

Strategic Review of Ocean Estate & Limehouse Fields Area



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1 Summary

This report presents the results of the Ocean Estate and Limehouse Fields Area Strategic Review. In June 105, a local election took place and there was a change in the local administration. The former Mayor's Office of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets commissioned this review and it has been completed under Mayor John Biggs.

According to the 2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) the Ocean Estate and Limehouse Fields area, despite those the regeneration initiatives, still remains firmly anchored in the worst 20% of neighbourhoods in the country whilst over the same period the Borough of Tower Hamlets overall has become relatively less deprived. It is increasingly clear that the locality has a long way to go to catch up with the ambitions of the Tower Hamlets 2015 Community Plan.

Tower Hamlets 2015 Community Plan

- **Themes**
 - A great place to live
 - A fair and prosperous community
 - A safe and cohesive community
 - A healthy and supportive community
- **One Tower Hamlets Principles**
 - Equality
 - Cohesion
 - Community leadership
- **Cross-Cutting Priorities**
 - Empowering residents and building resilience
 - Promoting healthier lives
 - Increasing employment
 - Responding to population growth.

The primary purpose of the review is to produce a community plan that will complete “the regeneration of the Ocean Estate and the Limehouse Fields area”. In effect, it would provide a local expression or interpretation of the theme, principles and priorities of the Tower Hamlets Community Plan. The difficulty of the challenge that lies ahead should not be underestimated, as we shall see in the rest of the report. However, the Strategic Review has laid the groundwork for a sustainable community plan for the local area.

The key demographic indicators of the Ocean Estate and Limehouse Fields area shown overleaf measures the extent of deprivation and disadvantage in the locality today.

Key Deprivation Indicators

- Greater proportion of households who were economically inactive in ORT area (36.2%), Tower Hamlets (30.2%) and London (29.5%)
- Higher levels of unemployment in ORT area (12.5%), Tower Hamlets (9.7%) and London (7.3%)
- Fewer residents with Level 4 or above qualifications in ORT area (32%), Tower Hamlets (41%) and London (37.7%)
- More residents with no qualifications in ORT area (25.4%), Tower Hamlets (20%) and London (17.6%)
- Average life expectancy lower for men in ORT area (72 yrs), Tower Hamlets (76.7 yrs) and London (79.3 yrs); for women in ORT area (80.6 yrs), Tower Hamlets (81.9 yrs) and London (83.6yrs)*
- Proportion of households where no-one has English as a main language is higher in the ORT area (22.1%), Tower Hamlets (19.4%) and London (12.9%)
- Proportion of overcrowded households higher in the ORT area (40.3%), Tower Hamlets (34.8%) and London (21.7%)
- Fewer residents were employed in higher managerial and professional occupations in ORT area (8.7%), Tower Hamlets (14.4%) and London (13.2%).

Whilst the two regeneration programmes achieved considerable physical change in the area and have helped to transform the housing conditions of local residents, it is self-evident that neither made any substantial inroads in the socio-economic problems of the neighbourhoodⁱ. Various explanations can be advanced to account for that relative lack of success and they are considered in more detail later in the reportⁱⁱ. However, it appears that gentrification itself – the process by which higher income and higher skilled professional households move into the new generally private owner-occupied homes changes the demographic profile of an area - will do little by itself to erode the underlying bedrock of deprivation and disadvantage. Indeed, as the Tower Hamlets Fairness Commission suggests that is likely to have the perverse outcome of widening the social divide, increasing social polarisation and sharpening economic and social exclusionⁱⁱⁱ.

Helen Pearson, in her account of the British cohort studies, shows just how hard it is to escape from a disadvantaged background^{iv}. More generally, the work of the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, chaired by Alan Milburn, provides strong evidence that social mobility has stalled and may be going into reverse across the country, and its various reports paint a depressing picture of a divided Britain in which there is a “postcode lottery in social mobility”, with some parts of the country faring much worse in education and employment opportunities^v.

Although such structural factors make area based initiatives difficult, nevertheless it is still possible to make a real and lasting difference to people’s lives through local interventions. But in order for that to be successful, there has to be a significant shift in engaging the community, focusing less on its deficiencies and more upon its potential for change. We need a proper strategy of asset based

community development that has as explicit aims building the neighbourhood capital of the area and ensuring a more equitable distribution of its component elements within the community. In other words, we should be seeking to develop what Gabriel Chanan and Colin Miller term the “transformative neighbourhood”^{vii} – i.e. transforming the neighbourhood from inside rather than from outside by mobilising its internal resources.

It is an approach that establishes the local community as the primary agency of change. There is an extensive body of theory and practice developed over recent years which shows how can be done^{viii} and perhaps the best account is contained in the 2008 White Paper, ‘Communities in Control: real people, real power’^{ix}. A more recent RSA report demonstrates the effectiveness of building community capacity and social relations in a neighbourhood (what is called social capital) in generating “four kinds of social value or ‘dividend’ shared by people in the community”^x. Those four kinds of community dividend are defined as:

- A wellbeing dividend
- A citizenship dividend
- A capacity dividend
- An economic dividend^{xi}.

It follows that a sustainable neighbourhood community strategy of the local area should consist of the following main elements:

- Creating stronger identity and sense of place (community, neighbourhood, urban village).
- Promoting a greater sense of belonging and ownership (stewardship/custodianship).
- Fostering community cohesion and social integration (where new arrivals should be seen as an asset).
- Devolving responsibility and power to build social capital and resilient communities.
- Encouraging community self-help by supporting mutuality and building the capacity of local groups.
- Improving the performance and accountability of local service providers.
- Better neighbourhood management and service co-ordination.
- Treating public spending as community investment to build neighbourhood capital.
- Developing new structures of local governance and local accountability^{xii}.

Recommendations

Those themes form the basis of the main recommendations of the Strategic Review. The recommendations are:

- The work to complete the local community plan needs to be completed in participation with the local community, based upon the key themes outlined above.
- Community services should be more accountable to the community and subject to closer local scrutiny.
- Performance management indicators need to be collated and shared amongst service providers and with the local community.

- Better co-ordination, integration of community services, and resource sharing to avoid duplication and ensure more efficient service delivery.
- Action needs to be taken to address gaps in community services.
- Greater role for the local community and community groups in devising, developing and delivering local community services.
- A strategy of building local community capacity needs to be adopted.
- More effective neighbourhood management arrangements should be put in place.
- Stronger governance arrangements should be developed locally.
- A lead body must be clearly identified.

Our assessment of the Ocean Regeneration Trust is that has the appropriate legal structure, an effective Board of Directors with a broad range of experience and a diversity of gender and ethnic backgrounds (including local resident representatives), and that it “continues to explore opportunities to strengthen the membership...in order to deliver good governance and strong leadership’. The 2015/16-2017/18 Business Plan has been approved by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

Our key recommendation is that the Ocean Regeneration Trust (ORT) as the legacy body of the Ocean NDC Programme should be the delivery vehicle for the local community plan. It should be seen as the lead organisation, working in partnership with the local community, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and local community providers, for the development and the delivery of the local community plan. Moreover, the management of the Harford Centre should be transferred to the ORT. In order for it to fulfil those roles and for it to function effectively, the ORT must have sufficient, stable and sustainable funding in place.

2 Introduction

The Strategic Review was initiated by the Mayor's Office of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets in 2013. At the time it was becoming clear that, although the regeneration of the Ocean and Limehouse Fields area had largely achieved its housing objectives, it had not made the same impact upon the longstanding, deeply entrenched and more intractable problems of deprivation and disadvantage in the locality. Thus while physical regeneration of the area had been much easier to achieve, slower progress had been made in transforming the life chances and opportunities of local residents.

In this introductory chapter, we start by outlining the purpose of the review and in particular defining the nine core questions it sought to address. We then consider the methodology through which the review was undertaken and then discuss the main findings. In our concluding section we begin to elucidate the main themes that will run through the main body of the report and that will provide the framework for the community plan.

Purpose and scope of the review

The primary purpose of the Strategic Review was to produce 'a revised community plan on how to successfully complete the regeneration of the Ocean Estate and Limehouse Fields area and set up arrangements to ensure that the community, social and legacy provisions are adequately addressed and in line with Mayoral priorities.' In particular, the review was to incorporate 'a review of current provisions and services in the area' and 'identification of key gaps and opportunities to strengthen partnership arrangements.'

Nine specific questions framed the scope of the review. These were:

1. What are the new contextual changes and challenges (eg. changing demography, new facilities in the area, impact of government policy, different LBTH policy approach)?
2. What are the current social, financial, educational, employment and training needs and priorities of the area?
3. What is needed as a viable retail offer for the area? What are the physical improvements needed?
4. What is the scope of existing facilities and capacity of current service providers?
5. Is there a need for new community facilities in the area? What is the evidence base / needs analysis?
6. What is the demand for existing funding? Are there any new funding opportunities?
7. What is the future of the Harford Street Centre? What is needed to make the centre function as an effective area-wide facility?
8. What are the current partnership arrangements and management capacity of the Ocean Regeneration Trust (ORT)?
9. What alternative management models and new partnership opportunities are available?

From the outset, it was realised that this was an ambitious project and that there were no easy answers, nor simple solutions to the social and economic problems of the area. As Professor Peter

Ambrose suggested in 2002, many “decades of [public] expenditure [have] failed to cure many of the problems blighting Britain”^{xvii}. The task that has been made considerably more difficult in the current climate of public expenditure cuts. However, the review has gained a much better understanding of the available facilities and services in the area, and it has highlighted duplication or gaps in provision; it has provided an opportunity to look afresh at local service networks and bring some coherence to the fragmented picture of facilities that had developed. Tackling those problems requires new ways of working together, the pooling and more efficient uses of local resources and an enhanced role for the voluntary and community sector.

Methodology

This review was initiated by the Mayor’s Office in 2103 and the process was managed by a steering group of council officers, local service providers and community representatives. The members of steering group were: Brenda Daley (Ocean Tenants and Leaseholders Association), Margaret Fisher (Grand Union Place Residents Association), John Coker (London Borough of Tower Hamlets), Maureen Worby (East Thames Housing), Farida Yasmin (Limehouse Project), Michelle Bailleux (Ocean Regeneration Trust), James Turner (Tower Hamlets Homes) and Carol McAdams (Stepney Schools Partnership). The review was carried out by Shibbir Ahmed and Imelda Burke of the Strategy, Regeneration and Sustainability Team (London Borough of Tower Hamlets, supported by an independent consultant (Damian Tissier, Microfish).

The agreed work programme for the review was:

- a) Desktop review/audit of current needs and service provision of the area (which was to produce an evidence based report
- b) Consultation with residents
- c) Consultation with key service providers.

a) Desktop review

The desktop review assembled a range of demographic statistics and local service performance management information. A summary of the demographic statistics is presented in the Chapter 3 and the performance information in Chapter 4.

b) Resident Consultation

On 5 September 2015, the team organised a community day in Shandy Park on the Ocean Estate for over 500 residents and 20 local community and voluntary groups. Residents who attended the event for were asked for their views on local services and facilities which they used on daily or weekly basis. Over 170 questionnaires were completed and these also provided information on age and ethnicity. The event was followed with smaller, more focused consultation meetings with key stakeholders on the Ocean Estate and in the surrounding area.^{xviii}

c) Service provider consultation

The consultation with service providers consisted of:

- Questionnaire survey of local service providers to obtain their views on the current facilities and services available. Seventeen organisations replied. The respondents provide a range of services: including an older person's club, health support and advice, social gatherings, support into work, youth and children's services and advice for small community groups.
- Focus groups to understand the take-up of services from a service delivery point of view and to identify any gaps or duplication in those services. The focus groups were divided into thematic areas.

Focus Group	Attendees	Date
Crime and anti-social behaviour	East Thames, Gateway Housing, LBTH Youth Service, Salvation Army, Grand Union Place Residents' Association, and Ocean Regeneration Trust	10 December 2015
Education, childcare and parenting support	Stepney Partnership (Halley, Cayley, Ben Jonson and Stepney Green Schools) and residents	26 November 2015
Youth and Sports Services	LBTH Youth Service, Ocean Youth Connexions, Stepney Foundation, Stepney City Farm, Ocean Regeneration Trust	19 November 2015
Older Persons Services	Service providers and residents	10 December 2015
Employment and training	Department of Works and Pensions, City Gateway, East Thames, Tower Hamlets Homes, LHP	9 December 2015

Main Findings

The baseline research shows that the area is undergoing rapid population growth as the supply of new housing locally grows, and that its demographic character is changing although at a lower rate than had possibly been anticipated originally.

In summary, it reveals that:

- Over the last ten years the population of the area has grown rapidly (nearly 23%) which is greater than the average for London (14%) but not as fast as Tower Hamlets overall (29.6%).
- The character of the area is changing albeit more slowly, with small but significant shifts in its social class composition, age profile and ethnic and cultural mix. It is gradually becoming more "gentrified" as the housing tenure diversifies and the proportion of home ownership increases and social renting decreases.
- Nevertheless the Ocean Estate and Limehouse Fields is still defined by its persistently high level of deprivation and it remains firmly anchored amongst the worst 20% neighbourhoods in country at a time when Tower Hamlets overall has become less deprived.

- As a consequence, social polarisation is likely to increase and community cohesion undermined.

Those trends are likely to accelerate in the period between the 2011 Census and the 2021 Census. But what is unlikely to change is the level of demand upon community services although the nature of that demand may be different.

The resident consultation has provided useful information on the local demand upon community services, the social and economic concerns/problems of the area and the current gaps in service provision.

Top five facilities in order of use	Top five concerns/problems in order of importance	Gaps in service provision in order of priority
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mile End Leisure Centre 2. Local parks and open spaces 3. Stepney City Farm 4. Harford Street Health Centre 5. Ocean Childrens Centre. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Crime and anti-social behaviour 2. Jobs 3. Health care 4. Poor quality shops 5. Recreational facilities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More activities for young people 2. More activities for elderly people 3. More affordable childcare.

The service provider consultation has begun to assemble a more complete database of all the community service provision in the area. It also provides an indication of the level of demand for community services and the challenges faced by the local providers in delivering those services.

Key Findings from Service Provider Consultation

- A range of services is being delivered from mainstream organisations, voluntary bodies and faith groups. They include community health services, community cohesion initiatives, young people’s services, ESOL and skills training, and advocacy services.
- There is some duplication of services provided by third sector providers.
- There are gaps in the provision of
 - support services for older people linked to health and wellbeing agencies
 - culturally-sensitive support services for girls and young women
 - youth service activities for under 11’s
 - weekend and holiday activities for under 13’s
 - affordable childcare for working parents
 - integrated employment support and adult learning provisions.
- Community facilities could offer multi-purpose usage and provide more activities like cooking, sewing and arts & crafts. They could also provide new community groups with a place to meet and grow. Facilities should be easily accessible to all sections of the community and open in the evenings and at the weekend.
- Most voluntary groups lack up-to-date business plans and rely heavily on grant funding. This raises concerns about their longer-term sustainability, post NDC. Most had received early NDC support with business planning and fundraising but would welcome more help with developing social enterprises.

Conclusions

The Ocean Estate and Limehouse Fields Area Strategic Review has begun the process of developing a community plan for the locality. It has highlighted the major issues impacting upon the provision of community services and the challenges they are experiencing in the context of rapid demographic change, growing inequality and social polarisation, and the increasing pressures on public expenditure.

The rest of the report goes into much more detail about the current level of community service provision, how it needs to change to meet the demographic and financial challenges of the future in what is still one of the most deprived and disadvantaged places in Tower Hamlets. Our final chapter outlines our recommendations for how that can be done.

3 Background

This chapter provides the context to the Strategic Review. We start by describing its physical features before looking at its demographic characteristics. The nature of a place and the nature of its people are closely intertwined, and it is the interactions between people and between people and place that constitute the identity of a neighbourhood.

But whilst neighbourhood is defined primarily through internal relations of people and place, it is also shaped by outside influences. Those external factors are considered in some detail in our section on the wider political and economic context.

The key themes that emerge from analysis, and their impact upon the Strategic Review, are discussed in more detail in the concluding section.

Place

The Ocean Estate and Limehouse Fields area is delineated by the Mile End Road to the north, the Regents Canal to the east, Commercial Road to the south, and Belgrave Street, Stepney High Street and Stepney Way to the west. It encompasses most of the St Dunstons Ward in Tower Hamlets, excluding York Square conservation area in the south west and the Stepney Green conservation area to the north-west^{xix}. The extent to which it forms what could be considered to be natural neighbourhood is a matter of some debate - in densely populated urban localities neighbourhood boundaries are usually fuzzy, varying considerably in the perceptions and experience of individual residents^{xx}.

It is primarily residential in nature, with Ben Jonson Road located at its heart. Ben Jonson Road functions as the high street for the neighbourhood, with Harford Health Centre at one end and Stepney City Farm at the other; in between are a variety of shops and community facilities, including Stepney Green Maths, Computing & Science College and the Haileybury Youth Centre. Just south of Ben Jonson Road is the church of Saint Dunstan and All Saints, dating back to the 10th century, around which grew the old medieval village, which later expanded to become Stepney.

Shandy Park is the main green space in the neighbourhood and it is situated on the former site of the East London Cemetery or Beaumont Burial Ground. In addition, there are four other smaller parks, at Beaumont Square Gardens (with play areas for the ages 4 and below and ages 5 plus), Trafalgar Gardens (with a multi-use games area and a play area for ages 5 plus), White Horse Lane open space and Whitehouse Road Park (with a play area for the ages 4 and below). Just outside the eastern boundary of the area, on the other side of the Regents Canal, the 79 acres of Mile End Park created on industrial land devastated by the intensive bombing during the World War II. So too is the Ragged School Museum, which opened in 1990 in the premises of the former Dr Barnardo's Copperfield Road Ragged School, founded in 1877.

The housing redevelopment over the last 15 or so years has gradually reshaped the landscape, the land uses and the physical character of the area. Whilst some housing development has been of derelict industrial sites like the old Stepney Gas Works on Harford Street, mostly it has taken place

on Council housing land, primarily the Ocean Estate and the Limehouse Fields Estate through a mixture of refurbishment and redevelopment. Although much of the housing stock has remained social housing (52.9%)^{xxi}, there has been a diversification of social landlords (24.7% rented from the council and 28.2% from a variety other registered housing providers)^{xxii}. Increasingly too, there is a greater mix of housing tenure, with a rise in the proportion of properties being built for private sale^{xxiii}. As we shall see in the next section, tenure diversification is having some impact on the local demography.

People

According to the 2013 Ocean Profile, there are 7,459 people (2,574 households) are living in the area^{xxiv}. The population has grown by 23%, from when the NDC programme began in 2000, and it continues to rise^{xxv}. Whilst the rate of population growth is below the Borough average of 29.6%, it is greater than for Central London (16.7%) and all of London (14%). The area has one of the higher population densities in Tower Hamlets^{xxvi}.

Key features

- The age profile is skewed towards younger and older age groups - aged under 25 (42.1%), aged 25 to 64 (50.7%), aged over 64 (7.2%).
- A relatively high proportion of residents' health is bad or very bad (7.4%) than Tower Hamlets overall (6%) or London (4.9%)
- The proportion of population belonging to black and minority ethnic communities was higher (69.9%) than Tower Hamlets (64.2%) or London (40.2%)
- 40.7% of the population does not have English as their main language (and 11% cannot speak English well or at all).
- A lower proportion of the population have a Level 4 plus qualification (31.7%) than Tower Hamlets (43.6%) and London (40.5%); and more local people have no formal qualifications (20.3%, than Tower Hamlets (15.6%) and England (14.8%)
- A high proportion of the population have never worked or are long-term unemployed is higher (18.5%) than Tower Hamlets (13.4%) and London (8.2%)
- A low proportion of people are in managerial and professional occupations (26.8%) than Tower Hamlets (36.1%) and London (36.3%)
- Rates of home ownership are lower (24.8%) than Tower Hamlets (26.6%) and London (49.5%).

With population growth, the demographic character of the population has altered too - but perhaps by not as much as had been initially anticipated (or feared). The changing demography has several causes: the longer term effect of the transfer from social to private housing through right-to-buy, recent rises in property values and the impact of housing redevelopment to diversify tenure. The demographic shifts can be summarised as follows:

- Alongside the increase in the housing stock (up by 26.2%), there has been a diversification of tenure: with a small increase in home ownership (up 0.8%) accounted for by the greater

availability of shared ownership¹; a rise in private rented (up 6%) and an decrease in the proportion of social rented (down 8.1%)².

- The age profile of the area has changed, with the proportion of 25-44 year olds up from 30.2% to 38.2%.
- There has been a shift in the socio-economic groups, the number of residents in higher managerial and professional occupations up by 34.1% (although the relative proportion within the local population has only changed by barely 1.4%).
- The proportion of White British has declined by 8.7% and Bangladeshi by 1.9%; whilst the proportion of white other has increased by 3.9% and mixed ethnicity by 2.4%.

The social statistics depict a depressing scenario of entrenched deprivation. Thus the Ocean Estate and Limehouse Fields area is still firmly anchored amongst the worst 20% neighbourhoods in the country. Whilst over the last five years, according to the 2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation, Tower Hamlets has jumped up 17 places in the local authority rankings, from the 7th to the 24th most deprived area in England.^{xxix}

Recent History

As we have already noted, the recent past of the Ocean Estate and Limehouse Fields area has been a history of physical and demographic change. Over the last 20 years, an ambitious programme of regeneration aimed to transform the lives of residents and the fortunes of the locality.

A total of £85 million funding was secured from successive governments from two regeneration programmes : in 1995, from the Single Regeneration Budget (£28.4 million); and in 2000, and the New Deal for Communities Programme (£56.6 million). The regeneration funding in turn levered in additional public and private investment. Over the period, the estimated total amount of regeneration expenditure has been in excess of £400 million, with overwhelming proportion directed on physical improvements: predominantly investment to the housing stock through a mix of refurbishment and redevelopment, with smaller amounts spent on other public and community buildings and on the environment. Very little investment was made in the other aspects of neighbourhood capital on what can be described generically as the “people programmes”. A summary of the main areas of expenditure of SRB6 and NDC schemes is shown overleaf.

Physical change can and does transform people’s lives. For example, new and improved housing addresses poor housing condition, overcrowding (and under-occupation), and other types of housing stress, and as Peter Ambrose has demonstrated that has multiple other benefits most particular upon public health^{xxx}. By making an area a better place to live, it also increase local satisfaction in a neighbourhood and attract more people to live there. One obvious measure, of course, is the boost that successful physical regeneration gives to land values, house prices and rents – although, as Peter Ambrose also pointed out, that can also have the unintended consequence of making that housing less and less affordable for local people.

¹ It is interesting to note that there appears to have been a decrease in the conventional forms of home ownership (properties owned with a mortgage or loan are down 5.4%).

² The decrease in the proportion of social housing overall is accounted for by the loss of council housing (down 25.3%) and the growth of housing associations (up 17.1%) locally.

Central Stepney SRB6 Programme

- Between 1995 and 2002
- Aim 'comprehensive revitalisation' of the area
- Budget £28.4 million
- £15 million directly allocated for housing
- Levered in £113 million additional housing investment
- Focus on housing conditions on Limehouse Fields
- No legacy vehicle.

Ocean Estate NDC

- Between 2000 and 2010
- Aim to close the "disadvantage gap" with rest of country
- Budget £56.6 million
- Stronger focus on social regeneration
- Levered in £200 million additional housing investment
- Focus on a core area (mainly Ocean Estate) but wider area of benefit
- ORT set up as successor body.

Perhaps because it was a much bigger regeneration programme, the Ocean Estate NDC made greater capital investments in public facilities in the area, including improvements to local parks and open spaces, the Stepney Health Centre, the Ocean Children's Centre, the Hanford Street Community Facility and the Mile End Park Leisure Complex. It also worked with and supported a greater range of social and economic initiatives than the Central Stepney SRB6 programme: for example, an award-winning project to increase the involvement of parents in their children's maths learning and it established a community interest company, the Community Consortium Against Poverty (CCAP), which in turn helped to set up two other social enterprises – one providing catering and the other IT support services.

Government funding for the Ocean NDC programme came to an end in 2010. The Ocean NDC partnership then developed a new *Transformational Regeneration Strategy* to maintain the benefits and achievements of the NDC programme for the longer-term'. The Ocean Regeneration Trust (ORT) was set up as its successor body, with £14 million funding to deliver the strategy. Around the same time, Tower Hamlets Council embarked upon a five-year £200m housing programme for the Ocean Estate.

The new housing programme contained major refurbishment and redevelopment schemes. The refurbishment aspect consisted of external renewal works to around 1,109 and internal works to 700 homes to the Decent Homes Standard; the redevelopment part entailed the demolition of 338 run-down council properties and their replacement with over 800 newly built homes (296 homes affordable rent, 100 shared ownership and 420 private sale). In addition, the housing programme carried out associated environmental improvements, and it helped to revitalise Be Jonson Road by developing a new youth centre, health facility and shops. However, previous socio-economic programmes delivered by the NDC were scaled back significantly.

The physical regeneration of the Ocean Estate will be completed by final redevelopment phase: the demolition of 120 council properties in Allonby House, Channel House and Studland House and their

replacement with 225 new homes (92 affordable rent, 29 for shared ownership and 104 private sale) and improved communal areas.

Context

The financial crisis of 2007/2008 sent shock waves throughout the global economic system. No longer can economic growth simply be taken for granted. Since then, successive governments have sought to reduce the UK's debt burden through big reductions in public expenditure and welfare spending, introducing the so-called "Age of Austerity" .

The bulk of the cuts to public expenditure have fallen on local government. Between 2009/10 and 2014/15 spending by England's local authorities was cut by a fifth, more than twice the rest of the UK public sector. Councils are now half-way through a three year period in which they need to find ways to cut a further 20% off their budgets. The Local Government Association (LGA) predicts that the amount of money available to deliver some of the most popular local services will shrink by 66 per cent by the end of the decade.^{xxx1}

Most local authorities responded to the financial squeeze through efficiency savings than by cutting back on direct services. However, the vast majority have exhausted the efficiency savings route and they are now having to cut public services. Some plan to use their reserves to support investment in cost saving or income generating activities; others are looking into the commercialisation of activities delivered by leisure centres, etc. In response, the government was forced to ease the pressures in last year's comprehensive spending review by giving town halls greater fundraising powers, allowing them to keep 100% of business rates, and increase council tax bills. Despite these measures, the LGA believes that councils are now looking at a £4.1bn black hole in their budgets every year.^{xxxii}

Tower Hamlets has fared austerity better than most authorities with total spending (excluding public health and education) dropping by 10% from £713m in 2009/10 to £645m in 2014/15.^{xxxiii} In this time, the Council's spending on adult social care rose from £98.6m to £123m while income from social care charges dropped from £4.8m to £2.8m. Spend on housing and homelessness support more than tripled from £4.8m to £16.1m. Meanwhile, spend on children's centres dropped from £978 per child to £727 per child and the education budget is under threat with the proposed changes to the funding formula redistributing money away from inner London schools.

The cutbacks in public expenditure have come at a time when more responsibility is being devolved to local authorities and local communities. In 2011 the government brought in the Localism Act to give local authorities 'the power to do anything that individuals generally may do'. The new law also aimed to facilitate the devolution of decision-making powers from central government to individuals and communities. Some commentators have argued that the law has had little effect on the balance of power between communities and local and central government. Communities remain dependent on councils to negotiate on their behalf with central government, major utility providers and developers; councils remain dependent on central government grants for much of their spending.^{xxxiv} And, of course, local authorities and local communities are required to do more with less.

In addition, the Welfare Reform Act 2012 introduced a raft of changes to the benefits system. It also introduced the controversial 'bedroom tax' which requires social housing tenants who are deemed

to have a spare bedroom to downsize or face cuts in their housing benefit. It also introduced legislation to reduce the cap in welfare from £26,000 to £23,000 and freeze working-age benefits, tax credit and child benefit for two years.

The overall effect of such changes is to take money out of the pocket out of some of the poorest members of society. An independent report last year found that benefit cuts have helped pitch three quarters of a million people into poverty. While poverty is rising among all age groups, the biggest increase is in child poverty.^{xxxv}

More recently, the Government has introduced its new Housing Bill. The key features of which are: widening access to home ownership through starter homes (with a duty on local councils to promote the supply); the extension of the Right to Buy to housing association tenants funded by an obligation on council's to sell of their higher value properties; and the introduction of mandatory higher rents for higher income social tenants (in London the bar will be set at a £40,000 household income). Council and housing association rents have been capped with an annual 1% reduction in rent levels for the next three years. This has led some housing experts to issue stark warning about the future of social housing and it is likely to lead to the greater residualisation of social tenure^{xxxvi}.

Conclusions

Over the least 20 years, the Ocean Estate and Limehouse Fields area has received substantial investment of additional public funds above and beyond the mainstream public services. In particular, regeneration funding of £85 million was awarded the neighbourhood to address the persistently high levels of deprivation and disadvantage. Yet, according to the most recent Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD 2015), the neighbourhood remains one of the most deprived localities in the country.

Several arguments can be advanced to explain the lack of success of those regeneration programmes. The first is quite simply that the area has improved but so too have other neighbourhoods and its relative position therefore remains static – sometimes called the “maintenance argument”. Another explanation is the “revolving door” hypothesis, which suggests that when the life circumstances of deprived residents improves they move out of the area only to be replaced by other more disadvantaged incomers. Finally there is an extensive body of research that argues that Area Based Initiatives like the SRB and NDC programmes are powerless to tackle poverty and inequality as those are structural problems inherent in the economic basis of society, and that needs to be addressed at a national level - and in an increasingly globalised world may even be beyond the reach of national governments)^{xxxviii}.

And yet, perhaps that is an unduly bleak assessment of the possibility for economic and social change? People do have the capacity individually and collectively to transform the world they live in; communities have shown that they have the resilience and the capacity to cope with and bounce back from natural and economic disasters^{xlii}. There are many examples of successful community initiatives in the Ocean Estate and Limehouse Fields area and we will be considering how these may be supported and developed in the next chapter.

4 Community Services

London is famously a city of villages - and the village ideal still exerts a powerful grip on our urban imagination. Not for nothing, do developers and estate agents use the description so often in their promotional literature. But does it make any sense to think about the Ocean Estate and the Limehouse Fields area as village? What features does it have, or should have that would encourage to take a more parochial view of the locality? And are there benefits of looking at a densely inhabited urban neighbourhood in such a way?

In this chapter we argue that considering the Ocean Estate and Limehouse Fields area as a village provides some useful insights into how an urban neighbourhood functions as a social and economic entity connected to but still differentiated from the wider city. Mostly this is about identity, personal connections and the importance of locality and place in the life of a community.

First though an obvious caveat is that most villages have an average population size of around 1,500 people. Whereas, the Ocean Estate and Limehouse Fields area contains a population of between of between 7,459 and 9,148 residents - depending on exactly where the boundary is drawn - and the wider St Dunstan's ward is home to at least 11,799 people. The population size more closely resembles that of a small town. So in that respect, at least, urban villages are quite different from their rural counterparts.

Villages are relevant for two other reasons. The first is by virtue of their compact form and the second is the strength of their social networks. The compact form of the village exemplifies in simple terms the concept and organisation of walkable neighbourhood – the standard depiction of which is a circle with a radius of between 400 and 800 metres. Indeed the smooth functioning of village social relations is maintained by a high frequency of accidental individual contact and the familiarity that it engenders between people and people and place. In urban areas too, we seem to value that is neighbourly, where people look out for of each other and which has an active and flourishing community life.

How should we go about design our urban neighbourhoods to favour proximity, promote walking, and encourage social contact? What then are the kinds of services and facilities, and indeed the governance arrangements that are needed for a successful village? All of which are questions vital to sustaining social bonds and the creation a stronger sense of belonging and to the urban environment.

In this chapter then we will pay particular attention to the role of community facilities and community services and the contribution they make to a successful urban village. In the Ocean Estate and Limehouse Fields area, there are two nurseries, one children's centre, four primary schools and two secondary schools, two youth centres, an adventure playground, various parks, a city farm, a museum and a children's theatre, three community halls (and other meeting places), two churches and one mosque, and forty-three local shops and businesses^{xliv}. In addition, there is a wide – and sometimes bewildering - mix of many different statutory bodies and voluntary agencies involved in delivering local community services, including around 15 small voluntary and community groups.

We have summarised the available data on all those community facilities and services, assembled where possible performance data and identified any common difficulties in service delivery, then assessed where there is any duplication or gaps in provision. To make it more readily understandable, we have structured the chapter into different categories of community service as follows:

- Education, children and youth support
- Health and well-being
- Training and employment
- Housing
- Crime and community safety
- Older people
- Community groups and community services.

We have distinguished between different types of service providers: namely private businesses, statutory agencies and the larger voluntary organisations, and the smaller voluntary and community groups who tend to provide more generalised and smaller scale activities. Whilst local shops are equally important, we have not considered the neighbourhood retail offer in any detail as that has already been covered in depth in various produced previous reports by Strategic Urban Futures (StUF)^{xlv}. Since the StUF reports in 2008, which only looked at the retail offer in the core NDC area, the retail offer on the Mile End Road, most notably by the opening of a Sainsbury's Local on the corner of Harford Street and the up-grading of the Co-op by Stepney Green Station. There is also a limited retail offer on the Commercial Road between the Regent's Canal and Yorkshire Road, including a Tesco's Local, a pizzeria, and Indian restaurant, Husk Coffee and Creative Space, two estate agents and a pub.

Education, childcare and parenting support

What happens in childhood largely determines the shape, character and direction of an adult's life. Home background is one of the most important determining factors in a child's development and later outcomes in health and well-being, educational performance, income levels and employment prospects^{xlvi}. Nevertheless, there is a considerable body of research that shows that deleterious effects of home background can be counteracted and overcome by the provision of effective support for parents in the early years of a child's development^{xlvii} and later at school^{xlviii}.

The 2013 Ocean profile provided some figures about the demographic challenges faced by local schools. Thus:

- 41.9% of pupils attending local primary schools were eligible for and claiming free school meals
- 91.6% of the pupils of primary school age children in the area had a first language other than English and 97.3% were from a black and minority ethnic background (84.2% were Bangladeshi)
- 55.9% of secondary age pupils attending local secondary schools were eligible for and claiming free school meals

- 72.3% had a first language other than English and 96.4% were from a black or minority ethnic background (81.9% were Bangladeshi).

Between 2011 and 2013, the proportion of children claiming free school meals fell by seven per cent to 42 per cent and the proportion with a first language other than English fell by four per cent to 92 per cent. Even so, both figures remain above the average for all schools in Tower Hamlets (37% and 76% respectively).

The focus group on education, childcare and parenting support, held on the 26 November 2015 and attended by residents and members of the Stepney Partnership (an affiliation between eight local schools, considered various aspects of the early year's services, local primary and secondary schools, and other child and youth provision in the area. Unfortunately, two important local schools – the Central Foundation Girls' School and Sir John Cass were not represented at the focus group meeting.

We shall look in turn at each of the early year's services, local primary and secondary schools, and other child and youth provision in the area, drawing upon the appropriate quantitative and qualitative data that is available.

a) Early Years

At the Community Day on 5 September 2015, affordable childcare was identified by residents as one of the top three services lacking in the area. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets is committed to expanding child care provision in the borough. The Council's Partnership Community Plan 2015 recognises that, with some of the lowest results in the country, early year's attainment continues to be a challenge in the Borough.

Facilities/Provider	Location	Description	Clients (child nos.)	Type	Performance*
Alice Model Nursery School		Mixed community nursery. High proportion of children BME backgrounds. One fifth are disabled or have special educational needs.	75 full and part time	LBTH	Ofsted – outstanding (2012). 'Rights-respecting school' award.
Harry Roberts Nursery School		Mixed community nursery. Three-quarters of children of Bangladeshi origin. One fifth eligible for free school meals; 25% disabled or have special educational needs.	101		Ofsted – outstanding (2015)
Ocean Children's Centre	Commodore Street E1 4PF. In addition delivers services from other local facilities.	Integrated services for children under 5 and their parents and carers: include early education, family support and outreach, health service and employment advice.	1,849	LBTH	Ofsted – requires improvement (2013)

The focus group on education, childcare and parenting support reported a high level of demand for affordable child care in the area. Concerns were raised about the different charging policies amongst local providers, variable standards of quality, and difficulties in accessing some services. Parent support work was identified as key area (especially ESOL classes to enable parents to support their children’s learning at home), although it was recognised that the take up of some services was poor and that it was difficult to maintain parent volunteer groups.

The government’s plans, announced in the Queen’s Speech on the 27th May 2015, for the extension of free childcare for 3-4 year olds from the existing 15 hours to 30 hours a week are likely to have a big local impact.

b) Schools

The 2013 Ocean Profile estimated that there are 1,346 children aged 5-17 living in the area^{xlix}. A total of 3,660 school places are supplied locally: 1,291 school places by the three primary schools^l, and 2,369 school places by the two secondary school places. On the face of it then, the capacity of local schools appears to be in excess of the immediate local demand and that that pupils are being imported from other localities.

What the figures do not reveal is just how many local children attend the primary and secondary schools outside the area^{li}. A better of assessment of demand, particularly for the secondary schools could be obtained from parental school preference data^{lii}. Many parents living on the Ocean Estate chose to send their daughters to the Central Foundation Girls’ School. The introduction of more parental choice in the education system has in many places resulted in an ‘educational market’ in which parents compete with each other to send their children to the best schools. As a consequence, the more successful schools tend to contract their catchment areas, which can often have a knock-on effect in stimulating inflation in local property prices^{liii}.

Recent years have seen impressive gains in educational achievement across Tower Hamlets. However, the latest performance figures for local schools show a mixed picture of improvement in educational standards, particularly in the local secondary schools.

Primary Schools	Location	Description	Pupils	Type	Performance*
Ben Jonson Primary School	Harford Street E14 4PZ	Mixed community school. High intake of Asian heritage children. High proportion eligible for school meals/pupil premium. Provides breakfast club.	500	LBTH	78%. Ofsted Good (2012).
Cayley Primary School	Aston Street E14 7NG	Mixed community school. Largely Bangladeshi intake. High proportion eligible for school meals/pupil premium. Provides breakfast club.	543	LBTH	83%. Ofsted Good (2012).
Halley Primary School	Halley Street E14 7SS	Mixed community school. Almost all pupils are of Asian heritage. Almost two thirds	248	LBTH	86%. Ofsted Good (2013).

		eligible for pupil premium. Provides breakfast club.			
Solebay Primary School	Soleby Street E1 4PW	Mixed free school for children aged four to seven. Mostly from Black and Asian backgrounds. High proportion eligible for the pupil premium.	112	Free school	N/A. Ofsted Requiring Improvement (2014).

**Percentage achieving Level 4 or above in reading, writing and maths (2015^{iv}).*

The focus group on education, childcare and parenting support was satisfied overall with the quality local primary schools. Indeed projects like ‘Helping Hands’ run by Halley School were quoted as examples of good practice. However, there was no discussion about the detail of school performance.

Secondary Schools	Location	Description	Pupils	Type	Performance*
Stepney Green Maths, Computing and Science College	Ben Jonson Road E1 4SD	Boy’s only community comp. Small sixth form for 21 pupils. Almost all students come from the Bangladeshi community. High proportion of children eligible for the pupil premium.	865	LBTH	59%. Ofsted – good (2014). Fourth best for A levels.
Sir John Cass’s Foundation and Red Coat School	Stepney Way E1 0RH	Mixed community comp. Large sixth form of 519 students. Almost all students from B/E background, largest group Bangladeshi. High proportion eligible for the pupil premium.	1,504	Vol aided	75%. Ofsted - outstanding (2015). Top performing in A levels.

Percentage achieving 5+ A-C GCSEs (or equivalent) including English and maths.*

Similarly, when the focus group considered secondary education there was no performance data provided at the meeting. The main concern was about bullying in secondary schools. Parents and teachers need to be more involved in addressing the problem - although Stepney Green Maths, Computing and Science College does have an anti-bullying programme in place. More generally the focus group suggested that local schools should be providing more ‘out-of-hours’ provision for the wider community.

c) Play and youth provision

The local play and youth provision for children and young people is described below.

Facilities/Provider	Location	Description	Clients (attend nos.)	Type	Performance*
Whitehorse Adventure Playground	White Horse Road E1	Opened 40 years ago. Threatened with closure 2011. Very little info available. But other organisations, including Tower Hamlets Play Association, deliver services from this site.	No figs available	LBTH	

Haileybury Youth Centre	Ben Jonson Road	Sports hall, rooftop MUGA pitch and gym, studios, classrooms and a café. Will act as a sanctuary for young people who need extra support and facilities for private one-to-ones (referrals through the Youth Service). Open seven days a week from 9am to 9pm and to the public at weekends. Specific girls-only activities two nights a week, including football, arts, craft and judo.	No figs available	LBTH	The centre was due to open in Spring 2106 but remains closed whilst the review of the Youth Service takes place. However, it is unlikely that it will achieve its target opening times and it is likely initially to provide only a limited service.
Arbour Youth Centre	100 Shandy Street E1 4ST	Established 1946. Provides holiday clubs, after-school club, football club and drop-in sessions. Hall is available for public hire.	Several hundred	Vol	
Ocean Youth Connections	Stepney City Farm	Established 2002. Provides advocacy, advice, counselling and information to young people. Promotes amateur sport. The office facility is based at Stepney City Farm and it runs its local services from the Ocean Tenants and Leaseholders Association community hall. Those activities include youth club sessions, football training, tackwando, half-term activities for SEN and NEET young people.		Vol	
Stepney FC/Stepney Foundation	Redcoat Youth Centre 262 Stepney Way E1 3DW	Stepney FC was established in 1993 for the purpose of engaging young people who are disaffected in society into mainstream provisions through the medium of sports. Over the past years it has grown into a borough wide initiative that brings young people from all backgrounds and ability together, using sports as a vehicle. The aim of the organisation is to use sport to reduce anti-		Vol	Stepney FC/Stepney Foundation

		social behaviour, crime and drug use among 12-25 year olds within our local geographical area.			
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Various provision is made in Mile End Park. The Children’s Play Pavilion and Park has a playground (open 10.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. throughout year), a small café, and stay and play sessions 12.30 to 3.30 for under 5’s during the week; and the Leisure Centre, the Arts Pavilion and the Ecology Pavilion put on programmes and activities targeted at children and young people.

Man voluntary and community groups provide activities for children and young people, The Stepney City Farm, Ragged School Museum, the Half Moon Theatre, all provide a range of educational and children’s support as part of their programmes.). St Dunstan and All Saints Church (in addition to running the Arbour Youth Centre) holds a carers and toddlers group and after school group and employs a children and community worker. The Ocean Tenants and Residents Association has organised a play group and various children’s events. The Limehouse Project is planning to offer safe and affordable childcare and crèche services from its Cheadle Hall site from summer 2106 on the Locksley Estate.

The Youth and Sports Services Providers Focus Group was held on the 19th November 2015, attended by the Youth Service, Ocean Youth Connexions, Stepney Football Club/Stepney Foundation, Stepney City Farm and the Ocean Regeneration Trust. It raised concerns about the availability of funding to support youth activities and it stressed the importance of providers working more closely together. Ocean Youth Connexions and Stepney FC/Stepney Foundation araised the issue of the lack of affordable facilities (both office and activity space) available to local community groups. Whilst Stepney FC/Stepney Foundation had office facilities in the old Haileybury centre the indications are that they will no longer be available in the new Youth Centre.

Health and well-being

Tower Hamlets has a poor public health profile, which is linked to the high levels of disadvantage and deprivation in the borough.^{lv} Thus, life expectancy is lower and death rates higher than London and national averages. There are high incidence of cancer, cardiovascular and chronic lung diseases, infection rates from HIV, tuberculosis and sexually transmitted infections. The rate of child obesity is amongst the highest in the country. Mental health issues – such as psychosis and depression - are widespread in the community. It has high rates of severe disability and one of the highest rates of childhood obesity in the country.

Those health inequalities are sharpest in neighbourhoods like the Ocean Estate and Limehouse Fields area. The work of Peter Ambrose, amongst others, has shown that those health inequalities have persisted for a long time, with low levels of public health and high rates drug usage. Little has changed since then, with almost 2,000 residents in St Dunstan’s ward having a health problem or a disability which limited their day-to-day activities in 2011^{lvi}. The ward had a relatively high proportion of residents with a severely limiting health problem of disability (8.4%) than the borough as a whole (6.8%). Average life expectancy for men (72 years) is 7.3 years and for women (80.6 years) is 3 years below the London average^{lvii}.

Facilities/Provider	Location	Description	Registered patients	Type	Performance*
Harford Health Centre	115 Harford Street	Three GPs, 2 clinical practioners, 2 nurses and 2 healthcare assistants. Wide range of services. Multi-disciplinary team. Pharmacy.	11,000	NHS	Met all 5 standards CQC (2014) ^{lviii} GP Patients Survey (7 Jan 2016). 51% rated surgery as good ^{lix} .

A key priority in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Strategic Plan 2015/2016 is to improve health outcomes for residents. According to the Council’s Partnership Community Plan 2015, reducing widespread inequalities in health and wellbeing is ‘one of the biggest challenges facing the borough’. The Council is committed to providing excellent primary and community care and promoting physical and mental well-being for local people.

Locally, the Harford Health Centre received funding from the Tower Hamlets Prime Minister’s Challenge Fund to employ a Networker for Wellbeing. The E1 Health Networking Group has been established for local partners to share information about their projects and to explore opportunities for collaborative working. A walking group and a 50+ coffee morning now take place from the Harford Street Multicentre, and there are plans to revive a local swimming group and to have an allotment at Stepney City Farm.

The quality of local health care was one of the top five concerns raised at the community day on the Ocean Estate held on the 5 September 2015. Although there was not a specific focus group for health and well-being, those issues were picked up in the other focus group sessions. The general conclusions drawn were that the statutory public health teams should work more closely with voluntary and community bodies in the area to improve residents’ diet and general health and to bring in better preventative measures to reduce ill-health among the local population. Overall, there needs to be better planning, greater co-ordination and integration of service provision, and more effective use of local resources.

In particular, more outreach work should be undertaken with hard-to-reach groups and the most disadvantaged families to tackle poor health. Local GP practices need to be much more involved as they employ community engagement officers whose role it is to work through schools, put on activities to extend the reach of health services and provide support and advice in the community. GPs can also refer patients to several exercise programmes provided locally through the Jump Start initiative. Better access needs to be provided and use made of the different facilities, services and activities that promote mental and physical well-being and healthy lifestyles in the area.

Training and employment

The area has the highest proportion of residents seeking Job Seekers Allowance, low paid and low skilled residents in the borough.^{lx} Thus, in St Dunstan’s ward, 46% of local people were in

employment, compared to the 58% in the borough as a whole; it had the second highest unemployment rate in the borough; it also had a high proportion of residents who were economically inactive (including students, those looking after home and family, and the long-term sick and disabled). St Dunstan’s had a high proportion of 16-24 year old residents (1,639 in total) with no formal qualifications and a low proportion of residents with a Level 4 plus qualification.

Whilst unemployment rates in the area have decreased, more families are living below the poverty line. In May 2013, there were 920 local people in receipt of benefits of various kinds; and the Ofsted report of the same year on the Ocean Children’s Centre noted: “there is wide variation in incomes and needs across the area, although most families have low levels of qualification, are on low income and up to 20 per cent of the families are supported by workless benefits.”

Alongside the government mainstream employment programmes and other borough-wide initiatives, there are a variety of more targeted local training and employment schemes.

Facilities/Provider	Location	Description	Clients	Type	Performance*
City Gateway ^{xi}	Stepney Life Centre, Harford Street Multicentre.	The Stepney Life Centre is a joint partnership with the ORT (who provides funding of £110k per annum towards operating costs). It offers local women training in pre-entry ESOL, ESOL, vocational courses and progression courses. Onsite free crèche to enable women to attend training courses.		Vol	
Skillsmatch	55 Upper Bank Street E14 5GR	Skillsmatch is a recruitment service based in the heart of Canary wharf.		Vol	
Account 3	3 Birkbeck Street E2 6JY	Job search, training and vocational services.		Vol	
East Thames Group	29-35 West Ham Lane Stratford E15 4PH	Support has included courses in IT, team working and CV development, to help people apply for jobs and gain access to work experience and apprenticeship opportunities.		Vol	70 local people into work. 35 apprenticeships. 50 attended pre-employment courses.
Limehouse Project	789-791 Commercial Road E14 7HG	Advice and guidance, job search, childcare courses, social enterprise development.		Vol	40 women set up local childcare businesses. 150 women into work over 7 months. However these may be borough wide performance figures.

Ocean Somali Community Association	Concordia Enterprise Centre, Burdett Road, E3 4AA	The Routes 2 Employment project supports women and unemployed individuals who are economically inactive back into work through a range of advice, guidance, accredited and non-accredited training and employment support activities.		Vol	
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The Tower Hamlet’s Partnership Community Plan identifies that one of the biggest challenges the borough faces is ensuring that the benefits of growth and prosperity reach all parts of the community, with a fairer distribution of wealth. The Council is committed to working with a range of partners to create more integrated employment services.

Access to employment opportunities was given a high priority by residents at the Open day consultation event. Indeed, the 2015/2106 Strategic Plan is designed to support more people into work, manage the impact of welfare reform, and foster enterprise and entrepreneurships.

The Employment and Training focus group held on 9 December 2015 at the Harford Street Multicentre, was attended by representatives from the Department for Work and Pensions, City Gateway, the East Thames Group, Tower Hamlets Homes and the Lime House Project. It identified various challenges in supporting people into work: getting the long term unemployed back into work is very resource intensive (particularly as a lot of clients do not like group work but prefer one-to-one training; construction is not widely understood in terms of careers; some women choose to remain home within the family and not go out to work; others stay within the family business; lack of aspiration and confidence; cultural issues; travel; childcare; and reduced welfare payments. For those furthest away from the labour market, it can take four years to get them “job ready”.

Among its recommendations were:

- Sharpening the focus of training and employment support programmes on the growth sectors of the London economy – hospitality, construction, digital media, and health and social care.
- Reducing the duplication of services, making better use of funding and filling spare capacity.
- Responding more effectively to the changing funding landscape.
- Building stronger local partnerships on the ground and better local co-ordination (although it was recognised that much of this had to be led by a borough-wide body like the City Gateway).
- Increase the accessibility of services for clients.

Housing services

As we have discussed earlier in this report, the Central Stepney SRB6, the Ocean Estate NDC and the subsequent housing regeneration programmes have largely succeeded in resolving the immediate housing problems of the area. Several schemes (e.g. VIVO and So Stepney) have been named as best places to live in the Mayor of London's 2015 London's 2015 London Planning Awards. The housing redevelopment has increasingly reshaped the tenure mix of the area and yet according to the 2105 it is still in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods in England for housing and services.

At the time of the 2011 Census, the housing stock comprised 2,574 homes (an increase of 26.1% from 2001)^{lxii}. The breakdown of the different tenure types was as follows:

- Owned 24.86%, lower than Tower Hamlets (26.6%) and London (49.5%)
- Social rented 52.9%, higher than Tower Hamlets (36.9%) and London (24.1%)
- Private rented 20.9%, lower than Tower Hamlets (32.6%) and London (25.1%).

Since then there has been the release of another 325 private properties (225 open market sale, 78 shared ownership and 12 shared equity), maintaining the growth of both the private rented and home-ownership sectors. In addition, 40 new social rented homes have been provided as part of the Dame Colet House/Haileybury Youth Centre development.

As the table below shows, the provision of social housing is becoming increasingly fragmented with a much bigger range of social housing providers than existed fifteen years ago. The most marked change has been the large drop in the number and proportion of council housing in the area^{lxiii}.

Facilities/provider	Location	Description	Units	Type	Performance*
Tower Hamlets Homes	Nearest office is Idea Store, 260 Commercial Road, E1 2FB	The ALMO manages the council's housing stock. The council homes in the area are split between three housing neighbourhoods but most is contained within Ocean North (ON) and Ocean South (OS).	748	LBTH	72% of tenants in ON 60% in OS satisfied with housing service ^{lxiv}
East Thames Group	Neighbourhood office at Harford Street	East Thames is a registered housing provider and social regeneration charity with more than 15,000 homes in London and Essex. It also provides care and support services and offer employment, training and community programmes.	641	HA	
Gateway	409-413 Mile End Road E3 4PB	Operates in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets with a small stock holding in Hackney and Newham. Most of the 2,800 homes are social rent. Provides a retirement housing/sheltered housing	362	HA	

		scheme in Duckett Street (Edith Ramsey House) with 34 one-bed flats and four studio flats. Largest provider of sheltered housing in Tower Hamlets and two registered care homes for older persons. Community Chest grant fund and Environmental Improvements Grant available for their residents' groups. Digital training suite. 'The Zone' delivers STEP (Support to Employment Programme) and welfare advice services.			
Spitalfields Housing Association	78 Quaker St, E1 6SW	Largest Bangladeshi-led housing Association in the UK, founded in 1979. Owns and manages over 600 properties. It provides confidential debt advice in partnership with Toynbee Hall and Mybnk and careers advice sessions in partnership with Krypton Training for their residents. Spitalfields residents are also eligible to participate in the Gateway STEP programme.	44		
Newlon Housing Trust	Newlon House 4 Daneland Walk N17 9FE	Newlon Housing Trust is a 'not for profit' Community Benefit Society and a charitable housing association that manages around 8,000 affordable homes in north and east London. Community regeneration arm supports people living in areas of deprivation to combat fuel poverty, increase financial inclusion and employment initiatives.	82		
Genesis Housing Association	Peter Shore Court Beaumont Square	Care home for older people.	41		
Industrial Dwellings Society	Stepney Green Court Stepney Green	Provides a sheltered scheme for older people.	19		

Housing was not identified as a major issue in the Strategic Review and there was not a specific Housing Focus Group. However, there is concern that the diversification of social housing providers, operating in market that provides in very little real customer choice, could create its own problems

of maintaining quality and service standards^{lxv}. Moreover, as most of the housing association providers do not have local offices in the area, and the growing consolidation of the sector into fewer and larger organisations, is likely to seriously weaken their sense of local stewardship and connection to the area as they become more physically remote from the community.

Crime and community safety

The community consultation identified that crime and anti-social behaviour was the highest priority for local residents, and this corresponds with the results of the Tower Hamlets 2014-15 Annual Residents’ Survey where crime is one of the top priorities for all residents (along with the cleanliness of the Borough’s streets and the lack of affordable housing). It is also well known that issues of community safety are worse in areas of social housing^{lxvi}.

Whilst the data from the Metropolitan Police shows that crime in the area has been dropping it is still regarded as a borough hotspot. Generally too there is a mismatch between reported crime figures (which according to official statistics are dropping) and public perceptions (which tend to suggest that people are becoming more worried about person and community safety).

Facilities/provider	Location	Description	Clients (nos.)	Type	Performance*
Safer Neighbourhood Team		Stepney and St Dunstons Safer Neighbourhoods Team. Inspector Christopher Heflin-Scott, Sergeant Victoria Groves, PC Krzysztof Rycerz & PCSO Leanne Darby. Tackles anti-social behaviour in general, anti social behaviour by groups of youths and drug dealing and using.		Stat	

The Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour focus group was held on the 10 December 2015. It was attended by East Thames, Gateway Housing, Youth Service, the Salvation Army, GUPRA and the Ocean Regeneration Trust. It reported that particular localities in the area suffered a high incidence of anti-social behaviour, with drug-dealing and drug taking a particular problem. Concerns were expressed about the slow response times of the Safer Neighbourhoods Team but it was recognised that it is operating under a lot of pressure. The focus group agreed that there needed to be much better partnership working between all the agencies involved in community safety, the adoption of a more consistent approach and knowledge sharing, joint communication campaigns, and better reporting mechanisms.

Older people

Research suggests that older people are uniquely vulnerable to social isolation, loneliness, ill health and poverty^{lxvii}. They are also particularly at risk from the negative and disruptive effect of regeneration activity^{lxviii}. According to a joint report by the Nuffield Trust and the Health Foundation in 2014, the cutback in welfare funding have had a big impact on the level and quality of the social care older people receive in the UK^{lxix}.

Facilities/provider	Location	Description	Clients (nos.)	Type	Performance*
Ocean Women's Association	492 Bethnal Green Road, E2 OEA	Provide services to elderly people including coffee mornings and a range of health and social activities for older BME/Bangladeshi women.		Vol	
Limehouse Project	Hartford Street Multi-centre	Luncheon club for older people and associated health and recreational activities		Vol	
Emmott Close Senior Citizens Club	27 Emmott Close E1 4QW	Established for over 40 years. Caters for residents aged 60+ who live within the Ocean area. Provides social club, home visits and advocacy service. Works closely with the Ocean Resident Wardens service,		Comm	

In addition, Genesis Housing provides a care home for 41 older people at Peter Shore Court, the Industrial Dwellings Society has a sheltered scheme for 19 older people at Stepney Green Court and Gateway Housing has a retirement housing/sheltered housing scheme in Duckett Street (Edith Ramsey House) with 34 one-bed flats and four studio flats.

The Older Peoples focus group was held on the 10th December involved residents as well as service providers. The main issues affecting older people in the area were community safety, the cost of local services (i.e. luncheon clubs) and isolation. The group felt that older people were “just forgotten and left behind”. Particular concerns were expressed about the closure of the lunch club at the Ocean Tenants and Leaseholders Association community centre, the closing down of the Ocean Residents Warden service currently based at Emmott Close Senior Citizens' Club and the lack of awareness of older people's service provision in the neighbourhood. Generally, it was felt that there needed to be better co-ordination of services for older residents locally (especially around lunch clubs) and greater linkages to the Borough's overarching older person's strategy through a stronger local partnership.

Community groups and community services

Many of the community services in the neighbourhood are provided by statutory institutions (the Council, Tower Hamlets Homes, the NHS, the Metropolitan Police and DWP/JobcentrePlus) and the larger third sector agencies (housing associations, City Gateway, Skillsmatch). We can define such bodies as being essentially provider organisations^{lxx} in contrast to the smaller and locally based voluntary and community groups.

Those smaller voluntary and community groups may be considered variously to be the life-blood, the social glue or the vital force that holds that community together. They are much closer to the ground than the larger providers, have generally sprung out from home-grown or grass-roots initiatives, and have developed with a strong ethos of mutual self-help and high level of voluntary engagement. They constitute the civic fabric (or what is often referred to as the social capital) of the

Ocean Estate and Limehouse Fields neighbourhood. In his wonderful book ‘Together’, Henry Hemmings suggests that “we have lost sight of the huge range of associations in Britain today”, that we have largely forgotten “their role in our past” and that we need to rediscover “the remarkable things that can happen when we come together in small groups”^{lxxi}.

Organisation	Location	Description	Clients (nos.)	Type	Performance*
Ocean Regeneration Trust	115 Harford Street E1 4FG	Set up by the Council in May 2008 as the NDC successor body to promote the socio-economic regeneration of the Ocean area, to hold assets, and to receive and generate income for the benefit of the local community. Overall responsibility for the Harford Street Multicentre ^{lxxii} .		Vol	
Ocean Tenants and Leaseholders Association	Community Hall Ernest Street E1 4SE	Represents the interests of tenants and leaseholders on the Ocean Estate. Manages the community hall. Various activities, including a mothers and toddlers group.		Comm	
Grand Union Place Residents Association		Represents the interests of the residents of Grand Union Place. Various social events.		Comm	
Stepney City Farm	Stepney Way, E1 3DG	Working farm, rural arts and community meeting space founded in 1979. Café, weekly farmers market, vegetable box scheme, community allotments, courses and educational programme.	30,000 visitors a year	Vol	
Limehouse Project	789-791 Commercial Road, E12 7HG	The Limehouse project was founded in 1984. It provides welfare advice and support; education training and support; and recreational activities for families, children and older people with a particular focus on women, black and minority ethnic groups, and those for whom English is not a first language.		Vol	
Emmott Close Senior Citizens Club	27 Emmott Close E1 4QW	Primarily provides activities for older people. Community hall that is available for public here from 9am to 11pm on		Comm	

		Thurs, Fri and Sat and also Mon and Wed evenings.			
Ocean Womens' Association	492 Bethnal Green Road, E2 0EA	Established 2003. Women's centre or local women (particularly Bengali and Somali women). 10 volunteers working with the project. Variety of training, employment and community projects.		Comm	
Ragged School Museum	46-50 Copperfield Road E3 4RR	Set up by local residents in 1990. The museum recreates a Victorian classroom. Also holds exhibitions on local culture and history. It runs a free family holiday activities programme that is popular with local families.		Vol	
Latimer Congregational House	Ernest Street E1 4LS	Independent free church with a small local membership. Part of the Congregational Federation. Provides a youth club. Facilities include a mini-conference centre (available for public hire), games room and outside play area.		Religious	
St Dunstons and All Saints Church		The old parish church for Stepney on a site of Christian worship for over 1,000 years. Close links to the two local Church of England Schools ^{lxixiii} . Provides welfare grants and food co-op. Manages the Arbour Youth Centre. Employs a youth and community worker. Facilities available for use by community groups.		Religious	
Shah Jalal Mosque	83 Duckett Street	The mosque provides a local place of worship, classes for children in the teachings of Islam and other community services.		Religious	
Ocean Somali Community Association	Concordia Enterprise Centre, Burdett Road, E3 4AA	OSCA provide support services for the Somali community in the East End of London. These include welfare advice and information, home school liaison, employment and training support, women's		Vol	

		support and health advice, and family support.			
Ocean Youth Connections	Stepney City Farm	Established 2002. Provides advocacy, advice, counselling and information to young people. Promotes amateur sport. The office facility is based at Stepney City Farm and it runs its local services from the Ocean Tenants and Leaseholders Association community hall. Those activities include youth club sessions, football training, tackwando, half-term activities for SEN and NEET young people.		Vol	
Stepney FC/Stepney Foundation	Redcoat Youth Centre 262 Stepney Way E1 3DW	Stepney FC was established in 1993 for the purpose of engaging young people who are disaffected in society into mainstream provisions through the medium of sports. Over the past years it has grown into a borough wide initiative that brings young people from all backgrounds and ability together, using sports as a vehicle. The aim of the organisation is to use sport to reduce anti-social behaviour, crime and drug use among 12-25 year olds within our local geographical area.		Vol	

For the first time, the number and type of smaller voluntary and community groups in the area have been mapped to gain a better understanding of current levels of community activity and the provision. The exercise found that there around 14 small, locally-based voluntary and community groups. Whilst that figure this is likely to be an underestimate, as there will be some groups operating under the radar, even so it reveals a surprisingly low level of social capital.

If the figures are correct, then there are approximately two (1.87) groups per thousand people and according to the community development experts Gabriel Chanan and Colin Miller “if a local survey cannot find more than three community and voluntary organisations per thousand, it can be concluded that community activity is distinctly low”^{lxxiv}. As they point out that “is likely to mean that the community is playing little part in determining and enhancing its own social conditions”. However a strong note of caution should be sounded as this is a fairly crude way of assessing community activity and other measures, such using local volunteering rates for benchmarking, may be more accurate.

We also mapped the current level of community facilities. There are six community halls locally that are available for use by community groups and residents.

- Harford Street Multicentre hall
- Ocean Estate community hall (capacity 100)
- Emmott Close Senior Citizens Club
- Latimer Congregational Church mini-conference centre
- St Dunstan's and All Saints Church
- Arbour Youth Centre.

It concluded that there were few gaps in community facilities and community services in the area.^{lxxv} But access by local voluntary and community groups appears to be patchy. However it suggested that there was a “need for community groups to have a space to meet and grow” and that community facilities should be “multi-purpose, easily accessible for all sections of the community, and open at weekends and in the evenings”.

Unlike say green space or children's play areas, there is no statutory guidance on the amount of community space that should be provided in a neighbourhood. However, Fordham Research Associates has recommended that 0.75 square metres of community facility space should be provided per household^{lxxvi}.

It is intended that a fuller community facilities review should be carried out as part of the development of the community plan, as the lack of affordable space has been and continues to be an issue for smaller voluntary and community groups - and that could contribute to the low number of such organisations located in the Ocean Estate and Limehouse Fields area. For example, the Limehouse Project was located on the Limehouse Fields Estate prior to the demolition of Lifra Hall as part of the Ocean Regeneration Scheme, plans to relocate to the Harford Street Multicentre didn't work out because they couldn't afford the occupation costs the Council proposed to charge and they decided it was better to buy their own building in Commercial Road with the help of Community Builders. The only services they now deliver in the Ocean and Limehouse Fields area (from the Harford Street Multicentre at a subsidised room hire rate) are welfare and benefits advice, an elders' luncheon club and an exercise class.

Another example is the Arbour women's service, which operated from the space left vacant by Limehouse Project in the Harford Street Multicentre from September 2012 to July 2014 but could only afford around 50% of the previous rent. Over the longer term, it couldn't afford to pay even that amount and were looking for alternative accommodation outside the area when their trustees decided to stop delivering women's services altogether.

Other organisations that have had to move out of the area include the Ocean Women's Association, which was originally based in a decant property that was refurbished for their use as a women's centre by the NDC but is now based in Bethnal Green; Kollam delivered programmes for women, including ESOL, literacy and numeracy, health and wellbeing, dance classes, a homework club and domestic violence awareness, from a retail unit under Marmora House and has moved out of the area; Fair Finance provided fairly priced loans and debt advice from a retail unit under Marmora House.

The Ocean Regeneration Trust has been responsible for developing stronger community partnerships and better linkages with the statutory service providers. Several partnerships have been formed: for instance, between local retailers and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Economic Development Service, the Ocean Bursary scheme with the Tower Hamlets & Canary Wharf Trust, the Stepney Life Centre with the City Gateway. It was instrumental in facilitating the partnership between the Tower Project and LBTH which set up the Ocean View Café.

Profile of the Ocean Regeneration Trust

The Ocean Regeneration Trust (ORT) is committed to making sure that residents living on the Ocean Estate in Tower Hamlets benefit from the regeneration of the area. Local benefits and opportunities are not just new and refurbished homes, schools, community facilities and much improved public and open spaces but also the social and economic changes of regeneration, including employment, education and training, improvements to health and well-being, and a reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour.

The Ocean Regeneration Trust was created as the successor to the Ocean NDC in May 2008. It is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. The governance of the organisation rests with Board of Directors, which comprises a minimum of four and a maximum of 16 trustees. The current Board has members with a wide range of experience, including health care, social housing, local government, regeneration and the voluntary/charitable sector. It has a diversity of gender and ethnic backgrounds and members drawn from the local community.

Conclusions

Most of the community services in the area are provided by the various statutory agencies and larger voluntary organisations and only few have a dedicated local presence. The main exceptions being the local nurseries, schools, and youth centres; Tower Hamlets Homes, the Hareford Health Centre and the Council's Youth Centre.

Where service performance information is available it suggests that standards vary quite a lot between the types of provision and different providers. Generally though service performance indicators are not widely available, nor easily accessible - least of all to the wider community. There are some notable exceptions. Thus it is fairly easy to access information on the performance of local nurseries, children's centres and schools, and Tower Hamlets Homes carries out a regular resident satisfaction survey at the housing management neighbourhood level that is benchmarked against other social housing providers.

The service provider service groups identified various problems in the delivery of local community services. These were:

- Levels of funding, funding uncertainty and lack of resources.
- Overlap and duplication of provision.
- Local co-ordination, information-sharing and partnership working.

- Reaching the most vulnerable.
- Accessibility of service provision.

Those perceived gaps in service provision correspond to resident priorities. Those were identified as:

- Support services for older people.
- Activities for children and young people.
- Affordable childcare.
- Employment support and opportunities.
- Support services for women.

The smaller voluntary and community organisations play a much smaller but still significant role in providing community services locally. However, they appear to have suffered disproportionately from the cut-backs in public funding. For example, the Limehouse Project's income dropped from £778,090 in 2011 to £489,413 in 2014, and the Ocean Tenants Leaseholders lost its grant for older persons' luncheon club. In many cases, they appear to lack access to suitable premises and other resources. It is questionable too, the extent to which those partnership structures have included, accommodated and reflected their importance in sustaining community spirit and developing social capital of the area.

The legacy vehicle for the NDC is the Ocean Regeneration Trust and it has a key role of co-ordinating the various community services delivered by the various local providers and building community capacity. However, it has been handicapped by the absence of firm funding commitments from the Council. The lengthy negotiations, which have been going since the Ocean Regeneration Trust's inception have been a major distraction, diverting time and resources and severely restricting its ability to develop its role and to deliver its programme and projects. In particular, the Ocean Regeneration Trust has not been able to build the asset base it requires to ensure a financially sustainable future.

5 Conclusions

The purpose of the Ocean Estate and Limehouse Fields Area Strategic Review was “to develop a revised community plan on how to successfully complete the regeneration of the Ocean Estate and the Limehouse Fields area and set up arrangement to ensure that the community, social and legacy provisions are adequately addressed and in line with Mayoral priorities”.

Essentially then, the purpose of the Strategic Review was to produce a local expression of the aims and objectives Council’s 2015 Community Plan.

Community Plan 2015 - Main Elements

- **Themes**
 - A great place to live
 - A fair and prosperous community
 - A safe and cohesive community
 - A healthy and supportive community
- **One Tower Hamlets Principles**
 - Equality
 - Cohesion
 - Community leadership
- **Cross-Cutting Priorities**
 - Empowering residents and building resilience
 - Promoting healthier lives
 - Increasing employment
 - Responding to population growth.

Over the last twenty years, successive regeneration programmes – the Central Stepney SRB and the Ocean Estate NDC- have focused upon transforming the neighbourhood primarily through physical change, by building new housing and refurbishing existing homes. Largely as a result of some change to the tenure mix of the local housing stock, the demographic profile of the area has altered slightly. However, the longstanding and persistent problems of deprivation and disadvantage have not been affected and the neighbourhood’s ranking in the 2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation is the same as it was in 2001.

It is clear that whilst those regeneration programmes may have improved Ocean Estate and Limehouse Fields as an area to live, they have had little or no impact upon the other three themes of the Borough’s Community Plan – i.e. achieving a fairer and more prosperous community, a safer and more cohesive community, and a healthier and more supportive community. Indeed, the housing redevelopment may have unintended consequence through its effect on local land values and house prices may have had untended consequence of widening social inequality, deepening social division and weakening community cohesion.

The most recent demographic profile of the Ocean Estate and Limehouse area paints a depressing picture of the extent of local deprivation and disadvantage. Some key indicators are provided below. Those indicators provide the “statistical pegs” that form an important part of the evidence base for the local community plan.

Key Deprivation Indicators

- Greater proportion of households who were economically inactive in ORT area (36.2%), Tower Hamlets (30.2%) and London (29.5%)
- Higher levels of unemployment in ORT area (12.5%), Tower Hamlets (9.7%) and London (7.3%)
- Fewer residents with Level 4 or above qualifications in ORT area (32%), Tower Hamlets (41%) and London (37.7%)
- More residents with no qualifications in ORT area (25.4%), Tower Hamlets (20%) and London (17.6%)
- Average life expectancy lower for men in ORT area (72 yrs), Tower Hamlets (76.7 yrs) and London (79.3 yrs); for women in ORT area (80.6 yrs), Tower Hamlets (81.9 yrs) and London (83.6yrs)*
- Proportion of households where no-one has English as a main language is higher in the ORT area (22.1%), Tower Hamlets (19.4%) and London (12.9%)
- Proportion of overcrowded households higher in the ORT area (40.3%), Tower Hamlets (34.8%) and London (21.7%)
- Fewer residents were employed in higher managerial and professional occupations in ORT area (8.7%), Tower Hamlets (14.4%) and London (13.2%).

Note that all figures are from the Ocean Profile 2013 and based upon 2011 Census and that those marked * are ward figures.

The Ocean Estate and Limehouse Fields area is one of the most disadvantaged parts of one of the country’s most deprived local authorities. The 2013 report of the Tower Hamlets Fairness Commission, chaired by Dr Giles Frazer estimated that 49% of children in Tower Hamlets live in poverty and a fifth of households have an annual income below £15,000^{xcv}. It highlights the emergence of a rapidly widening divide between what can be called the “have-a-lots” and the “have-nots” in the Borough, suggesting that “people who are already struggling to get by from month to month are finding it harder to cope.” The consequences of increasing social polarisation in relation to social cohesion are likely to be severe and the tensions created by gentrification will weaken community cohesion^{xcvi}.

Faced with the scale of entrenched deprivation and disadvantage in the area, it is not surprising that local community service providers are struggling have much effect. Our consultation with those service providers identified various difficulties: lack of finance and resources; overlap and duplication of provision; lack of local co-ordination, information-sharing and partnership working; reaching the most vulnerable and the accessibility of provision. Of course, such problems in service delivery are not unique to the local area.

The Young Foundation, in its review of the Wiltshire Council's Total Place approach on the Bemerton Heath estate in Salisbury for the Wiltshire Think Family Board, has raised very similar points about the sometimes "chaotic" nature of community service delivery, the "lack of comprehensive data sharing" and concerns over "collaboration between agencies" in a similarly deprived and disadvantaged area^{xcvii}. Its recommendations for greater co-location of services, utilising the untapped assets of the community and developing opportunities for mutual aid, and greater targeting of services to the most vulnerable are very similar to findings of our report.

Our service provider and residents consultation has also identified broadly similar gaps in service provision. They can be summarised as: support services for older people, activities for children and young people, affordable childcare, employment support and opportunities, support services for women.

Local Community Plan

The Strategic Review has not produce a local community plan. However it has taken the first steps in establishing a good evidence base, a sound strategic framework and the appropriate delivery arrangements. Those provide the key elements for the structure of the local community plan that will be taken out for wider community consultation.

The central theme of the Strategic Review is that it possible to achieve significant and sustainable change by harnessing the resources of the community itself to build what we term the neighbourhood capital of the area^{xcviii}. It argues that there should be a conceptual shift in our thinking and approach from a process of neighbourhood transformation that is largely dependent on statutory agencies (and the larger voluntary agencies) to one based upon the idea of "transformative neighbourhoods^{xcix}. Where, in other words, the agency of change is more directly the community itself^c. But for that shift to be possible, the local community requires support and resources to be provided by external partners, most importantly from the local authority.

The approach relies heavily upon developing capacity within the community. One unexpected findings of the Strategic Review is the relatively weak extent of community organisation and low level of social capital in the neighbourhood and that is most pressing problem which needs to be addressed. Moreover, the local community plan must be realistic about the social and economic change that is possible and the length of time it will take, given the scale of entrenched deprivation and deprivation in the area.

The focus of the local community plan should be on the following main themes:

- **Creating stronger identity and sense of place (community, neighbourhood, urban village).**
- **Promoting a greater sense of belonging and ownership (stewardship/custodianship).**
- **Fostering community cohesion and social integration (where new arrivals should be seen as an asset).**
- **Devolving responsibility and power to build social capital and resilient communities.**
- **Encouraging community self-help by supporting mutuality and building the capacity of local groups.**
- **Improving the performance and accountability of local service providers.**
- **Better neighbourhood management and service co-ordination.**

- **Treating public spending as community investment to build neighbourhood capital.**
- **Developing new structures of local governance and local accountability.**

At this point, it is worth pausing briefly to consider whether the Ocean Estate and Limehouse Area forms a natural neighbourhood. This matter was considered in some depth by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's report in 20 on the local ward boundaries^{ci}. Following the logic of the report's recommendations, there is a strong case that the new St Dunstan Ward boundaries provide a better definition, if not perfect, of the natural neighbourhood. Again this is a matter to be considered in the development of the local community plan.

It is also reflecting on the fact that there have been successive attempts to introduce more effective local governance arrangements for the local area. The last attempt to resolve the problem were the community ward forums set up under the previous administration. The community forums promised to be "the new, most localised element of the Tower Hamlets Partnership structure and will allow people to raise, discuss and address local service priorities by co-designing solutions with providers and promoting wider resident action". They have largely proved to be a failure and a common theme of the focus groups was that participants said they didn't know what was going on in the area and that local community and voluntary groups and residents are not kept up to date up to date with what is happening.

Nevertheless, the new emphasis placed on localism (and locality) communities taking on greater responsibility for their own affairs, and the devolution of power is unlikely to fade away time soon and indeed is considered to be essential by many people to the renewal of local democracy. Increasingly there are pockets of good practice we can learn from elsewhere.

Recommendations

The Strategic Review has revealed that wide range of community services are being delivered by many different statutory providers, larger voluntary agencies and to a much lesser extent by the smaller, locally based voluntary organisations and community groups. The community services provided by third sector organisations include housing, community health, family support, activities for children and young people, ESOL and skills training, job search and employment, welfare advice and advocacy.

The main recommendations of the Strategic Review are:

- The work to complete the local community plan needs to be completed in participation with the local community and based upon key themes outlined above.
- Community services should be more accountable to the community and subject to closer local scrutiny.
- Performance management indicators need to be collated and shared amongst service providers and with the local community.
- Better co-ordination, integration of community services, and resource sharing to avoid duplication and ensure more efficient service delivery.
- Action to address gaps in community services.

- Greater role for the local community and community groups in devising, developing and delivering local community services.
- Building local community capacity.
- Effective neighbourhood management arrangements.
- Stronger governance.
- Clearly identified lead body.

The assessment of the Ocean Regeneration Trust is that it has the appropriate legal structure, an effective Board of Directors with a broad range of experience and a diversity of gender and ethnic backgrounds (including local resident representatives), and that it “continues to explore opportunities to strengthen the membership...in order to deliver good governance and strong leadership’. The 2015/16-2017/18 Business Plan has been approved by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

Our key recommendation is that the Ocean Regeneration Trust (ORT) as the legacy body of the Ocean NDC Programme should be the delivery vehicle for the local community plan. It should be seen as the lead organisation, working in partnership with the local community, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and local community providers, for the development and the delivery of the local community plan. Moreover, the management of the Harford Centre should be transferred to the ORT. In order for it to fulfil those roles and for it to function effectively, the ORT must have sufficient, stable and sustainable funding in place.

ⁱ The NDC funding, in particular, had the express objective of “closing the [deprivation] gap between it [the Ocean Estate neighbourhood] and the rest of the country”.

ⁱⁱ Muscat, R. ‘Area Based Initiatives – do they deliver?’, Centre for Local Economic Strategies (Feb 2010)

ⁱⁱⁱ ‘Tower Hamlets Time to Act’, report of the Tower Hamlets Fairness Commission, chaired by Dr Giles Fraser, London Borough of Tower Hamlets (2013).

^{iv} Pearson, H., ‘The Life Project – The extraordinary story of our ordinary lives’, Allen Lane an imprint of Penguin Books (2016).

^v The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission was established by the Child Poverty Act 2010 as amended by the Welfare Reform Act 2012. It became fully operational in January 2013 and since then has produced a series of hard hitting reports, including three ‘State of the Nation’ reports (2013, 2014 and 2015), ‘Elitist Britain?’ (August 2014), and ‘Bridging the Social Divide’ (March 2015).

^{vii} Chan, G and Miller, C., ‘Rethinking Community Practice – Developing transformative neighbourhoods’, The Policy Press, (2013),

^{viii} Three good recent publications are: Hemming H., ‘Together – How Small Groups Achieve Big Things’, John Murray (2011); Wilding, N. ‘Exploring Community Resilience in times of rapid change’, Fieri Spirits Community of Practice, supported by the Carnegie UK Trust (Aug 2011); and Krasny, ME., Tidball, KG, ‘Civic Ecology: Adaption and Transformation from the Ground Up, MIT Press Books (Jan 2015).

^{ix} ‘Communities in Control: real people, real power’, Communities and Local Government (July 2008).

^x Parsfield, M. (ed), ‘Community Capital – The Value of Connected Communities’, RSA Action and Research Centre (Oct 2015).

^{xi} Which in our formulation, if retained (reinvested) within the community will build the overall neighbourhood capital of the area. The same logic applies to the other elements of neighbourhood capital (physical, economic, human and cultural).

^{xii} One point to consider is the issue of whether the Ocean and Limehouse Area forms a natural neighbourhood. This matter was considered in some depth by the Local Government Boundary Commission

for England's report in 2013 on the local ward boundaries. Following the logic of the report's recommendations, there is a strong case that the new St Dunstan Ward boundaries provide a better definition, if not perfect, of the natural neighbourhood.

^{xvii} Ambrose, P. 'No simple Solutions for Britain's blight', *Inside Housing* (14 June 2002). This is a very interesting article by Peter Ambrose that is illustrated by a photograph of Tony Blair touring the Ocean Estate with the members of the Ocean NDC Partnership Board. In the article he points to the failure of 70 years of area based initiatives (ABI's) to solve the problems of deprived urban areas. See also Muscat, R. 'Area Based Initiatives – do they deliver?' CLES briefing (Feb 2010).

^{xviii} It appears that no consultation event took place to secure residents views on the Limehouse Fields Estate.

^{xix} The two conservation areas straddle the ward boundary with most of the properties in the adjacent wards.

^{xx} Not only in the eyes of residents. The various institutional bodies constitute the neighbourhoods boundaries in different ways. Thus the Ocean NDC core area was smaller, with the southern edge set further north, running a wiggly line from Ben Jonson Road, briefly down Carr Street and then along Halley Street, down Aston Street, and then along Matlock Street, where it joins Stepney High Street. The Tower Hamlets Homes arrangements are even more confusing, dividing the area into the Ocean North Neighbourhood, the Ocean South Neighbourhood and place part of it in the Limehouse neighbourhood.

^{xxi} Richardson, R. 'Ocean Profile 2013', Vail and Associates for Ocean Regeneration Trust (Feb 2014).

^{xxii} *Ibid.* Note that six housing associations own and manage properties in the area.

^{xxiii} Bellway has just launched the sale of the So Old School at So Stepney development of the old school on Harford Road. The development is for ten 1-2 bedroom apartments, which are being marketed to professional working in the City and Docklands, with prices ranging from £524,995 to £849,993.

^{xxiv} Note that the Ocean profile is for the smaller NDC core area. The comparative population size of the St Dunstan' Ward is as follows: 12,000 people living in 4,000 households. The true figure for the Ocean and Limehouse Fields area is somewhere between the two. In both cases, the statistical information is drawn from the 2011 census.

^{xxv} The Ocean Regeneration Trust Business Plan 2015/16-2017/18 suggests that the number of households will reach 3,157 (approx. 9,148 assuming the same average family size).

^{xxvi} St Dunstan's Ward Profile, London Borough of Tower Hamlets, Corporate Research Unit (May 2014).

^{xxix} The English Indices of Deprivation. DCLG 2015.

^{xxx} Ambrose, P. 'Second best value: The central Stepney SRB – how non-joined-up government polices undermine cost-effectiveness in regeneration', *University of Brighton Health & Social Policy Research Centre* (May 2002). In the book, he suggests that those benefits although real may be transient as they can outweighed by increased housing costs.

^{xxxii} Under pressure. How councils are planning for future cuts. Local Government Association 2014.

^{xxxiii} Local authorities warn of critical funding crisis as £18bn grant is scrapped. *The Guardian*. 25 November 2015.

^{xxxiii} Austerity state: How has your council's budget changed? *Financial Times* <http://fig.ft.com/sites/2015/local-cuts-checker>.

^{xxxiv} Two years on, what has the Localism Act achieved? *The Guardian* 2 November 2013.

^{xxxv} Poverty – and child poverty in particular – is rising. *The Guardian* 29 April 2015.

^{xxxvi} "Experts say Housing Bill signals the end of the road for affordable housing", article by Dawn Foster, *The Guardian* 5 January 2016.

^{xxxviii} Muscat, R. 'Area Based Initiatives – do they deliver?', Centre for Local Economic Strategies (Feb 2010).

^{xlii} Wilding, N. 'Exploring Community Resilience in times of rapid change', Fiery Spirits Community of Practice, supported by the Carnegie UK Trust (Aug 2011), and Krasny, ME., Tidball, KG, 'Civic Ecology: Adaption and Transformation from the Ground Up, MIT Press Books (Jan 2015)

^{xliii} The figure on shops and businesses is taken from the 'Ocean Retail Study', produced by Strategic Urban Futures in association with Horden Ryan Property Consultants (July 2008), and which I helped to write.

^{xliii} 'Ocean Retail Study', (July 2008), 'Retail Capacity Assessment' (2008), *Retails Impact Study* (2008) and 'Best Practice in Neighbourhood Retail Management', Strategic Urban Futures in association with Haden Ryan Property Consultants.

^{xliii} Field, F. 'The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults', the report of the Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances, Cabinet Office (Dec 2010).

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- ^{xlvii} *'Grasping the nettle: early intervention for children, families and communities'*, Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO) October 2010.
- ^{xlviii} Pascal C., and Betram T. 'The impact of education as a strategy in countering socio-economic disadvantage', research paper for Ofsted's 'Access and achievement in education 2013 review' by the Centre for research in Early Childhood (CREC) 2013.
- ^{xlix} The St Dunstan's Ward Profile, produced by the LBTH Corporate Research Team (May 2014), gives an estimate of 2,898 children aged 0-15).
- ^l In addition, the Ocean Profile 2013 suggested that local children attended other nearby schools (Marion Richardson, Redlands and Smithy Street Primary Schools. Other primary schools within close walking distance are the Stephen Hawking Community Special School, Guardian Angles Roman Catholic Primary School, the Sir William Boroughs Primary School and the Stepney Greencoat CofE Primary School. According to the LBTH Children's Information Team (14/01/2015) there are 15 primary schools in the Stepney catchment area.
- ^{li} The admissions policies for schools are complex. In the primary school catchment (Area 1 – Stepney) there are four nurseries and 14 primary. However independent schools, academies and free schools are free to set their own admission policies. For community secondary schools, there is a "preferred school" for certain designated area and various banding criteria.
- ^{lii} There is a fascinating report on this subject. Weekes-Bernard, D. 'School Choice and Ethnic Segregation – Education Decision-making among Black and Minority Ethnic Parents', The Runnymede Trust (2007)
- ^{liii} Gibbons, S. 'Valuing schooling through house prices', article published in CentrePiece, published by the LSE's Centre for Economic Performance (autumn 2012).
- ^{liv} Note that individual school performances can vary quite widely between years. For instance, Halley Primary School achieved 59% in 2013, 90% in 2014, and 86% in 2015. Similar fluctuations are true of the other schools.
- ^{lv} Tower Hamlets Partnership Community Plan 2015
- ^{lvi} 'St Dunstan's Ward Profile', Corporate Research Unit, London Borough of Tower Hamlets (May 2014).
- ^{lvii} Ocean Profile 2013.
- ^{lviii} Care Quality Inspectors Report (March 2014), accessed on 2 March 2016 from <http://www.cqc.org.uk>.
- ^{lix} GP Patients Survey, NHS England, accessed on the 2 March 2016 from <https://gp-patient.co.uk>.
- ^{lx} Notes of the Ocean and Limehouse Area Strategic Review, Employment and Training Focus group held on 9 December 2015.
- ^{lxi} City Gateway is a charity that provides women only IAG, job brokerage and training offers services from sites in Poplar and the Isle of Dogs as well as the Ocean. The Poplar facility has engaged over 200 women a week on courses from confidence building and English to ICT and business administration.
- ^{lxii} Please note that the figures are for occupied properties. The numerical increase was 534 new homes: 148 owner-occupier, 117 social rented and 235 private rented. All taken from the Ocean Profile 2013.
- ^{lxiii} Council tenants generally are very protective of their status as "secure tenants". Moreover, the shift away from council housing to other forms of social tenure can have a negative impact upon the democratic accountability of social housing provision, can widen the democratic deficit and more weaken the "custodianship" of the neighbourhood. The latter point will be discussed in more depth in the final chapter.
- ^{lxiv} The other housing management neighbourhood is Limehouse. All figures are taken from Tower Hamlets Homes neighbourhood profiles. Note that satisfaction rates are much lower amongst leaseholders: 52% and 30% respectively. Also it's interesting to observe that satisfaction rates with the neighbourhood as a place to live are relatively high at 76% for both neighbourhoods (the national figures in National Wellbeing Survey 2015 for social renters is 81.9%.
- ^{lxv} The problems with multi-landlord social housing estates were identified as long ago as 1995 by Tricia Zipfel of the Priority Estates Project (PEP). See also Mazi, T. and Smith Bower, B. 'Developing unstable communities? The Experience of mixed tenure and multi-landlord estates', paper presented at the Housing Studies Association Conference, Bristol 9-10 September (2003).
- ^{lxvi} 'Tackling anti-social behaviour: Tools and powers – toolkit for social landlords', Communities and Local Government (2010).
- ^{lxvii} Mortimer J., and Green M., 'The Health and Care of Older People in England' Ageuk (Oct 2015).
- ^{lxviii} Dumbelton B., "' Help Us Somebody", The Demolition of the Elderly', The London Press (2006).
- ^{lxix} Ismail, S., Thorlby R., and Holder H., 'Focus On: Social care for older people', The Health Foundation and Nuffield Trust (2014).
- ^{lxx} Uniquely though, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets is not only responsible for the provision of an extensive range of public services in the area, it has a much broader duty to protect the interests and promote the well-being of the local community (social, economic, educational, public health, community safety,

recreational, cultural and general development), very important regulatory functions and financial powers, and it is directly accountable to the local electorate in its governance structures.

^{lxxi} Hemming H., 'Together – How Small Groups Achieve Big Things', John Murray (2011).

^{lxxii} Although the ORT has still to take over management from the Council.

^{lxxiii} Stepney Greencoat Church of England Primary School and Sir John Cass and Redcoat Church of England Secondary School.

^{lxxiv} Chanan, G., and Miller, C., 'Rethinking Community Practice – Developing transformative neighbourhoods', The Policy Press (2013).

^{lxxv} It did recommend that more provision should be made for cooking, sewing and arts-based activities.

^{lxxvi} Quoted by Colchester Borough Council in their Supplementary Planning Document: Provision of Community Facilities (Update July 2013).

^{xcv} 'Tower Hamlets Time to Act', report of the Tower Hamlets Fairness Commission, chaired by Dr Giles Fraser, London Borough of Tower Hamlets (2013).

^{xcvi} See 'Distant Neighbours: Poverty and Inequality In Islington', a report for the Cripplegate Foundation by the new economic foundation (2013); 'Invisible Islington: Living in Poverty in Inner London', a report for the Cripplegate Foundation by Rocket Science UK Ltd (2008), and 'Living in the Bubble: Gentrification and its 'Others' in North London', article by Tim Butler published in the journal *Urban Studies* (November 2003).

^{xcvii} Sellick V., Mguni, N., Ressel, C., and Bacon, N. 'Building resilient communities', a Young Foundation report for Wiltshire Think Family Board (2010).

^{xcviii} The theory of neighbourhood capital starts from the premise that all neighbourhoods have assets and potential (whether those assets and potential are expressed in physical, economic, human and social terms). Generally there is room to develop (increase the value) of those individual elements of neighbourhood capital. The critical issue is how much of the value created is retained and reinvested in the neighbourhood.

^{xcix} Whilst not absolving the roles and responsibilities of national and local government, it places more emphasis on the idea of local action to solve local problems.

^c Based upon the principle that potential will always try to realise itself – which applies equally to individuals, organisations and communities. The idea of self-actualising communities was first attributed to the distinguished American academic Professor Kenneth P. Wilkinson

^{ci} 'Final recommendations for the London Borough of Tower Hamlets', Local Government Boundary Commission for England (March 2013).