



Refocusing  
on our town  
centres

3

# Refocusing on our town centres

## Where we want to be

### SO4

To have a hierarchy of interconnected, vibrant and inclusive town centres that are mixed use hubs for retail, commercial, leisure, civic and residential. The purpose of each town centre will differ according to its role and function.















### SO5

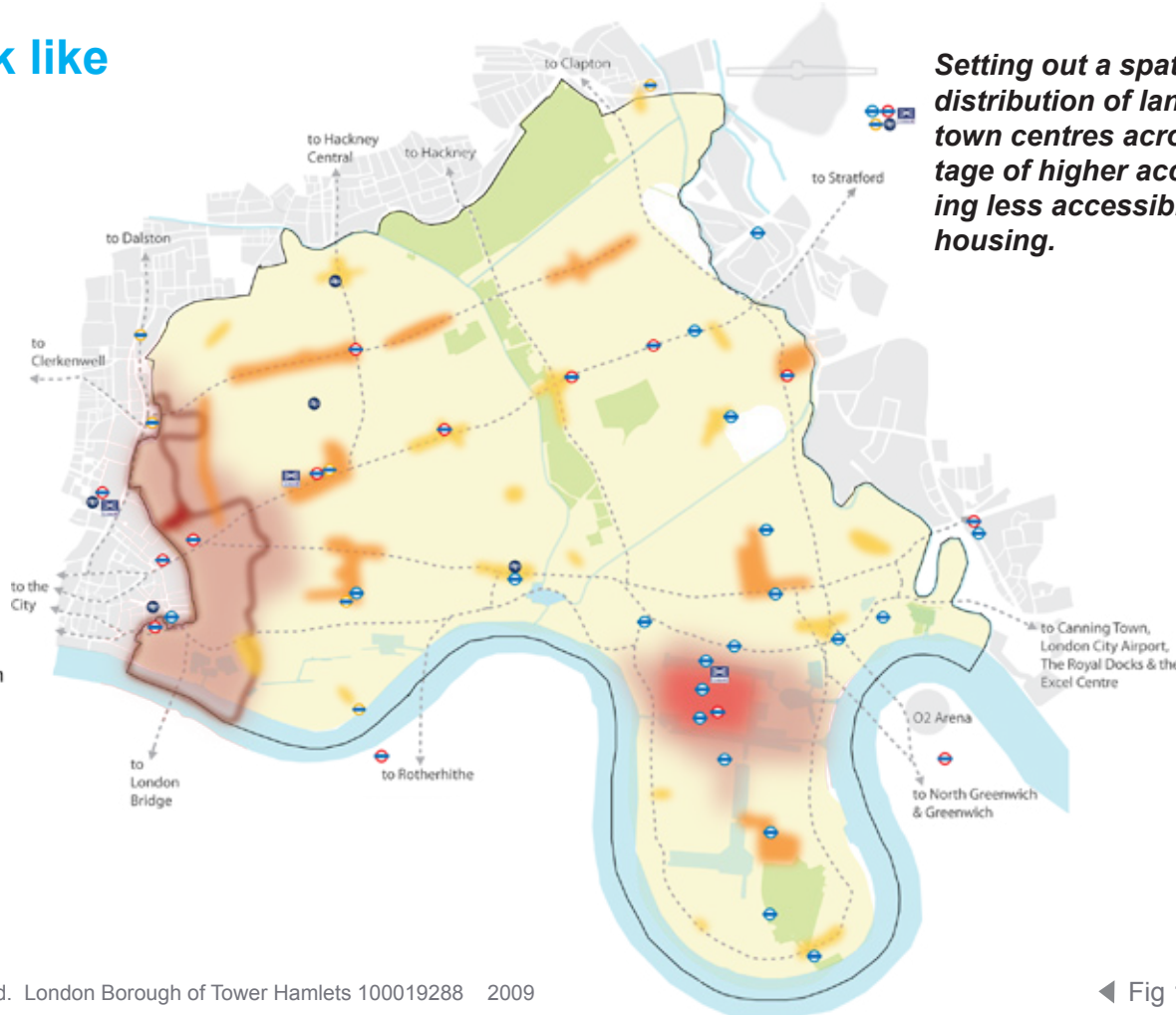
To promote mixed use at the edge of town centres and along main streets.

### SO6

To promote areas outside of town centres for primarily residential and supporting uses that do not need the higher levels of accessibility that town centres require.

## What will it look like

-  Central Activity Zone frontage
-  Major centre
-  District centre
-  Neighbourhood centre
-  Tower Hamlets Activity Area
-  Central Activity Zone
-  Main street
-  Predominantly residential area
-  Metropolitan Open Land
-  Crossrail station
-  London Underground Station
-  London Overground Station
-  DLR Station
-  National Rail Station



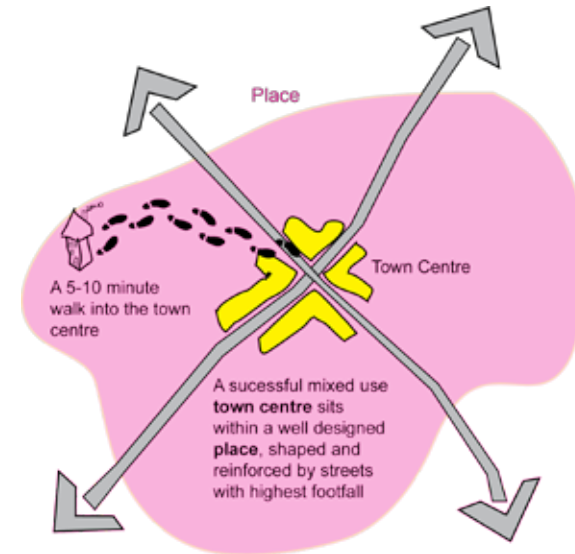
**Setting out a spatial strategy that ensures the distribution of land uses supports a network of town centres across the borough, taking advantage of higher accessibility levels while promoting less accessible areas as places for primarily housing.**

## How we are going to get there

SP01

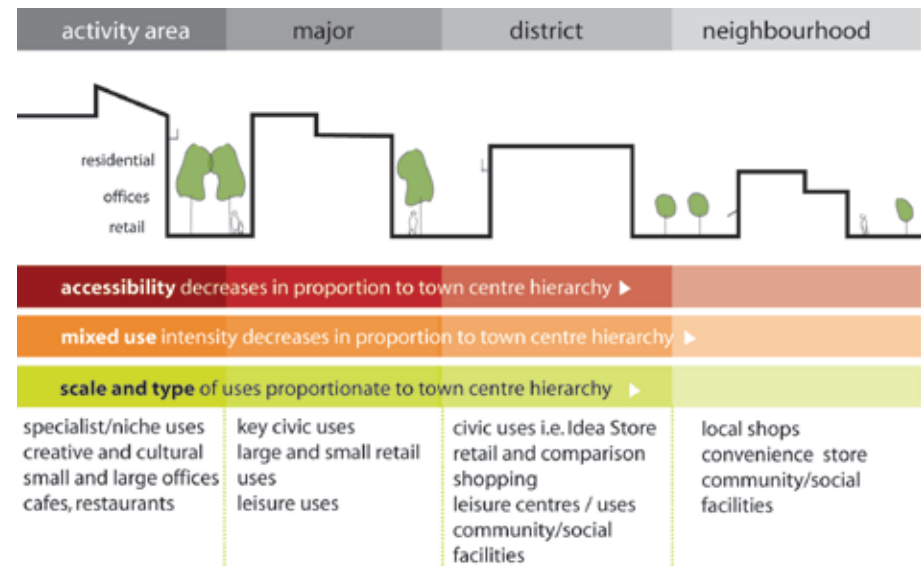
1. Redefine and apply the town centre hierarchy as follows:
  - a. **Central Activity Zone**  
Apply London Plan policy on CAZ.
  - b. **Tower Hamlets Activity Area**  
Provide transitional areas that are complementary, yet different, to the distinct designations of the CAZ and Canary Wharf major town centre. This will be achieved through the promotion of a vibrant mix of uses that are economically competitive, based on a set of principles, defined in the Town Centre Spatial Strategy.
  - c. **Major Centre**  
Maintain and enhance Canary Wharf as an important major centre in the borough through, improving its local accessibility and supporting its continued growth.
  - d. **District Centre**  
Enhance existing district centres, and create ones that contain a wide range of shops and services to meet the needs of local communities. New district centres at:
    - Bromley-by-Bow: to support wider regeneration
    - Brick Lane: reclassified from a neighbourhood centre
  - e. **Neighbourhood Centre**  
Enhance existing neighbourhood centres, and create new ones that contain a range of shops including essential uses that serve a local catchment area. New neighbourhood centres to reflect existing mixed-use activity at:
    - Mile End
    - Limehouse Station
    - Thomas More
    - Stepney Green
    - Devons Road
    - Hackney Wick

▶ See Appendix Four for the detailed town centre hierarchy and see Chapter 4 of the Town Centre Spatial Strategy (2009) for further information about each town centre.



▲ Fig 19. Place and town centre relationship

Graphics are for illustrative purposes only

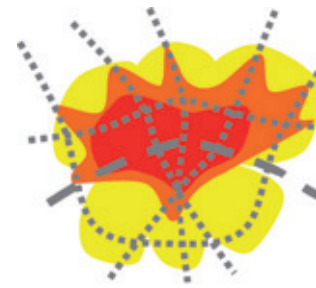


▲ Fig 20. Hierarchy of town centres

Graphics are for illustrative purposes only

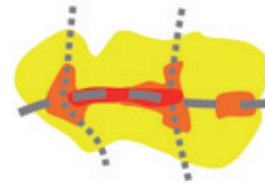
## SP01

2. Ensure the scale and type of uses within town centres are consistent with the hierarchy, scale and role of each town centre. This will be achieved by:
  - a. Concentrating civic uses and service provision in town centres of the appropriate scale.
  - b. Ensuring town centres are active, well-used and safe during day and night through appropriate uses and good design.
  - c. Encourage evening and night time economy uses that contribute to the vibrancy, inclusiveness and economic vitality of our town centre hierarchy. Ensuring such uses are:
    - i. Not over-concentrated in areas where they will have a detrimental impact on local people;
    - ii. Of a balanced provision to cater for varied needs; and
    - iii. Complementary to existing uses and activities.
  - d. Promoting mixed-use and multi-purpose town centres with a mix of unit sizes and types (including smaller unit sizes) to assist in the creation of vibrant centres that offer a diversity of choice, and meet the needs of communities.
  - e. Facilitating and promoting the cultural and leisure sector in our town centres by providing multifunctional, diverse and inclusive venues, and promoting associated uses. These uses will be focused in the Tower Hamlets Activity Areas, Major Centre and District Centres.
  
3. Promote the good design of town centres, ensuring an appropriate and well integrated spatial layout is achieved that connects to surrounding areas. (See diagram to the right and LBTH Town Centre Spatial Strategy)



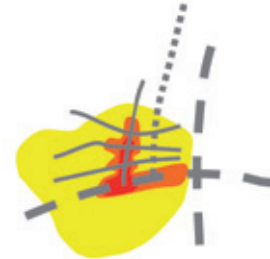
### Pervasive

e.g. City Fringe Activity Area  
 These centres are defined by their continuous activity, high accessibility, pervasive nature and blurred edges.



### Online (High Street)

e.g. Bethnal Green District Centre  
 These centres are the traditional high streets that are common across much of the UK. They take advantage of the high accessibility and footfall of a particular street.



### Offline-Online

e.g. Chrisp Street District Centre  
 This type of centre is similar to the high street but also has activity located just off the main street.



### Pod

e.g. Canary Wharf Major Centre  
 This type of centre sometimes offers very good public transport provision but is disconnected from the pedestrian street network, which makes it difficult to reach by foot and bicycle.

Fig 21. The design and spatial layout of town centres

Images and descriptions courtesy of Space Syntax Ltd. Illustrative purposes only. For further information please refer to Spatial Baseline reports

SP01

4. Maintain, focus and increase the supply of town centre activity and retail floorspace across the borough to meet identified demand and support town centres as vibrant economic hubs by:

- a. Encouraging, as a priority, 16,600sq m (net) floorspace of comparison retail in the following town centres:
  - Canary Wharf
  - Chrisp Street
  - Brick Lane
  - Bethnal Green
  - Crossharbour
  - Bromley-by-Bow

b. Encouraging, as a priority, 17,700sq m (net) floorspace of convenience retail in the following town centres:

- Bethnal Green
- Roman Road
- Whitechapel
- Bromley-by-Bow
- Crossharbour

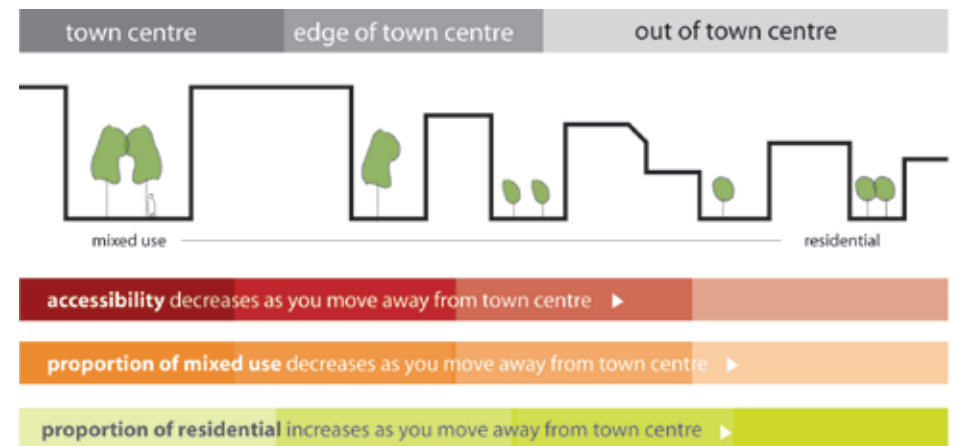
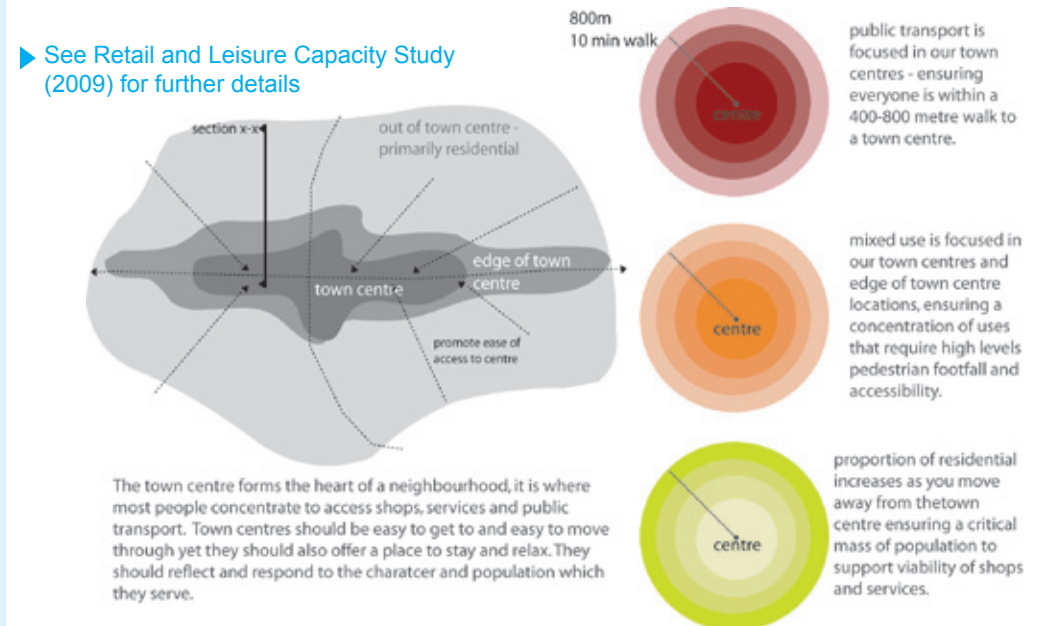
c. Promoting and focusing street markets in town centres; supporting their growth and their role in adding retail variety, promoting local enterprise and local character.

5. Promote areas outside, and at the edge of town centres, as places that support and assist in the creation of sustainable communities. This will be achieved by:

- a. Promoting mixed use development at the edge of town centres and along main streets to support the role of town centres.
- b. Promoting areas outside of town centres for primarily residential uses as well as other supporting uses that are local in nature and scale.

► SP01 – Further detailed policies relating to town centres will be provided within the Development Management DPD and Sites and Placemaking DPD.

▼ Fig 22. Urban structure and town centre plan



▲ Fig 23. The relationship of town centre, edge of centre and out of centre | section x-x

Graphics are for illustrative purposes only

## Programme of Delivery

This strategy will be implemented through a number of key projects including:

- Bromley-by-Bow Masterplan
  - Whitechapel Masterplan
  - Aldgate Masterplan
  - Wapping Masterplan
  - Fish Island Area Action Plan & Poplar Area Area Action Plan
  - Town Centre Implementation Plans
  - St Pauls Way Transformation Project
- Ocean Estate Regeneration Programme
  - Blackwall Reach Regeneration Programme
- Town Centre Spatial Strategy
  - Development Management DPD
  - Sites and Placemaking DPD
  - Proposals Map
  - LBTH Market Strategy
  - LBTH Public Realm Strategy
  - Council Asset Management Strategy

Please refer to the Programme of Delivery (Appendix two) for full implementation and delivery details and the Monitoring Framework (Appendix three) for full plan, monitor and manage details.



## Why we have taken this approach

- 3.1 Town centres are the economic, transport, social and civic hearts of Tower Hamlets with each playing a different role in enabling sustainable living and community cohesion<sup>50</sup>. The vibrancy and vitality of town centres is dependent upon the surrounding area (400 and 800 metre catchment area) including its layout, its population, its employment levels, its spending power and principally, its accessibility<sup>51</sup>.
- 3.2 The boroughs' town centres continue to evolve, they have changed in the way they look, the purposes they serve, the types of shops they have and the way they are accessed and used. With the London Plan as the starting point, the town centres of Tower Hamlets have been configured in a hierarchal manner<sup>52</sup> which has been made locally specific to Tower Hamlets through extensive spatial baseline research. The creation of new town centres is proposed over the lifetime of the plan, in order to support population growth or to reflect existing town centre activity in some areas.
- 3.3 In addition two Activity Areas have been identified. The Tower Hamlets Activity Areas resulted from the Town Centre Spatial Strategy (2009) identifying specific areas bordering the Central Activities Zone and the major town centre of Canary Wharf where the scale, continuity and intensity of town centre activity and land use is different to that found across the rest of the borough. Specific challenges in policy terms of these areas required a new policy mechanism as a distinctive policy response to ensure these areas are successfully managed<sup>53</sup>.
- 3.4 The Community Plan highlights vibrant town centres as a key priority, raising concerns regarding access to town centres, service provision and issues of social cohesion<sup>54</sup>. Evidence highlighted that the design, accessibility and layout of town centres has an important impact upon those social and economic factors<sup>55</sup>. This has been reflected in the amendments to the town centre hierarchy, key examples of which have been the development of the Tower Hamlets Activity Areas and the establishment of a new town centre at Bromley-by-Bow.
- 3.5 The council looked at the challenges facing the borough's town centres to understand how to ensure they retain their vibrancy, competitiveness and

strengths while respecting their different roles. According to the measures of town centres' health<sup>56</sup> (which do not reflect overtrading<sup>57</sup>), most town centres in Tower Hamlets are in reasonable health<sup>58</sup>. Many have benefited, as have other town centres in London, from growth, greater consumer expenditure and, in some cases, improvements in the public realm. However this growth has also brought significant challenges with pressures on town centres to meet the demands of a larger population<sup>59</sup>. In addition there is a need to plan for a potential and significant net increase in retail floorspace over the lifetime of this plan<sup>60</sup>.

- 3.6 The formation of town centres take advantage of areas that offer higher accessibility levels, as these areas offer the greatest opportunity for economic transactions (the high street is a example of this). Land uses that require higher accessibility levels seek those locations that are movement rich, while other land uses such as residential, seek locations that are less accessible, migrating to less accessible areas<sup>61</sup>. The success of town centres depends upon this principle of concentration in the right location, dispersing those uses reduces economic and social vibrancy and vitality<sup>62</sup>.
- 3.7 Following extensive evidence gathering<sup>63</sup> and in line with national guidance<sup>64</sup>, this spatial policy puts forward a comprehensive, distinctive and tailored approach in planning for the boroughs town centres and wider land use structure. This spatial policy makes the connection between understanding the dynamics of Tower Hamlets places<sup>65</sup> and the role that town centres play in bringing communities together, as places for social and civic exchange<sup>66</sup>.

### Key supporting evidence base

- PPS6: Planning for Town Centres, 2005
- DETR Towards an Urban Renaissance, 1999
- GLA London Plan, 2008
- LBTH Town Centre Spatial Strategy, 2009
- LBTH Town Centre Spatial Strategy Spatial Baseline, 2009
- LBTH Retail and Leisure Capacity Study (2009)
- LBTH Community Plan, 2008
- LBTH Urban Structure and Characterisation Study, 2009
- LBTH Small and Medium Office and Workspace Study, 2006
- LBTH Creative and Cultural Industries Report (2005)