



# CAMDEN HIGHLINE DESIGN PHILOSOPHY PART ONE

## HUMANS AND NATURE: THE CREATIVE TENSIONS THAT EXIST BETWEEN AN URBAN ENVIRONMENT AND THE NATURAL WORLD

**Our team have met to share thoughts and distil our understanding of the brief. In the A2 drawing that we have created together, the Highline emerges as a wonderful opportunity to reconnect people from the urban environment to the natural world.**

The five key threads of sustainability are represented by word-strings, with Human and Social sustainability as the 'yin' to those of Nature and Physical as 'yang'. Economic sustainability lies between - because the fusion of Natural and Urban worlds depends on viability and a sustainable business plan. In this way, the success of the highline could ultimately be measured by how well these five threads are woven through all that takes place on the Highline, with the word-strings hinting at ideas and themes that might develop through engagement with local communities.

The Highline could be thought of as a lung for the local people, commuters and tourists alike - otherwise 'trapped' in the more polluted and frenetic street environment - a respiratory system that takes people, like Alice, from the street up into a Wonderland environment. But the Highline must have its feet planted firmly on the ground, embedded in, and growing from the surrounding communities it serves. In this way each of the four places where the Highline steps down to the street, represented here by four leaves, will evolve its character, breathing new life into the rich cultural heritage of each constituency.

As ideas for the Highline develop, there will be different types of creative tension - each with opportunities:

### Spatial tensions

The Highline can create space for human activities and allow natural habitat to flourish. The natural world is rough-edged and porous, offering the chance to create a rich variety of vertical and horizontal niches against the background brick, steel and concrete of the abandoned railway infrastructure. Creative solutions will help find the balance between the natural and the urban, remembering that multi-use, layered, and permeable systems hold much more life.

### Temporal tensions

Specific engineering solutions and radical overnight change are hallmarks of traditional development processes. In contrast, change in natural systems is slower, iterative and adaptive. The pre-determined, perfectly engineered solution is an illusion in all but the most mechanical of situations. Development of the Highline will follow the adaptive, iterative path. We need to be humble enough to know change will be imperfect and allow for the time to incrementally create better places.

### Behavioural tensions

We will create learning environments that help people choose a more sustainable path. We can help people see their connected-ness and choose more sustainable behaviours, not by being pushed or directed but rather because it is natural, more fulfilling and frankly, easier to do so.

### Lack of connectivity

Tensions also exist where human activity has been separated from natural systems. The Highline offers the chance to reconnect. As nature reclaims the city, so communities of citizens will reclaim space that was previously inaccessible, to enhance their quality of life. This will help connect them with the natural world and encourage them to interact in a more balanced way with nature.

**Our approach to the design and delivery of the Highline, will ensure that each element, each initiative, each stitch, between the natural and urban worlds considers all five threads of sustainability. A colourful cloth will emerge, tailored to connect people and the natural environment across Camden.**