



# Setting the scene

# 1

# Building a spatial strategy

## Local Development Framework

1.1 The primary purpose of the Local Development Framework is to assist in the regeneration and sustainable development of Tower Hamlets by implementing the spatial aspects of building One Tower Hamlets (see p.19). The Core Strategy is the principal document in the LDF as it sets the borough's spatial strategy to 2025.

Other Development Plan Documents that will support the Core Strategy are:

- **Development Management DPD** - setting out detailed policies to support development decisions
- **Sites and Placemaking DPD** - setting out place and site specific proposals for the borough, including key site allocations.
- **Proposals Map** - setting out specific boundaries within which particular policies apply.
- Any **Area Actions Plans** that are required
- In addition, any **Supplementary Planning Documents** required to help support and add further detail to the DPD policies.



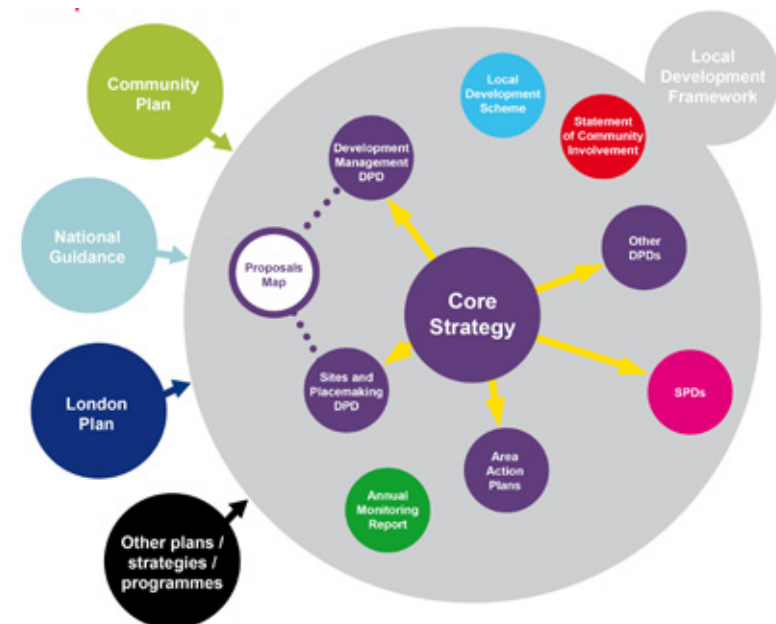
## The Core Strategy 2025

1.2 The Core Strategy is not a stand-alone document; it is one piece of a wider spatial framework for the borough. The Core Strategy sets out an ambitious and long-term spatial strategy to deliver the aspirations set out in the Community Plan. It sets out broad areas and principles, and where, how and when development should be delivered across the borough until 2025. It is also outcome-focused, and does not solely relate to development decisions.

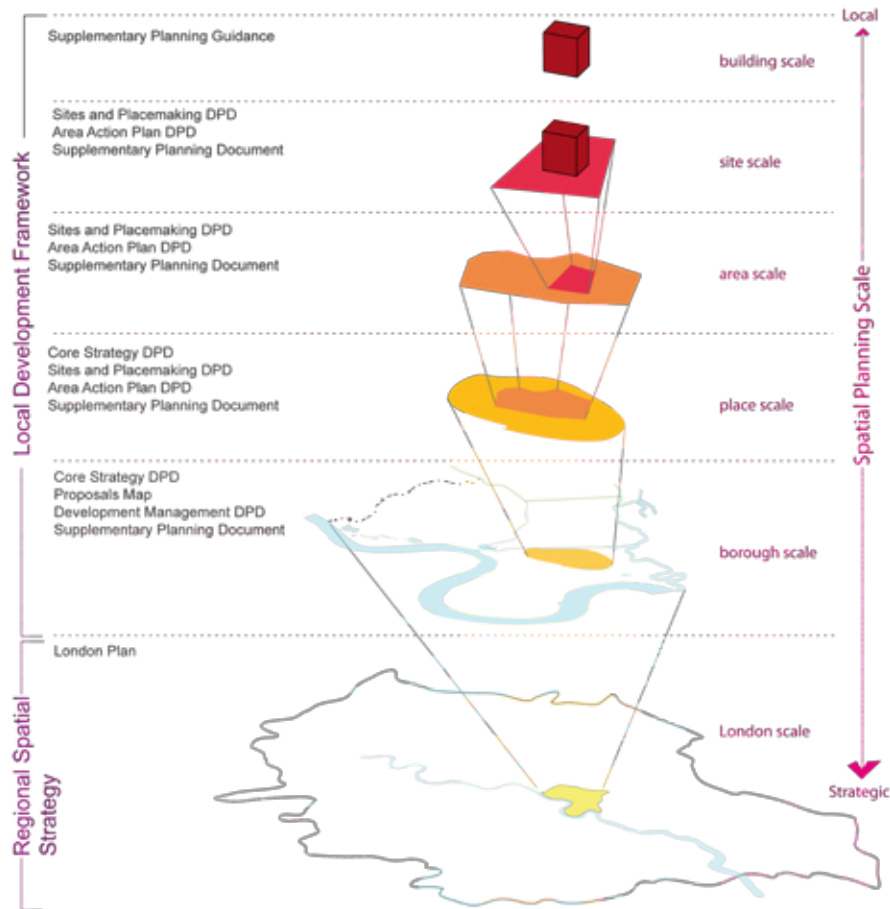
It is **not** the role of the Core Strategy to:

- set out detailed policies in relation to planning applications
- set out site specific policies and allocations
- set out defined boundaries on an OS-based map

► See Planning Policy Statement 12



▲ Fig 1. The Local Development Framework



▲ Fig 2. A diagram showing the inter-relationship between spatial scale and LDF spatial planning tools

### Produced in partnership

- 1.3 The Core Strategy has been produced after extensive stakeholder engagement and wider consultation, adhering to the principles set out in the Tower Hamlets Statement of Community Involvement.
- 1.4 This document has been prepared in accordance with the Planning Act 2008, The Town and Country Planning Regulations 2008 and Planning Policy Statement 12. This document is the final submission Core Strategy informed by the two previous option consultation papers\* and from previous research and engagement prior to the 2008 Act.
- 1.5 The first round of consultation identified within the Options and Alternatives Consultation Document two potential overarching strategies. One strategy was looked to refocus on our town centres, and the other advocated for organic growth across the borough. This Consultation Document also looked at options for each of the borough wide policies coming forward.
- 1.6 In selecting the overarching strategy, consultation findings and further evidence base suggested a combined approach which sought to refocus on town centres, while still recognising the organic nature of growth in the areas adjacent to the City Fringe and Canary Wharf. This preferred approach for the overarching strategy, along with the preferred approach for the borough-wide policies, was tested as part of the second consultation phase – Options and Alternatives for Places. This phase also tested options for how the borough-wide policies would affect the 24 identified individual places of Tower Hamlets. It also tested the vision for each place, which included engagement with the community and stakeholders about what each place would look like in the future and how that might be delivered.
- 1.7 The preferred approach for the overarching strategy is stated within chapter 3 “Refocusing on our town centres”.
- 1.8 The Core Strategy seeks to provide a robust spatial strategy for Tower Hamlets. It has been developed in line with national and regional planning policy, and while not repeating, it does seek to interpret this guidance locally, to the particular needs and characteristics of Tower Hamlets.

# Putting it into perspective

- 1.9 The Core Strategy looks at guiding and delivering strategic growth on a local scale. But this is significantly affected by a variety of factors on global, national and regional scales.



## Global challenges

### Climate change

- 1.10 There is a consensus among experts that human activities are contributing to climate change through the release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere<sup>1</sup>. The built environment contributes to greenhouse gas emissions and therefore sustainable development plays a critical role in tackling climate change<sup>2</sup>.

### Global economy

- 1.11 The global economy is currently experiencing a significant downturn that is impacting on the UK's and London's economic activities<sup>3</sup>.

### Health equality and well-being

- 1.12 Urban living provides many benefits but can place stresses and strains on the health and well-being of those who live and work in cities. Urban planning can play a significant role in creating healthy cities that contribute towards healthier communities<sup>4</sup>. The important role of planning and health is recognised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in its Healthy Cities and urban governance programme<sup>5</sup>.

### International migration

- 1.13 Migration is a major factor in shaping the population distribution. As the global population becomes increasingly urbanised and populations move due to the effects of climate change this creates a wide range of positive and negative issues.



▲ Fig 3. London continues to be one of the world's global cities



## UK issues & responses

1.14 Global issues have a significant impact on the UK and are shown to have the following influences:

### Impacts of climate change

1.15 The impact of climate change on the UK is likely to be in the form of more extreme weather events with effects on the natural environment, national prosperity and social cohesion<sup>6</sup>. As such, the UK Government has committed to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change by meeting international and national targets<sup>7</sup>.

### National economy

1.16 The UK is currently experiencing the effects of the global economic crisis which is limiting the country's economic growth and is expected to continue for the next two to three years<sup>8</sup>. The Core Strategy through the Plan-Monitor-Manage approach, is well placed to adapt to changing economic circumstances.

### Health equality and well-being

1.17 Lifestyle factors and the wider determinants of health have an impact on health equality in the UK<sup>9</sup>. The built environment can play an important part in helping to address ill health and promote healthy and sustainable communities<sup>10</sup>. It can also provide appropriate locations for healthcare services by considering human health and well-being<sup>11</sup>.

### Population migration

1.18 The UK has always attracted new people for many varied reasons and this is expected to continue as the mobile global workforce seeks employment opportunities. London sits as the spatial and economic centre of the UK, it is also the Gateway to mainland Europe (*see diagram to the right*). Within the UK, the population of London and South-east is expanding as people move to these areas.

## Spatial Planning

1.19 The UK Government responds to the preceding issues by developing and implementing national policies and guidance. One such response has been the development of new national guidance to modernise the UK planning system through spatial planning. Spatial planning is a process of placemaking and delivery which aims to streamline the planning process through a flexible, proactive and spatial approach<sup>12</sup>.





## Regional challenges

### London and climate change

1.20 The effects of the increase in carbon emissions since industrialisation can already be felt in London, with milder winters and hotter summers being experienced. Some other effects of climate change on London which can be expected include<sup>13</sup>:

- Heat waves and other extreme weather events
- An increase in the “urban heat island” effect
- Increased risk of flooding
- Extra pressure on London’s water resources
- Increased health risks for vulnerable groups, including the elderly
- Impacts on biodiversity, including the loss of species

### London’s economy

1.21 The national agenda places the Greater London region as the key driver of the UK economy, with an emphasis on growth, investment and connectivity<sup>14</sup>. Historically Tower Hamlets has been an important strategic link between central London and the east of England with the borough providing the early trading routes to eastern ports from central London<sup>15</sup>; today it forms the western edge to the Thames Gateway growth corridor.

### Health equality and well-being in London

1.22 For all of London’s strengths, it is marked by high levels of deprivation, social exclusion and homelessness. It is a city showing extremes of affluence and poverty, often next door to each other. High infant death rates, levels of mental ill health, and drug misuse and addiction are of serious concern in some areas. A coordinated, London-wide approach can make a significant difference to the factors influencing Londoners’ health. Recognising this, a broad range of organisations have formed a

partnership called London Health Commission to reduce health inequalities and improve the health and well being of all Londoners.

### Migration

1.23 London has always attracted new people for a variety of reasons and this is expected to continue as the highly mobile labour market takes advantage of the economic opportunities present in London<sup>16</sup>.

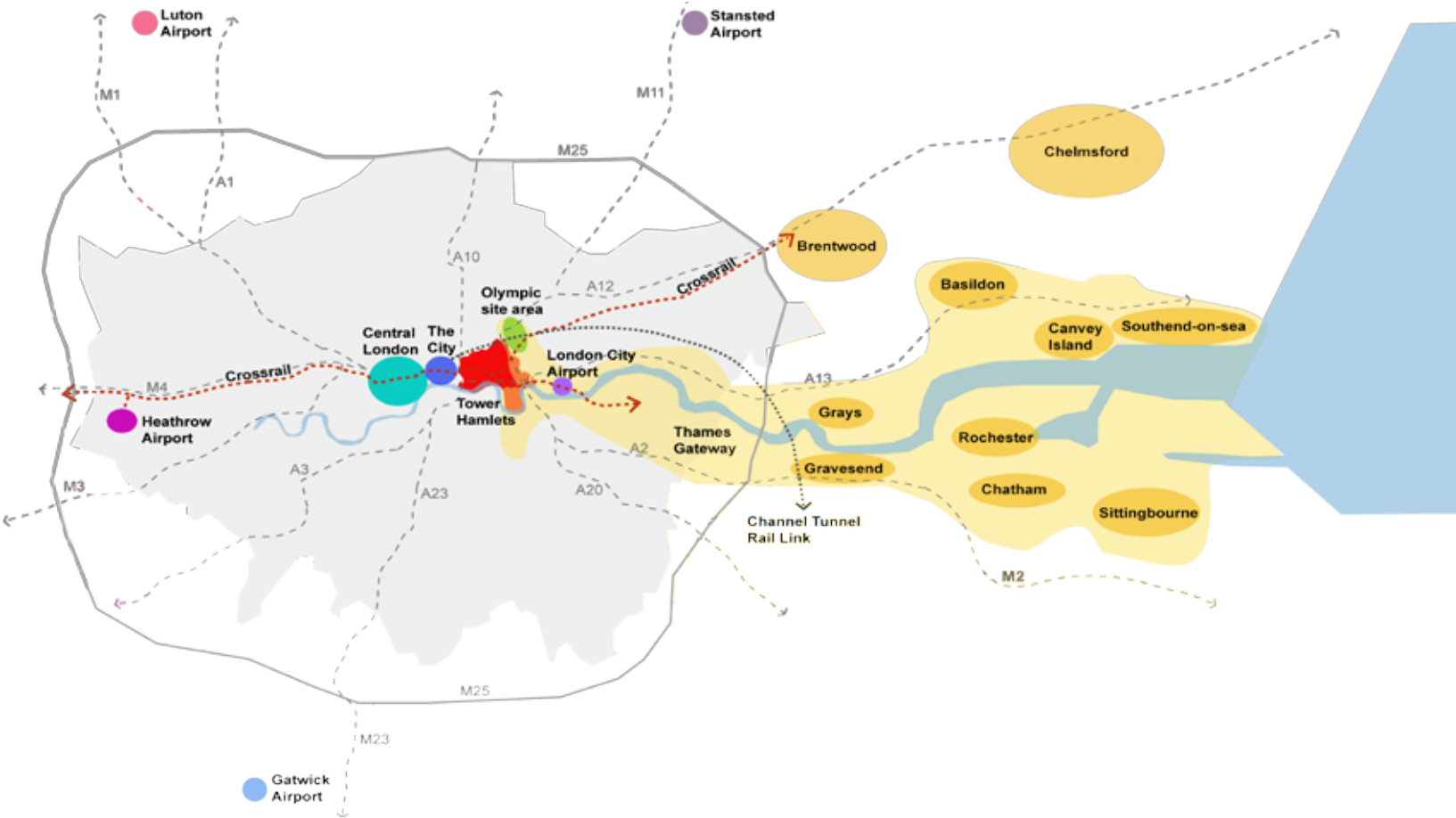
### Thames Gateway growth area

1.24 The Government has identified the Thames Gateway as a key location for the delivery of new homes and sustainable communities over the next 25 years<sup>17</sup>. This will significantly help to address the regional need for more housing, partly due to population growth, but also lifestyle changes as smaller households become more common. The London Thames Gateway Development Corporation acts as the main delivery and coordinating agent for the regeneration of the Lower Lea Valley and Barking and Dagenham areas of the Thames Gateway.

1.25 Major transport improvements are underway or planned for the Thames Gateway and London in order for it to fulfil and facilitate its growth aspirations. Crossrail and the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL) are the two main infrastructure projects that will significantly improve regional and international connections from east London<sup>18</sup>.

### 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games

1.26 This is the single largest regeneration project in Europe and the UK, and it is happening in east London. The legacy of the Olympic Park, including the Legacy Masterplan Framework and Stratford City, will have both immediate and lasting impacts, helping to transform Tower Hamlets. The five Olympic boroughs - Newham, Hackney, Waltham Forest, Greenwich and Tower Hamlets - are working together across a number of sectors, through the creation of a Strategic Regeneration Framework and Multi-Area Agreement<sup>19</sup>, to ensure the delivery of its legacy benefits to east London.



◀ Fig 5. A diagram showing the regional context of Tower Hamlets as part of London and its relationship to the Thames Gateway growth corridor

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# One Tower Hamlets diverse communities and distinct places

## A borough of diverse communities

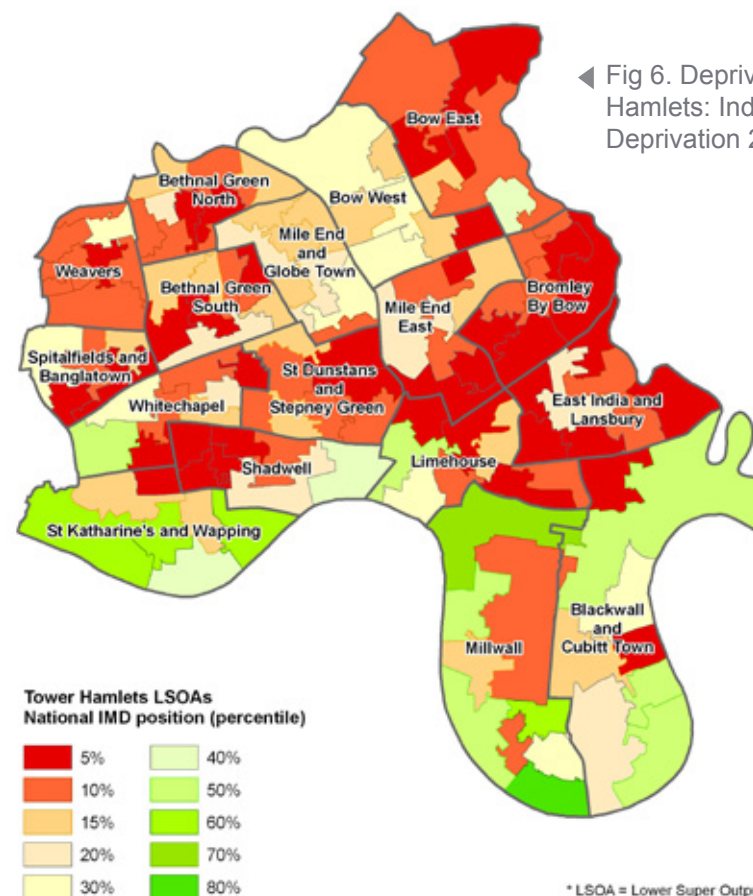
1.27 The people of Tower Hamlets are the borough's greatest asset. The community that lives and works in the borough is as diverse as the landscape around it. Tower Hamlets has always been a diverse place, attracting communities from all over the country and the rest of the world. Our population is expected to reach 300,000 by 2025 with many new communities moving into the borough which will contribute to a changing community profile over the next fifteen years<sup>20</sup>.

1.28 Tower Hamlets is one of the most ethnically diverse areas in the country. About half of the total population are from black and ethnic minority communities (refer to Figure 7), and around 110 different languages are spoken by our school pupils. The proportion of young people living in Tower Hamlets currently stands at 35% (Figure 8), which is much higher than the 18% average for the rest of inner London, and over 70% of our young people are from minority ethnic backgrounds<sup>21</sup>.

1.29 Tower Hamlets is also ranked as the third most deprived local authority in the country (refer to Figure 6) after the London Boroughs of Hackney and Newham, with local people suffering from a number of health and well-being challenges, including high levels of obesity (approximately 20% of adults) and high levels of smoking (37% of adults)<sup>22</sup>. This is affecting overall life expectancy which stands at 75 for men and 80 for women, placing Tower Hamlets 383rd and 361st respectively, out of 432 local authority areas<sup>23</sup>.

1.30 The population of Tower Hamlets increases significantly on weekdays, with more than 200,000 workers commuting into Canary Wharf<sup>24</sup>. Conversely for people living in Tower Hamlets, worklessness is a critical issue. The employment rate for the working age population is 58.6% compared with London's 69.8% and 74.3% for the UK<sup>25</sup>. In addition, whilst the average salary for those working in Tower Hamlets is nearly £69,000, 23% of families live on less than £15,000<sup>26</sup>.

1.31 Tower Hamlets has one of the highest population densities in inner London. By 2025 it's projected that there will be a further 43,000 new homes in the borough. However, housing affordability is low in comparison to national standards, and existing social housing quality (in terms of decency) is low but improving<sup>27</sup>. Housing need, both in terms of quality and quantity, is one of the most significant drivers for change in the borough.



**A borough of distinct places**

- 1.32 Tower Hamlets has a long and rich history, arising from the collection of Hamlets that grew along and around the trade and movement routes between the City of London and the hinterlands of Essex (refer Figure 9).
- 1.33 The greatest natural asset in the borough is the River Thames and the network of inland waterways which transect the borough. Open and green spaces are dotted throughout the borough, with Victoria Park and Mile End Park providing the most significant contribution. Given the inner-London nature of the borough, improving access to open, green and water spaces continues to be a significant challenge<sup>28</sup>.
- 1.34 There are many physical assets that put Tower Hamlets on the map, the most significant being the Tower of London - a UNESCO World Heritage Site - and the iconic Canary Wharf. Many of the places of Tower Hamlets, (Bethnal Green, Bow, and Whitechapel) are also well renowned as being the home of London's East End. Many places, from the former docklands to the Lower Lee Valley continue to be the focus for significant regeneration, with the shift in the economy away from manufacturing to a service-based economy.



Fig 8. The historic hamlets as distinct places centred around the Tower of London

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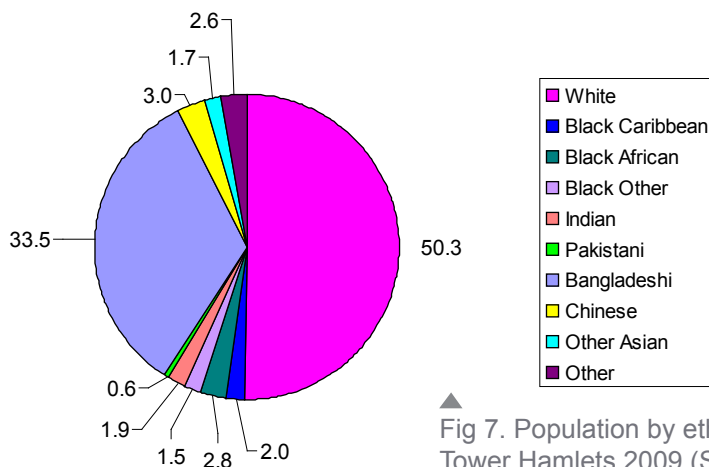


Fig 7. Population by ethnicity Tower Hamlets 2009 (Source GLA Estimate)

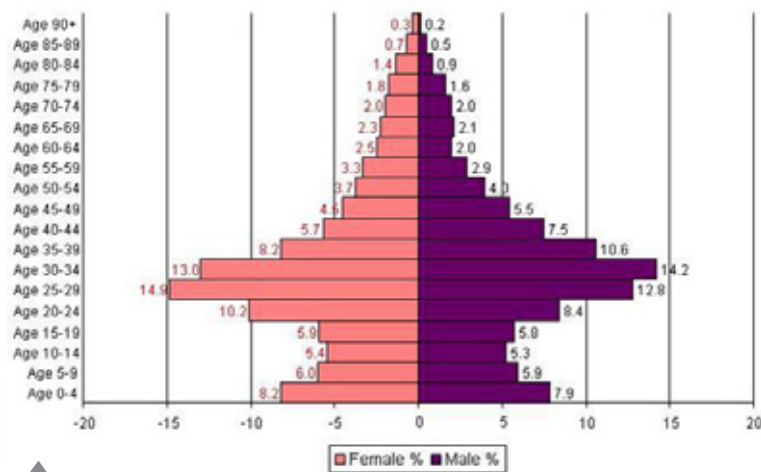


Fig 9. Age structure of Tower Hamlets Population

# One Tower Hamlets a spatial response



## Building One Tower Hamlets through the Community Plan

1.35 Tower Hamlets Partnership has prepared the Tower Hamlets Community Plan which provides an exciting vision for the borough to 2020 and clearly defines the priorities for change. This plan sets out an ambitious agenda to ensure the borough's diverse communities are prosperous, healthy, safe and supportive. The over-arching aim of the Community Plan is to **“improve the quality of life for everyone who lives and works in the borough”** and the plan's priorities and objectives are arranged around four themes<sup>29</sup>:

- A Great Place to Live
- A Prosperous Community
- A Safe and Supportive Community
- A Healthy Community

1.36 Underpinning these themes is the aspiration to build ‘One Tower Hamlets’ – a borough where everyone has equal stake and status; where people have the same opportunities as their neighbour; where people have a responsibility to contribute; and where families are the cornerstone of success.



## Building One Tower Hamlets through the Core Strategy

1.37 Where the Community Plan sets out the aspirations for the communities of Tower Hamlets, the Core Strategy seeks to translate these into a physical reality. The Core Strategy achieves this by setting out a spatial framework to design, build and plan great places to live and work. The Core Strategy seeks to understand the roles and opportunities of each place in the borough. It brings these opportunities together to enable shared success across the borough and deliver the vision of One Tower Hamlets.

Fig 10 & 11. Diagrams showing the relationship between the Community Plan (top) and the Core Strategy (bottom)

