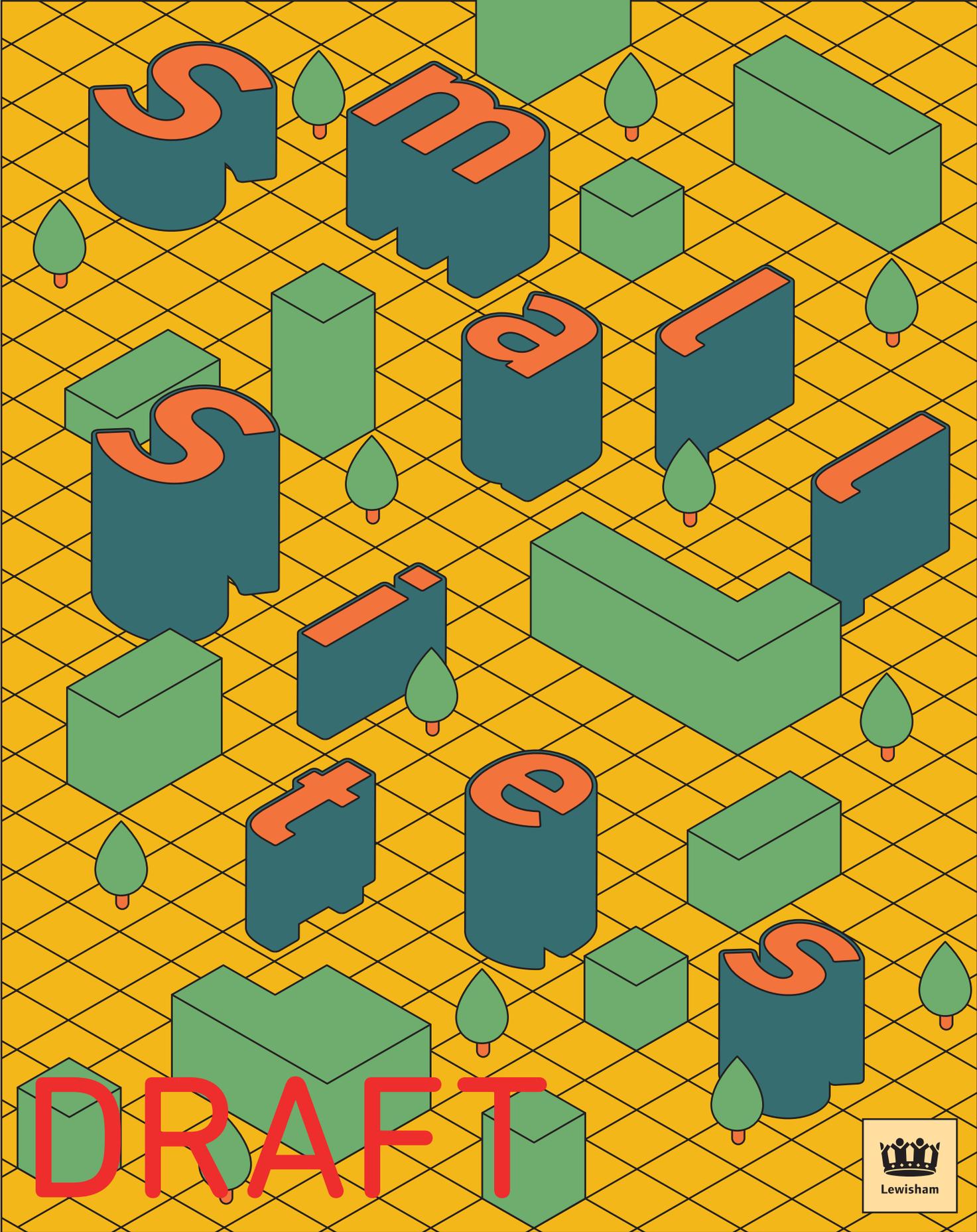


Small Sites Vision

Development Strategy Document

Draft March 2021





**London Borough of Lewisham
Small Sites Vision
Development Strategy Document**

This document is a development strategy for small sites developments in the London Borough of Lewisham. It is the first of three documents in this series, all of which can be found on Lewisham Council's website.



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Published TBC

This is a draft version for comment.

Some images in this document are placeholders awaiting new photography that will be incorporated ahead of issuing for consultation.

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Small Sites Design Guide (SPD)

Small Sites Appendices

1.1. Executive Summary

This document is the Lewisham Small Sites Development Strategy.

It is Part 1 of three documents which are:

- Part 1: This Small Sites Development Strategy document sets out a high level strategic vision for delivering more homes, including affordable homes, on Lewisham's small sites, underpinned by a series of objectives to achieve this vision.
- Part 2: The Small Sites Design Guide which forms an SPD to guide the delivery of small sites intensification in Lewisham.
- Part 3: Appendices

This Part 1 Development Strategy document:

- Defines what a small site is;
- Identifies a series of site types which align closely with Lewisham's existing key policies;
- Describes why developing small sites is important;
- Targets eight key objectives;
- Examines the national, London-wide and local policy context for delivering small sites;
- Describes Lewisham's suburban growth;
- Identifies potential areas for intensified small sites development.

1.2. Purpose of this document

This document sets out Lewisham's vision for how small sites can help it to meet its housing need.

Encouraging the delivery of small sites will:

- Deliver more homes, including those that are genuinely affordable.
- Help Lewisham meet its annual housing targets.
- Safeguard Lewisham's income from the New Homes Bonus.
- Diversifying away from reliance on large strategic sites
- Support local builders and developers, stimulating the local economy.
- Increase density, and thereby improving viability of local services.
- Improve infrastructure through CIL and S106 contributions.

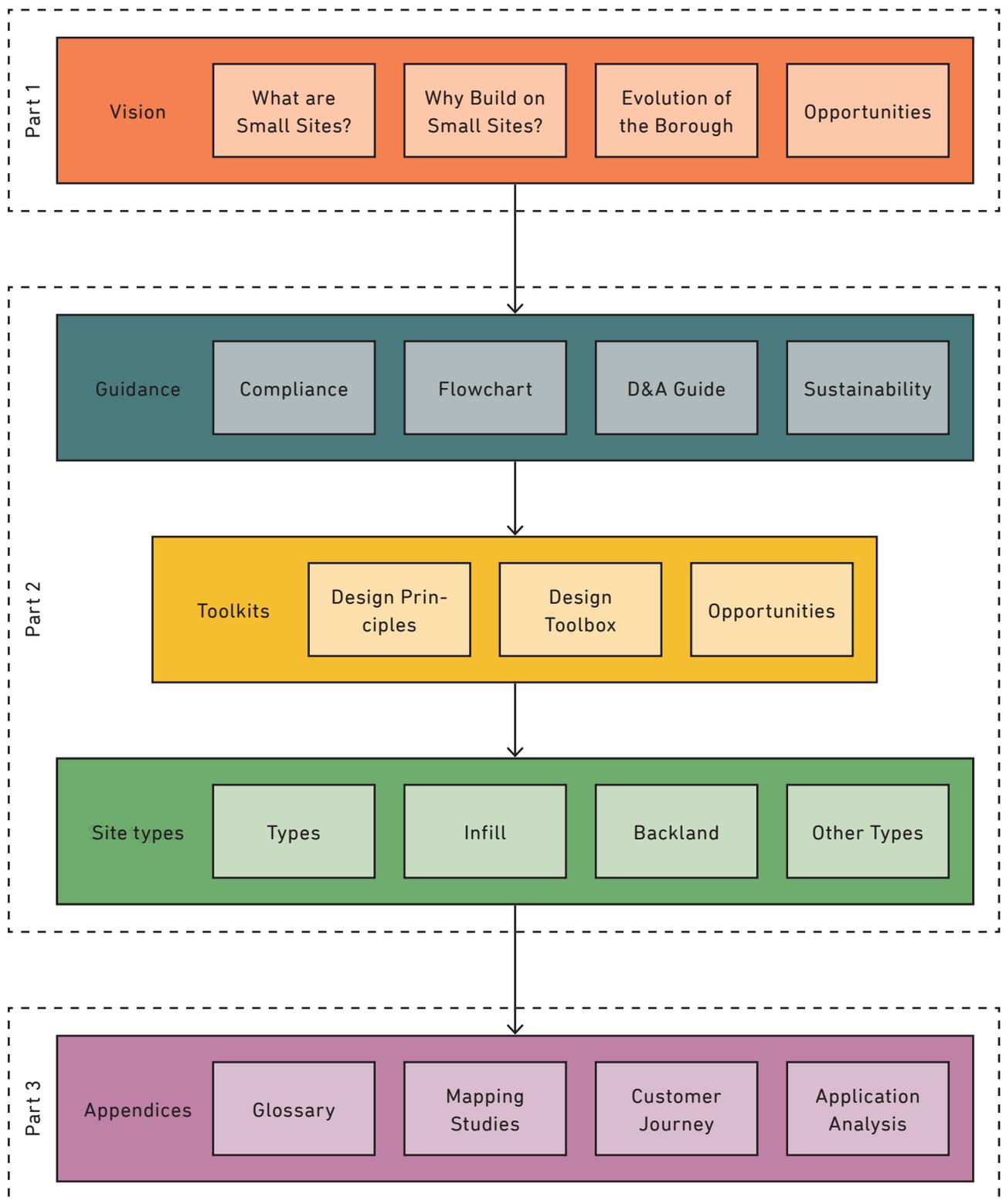


Fig. 1: Structure of the small sites documents. This document constitutes Part 1

2.1. What is a small site?

We can define a small site as being a plot of less than 0.25 hectares, which is 2,500 square metres, or 27,000 sq ft. To visualise this better, it is a square with 50 metre sides, or sides of 165 feet. This is a little more than one third the size of a football pitch.

There is no minimum size, though it is hard to imagine a site of less than, say, 50 square metres being developable.

Carefully designed, and in appropriate locations, a 0.25 hectare site might provide as many as 35 new homes, assuming a density of around 140 homes per hectare. This compares with typical suburban density of around 21 homes per hectare.

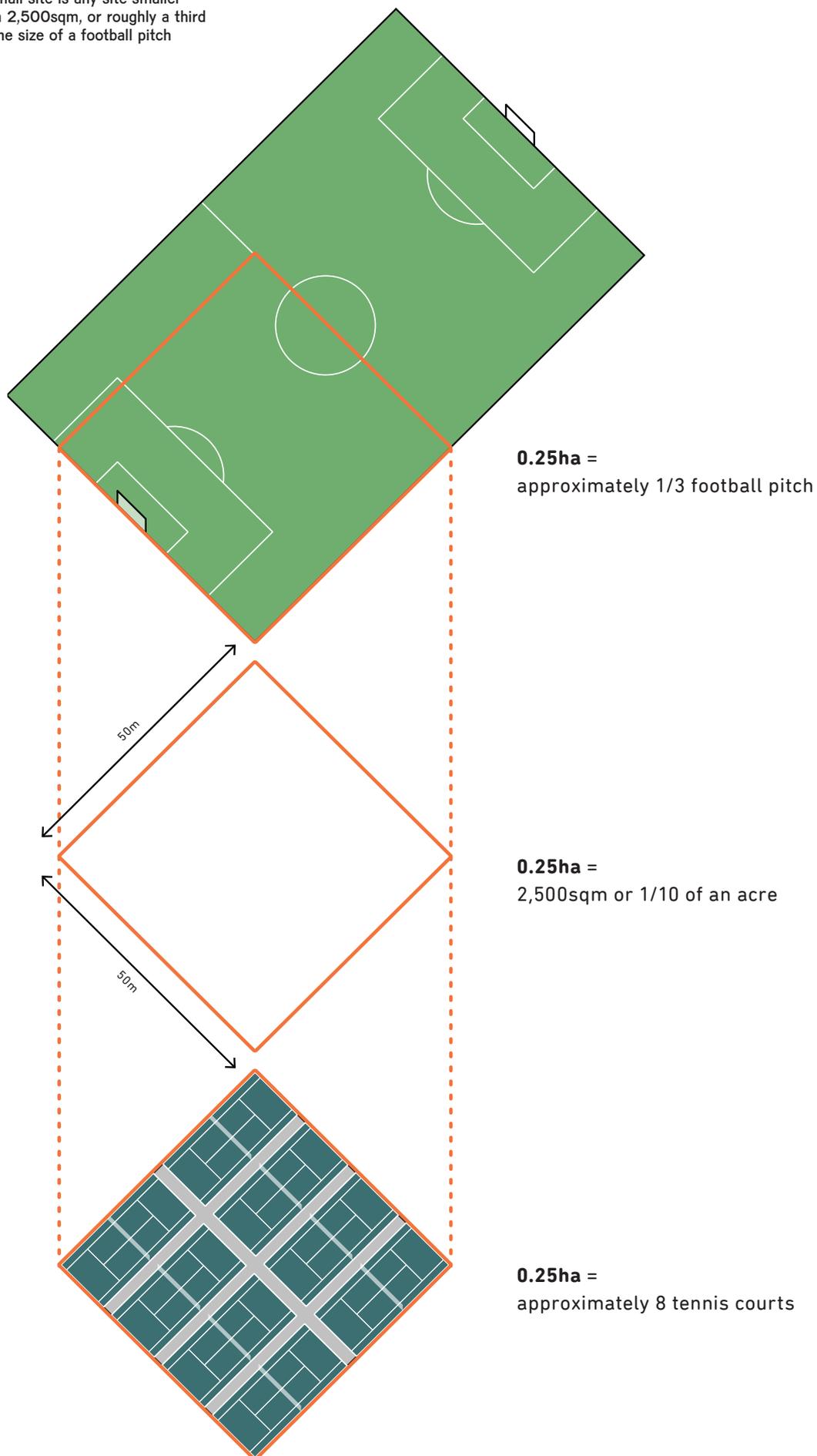
A small site might be:

- An area of low density, for example backlands, where demolition and redevelopment of low-density dwellings or former industrial premises can provide more homes;
- Infill sites, that may never have been previously built upon;
- Extensions and alterations to existing homes, allowing new generations to stay in the communities they grew up in.

Small site development can benefit not just incoming residents, but existing residents too. Suburban intensification through an increase in density can enhance existing places, through new infrastructure and improved local services.

It is worth noting that some of the densest parts of London, including Bloomsbury, Kensington, Knightsbridge, Kensington and Chelsea, are among the most desirable places to live in the capital.

Fig. 2: A small site is any site smaller than 2,500sqm, or roughly a third of the size of a football pitch



2.2. Site Types

Five primary site categories have been identified, drawn primarily from the Local Plan Policy DM11 and the emerging Local Plan Policy QD 11, with the addition of a conversion and extension category. This allows us to better tie the SPD back to Lewisham’s key policies.

The five categories are:

- Infill
- Backlands
- Conversion and extension
- Garden lands/ back gardens
- Amenity

Under each of these categories we have defined site types. The categories have been tested, iterated and refined by running real sites through them to ensure that all potential sites can be matched to a category.

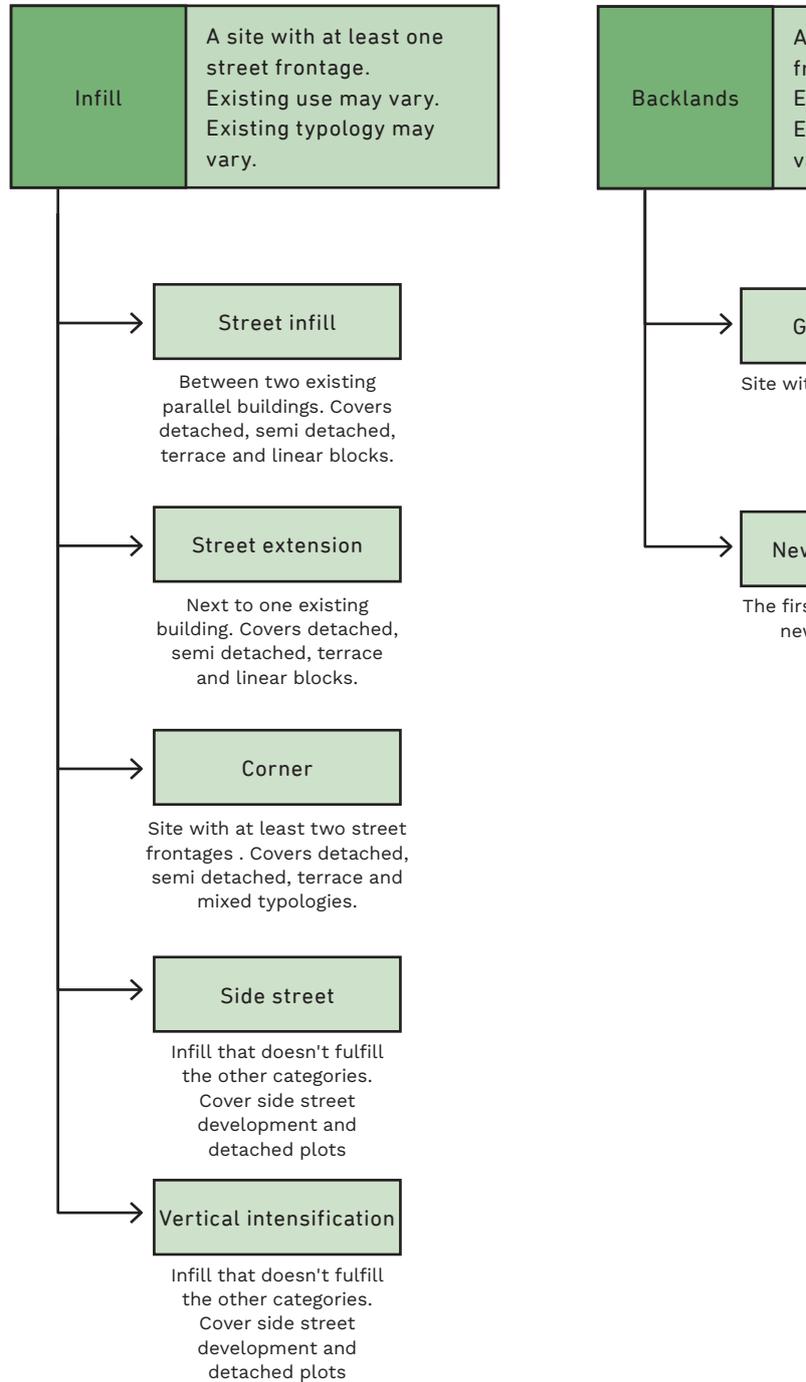


Fig. 3: The five types of small sites that are identified and advised on in this document

site with no street frontages. Existing use may vary. Existing typology may vary.

Garage / yard

with existing vehicular access

Low mews / alley

Best development of a low mews street

Conversion + extension	Retaining an existing structure on site. Change to residential use. Increase in number of homes.
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Other type?

When retaining an existing structure on site you should consult the section relevant to the site type

Other guidance

Refer to the Alterations and Extensions SPD

Garden lands / back gardens	Existing usage as a garden. May be hard or soft landscape. May be visible from street.
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Other type?

Garden land is not developable, so consider if the site fits another category

Amenity	Existing amenity use. May be green space or other communal facility. Has specific designation.
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Redundant amenity

Site has an existing designation as amenity but can be proved to be surplus or redundant and the designation removed

3 Why Build on Small Sites

3.1 Why encourage the delivery of small sites?

Lewisham needs to deliver more new homes, especially affordable homes. In June 2020, 9,000 households were on the housing register. Of these, 2,500 were in temporary accommodation. It is calculated that the borough needs to build 1,667 homes every year for the next ten years with at least 23% of these being provided by small sites of less than 0.25 hectare.

Small site development is required because:

- Government planning policy recognizes the contribution of small sites to housing delivery as important and suggests they should provide 10% of an area’s housing requirement.
- The upcoming London Plan mandates boroughs to meet certain housing targets with small sites playing an essential part. Lewisham’s annual target is 379 new homes on small sites.

Lewisham’s small sites strategy aims to:

- Deliver more homes, including those that are genuinely affordable.
- Diversify who is delivering Lewisham’s housing supply to make it more resilient.
- Encourage local builders and developers, thus stimulating the local economy and providing jobs.
- Increase density, helping to support local centres and infrastructure.

The following pages set out the vision and key objectives underlying this small sites strategy.



Fig. 4: Example of small sites housing

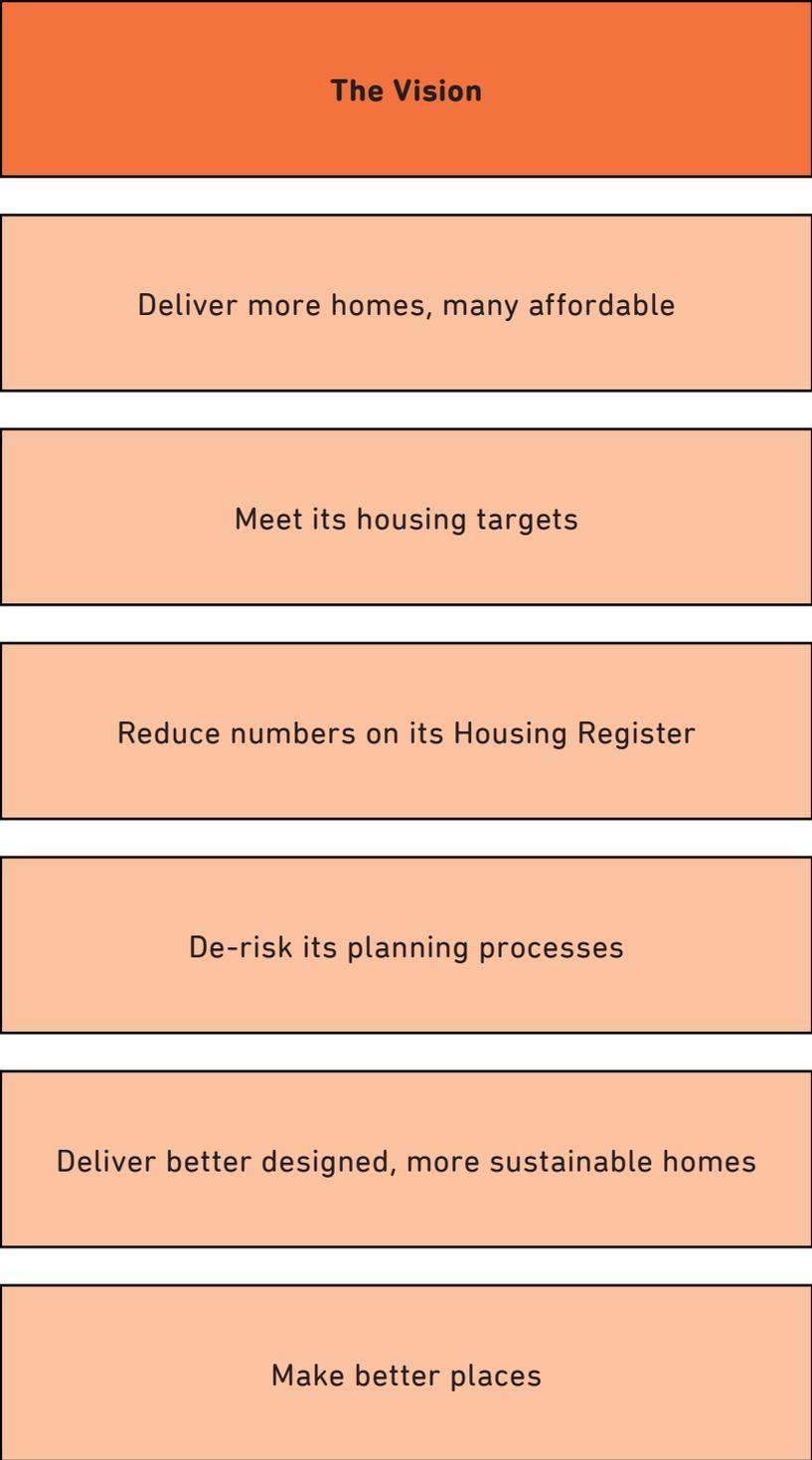


Fig. 5: Aims of the Lewisham Small Sites Vision

Improve the quality of new homes

Encourage applicants to build homes which are sustainable, resilient, healthy to live in and of exemplary design. Ensure they respond appropriately to the character and heritage of their neighbourhood.

Increase Lewisham's supply of new homes

Develop a strategic approach to small site intensification which de-risks the planning process and results in more sites coming forward.

Identify sites and areas for intensification

Identify and publicise those parts of the borough where small site intensification will help make better places for both new and existing residents, by enabling more commerce, services and public transport to develop.

Reduce risk

Provide clear principles for the development and intensification of small sites, minimising planning risk, optimising site capacities and supporting Lewisham's emerging spatial strategy for significant growth in suburban locations.

Fig. 6: Objectives of the Lewisham Small Sites Vision

Learn from elsewhere

Similar studies by other London councils and guidance from the GLA can provide leads. However, Lewisham's approach needs to be specific to its own culture and development needs so as to enthuse residents and ward councillors with a vision they can support.

Engage with local stakeholders

These include Housing Associations, private developers, local contractors, architects and landowners, whose experiences can help shape the strategy and guidance.

Optimise the supply of affordable homes

Reach out to applicants and provide robust advice as to the delivery capacity of each site. Demonstrate a clear understanding of the constraints and opportunities faced by developer partners.

Make advice accessible and easy to understand

Provide printed and online advice which is user-friendly. Avoid jargon, and help applicants successfully navigate the planning policy maze. Aim to widen participation so more people can build.

3.1. Policy Context

This Small Sites Development Strategy document, and its associated Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides guidance to applicants proposing small sites development in Lewisham.

A tiered layering of policy documents provides the planning policy context for the Small Sites SPD. The most significant of these are:

- The NPPF
- The upcoming London Plan
- Lewisham's upcoming Local Plan.

3.2. NPPF

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) promotes sustainable development and encourages local planning authorities to **plan positively** for new development and to approve proposals wherever possible. It aims for a genuinely plan-led system to enable local people to shape their surroundings and seeking **high standards of design**.

The NPPF identifies **small and medium sized sites** as able to contribute to housing need. It calls on local planning authorities to identify these sites to accommodate at least 10% of their housing requirement, and support the development of small sites. Nonetheless, they should **resist inappropriate development of residential gardens** where this would cause harm.

To provide maximum clarity and to encourage good design the NPPF encourages definitive plans, **supplementary planning documents**, and visual tools such as **design guides and codes**.

3.3. London Plan

The December 2019 'Intend to Publish London Plan' sees increasing the rate of housing delivery from small sites as a **strategic priority**. It sets out a 'small sites' housing target for every borough as part of its Policy H2 concerning small sites. For Lewisham, this small sites target for the ten-year period from 2019/20 is 3,790 net housing units, or 379 units per year, and makes up roughly 23% of the borough's overall draft London Plan target.

It foresees **incremental intensification** within 800 metres of transport hubs or town centres and recognizes that **local character will need to change over time** in appropriate locations to achieve this.

The Plan hopes to revive the role of **small and medium sized developers**, diversify the locations for development, encourage **custom-build and community-led housing**, support town centre economies and promote **modern methods of construction**.

It recommends that boroughs should provide design guidance in the form of **design codes** to provide clarity for potential applicants and reduce planning risk.

The Plan expects small sites development to contribute to **affordable housing** delivery, either on-site or, more often, as cash in lieu contributions.

3.4. Local Plan

Lewisham's 2014 adopted Local Plan is in process of being superseded by the emerging Local Plan which states Lewisham's aim as not just to meet the draft London Plan small sites target but to exceed it.

It recognizes that small sites provide opportunities to deliver new affordable homes, and can play an important role in addressing local deprivation. For instance, the designated Areas for Regeneration in the south of the Borough, that is Whitefoot, Downham and Bellingham wards, have distinctive characters and urban grain based on historic estate development with a lack of large site opportunities. Small site development could here provide a mechanism for more incremental investment and area improvement and could help to address the underlying causes of deprivation.

The Local Plan will provide the planning policy context for the Small Sites SPD. When determining applications, the Lewisham Local Plan and its policies, along with relevant guidance - including the Small Sites SPD - will be used to reach a balanced decision. Development proposals will be expected to have regard to this planning guidance and show how it informs the development through a design-led approach.



Fig. 7: Example of small sites housing

The upcoming Local Plan contains a number of items relevant to small sites, and section **H02 Optimising the use of small housing sites** addresses them specifically. Relevant points include:

- The Council will safeguard employment sites where possible;
- There is no mention of habitable room separation distances, previously set at 21m;
- A potential infill site should have a street frontage;
- Demand for parking must be considered;
- Development must not overshadow neighbouring back gardens;
- Backland development must provide easy access and avoid gates;
- Generally, the use of garden land for development is to be avoided and will be strongly resisted;
- Small sites should contribute towards affordable housing targets, respond positively to local character, enhance biodiversity, protect local amenity, and be designed to a high quality.
- Incremental intensification may lead to an area's character evolving over time, and this is not necessarily unwelcome.

3.5. The evolution of Lewisham's suburbs

London's suburbs have evolved over the past century and a half, and those in Lewisham form an essential part of this story.

Victorian development was a mix of terraced houses, often along key routes, and estates of large detached houses for a growing middle class.

Later, twentieth century inter-war development saw large areas of suburban housing. Predominantly this used the typology of the ubiquitous semi-detached suburban house, though parts of the Borough, such as Bellingham and Downham, feature suburban terraces.

Since 1945, evolution has continued, through the construction of new homes, often in larger blocks, as well as extensions and alterations to existing homes.

In addition, Lewisham has pioneered different development types, such as the development on infill or backland sites, and on difficult sites such as Walter's Way and Segal Close.

Development proposals coming forward today are part of the on-going evolution of the suburbs. This evolution and growth will continue, whether or not it is planned.

This document sets out a vision for development and intensification of small sites as an intrinsic part of this growth. Its aim is to ensure that the suburbs develop sustainably, and in ways that enhance the quality and character of Lewisham's neighbourhoods.

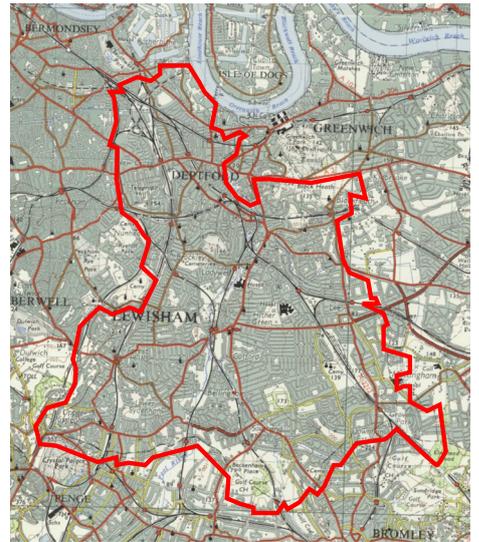
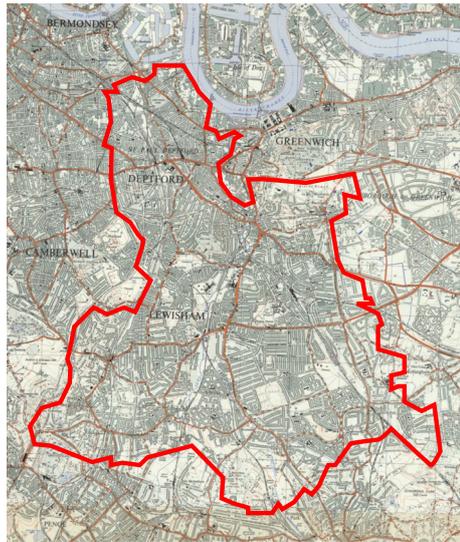
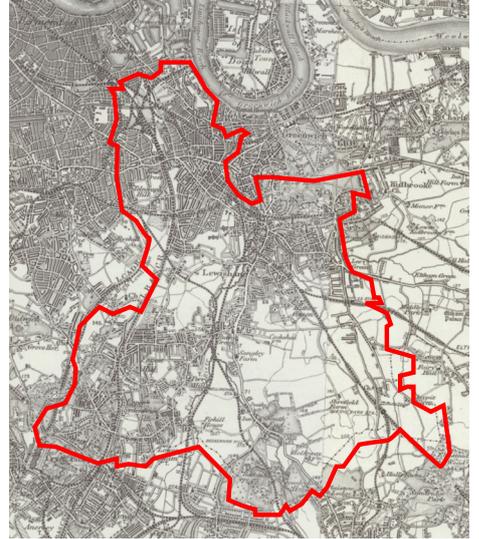
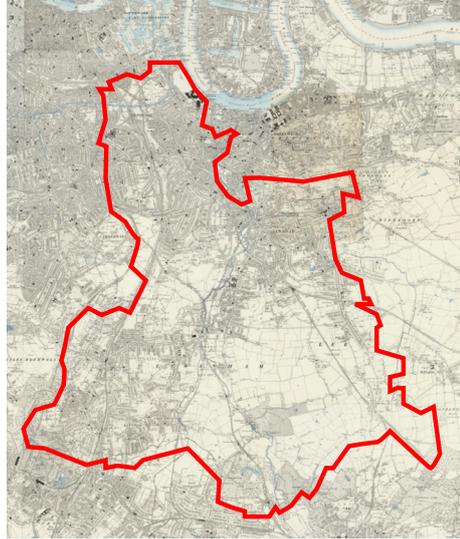
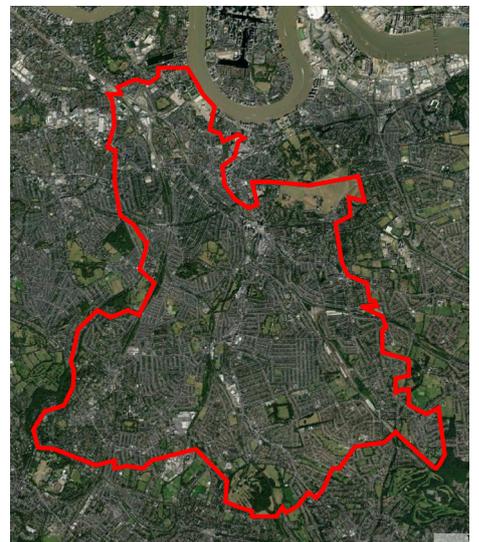


Fig. 8: The growth of Lewisham's suburbs between the 1880s and today



5.1. Area Mapping

We have used a detailed mapping process of the Borough to identify opportunities for intensification.

Further to understanding the borough's areas by wards, character areas and focus areas, the borough has been analysed by typological areas.

Each area has been analysed, leading towards a stronger understanding of typical sites that occur across the borough. Using this mapping and other resources, potential sites for small sites development have been identified and catalogued.

The map opposite, for example, indicates areas which may be appropriate for intensification, based on their connectivity.

Further detail on mapping and identified areas for intensification can be found in Part 3: Appendices.



Fig. 9: Example of small sites housing

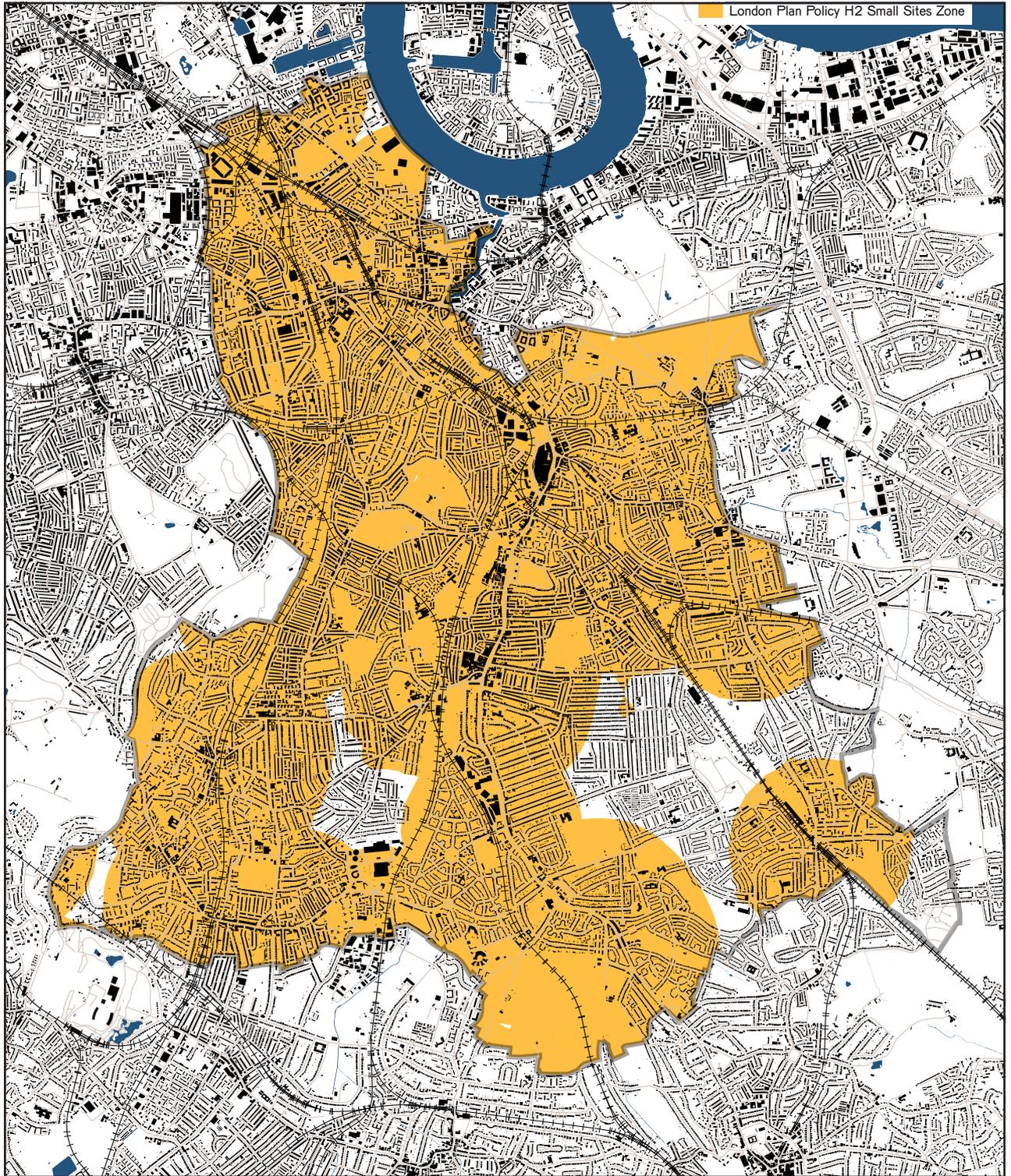


Fig. 10: Map of Lewisham and the surrounding areas showing the Policy H2 area and areas close to a cycleway