

7. OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE

This chapter utilises the baseline analysis to assess the sensitivity to change, capacity for growth, built form quality and character, socio-cultural and economic significance to devise areas of the borough that are to be conserved, enhanced or transformed and a tall building zone strategy map.

CHARACTER ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION PROCESS

Borough-wide intensification

Newham, and indeed London as a whole, is facing ever growing pressure to accommodate new homes, jobs and vital infrastructure that underpins a high quality of life for all. The London Plan (2021) places emphasis on making best use of available land through intensification of existing places, meaning the efficient use of space, increasing density in appropriate locations and encouraging a mix of uses to improve the range of services and amenities accessible to communities i.e. Good Growth. Indeed, Newham is championing this holistic approach to borough-wide intensification through 15-minute neighbourhoods, a pillar of their Re-orientation and Recovery Strategy and new Local Plan.

However, intensification itself can take many forms, from the strategic regeneration of the Royal Docks and Beckton Riverside Opportunity Area, to small site infill in residential neighbourhoods with good access to services and amenities. In each case, the appropriate level and form of intensification depends on the opportunity for change and the local contexts.

Strategic assessment and evaluation

The methodology on the following pages sets out the assessment undertaken to strategically characterise and evaluate the borough. This process draws together analysis of the historic evolution, functional character, urban morphology and socio-economic characteristics to establish the capacity for and likelihood of change for each part of the borough. The assessment reflects a granular survey of Newham at the level of the urban block.

The assessment result is a synthetic map that divides the borough into three categories - conserve, enhance, and transform - which provide a framework to establish the intensity and type of change expected and appropriate for each area. The assessment is undertaken considering the interrelation of four lenses of analysis to establish whether each area is to be conserved, enhanced or transformed:

Sensitivity to change: reflecting heritage and historic value, consistency of character from a specific period and concentration of high quality green spaces.

Urban form quality and character: reflecting the quality of architecture and urban design in each area.

Opportunity for growth: reflecting existing densities and development patterns, available space for significant growth, amount and extent of development sites in the pipelines, designated regeneration areas and opportunity areas, and current public transport access.

Socio-economic and cultural significance: reflecting the presence of intangible cultural and community assets, economic opportunities, population characteristics, essential services, amenities and social infrastructure.

This process is based on an evaluation and assessment of character that is multifaceted and should not be considered a designation or a rigid definition. It instead highlights in each area strengths, weaknesses and opportunities, contributing to establishing neighbourhood specific visions, developed in the following chapter, which will reinforce, mitigate or address the characteristics highlighted in the large scale assessment.

A design-led approach

Each category sets an appropriate framework for a design-led approach on potential site allocations, as well as providing a steer on assessing windfall sites that come forward in these areas. These categories are conceived as a tool, rather than a designation, and should form part of a comprehensive appreciation of character, context and site conditions to inform a site by site approach to appropriate scale, massing and heights. Indeed, a design-led process should evidence a range of site layouts, typologies, scale and massing options in order to determine the most appropriate form of development for the site.

The methodology for determining which areas fall into each category closely follows the GLA guidance set out in the Draft Characterisation & Growth Strategy LPG, February 2022.

Process Diagram

