

Local Plan Evidence Base

Private Outdoor Amenity Space and Family Housing

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Private outdoor amenity space plays a multifaceted role in the creation of successful places, thus the need for its protection and delivery as part of a quality housing offer is well embedded within planning policy at multiple levels.
- 1.2 In addition to enhancing housing quality, private garden space can also play a role in wider area improvement, provides space for recreation and play, assists in safeguarding against the implications of climate change by contributing to the achievement of flood risk and biodiversity objectives and may have a positive impact upon health and well-being, enhancing sense of place and adding to quality of life.
- 1.3 Given this, in seeking to deliver a supply of well-designed, good quality accommodation that meets to the needs of Newham's residents, it is essential that the importance of adequate private amenity space continues to be reflected by the Local Plan's policy approach. In proposing options that would allow for the conversion or subdivision of Newham's larger properties, provided that this would yield family homes¹ it is necessary to consider how policy should safeguard the provision of outdoor amenity space to meet the needs of any future occupying families.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1 Policy 3.5 of the London Plan (2016) seeks the highest quality housing, both internally and externally, that relates to the surrounding context and the wider environment, and enhances the quality of local spaces. Minimum space standards set out by the Mayor's Housing SPG note that 5 sqm of private outdoor space should be provided for 1-2 person dwellings and an extra 1sqm provided for each additional occupant.
- 2.2 The Local Plan: Core Strategy (2012) seeks to deliver a supply of well-designed good quality homes that meets to the needs of Newham's residents. In achieving this, existing policy requires design that improves housing quality for the promotion of healthy lifestyles and reduction of health inequalities (SP2); that ensures proposed densities take into consideration open space provision including private gardens (H1); that realises a high quality of design that will engender inclusive mixed and balanced communities, including via the minimisation of environmental impact through sustainability features and design that responds to local character and context (SP3) and prevents any loss, whilst seeking enhancement of private amenity space (SP8).

¹ See Local Plan Review Issues and Options, Part 1: Homes, Option 4

3. Family Homes and Outdoor Amenity Space in Newham

- 3.1 As part the Local Plan Review: Issues and Options, a potential opportunity to increase the supply of larger family homes (4 bed plus) has been identified through allowing for the conversion or subdivision of the borough's very large housing units. However, in order to ensure that this would result in a quality offer that meets the needs of future family occupiers, the delivery of the right level of accompanying outdoor amenity space provision is essential.
- 3.2 Whilst existing guidance sets a minimum quota for outdoor amenity space, the low threshold is reflective of the fact that in the context of constrained land supply, the majority of housing delivered in London is in the form of flats, where outdoor amenity space mainly comprises private balconies bolstered by additional semi-private shared spaces within a broader development. When this same threshold is applied to existing large scale houses, many of which already contain a good proportion of outdoor amenity space provision, not only would this result in very small gardens inadequate for meeting the needs of families occupying 4 bed plus homes, but it may also allow for substantial losses of valuable garden space to house extensions which may artificially justify conversions on internal space standards alone, and significantly impact local character. To safeguard the existing context and ensure future provision, preventing any harmful impacts on amenity, it is necessary to introduce a new minimum threshold for such property conversions.
- 3.3 In determining an appropriate level of amenity space, an assessment has been undertaken of gardens in areas comparable to where Newham's large scale properties are located (i.e. in Urban Newham), and where the available provision is considered to be aligned with that of a well-rounded quality housing offer. The four sample areas contain typical Victorian terraces comprising family homes (see Appendix 1 for area maps).
- 3.4 Averages (mean, median and mode) provide reasonable benchmarks for analysing garden space, the results of which are set out in the table below:

Area	Total Garden Area m ²	Median Garden Area m ²	Mean Garden Area m ²	Mode Garden Area m ²
1	8701	56	54	62.4
2	14,118	44	46	24.1
3	5505	60	62	35.8
4	16,612	61	58	63.5

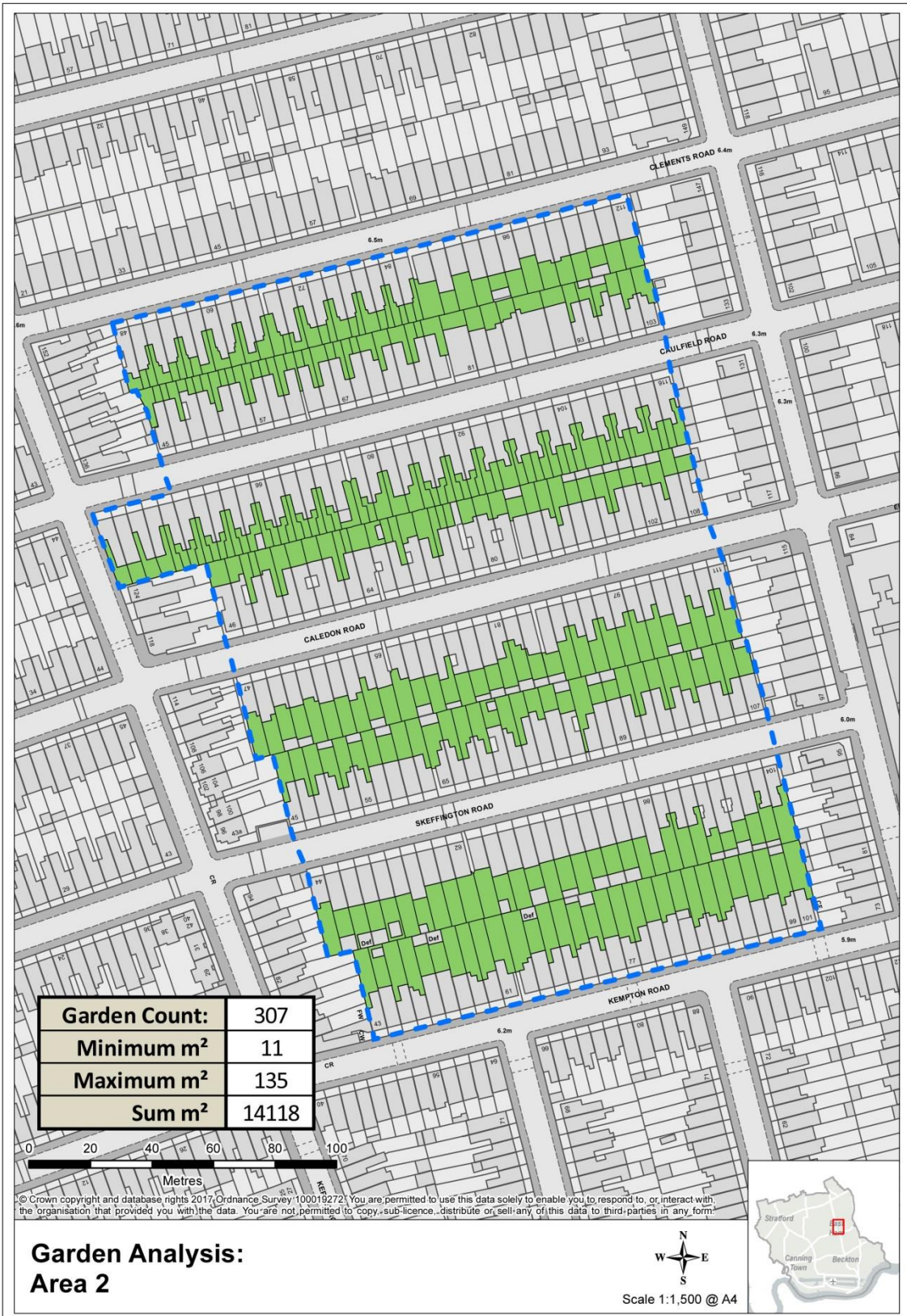
- 3.5 Whilst a mean figure helps to identify a broad area average, given the significant variations in garden sizes across each area, the occurrence of a few very large gardens drives up this figure, potentially distorting the real

picture. Mode and median averages however, provide further insight as to a 'typical' garden area, although significant variations (particularly in mode averages) are present across the four locations.

- 3.6 Analysing these results, an outdoor space of 45 sqm represents the lower end of mean and median averages and the mid-point of combined mode averages. When this is considered against the gardens of very large properties on some of Newham's villa streets in Forest Gate and in areas like Plaistow, their significant outdoor amenity spaces (between 100 and 200 sqm) are large enough to accommodate gardens of this size if subdivision were to occur.
- 3.7 Whilst overall area is the key consideration for outdoor amenity space, it is necessary to further review how width might impact upon the usability of that space. Taking the sample areas, the majority of the smaller garden widths are between 4 and 5m, demonstrating widths that whilst narrow, provide adequate amounts of space. Accepting that narrow linear gardens are commonplace across the borough due to the nature of terraced housing plots, it would be reasonable for any proposals for the conversion of larger properties to achieve this as a minimum to avoid excessively narrow corridor gardens. It is considered therefore that it is reasonable to require a 4m minimum garden width (especially in light of the significant spaces found within the boundaries of larger properties) in addition to the area threshold, as part of ensuring quality useable outdoor space.
- 3.8 Overall, in striving for area curation that results in the achievement of successful places and assists in fulfilling broader Local Plan objectives, these are considered to be a reasonable evidenced minimum thresholds for outdoor amenity space in larger scale family housing across the borough.

Appendix 1 – Area Maps









Garden Count:	286
Minimum m²	18
Maximum m²	91
Sum m²	16612



**Garden Analysis:
Area 4**



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