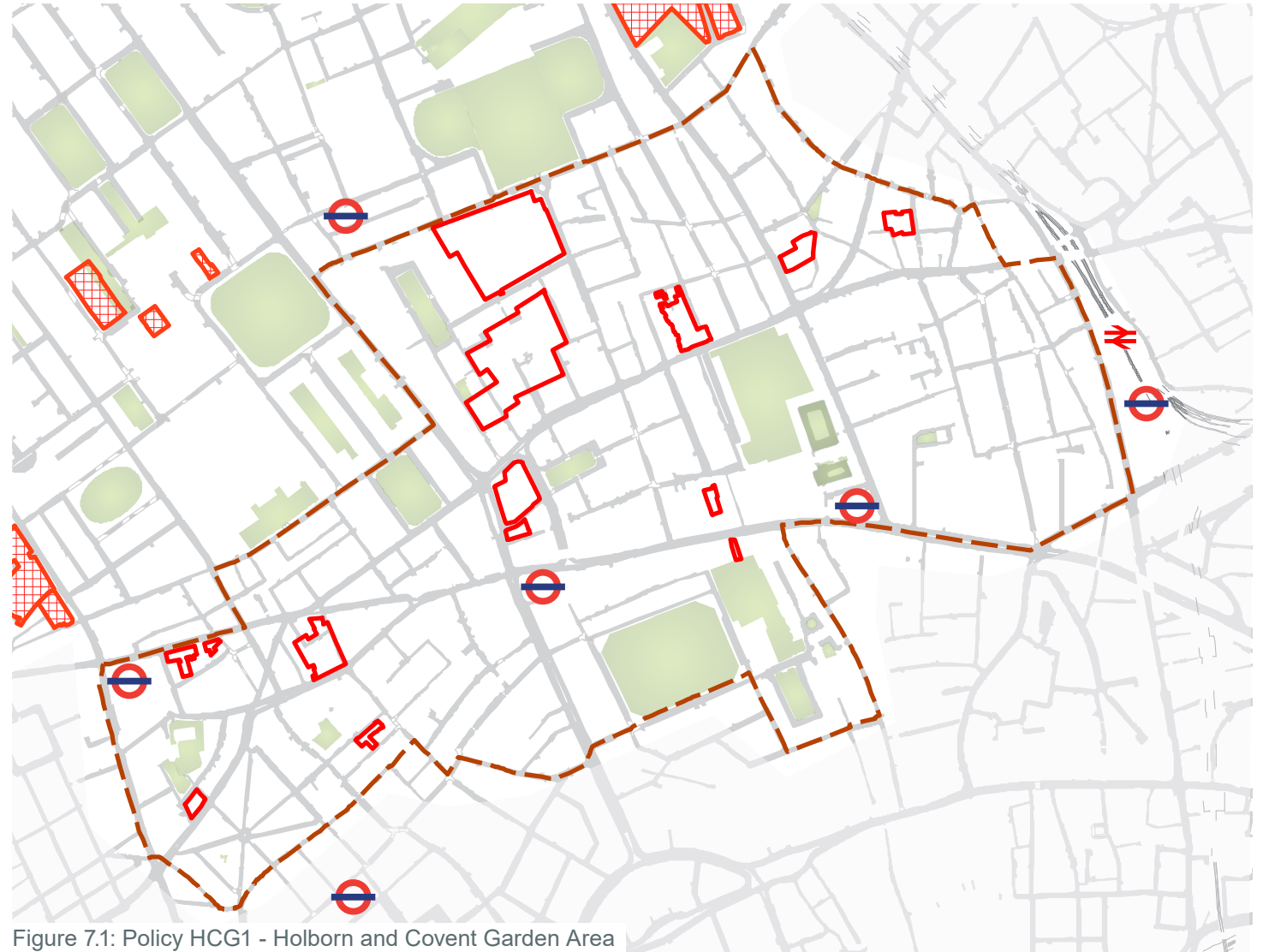


Figure 7.1: Policy HCG1 - Holborn and Covent Garden Area

jobs by 2031. The London Plan expects that the Tottenham Court Road opportunity area will deliver a minimum of 500 homes and 5,000 additional jobs by 2031.

<b>Area name</b>	Holborn and Covent Garden Area
<b>Area size (ha)</b>	119 ha
<b>Indicative housing capacity</b>	400 additional homes

## Policy HCG1

The Holborn and Covent Garden area has the potential to strengthen its role as a gateway for business and create more vibrant and well-connected neighbourhoods in the heart of Central London with an improved commercial, leisure and retail offer, a high-quality public realm and much needed new self-contained homes.

To enable the area to fully realise its potential, development within the area must:

- a. Make the most efficient use of land while delivering the highest quality architecture that complements the area's rich character, heritage assets and historic form.
- b. Provide retail, food, drink, entertainment and service uses in the area's Central London Frontage, taking opportunities to introduce ground floor town-centre uses where the continuity of the frontage is currently broken and avoiding large-scale office or residential lobbies that lead to the fragmentation of retail frontages..
- c. Maximise opportunities for community access to private facilities intended to serve the development like lobby spaces, roof gardens, cafes and gyms.
- d. Connect, improve, make public and, where possible, reinstate, historic lanes, alleyways and passages in order to increase permeability and encourage walking.
- e. Demonstrate the highest feasible levels of high-quality on-site open space and urban greening, including pocket parks, green roofs and walls, and explore opportunities for creating links to other open spaces in the area.
- f. Contribute to the improvement of the public realm, including an improved network of safe and attractive places and routes for pedestrians and cyclists that successfully links to neighbouring areas and reduces the dominance of traffic in the area.
- g. Support the Council's Liveable Neighbourhoods programme which will deliver significant investment in the public realm throughout the area through appropriate on-site delivery and financial contributions.

Development proposals for specific sites within the Holborn and Covent Garden area must also accord with the 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.

7.5 The Council is preparing a Holborn Vision and Urban Strategy to provide further detailed guidance on the redevelopment of the area, consistent with this allocation. It is the Council's intention that the final version of this document will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The Vision and Urban Strategy builds on the area's strengths as a gateway for business in the capital that is open to all whilst creating a more vibrant and well-connected neighbourhood in the heart of Central London. Development proposals should be informed by the Vision, which will be a significant material consideration in the assessment of planning applications for sites in the area.

7.6 The Council's aspirations for the Holborn and Tottenham Court Road areas are set out in the Local Plan, and include a mix of land uses, with offices and housing as the predominant uses in development schemes. The Council expects that the London Plan housing target will be met through mixed-use schemes where the additional floor space will result in an obligation to deliver housing and affordable housing, in accordance with the Local Plan's mixed-use policy H2. In light of its central London location, the area is suitable for hotel provision.

7.7 The Council will promote the additional provision of retail and other town centre uses as part of redevelopment schemes in the

Holborn and Tottenham Court Road growth areas. The Council will protect existing retail frontages from fragmentation in order to avoid the creation of isolated and less viable retail units. Developers should take opportunities to introduce ground floor town-centre uses where the continuity of the frontage is currently broken in order to create strong active frontages. The Council will support ground floor lobbies that lead to offices and residential units on the upper floors, as long as these are of a size and in a location that does not fragment existing retail frontages.

7.8 As one of the most accessible parts of the Borough, the Council encourages intensification of the area through higher-density redevelopment of existing properties and infill development. New development is expected to deliver the highest quality architecture of a height and massing that complements the area's rich character, heritage assets and historic form. The wider Holborn and Covent Garden area is characterised by a historic environment owing to the exceptionally high number of statutory listed buildings and substantial coverage of conservation areas. However, some more modern buildings do not successfully relate to Holborn's rich architectural and historic surroundings and have eroded the area's character.

7.9 Development proposals should demonstrate how opportunities for making their facilities, including



lobbies, cafes, restaurants, gyms and roof garden, available to the local community have been maximised. Developers should prioritise active ground floor uses and facilities that provide a clear visual and physical connection between the development and the surrounding streets.

**7.10** Holborn and Covent Garden benefits from a network of historic lanes, alleyways and passages. These add to the character of the area and provide alternative, attractive walking routes away from the main

streets. It is expected that new development will seek to connect and improve historic lanes and passages and, where possible, reinstate historic routes that have been lost through previous development.

**7.11** Although the area contains some of London's finest squares, the amount of open space and nature in the ward is low in comparison to other parts of the Borough. In light of this, developers are expected to provide green open space and other urban greening measures such as

green walls and green roofs on-site. Urban greening can benefit the area by providing a range of benefits for air quality, noise reduction, urban heat-island effect, rainwater run-off, biodiversity enhancement, recreation, and health and wellbeing. The draft London Plan's Policy G5 Urban Greening Factor provides a useful tool for increasing on-site urban greening.

**7.12** Much of Holborn and Covent Garden is traffic dominated, with high levels of pollution, traffic safety problems, and roads forming barriers to pedestrian movement. The Holborn Vision sets out how the public realm of the area will be

improved to meet these challenges. The Council has secured investment from Transport for London's Liveable Neighbourhoods programme to part fund improvements to the environment for pedestrians and cyclists in the area, creating an enhanced public realm and improving access to public transport. Developments will be expected to support this programme of work through appropriate on-site delivery and financial contributions and ensure that individual schemes respond and contribute to the public realm improvements being made.

Question box

Q54. Do you support Policy HCG1? If not, what changes are needed and why?

Q55. Are there any other uses that would be suitable for the Holborn and Covent Garden Area?

Q56. What do you think the infrastructure priorities should be for this area allocation and why?

Q57. Is the boundary shown in Figure 7.1 appropriate in the context of Policy HCG1? If not, what changes are needed and why?

Q58. Are there any other key sites which should be referred to in Figure 7.1? If yes, please include additional information about the site. If it is a site which has been discounted by the authority during the assessment process please state the site reference and name. If the site is a new site please state the site address, a clear description of the type and scale of development that you believe could be accommodated on the site, and if possible attach a site plan.

## Policy HCG2 – Former Central St Martins

7.13 The former Central St Martins College (University of the Arts) is an island site surrounded by Southampton Row to the west, Procter Street/Drake Street/Red Lion Square to the east, Theobald's Road to the north and Fisher Street to the south.

7.14 The site was previously in higher education use and currently has a number of meanwhile uses. The western part of the site is located within the Kingsway Conservation Area and the eastern part of the site sits opposite the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

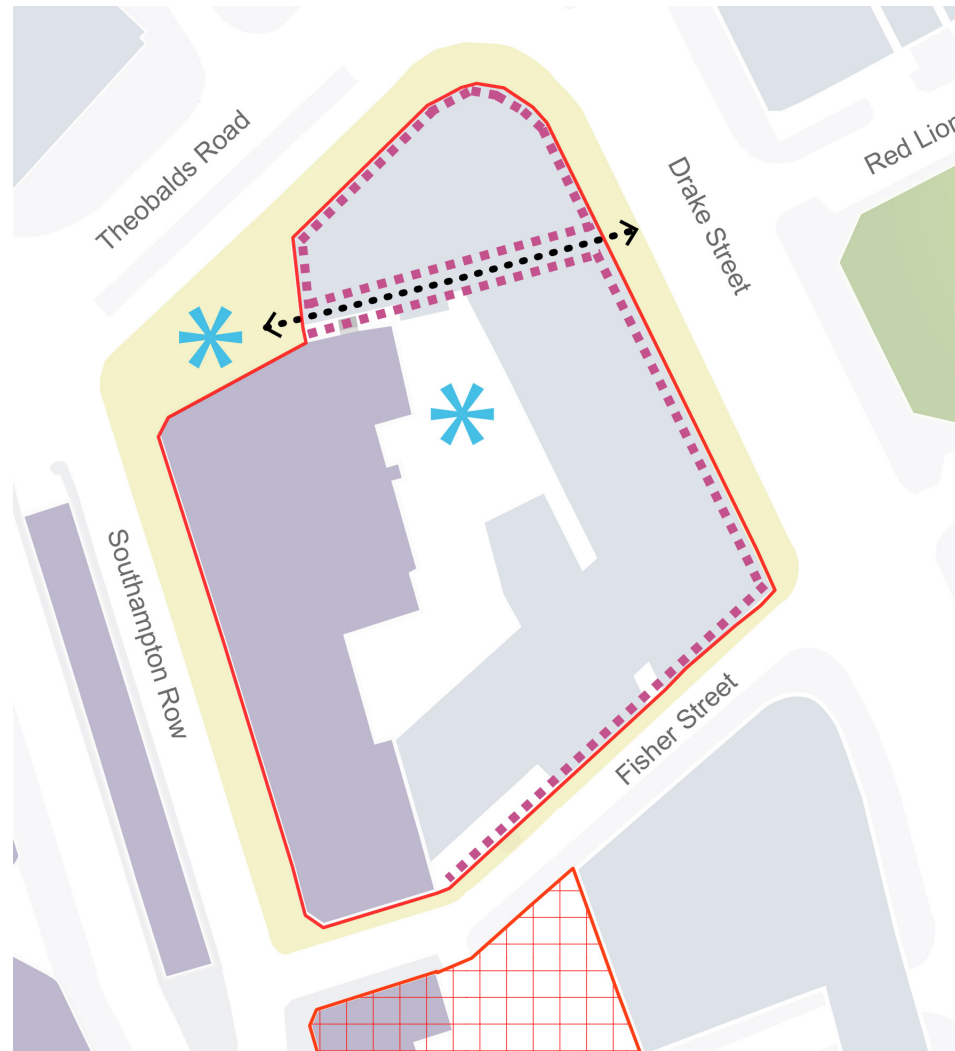


Figure 7.2: Policy HCG2 - Former Central St Martins College

## Policy HCG2

The former Central St Martins College (University of the Arts) site is allocated for mixed-use development including hotel, self-contained homes, retail, and creative workspace, cultural and public uses. Development must be in accordance with Policy HCG1 and in addition must:

- Retain the Grade II\* listed Lethaby Building at 12-42 Southampton Row, ensuring that its fabric and setting are restored and protected to better reveal its heritage significance, and establishing an appropriate and viable use to ensure the building's long-term future.
- Provide an on-site cultural use, including gallery, exhibition space or other publicly available cultural space.
- Ensure any new buildings and extensions are of an exceptional architectural quality to respond to the site's sensitive and varied context and range of interfaces, particularly Red Lion Square and the Lethaby Building. Any additional height, scale or massing to the current building on Red Lion Square would need to be sufficiently justified and articulated.
- Create a new public pedestrian route to conform to the historic alignment of the street that led diagonally north-westwards from Red Lion Square.
- Make significant improvements and contributions to the public realm on the site, including new public open spaces and routes.
- Respond and contribute to streetscape improvements in the wider area on Southampton Row, Theobalds Road, Fisher and Procter/Drake Street.
- Provide active ground floor uses, including retail or front doors and windows that contribute to the life on the street to Procter/Drake Street and Theobalds Road, and other streets where possible.

Site address	12 - 42 Southampton Row & 1-4 Red Lion Square, WC1B 4AF
Site area (ha)	0.45
Proposed uses	Hotel, self-contained residential, cultural, retail
Indicative housing capacity	85



7.15 Proposals for this site will be considered having regard to Policy HCG2, any other relevant policies in this Site Allocations Local Plan, all relevant development plan policies and any other relevant material considerations.

7.16 Given its highly accessible location in the Central Activities Zone (CAZ) and Holborn growth area a mix of uses, including hotel, housing, creative workspace, cultural and public uses, would be appropriate on this site.

7.17 Built as the Central School of Arts and Crafts, the Lethaby Building has made a significant contribution to design, arts and culture. In addition, the Cochrane theatre was built on the site in 1963 for the

Central School of Art & Design and remained operational until 2012 when Central St Martins moved to their new site at King’s Cross. In light of the site’s significant cultural heritage, a cultural use on the site should be reintroduced, for example a gallery, exhibition space or other publicly available cultural space, which would give the site an attraction and help to create interest and activity throughout the day.

7.18 Apart from the Grade II\* listed Lethaby Building, the existing buildings are of limited merit and could be replaced. New buildings must be of an exceptional standard of architecture and enhance the setting of both the listed Lethaby Building and to Red Lion Square. A Certificate of Immunity (COI) against listing has

been issued for the Cochrane Theatre and attached Administrative Block (expiring 14 July 2024).

7.19 At eleven storeys, the existing 1960s slab and podium block towards the east of the site is one of the tallest building in the area. Due to the surrounding townscape, conservation areas, and listed buildings, in particular the Lethaby Building, a new building that exceeds this height is unlikely to be considered acceptable.

7.20 The Procter Street gyratory was created on the bomb-devastated ruins of Red Lion Square in 1968. One of the distinctive pattern of diagonal streets leading out of the square was lost in the associated development. The reinstatement of the historic diagonal route from Drake Street to Theobalds Road is expected as part of the redevelopment of 1-4 Red Lion Square to improve permeability, create a link between Southampton Row and Red Lion Square, and allow people to walk through the site.

7.21 The site is located on a busy road and the on-site self-contained residential element of any redevelopment must therefore be

located and designed to minimise the negative impacts of noise and pollution on the amenity of residents. All uses on the site should be designed so that they do not negatively impact the amenity of residents.

7.22 Public realm improvements are planned on all sides of the site and the development of the site must contribute to and respond to these improvements. Several of the frontages of the current buildings are blank or inactive, which contributes to a poor public realm and lack of overlooking. Opportunities for introducing active frontages, including retail or front doors and windows, should be maximised, in particular on Procter/Drake Street and Theobalds Road, in order to ensure overlooking and increase the sense of safety on the streets around the building. Independent retailers and those serving the local community should be encouraged.

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• Question box

• Q59. Do you support Policy HCG2? If not what changes are needed and why?

• Q60. Is the boundary in Figure 7.2 appropriate in the context of Policy HCG2? If not, what changes are needed and why?

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## Policy HCG3 – 1 Museum Street

7.23 1 Museum Street is a Travelodge hotel and multi-storey car park located in the Tottenham Court Road growth area. The 1960s Travelodge tower is 17 storeys with a three-storey podium. The site is not within a conservation area but adjoins

the Bloomsbury Conservation Area which covers the area to the north and west of the site.

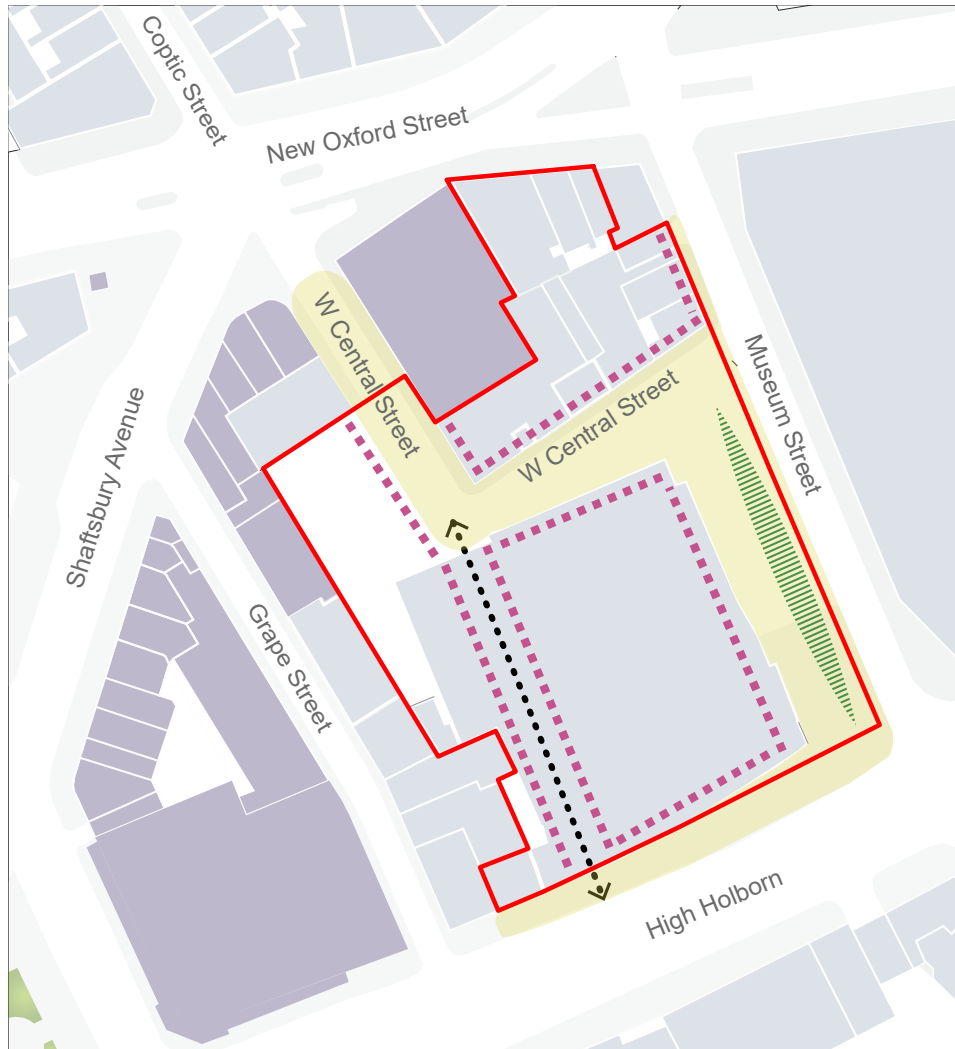


Figure 7.3: Policy HCG3 - 1 Museum Street

## Policy HCG3

1 Museum Street is allocated for mixed-use development including hotel, self-contained homes, offices and retail.

Development must be in accordance with Policy HCG1 and in addition must:

- Ensure that any new buildings are designed to respond to the site's varied context, including listed buildings, the setting of specific heritage assets, and the Bloomsbury conservation area
- Ensure that any replacement building is of a height and massing that can successfully integrate with the surrounding townscape
- Maximise active ground floor uses, either through retail or front doors and windows that create lively and well-overlooked streets on Museum Street, West Central Street and High Holborn
- Respond and contribute to the planned streetscape improvements and provide public space on Museum Street and West Central Street
- Explore options for providing a public route with active ground floor uses, primarily shops and restaurants, through the site on the axis with Coptic Street
- Maximise opportunities for high-quality urban greening, in particular along the wide pavement on Museum Street

Site address	1 Museum Street
Site area (ha)	0.45
Proposed uses	Hotel, commercial, housing
Indicative housing capacity	50

7.24 Proposals for this site will be considered having regard to Policy HCG3, any other relevant policies in this Site Allocations Local Plan, all relevant development plan policies and any other relevant material considerations.

7.25 Given its highly accessible location in London's Central Activities Zone (CAZ) and Tottenham Court Road Growth area, a mix of uses, including hotel, commercial, and housing, including affordable housing, would be appropriate uses on this site.

7.26 Redevelopment of the site offers the opportunity for higher-quality buildings which make better use of the limited land available by removing the multi-storey car park, redeveloping the podium building and developing the vacant part of the site on West Central Street.

7.27 At seventeen storeys the existing tower is one of the tallest buildings in the area, however a more elegant and refined tower could more successfully integrate with the surrounding townscape and the Bloomsbury conservation area.

7.28 The frontages facing West Central Street and Museum Street are currently blank and inactive, which contribute to the poor public realm and lack of overlooking. Redevelopment should provide active ground floor uses, through retail or front doors and windows that contribute to the life of the street on Museum Street, West Central Street and High Holborn.

7.29 Development of the site should provide a new public route on the axis with Coptic Street, creating a new route from the British Museum. This would increase permeability, allowing people to walk through the site. Active ground floor uses, including shops, restaurants, entrance doors and windows, should be introduced along the new route in order to ensure overlooking and increase the sense of safety and overcome anti-social behaviour on West Central Street.

7.30 Significant public realm improvements are planned for the area and any development of the site must contribute and respond to these improvements, including providing improved public space on Museum Street.

Question box

Q61. Do you support Policy HCG3? If not, what changes are needed and why?

Q62. Is the boundary shown in Figure 7.3 appropriate in the context of Policy HCG3? If not, what changes are needed and why?





## Policy HCG4 – 134 - 149 Shaftesbury Avenue

7.31 The building at 135-149 Shaftesbury Avenue is surrounded by Shaftesbury Avenue, St Giles Passage, New Compton Street and Stacey Street. The Phoenix Community Garden lies to the rear of the site. The building opened in 1931 as the Saville Theatre and was converted to a cinema in 1970. It is currently used as an Odeon Cinema.

7.32 The site is not within a conservation area but adjoins the Seven Dials (Covent Garden) Conservation Area which covers the south side of Shaftesbury Avenue, and the Denmark Street Conservation Area, which covers the north side of New Compton Street.



Figure 7.4: Policy HCG4 - 135-149 Shaftesbury Avenue

## Policy HCG4

The site is allocated for cinema or theatre use. Provision of other uses, such as commercial and self-contained homes, are considered acceptable provided that these are secondary uses within a mixed-use scheme with a cultural facility as the predominant use.

Development must be in accordance with Policy HCG1 and in addition must:

- a. Retain the Grade II listed building and ensure that its fabric and setting are protected, restored and enhanced, particularly the building's distinctive features.
- b. Retain the cinema/theatre use and ensure that any other uses introduced on the site do not compromise or restrict the viability or operation of the cinema/theatre.
- c. Ensure that the cinema/theatre function is integrated in the building's design, including careful consideration of the location, size and relationship of the screening rooms/stage, to circulation and other public spaces.
- d. Retain the main, front entrance for the cinema/theatre use, and use side entrances for any secondary uses.
- e. Ensure that any roof extension is of an exceptional architectural quality to complement and enhance the host building.
- f. Explore options for activating the blank façades facing St Giles Passage, New Compton Street and Stacey Street, including windows, entrances and active ground floor uses that contribute to the life on the street.
- g. Contribute to improvements of the public realm around the building to create better-lit routes and encourage activity around the building.
- h. Contribute towards the provision of permanent self-contained homes in the wider area through the provision of housing on an alternative site nearby, or a payment-in-lieu

Site address	134 - 149 Shaftesbury Avenue
Site area (ha)	0.08
Proposed uses	theatre/cinema, cultural use

**7.33** Proposals for this site will be considered having regard to Policy HCG4, any other relevant policies in this Site Allocations Local Plan, all relevant development plan policies and any other relevant material considerations.

**7.34** The site is allocated for theatre/cinema as the primary use. It could potentially accommodate additional uses, including commercial or self-contained housing, as secondary uses within a mixed-use scheme with the cinema or theatre as the predominant use.

**7.35** The supply of sites that could accommodate a large-scale cultural venue, such as a theatre,

is very limited in the West End and there is continued demand by theatre operators for such venues. Paragraph 92 of the NPPF (2019) advises that planning policies and decisions should plan positively for and guard against the unnecessary loss of cultural facilities. The Council will therefore seek to retain cinema/theatre use on this site and will resist their loss. Alternative public cultural uses may be considered if it can be demonstrated to the Council's satisfaction that a cinema or theatre operator cannot be identified.

**7.36** The Grade II listed building's original use as a theatre is strongly reflected in the striking design of the façade facing Shaftesbury Avenue which includes a sculptural relief

frieze depicting the history of dramatic art running the length of the building and an entrance set in a large arched opening. Any development of the site must conserve and restore the building and its unique architectural features.

**7.37** The historic architecture of the building is robust and could potential support a roof extension. Any roof extension should be of the highest architectural quality to complement and enhance the host building and of a height and massing that is appropriate to the site's surrounding townscape and does not negatively impact the neighbouring conservation areas or the Phoenix Community Garden.

**7.38** In contrast to the ornate front elevation, the side and rear elevations of the building are dominated by predominantly blank façades, which should be activated through the introduction of windows, entrances or public uses at ground floor, to ensure overlooking and increase the sense of safety on the streets around the building.



Question box

Q63. Do you support Policy HCG4? If not, what changes are needed and why?

Q64. Is the boundary shown in Figure 7.4 appropriate in the context of Policy HCG4? If not, what changes are needed and why?

## Policy HCG5 - Other development sites in the Holborn and Covent Garden Area

### Policy HCG5

Sites identified in Figure 7.5 will be allocated for the uses set out in the table

Allocation reference	Site name	Proposed uses	Indicative housing capacity
HCG5a	Tybalds Estate (infill)	Self-contained homes	56 additional homes (416 total – includes 360 existing)
HCG5b	294-295 High Holborn	Office, Self-contained homes	10 additional homes
HCG5c	Panther House, 38 Mount Pleasant, The Brain Yard, 156-164 Gray's Inn Road	Office, Self-contained homes	8 additional homes
HCG5d	Castlewood House and Medius House	Office, Self-contained homes	18 additional homes
HCG5e	8-10 Southampton Row	Hotel, Self-contained homes	9 additional homes
HCG5f	60-67 Short's Gardens & 14-16 Betterton Street	Office, Self-contained homes, retail	4 additional homes
HCG5g	GOSH Masterplan	Hospital	0
HCG5h	Holborn Library and Cockpit Yard	Self-contained homes, library	120 additional homes
HCG5i	Hand Court, 50-57 High Holborn	Office, Self-contained homes, retail	6 additional homes
HCG5j	18 Vine Hill and 15-29 Eyre Street Hill	Hotel, Self-contained homes	10 additional homes

Figure 7.5: Other development sites in the Holborn and Covent Garden Area

7.39 Within the Holborn and Covent Garden Area there are a number of other development sites. These sites are listed in Figure 7.5. We consider that Policies KQ1, HCG1 and the Camden Local Plan 2017 provide a robust basis for considering proposals for development in these locations. As such the Plan does not include a detailed allocation policy for these sites and seeks to allocate them through Policy HCG5.

7.40 Proposals for sites identified in Figure 7.5 will be considered having regard to Policies HCG1 and HCG5, any other relevant policies in this Site Allocations Local Plan, all relevant development plan policies and any other relevant material considerations.

Question box

Q65. Do you support Policy HCG5? If not, what changes are needed and why?

Q66. Are the boundaries shown in Figure 7.6 appropriate in the context of Policy HCG5? If not, what changes are needed and why?

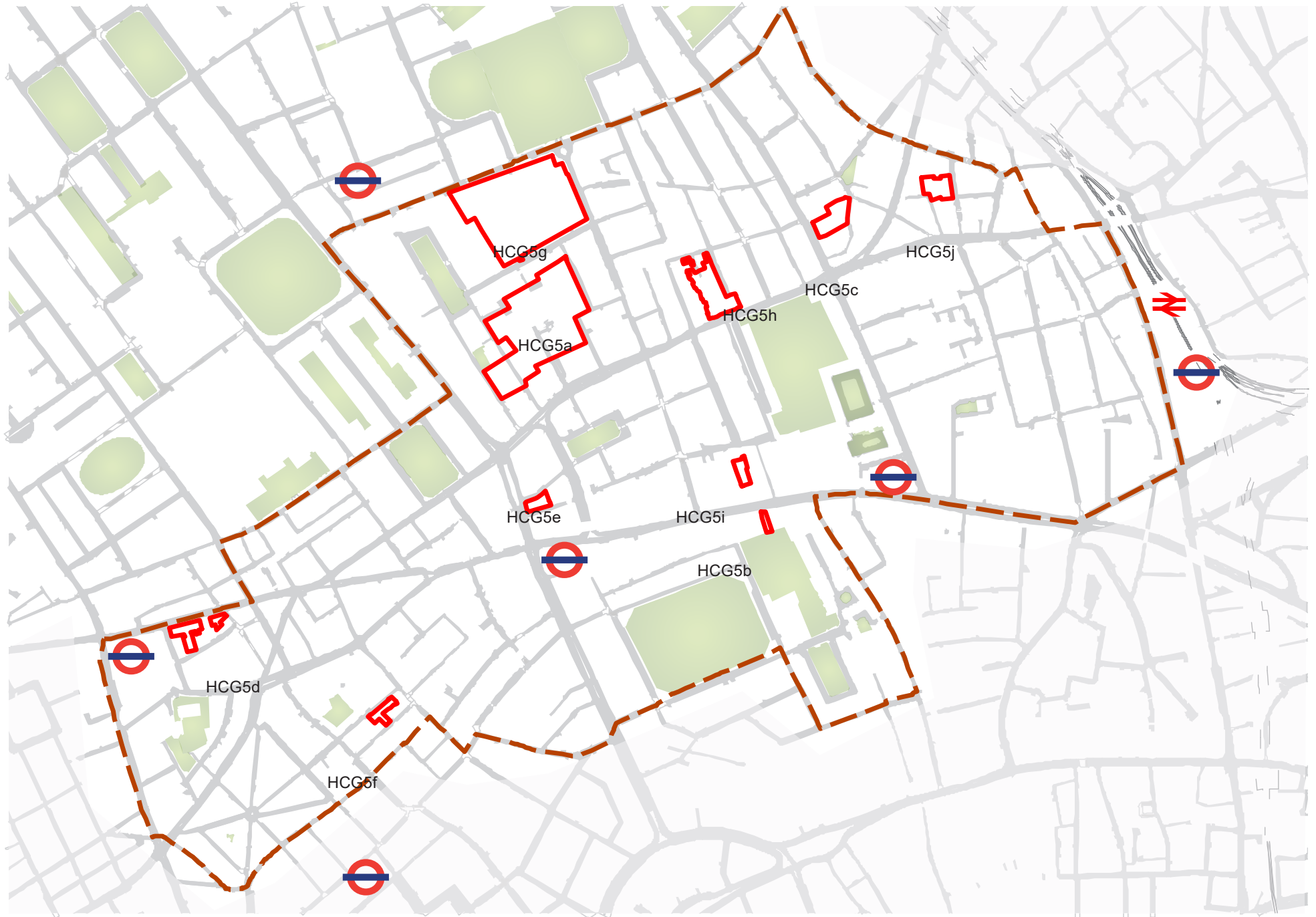


Figure 7.6: Policy HCG5 - Other development sites