**Camden audio**

Hello, I’m Georgia,

I want to tell you a little bit about our ambitions in Camden and what we’re looking for.

Camden is a dynamic, exciting place in the heart of London. We’ve got world-leading cultural institutions, universities, and businesses - from Google to the British Museum. We’ve got a really vibrant and active voluntary sector, local press and residents who get involved, they **agitate(?),** they campaign, they volunteer, and always make their voice heard.

And we’ve got this history of political and social activism, from the suffragettes through to the tenants movement. What we sometimes like to call in Camden ‘our rebellious spirit’.

But we also have deep inequalities. 39% of our children grow up in poverty, and our residents from disadvantaged backgrounds are likely to live 20 years in poorer health than their wealthier neighbours. And despite all the fantastic growth in Camden, there are some people who still feel it’s not working for them. So I had a resident tell me recently that they felt that they were in an island of poverty in between glass. And we have young people who feel trapped by their postcodes and we’ve been rocked by increases in youth violence in Camden over this year.

And we have all the challenges that come with being a busy, central-London borough. We have high levels of air quality issues, we have massive housing issues and a shortage of genuinely affordable homes. And we have high levels of street homelessness.

And we also have the issues posed by Brexit. It’s a threat to our growth but also to our European neighbours and colleagues, and there are so many European citizens that live in Camden.

I’m really proud of how creative and innovative we’ve been in responding to the austerity we face. We’ve lost half our discretionary budget in Camden, but we’ve still managed to do a huge amount. We’ve built some of the first council homes in Camden since the 1970s, and we’re set to build over a 1,000 homes. We’ve been praised by Ofsted for our preventative and strengths-based approach to children’s services.

Our schools have chosen to join Camden in a collaborative endeavour called Camden Learning to protect our community ethos. But we want to go further and address the stark inequalities we face in Camden. We want to build an alternative to a national picture that can seem frustrating, fragmented and frankly stark. Our aim is to bring together all the people that live and work in Camden around this positive alternative. We have ambitions that go far beyond our powers or resources to deliver them. So we want to be a council that delivers public services, but we also want to be a convener, a community organiser, a connector and above all an anchor of place.

Our community-led vision, Camden 2025, was written by residents in a borough-wide citizens assembly. And it sets out a number of community challenges which we’re asking citizens to help us solve, from social isolation through to youth safety. And that work has already started. We’ve got residents working with UCL on a new clean air action plan and many more examples throughout our borough.

Over the coming years, we want Camden to continue to be a place that is ambitious, a home for innovators and leaders who want to tackle inequality and want to be creative. We want to protect what is special about our borough - our social mix, our public services, our voluntary sector, and that rebellious spirit.

And the great thing about Camden is it’s brimming with energy to do that. 80% of our residents say that they want to work with their neighbours to make this borough a better place. And that is a huge amount of energy for us to mobilise together.