

# **ROMAN ROAD BOW NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN**

**2021 - 2031**

EDITED PUBLIC Draft  
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# LIST OF POLICIES

## **LIST OF POLICIES**

### **Thriving high street and local economy**

Policy LE1: Encouraging flexible use of premises

### **Green streets that encourage walking and cycling**

Policy GS1: Improving safe walking and cycling routes

### **Beautiful public spaces**

Policy PS1: Enhancing public realm spaces

Policy PS2: Designating Local Green Spaces

## **New life for our local heritage**

Policy HE1: Conserving and enhancing Bow Wharf

Policy HE2: Designating public houses as local heritage assets

### **High quality affordable housing**

Policy H1: Allocating sites for housing

Policy H2: Community led housing

Policy H3: Low carbon housing

### **Resilient and well-networked community infrastructure**

Policy CF1: Developing new and improved sports and play facilities

## **LIST OF NON-POLICY ACTIONS**

The following table summarises issues referred to in the neighbourhood plan which aren't directly related to land use. Tackling them has the potential to contribute to sustainable economic, social and environmental development in the neighbourhood area.

### **Non-land use issues to be addressed**

#### **Thriving high street and local economy**

Site specific action LE2: Bow House Business Centre, 153-159 Bow Road E3 2SE

Action LE3: Sustained support for job seekers and local businesses

Action LE4: Local cross-sector collaboration

### **Green streets that encourage walking and cycling**

Action GS2: to improve safe walking

and cycling

### **New life for our local heritage**

Action HE3: Opportunities for new types of Public House

Action HE4: Wayfinding and Bow Heritage Trail

### **Resilient and well-networked community infrastructure**

Action CF2: Developing new and improved youth facilities and support

Action CF3: Improving existing community centres

Action CF4: Forming a consortium of community groups

Action CF5: Community Asset Transfer and Assets of Community Value

Action CF6: Improving access to health and social care facilities

## **Welcome from the Chair of Roman Road Bow Neighbourhood Forum**

In February 2016 when Roman Road Trust first tabled the idea for preparing a neighbourhood plan at a public meeting, it wasn't the threat of large scale development that brought us together, but the opportunities that we all saw for engaging in a neighbourhood planning process that would create the means to bring new life to our high street and green spaces; to raise awareness about what is valuable about the community we live in - its ethnic diversity, its history of championing social change and the heritage of some of its architecture - public buildings, bridges, houses and pubs. We also recognised that the neighbourhood has some challenges: the impacts of traffic on air quality are making walking and cycling less appealing; a shortage of genuinely affordable and good quality homes; a narrow range of shops, empty retail units and a struggling market. A neighbourhood plan could help to direct funding to address some of these challenges.

The Covid-19 pandemic has shone a spotlight on fissures that were already present in our neighbourhood's fabric - more retail units are under threat, there is less funding available to improve open spaces and community facilities, at a time when these have become more valued. At the same time, wider issues of climate change create local consequences that the plan can help to address.

This final draft of the Roman Road Bow Neighbourhood Plan is an opportunity to test with the community whether the policies and actions proposed here can withstand the added pressures facing our neighbourhood, and still shape and safeguard its physical fabric. We welcome your comments and feedback on the policies and actions we have set out, that are drawn from what you have told us is important over the last three years.

Thank you for your support and engagement so far.

**Alex Holmes**

**Chair Roman Road Bow Neighbourhood  
Forum Committee**

The Forum would like to give special thanks to the following people who have given their time, support and expertise towards the development of the plan:  
Local residents - Sarah Allan, Eddie Blake, Sarah Bland, Gavin Cambridge, Janita Han, Patricia Hernandez, Alex Holmes, Tom Martin, Margaret McGinley, Mike Mitchell, Natalya Palit, Lee Sargent, Tabitha Stapely, Rosie Vincent, John White, Nadia Wilkinson, Marco Zed.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Purpose of the plan**

This is the Neighbourhood Plan for the Roman Road Bow Neighbourhood Area over the period from 2021 to 2031. The principal purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is to guide development within the Neighbourhood Plan Area (NPA) and provide guidance to anyone wishing to submit a planning application for development in the NPA. The plan defines a vision for the NPA focussing on the local economy, connectivity, open space, heritage, housing and community infrastructure, and sets out how that vision will be realised through planning and controlling land use and development change over the plan period.

The Covid-19 pandemic has seriously impacted Bow and the local economy, whilst also demonstrating the resilience and cohesion of our local community. We believe the neighbourhood plan offers a framework that will help shape a sustainable future for Bow, whilst respecting our rich heritage.

### **1.2 Structure of the plan**

The Plan comprises a vision for the area, and a set of objectives in thematic chapters. Each of the objectives presents a summary of issues followed by the different policies, actions and aspirations. These are respectively accompanied by their conformity with other policies and a justification.

The planning policies are in green boxes. Some of the Neighbourhood Plan policies are general and apply throughout the Plan area, whilst others are site or area-specific. In considering proposals for development, Tower Hamlets Council will apply all relevant policies in the Plan. It is therefore assumed that the Plan will be read as a whole, although some cross-referencing between Plan policies has been provided.

The process of producing the Neighbourhood Plan has identified a number of aspirations and actions which have not been included in the policies' sections. This is because these are not specifically related to land use matters and therefore sit outside the jurisdiction of a Neighbourhood Plan. These aspirations and actions will be addressed outside the Neighbourhood Plan process and are shown in yellow boxes.

Green box = Planning policies

Yellow box = aspirations and actions

### **1.3 Preparation of the plan**

The Plan has been prepared by the community through the Roman Road Bow Neighbourhood Forum (RRBNF) Committee, formed in February 2016 after the first Neighbourhood Forum meeting, where the proposal to prepare a neighbourhood plan was put forward and discussed.

Tower Hamlets Council, as the local planning authority, designated the Roman Road Bow Neighbourhood Planning Area (NPA) in February 2017 and amended this in June 2021. The revised boundary excludes small areas of land adjacent to the A12 Blackwall Tunnel Road that lie within the London Legacy Development Corporation's

planning area. The Council and designated the Roman Road Bow Neighbourhood Planning Forum, (the body responsible for developing the plan), in August 2017.

The different topic areas in the Plan reflect matters that are important to the NPA's residents, businesses and community groups. The Forum Committee has sought to engage the local community at each stage of the preparation of the plan. See the accompanying Roman Road Bow Neighbourhood Plan Engagement Report<sup>1</sup>, prepared by Public Works, that forms part of the evidence base supporting the Plan's proposals and policies.



Fig. 1: General Meeting 2017 in The Common Room

## INTRODUCTION

### **1.4 Wider policy context**

This Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 (as amended).

The Neighbourhood Plan , once adopted, will represent one part of the development plan for the neighbourhood area over the period 2021 to 2031, the other parts being the Tower Hamlets Local Plan 2031 and The London Plan 2020. The National Planning Policy Framework, representing national planning policy, is also a material consideration.

#### **1.4.1 National Planning Policy Framework**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out national planning policy and provides general guidance on a wide range of planning matters. It includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development, meaning that the development plan should seek to meet the needs of the borough for housing and other uses, and that planning proposals which accord with an up-to-date development plan should be approved. Where there are no policies relevant to the application, either within the Neighbourhood Plan or other relevant and up-to-date plans for the area, then Tower Hamlets

Council should grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The NPPF outlines the purpose of neighbourhood planning: “[it] gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development...” (p10, para. 29, NPPF 2019). The NPPF establishes the framework for developing local plans and neighbourhood plans. It states that “Planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area.” (p5, para. 9, NPPF 2019).

#### **1.4.2 The London Plan 2020**

A neighbourhood plan must be in general conformity with The London Plan. The London Plan contains detailed planning policy which must be applied, where relevant, to proposals in the Roman Road Bow Neighbourhood Plan Area unless there are very good reasons for not doing so.

The Roman Road Bow NPA falls within the London Plan’s Strategic Areas for Regeneration. Roman Road (East) has been classified as a district centre, with low commercial growth potential and incremental residential growth potential (p547, Table A1.1, The London Plan).

#### **1.4.3 Tower Hamlets Local Plan 2031**

Tower Hamlets Local Plan 2031 (p198, para 17.9) concerning sustainable places acknowledges the contribution of neighbourhood plans: “Neighbourhood plans may also shape the future planning of these areas at a neighbourhood level and developers and other relevant parties will need to consult with neighbourhood forums to inform development proposals in the neighbourhood planning areas.”

The Roman Road Bow NPA falls within the Central sub-area (p199, Tower Hamlets Local Plan). The NPA sits within Bow, one of nine character areas within the Central sub-area. There are no site allocations within the NPA or in close proximity.

There are 20 wards in Tower Hamlets local authority boundary. The NPA sits within two wards - Bow East and Bow West.

#### **Central Area Good Growth Supplementary Planning Document, Tower Hamlets Council August 2021**

The Central Area, which includes Bow, is only one of four sub-areas in the borough that is not an Opportunity Area of high growth. However; “in order to meet future needs, the Central Area needs to accommodate 7,597 new homes, or 14% of the borough’s total, during the plan period.”<sup>1</sup>

The Central Area Good Growth SPD

provides guidance to help the council deliver this housing growth, focusing specifically on design guidance to ensure that new developments respect and enhance the well-established character of this part of the borough. In addition to helping the council deliver its vision for the Central Area, the SPD also supports Priority 2 of

#### **Tower Hamlets Strategic Plan 2020-23:**

“People live in a borough that is clean and green; People live in good quality affordable homes and well-designed neighbourhoods; People feel safer in their neighbourhoods and anti-social behaviour is tackled; People feel they are part of a cohesive and vibrant community.”<sup>2</sup>

### **1.5 Monitoring the Plan**

Roman Road Bow Neighbourhood Forum, as the responsible body for the Neighbourhood Plan, will maintain and periodically revisit the Plan to ensure relevance and to monitor delivery.

## LOCAL CONTEXT

### 1.6 Roman Road Bow Neighbourhood Plan Area boundary



Fig. 2: Roman Road Bow Neighbourhood Plan Area boundary

The NPA is located between Globe Town to the west, Victoria Park to the north, Mile End to the south and Fish Island and the Olympic Park to the East. The A12 Blackwall Tunnel Road cuts through Bow north to south. Fish Island to the East is in a separate planning authority, the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC), formed in April 2012 to secure the

legacy of the 2012 Olympic Games. All LLDC land is excluded from the plan area.

The NPA is similar in boundary to the area identified as "Bow" in the Tower Hamlets Local Plan Sub Area 2: Central.

## 2.1 History of Bow

### 2.1.1 Economic character

London's docks had driven employment in Bow until their decline after the second world war and closure in the late 1960's. The docks represented east London's connection with trade and industry (The Bryant and May match factory, which closed in 1979, became one of East London's first urban renewal projects in 1988). For over 100 years, the economy of Roman Road Bow has been shaped by The Roman Road Market, which has been an important employer in

the area, sustaining local retail and businesses. The market once attracted visitors from across London, but has been in decline in recent years.

### 2.1.2 Urban character

The Central Area Good Growth SPD characterises the Bow area as a location which: "...generally has a finer grain to the west and a coarser grain to the east, with poorer permeability and legibility in and around post-war estates and more recent developments, and easier movement where Victorian and Georgian terraces are prevalent."<sup>3</sup>



Fig. 3: Bow's mixed urban fabric

## LOCAL CONTEXT

The varied character of street patterns, open spaces and homes in the NPA reflect Bow's rapid growth and change over 200 years. Georgian houses on Coburn Road and Tredegar Square are examples of the prosperity in Bow during the 1700's. The Victorian period saw rapid industrial growth with new road, rail and waterway infrastructure that today are assets as well as barriers to connectivity. Victoria Park, built in 1845 as a lung for the local population to escape the polluted east end air, is still a popular

and cherished green space. Post-war slum clearances saw the development of housing estates such as the Ranwell Estate and the Malmesbury Estate. Their layouts created new open spaces, many of them now under-used. Nearly 1,700 homes were built in the wider Bow area, including the NPA, between 2010-15. With little available land, the Council has focused on infill sites, demolishing Council owned buildings which no longer serve their original purpose, and re-building on these sites. Between

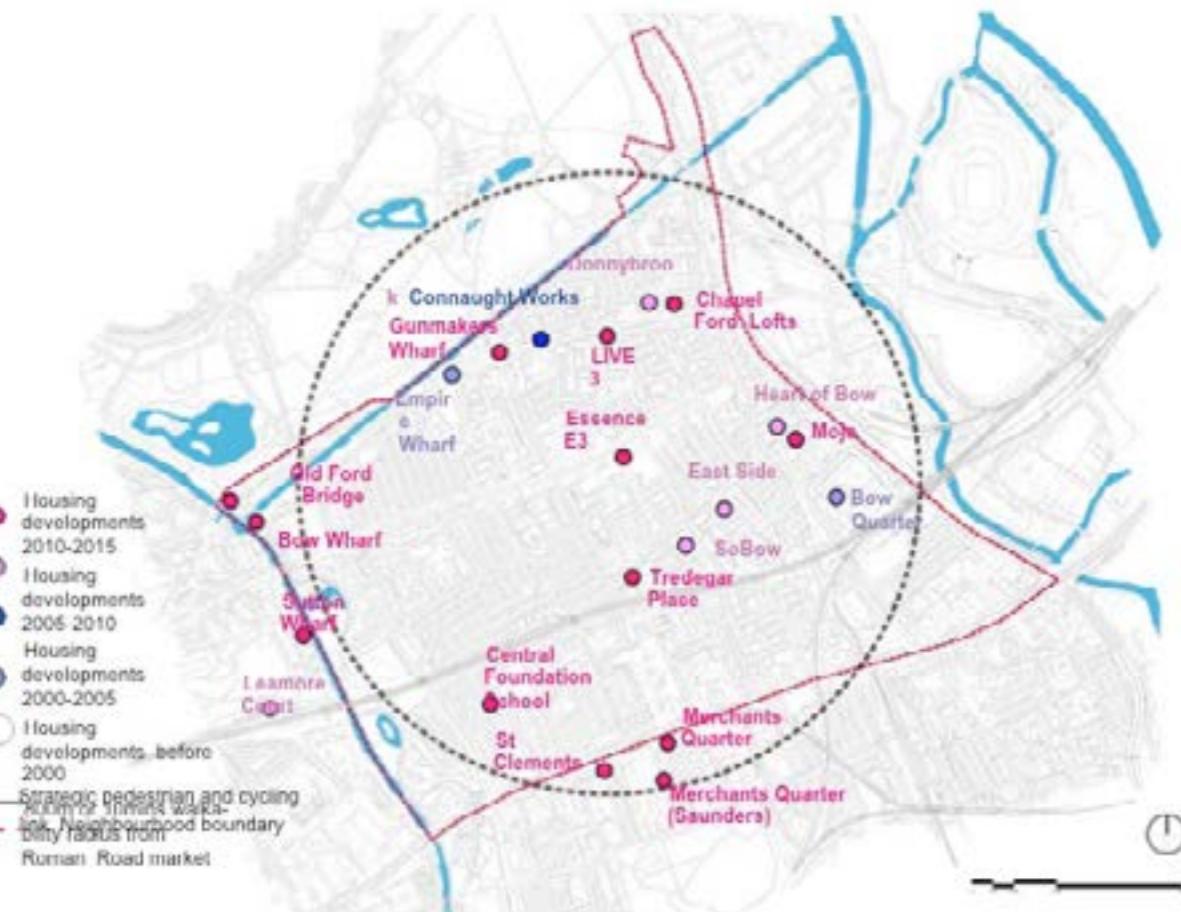


Fig. 4: Housing developments in Bow 2000 – 2015  
( <https://romanroadlondon.com/residential-housing-developments-bow/> )

2015-19 planning approval was granted to almost 170 new homes, including 106 age-restricted flats,<sup>4,5</sup> four townhouses<sup>6</sup> and 32 dwellings for market sale to cross-subsidise some of the age-restricted developments.

**2.1.3 Social and cultural identity**  
Bow has a rich history exemplifying the East End spirit of determination and resilience. It has been home to social reform movements such as the Suffragettes, and for centuries immigrants have settled here, shaping the area's local character and identity.



Fig. 5: Suffragette Mural , Lord Morpeth

Artists have established themselves in Bow since the East London Group in the 1920's, and continue to find a place here, producing and exhibiting their work. In Hackney Wick there is still a thriving community of artists, with 610 studios and up to five artists per studio. The LLDC, in preparing its plans for building new homes in Hackney Wick and Fish Island, realised they needed to accommodate growth without displacing the area's existing

working and creative community. There are concerns however; that rising rental costs are driving some artists away. In writing the neighbourhood plan for Bow, we have sought to ensure we value and conserve our rich and diverse heritage, whilst supporting high quality, sustainable development.

## LOCAL CONTEXT

### **2.2 Profile of the community today**

2011 Census data shows the population of Bow East and Bow West wards was 27,720. Projected growth for 2018-2028 for part of Bow East, which includes Fish Island, is over 51%, with a slight fall predicted for most of Bow West. This is because there is little housing development planned in Bow West, while at the same time the average household size of the existing population is expected to fall as the population ages.

#### **2.2.1 Bow West Ward<sup>7</sup>**

41% of residents were Black and Minority Ethnic (BME). This proportion was lower than the borough average of 54%

Residents of Bangladeshi origin accounted for 21% of the population, also a lower proportion than the borough average

The population aged 65 and over was almost 2% higher than the borough average, at 8%, with the under 16's forming 19% of the local population  
33% of the ward's households were owner occupied. As a result, there were a correspondingly lower proportion of households who lived in socially rented accommodation (39%) or privately rented accommodation (28%)

Renters as a whole account for 66% compared to the borough average of 72%

#### **2.2.2 Bow East Ward<sup>8</sup>**

40% of residents in the ward were BME, 14% lower than the borough average of 54%

Residents of Bangladeshi origin accounted for 17% of the population, a lower proportion than the borough average

The population aged 65 and over was almost 1.5% higher than the borough average, at 7.4%, with the under 16's forming 17.5% of the local population, 2% lower than the borough average  
There was a higher than average proportion of socially rented properties and a higher than average proportion of private rented properties in this ward accounting for 73% of all properties in the ward



Fig. 6: Welcome banner outside Chisenhale School

## LOCAL CONTEXT

### **2.3 Opportunities and challenges in Roman Road Bow**

A series of public engagement events run by the Forum Committee in 2018 and presented in more detail in the supporting evidence material, highlighted serious challenges that are described below.

**Comments gathered from a consultation with local communities conducted by the Forum in 2018.  
Roman Road Bow Neighbourhood Plan; report by UCL MSc Spatial Planning students (2019)**

"Significant barrier for pedestrian and cyclist movement to the green space of the Olympic Park and all of its health and leisure facilities."

"Playground is uninspiring. How about improving the playground for the very little ones? Not much for toddlers to play here."

"There is inadequate visitor cycle parking along Roman Road. Adding additional sheffield stands would encourage sustainable transport."

"Protecting current and more green spaces. Planting trees and fruit trees can be helpful."

"Width of pavement adjacent to bus stop on eastern side of Grove Road is far too narrow, when there are many passengers waiting."

"Hostile and unsafe for pedestrians and cyclists with no pedestrian crossing."

"Mile End Park - neglected, unwelcoming."

"Poor streetscape and need more trees on Roman Road.."

"I love the pretty oversized iris on pedestrianised Eden Way. There are other flowers dotted around Bow but this is a favourite. More please!"

## LOCAL CONTEXT

### 2.3.1 The local economy

#### **Opportunities:**

The Roman Road has an historic street market and a number of long established family businesses, shops and eating places. There are also a number of popular pubs such as Eleanor Arms, Lord Tredegar, Morgan Arms, The Coburn and the Palm Tree in Mile End Park.

#### **Challenge:**

There are a substantial number of empty retail units, particularly on Roman Road. Residents have commented on the narrow range of shops, lack of restaurants and almost no evening economy. The historic street market, while popular with some residents, no longer has the wider draw that it used to. Heavy traffic along St Stephen's Road and Tredegar Road discourages people from visiting the area. There are other underused local shopping parades, such as on Malmesbury Road.



Fig. 7: Former Co-op funeral care

### 2.3.2 Transport and connectivity

#### **Opportunities:**

The area has good transport connections, with Mile End and Bow Road tube stations and Bow Church DLR stations on its southern boundary, and is well served by bus routes.

#### **Challenges:**

There are limited cycle routes and cycle parking through the neighbourhood plan area. Many residents highlighted the poor pedestrian and cycle connections, such as Tredegar Road/A12 junction, as barriers to accessing the facilities of the Olympic Park.



Fig. 8: Crown Close pedestrian bridge



## LOCAL CONTEXT

The pedestrian environment is considered poor by many residents, who highlighted speeding commuter traffic, pollution and congestion as issues across the area. The market section of Roman Road is a one-way street on non-market days, making it less attractive for pedestrians.

Mile End and Bow Road underground stations lack step-free access. Fish Island has its own Area Action Plan, which highlights poor connectivity with the surrounding area: "Enhancing connectivity between Fish Island and its surroundings to make a genuinely joined up place in East London will be essential to secure sustainable development and ensure that the communities in Tower Hamlets can enjoy the benefits flowing from the Olympic Legacy and Stratford City developments."<sup>9</sup>



Fig. 9: Traffic congestion on Roman Rd

### 2.3.3 Public realm and green spaces

#### **Opportunities:**

The Neighbourhood Plan Area is bounded by excellent large parks including Victoria Park to the north, Mile End Park to the West and The Olympic Park to the East. The Hertford Union canal runs along the edge of Victoria Park, which links with the Regent's canal that runs along the edge of Mile End Park. All of these provide much appreciated amenity spaces. Bow is privileged to have Growing Concerns garden centre locally, which can assist with the design and planting of gardening projects.

#### **Challenge:**

The maintenance of Mile End Park is under-resourced. There is anti-social behaviour along the canal towpath and in the park. Green spaces in housing estates are often under-used and unloved. Some parts of the area lack any green spaces or trees.



Fig. 10: Wennington Green

## LOCAL CONTEXT

### 2.3.4 Heritage

#### **Opportunities:**

Bow has a wealth of history, including its industrial and suffragette past.

#### **Challenges:**

The fragile character of Roman Road has been eroded in the past by unsympathetic alterations and re-building. Conservation areas sometimes lack detailed guidance over where extensions may be appropriate, including guidance on

form, colour, texture, profile, materials, massing, fenestration, buildings lines, street frontages, scale, proportion and architectural detail.

Heritage assets, such as historic canal bridges, are often poorly maintained with a lack of clarity over who is responsible for them. At the Former Coborn Station on Coborn Road, baffleia overhangs the entrance, and the blue plaque that was above the main entrance, is no longer there.



Fig. 11:The Former Coborn Station, Coborn Road.

### 2.3.6 Housing

#### **Opportunities:**

The fine grain and low-rise character of the area is appreciated by residents, who wish this to be maintained. There is an opportunity for well-designed, small-scale, affordable housing schemes, including community-led developments. These opportunities are more clearly defined below:

To identify and allocate appropriate small sites for well designed, residential developments, and encourage intensification of under-developed and brownfield sites.

To encourage creative design in small-scale housing developments, and to promote a greater variety of housing types which foster community cohesion.

To promote affordable housing suitable for people of all ages and circumstances, helping to build long-term communities, and reducing the transient population.

To promote and prioritise Community-Led Housing, through organisations like the Roman Road Community Land Trust, as a preferred delivery mechanism for affordable housing.

To support low carbon housing.

#### **Challenges:**

There is a lack of genuinely affordable housing, alongside a piecemeal approach to development, including infills. This is due, in part, to the lack of available development sites, and the existing dense urban grain of the area.

Increasing house prices are prohibitive for many, and there is a need for more housing for people on modest incomes and for larger families.

A Housing Needs Assessment for Bow, conducted in March 2020, concluded:

*"Unless there is an increase in the vacancy rate from the existing affordable housing stock, the flow of unmet affordable need is an average of 86 dwellings per annum in Bow East and an average of 97 dwellings per annum in Bow West over the 5-year period to 2024, a total of 183 per annum. The capacity of affordable housing in the wards would need to double in approximate terms to generate sufficient supply on an annual basis to meet this requirement. Nearly half of this requirement would need to be in the form of 1-bedroom flats and apartments. 3 and 4-bedroom affordable homes should also be built in smaller quantities. Building of 2-bedroom homes should be resisted as the existing capacity of 2-bedroom homes in the wards is significantly higher than the requirement."<sup>10</sup>*

## LOCAL CONTEXT

### 2.3.5 Community infrastructure

#### **Opportunity:**

There are several well-loved cultural facilities such as Chisenhale Studios and Bow Arts Trust, and a variety of places of worship, including Bow Church, commissioned in 1311.



Fig. 12: Chisenhale Studios

#### **Challenges:**

Some community facilities are underused, such as the Ecology and Arts Pavilions in Mile End Park. The number of general community spaces and halls is falling due to increasing rents. Out of school children's and youth provision in the area is sparse and patchy. A survey of 54 students at Morpeth School concluded:  
*"Regarding the desire for new facilities, youth clubs were mentioned by 22% of students, contrasting with only 6% saying they attend one. The fact that 65% of students mentioned leisure facilities of some kind demonstrates a clear desire for more or better youth leisure provision."*<sup>11</sup>



Fig. 13: Art Pavilion in Mile End Park

## VISION AND OBJECTIVES FOR ROMAN ROAD

Our vision is for step-by-step improvements led by the community, to protect and enhance a neighbourhood where everyone feels they belong.

We believe that the implementation of the policies and actions in this plan will bring:

- greater flexibility of commercial spaces for different business uses, halting the decline of our high street whilst retaining and diversifying local employment opportunities;
- improvements to walking and cycling routes, creating safer streets and benefitting the health of the local community;
- a friendlier outdoor environment with spaces that are loved by local people, by removing unnecessary street furniture and improving specific open spaces across the neighbourhood;
- new life to the Bow Heritage Trail and protect our public houses and waterway infrastructure, placing the rich history of the area at the heart of future changes
- new homes built by and for the local community, giving residents an affordable choice of continuing to live in the neighbourhood; and
- greater control to the network of community groups who support a wide range of activities in the area allowing them to ensure these activities can flourish and benefit the local community into the future.

Our vision is underpinned by the following six objectives that support the plan policies:

### **Objective 1: Thriving high street and local economy**

Bow neighbourhood offers a wider variety of shops and other amenities. There are fewer vacant units, Roman Road having adapted its offer to reflect the range of different needs of the population, providing a more lively and safe local centre throughout the day and into the evening. Overall, retail is a smaller part in the local economy, the district centre having a broader range of uses and activities, including, the charitable sector, leisure, arts and culture, health and social care services. Modern local landmarks such as Bow House Business Centre are fully occupied, and provide much needed space for businesses and other local groups.

Policy encouraging flexible use of premises

Policy LE1

Site specific action: Bow House Business Centre businesses

Action LE2

Action for support to job seekers and local businesses

Action LE3

### **Objective 2: Green streets that encourage walking and cycling**

By 2031, we have a high quality network of pedestrian and cycle connections and supporting infrastructure such as secure short-term cycle parking. The area is more accessible to get to and move around in. Liveable Neighbourhoods funding has delivered a network of attractive green routes that are safe to use. Instead of driving, people choose to walk and cycle, reducing local traffic volumes, associated air pollution and parking issues.

Policy for improving safe walking and cycling routes

Policy GS1

Actions to improve walking and cycling

Action GS2

### **Objective 3: Beautiful public spaces**

By 2031, investment has transformed the public realm by creating green and de-cluttered local streets. Popular play areas designed to encourage free play and a love of nature now replace previously neglected spaces. The former car park on the corner of Roman Road and St Stephens Road plays a valuable role as a community space. The improved public realm has helped to reduce anti-social behaviour. Residents and businesses are proud of their high quality, litter-free environment - fly-tipping is no longer tolerated following vigorous campaigning and local action by the community.

Policy to enhance public realm spaces

Policy PS1

Policy to designate local green spaces

Action PS2

## VISION AND OBJECTIVES FOR ROMAN ROAD

### **Objective 4: New life for our local heritage**

By 2031, an updated Bow Heritage Trail links historic buildings, parks, galleries, pubs and restaurants, street market and shops along pedestrian friendly routes. Undervalued heritage assets such as the Three Colts and Parnell Road bridges over the Hertford Canal are better conserved. Our precious heritage resource is protected and enhanced to ensure that it continues to be appreciated and enjoyed by future generations.

Policy for Bow Wharf waterway infrastructure conservation and enhancement

Policy HE1

Policy for public houses to become locally designated heritage assets

Policy HE2

Action supporting opportunities for new types of public house

Action HE3

Action for an updated Bow Heritage Trail

Action HE4

### **Objective 5: High Quality, affordable housing**

By 2031, new developments over the last decade are well integrated with existing communities, retaining the character of local neighbourhoods without destroying locally listed assets. A majority of the homes are low carbon homes. Roman Road CLT has pioneered a few affordable and well designed community-led housing schemes around Bow. Incremental, small scale residential projects over time have created a greater variety of housing types. These projects reflect the local housing need and area and successfully promote community cohesion.

Policy on site allocations

Policy H1

Policy supporting community-led housing

Policy H2

Policy on low carbon homes

Policy H3

### **Objective 6: Resilient and well-networked community infrastructure**

By 2031 funding from new developments has enabled the creation of new places for young people to meet and there is an established and financially stable network of community groups running activities and facilities supporting the diverse population in the area. Grassroots organisations, child and youth groups, arts and performance organisations and places of worship are part of a community consortium, working together identifying and agreeing funding opportunities for provision of new or expansion of existing facilities or activities across the Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Policy to develop new and improved sports and play facilities

Policy CF1

Policy to develop new and improved youth facilities and support

Policy CF2

Action to form a consortium of community groups

Action CF4

Action to improve existing community centres

Policy CF3

Action to encourage Community Asset Transfer

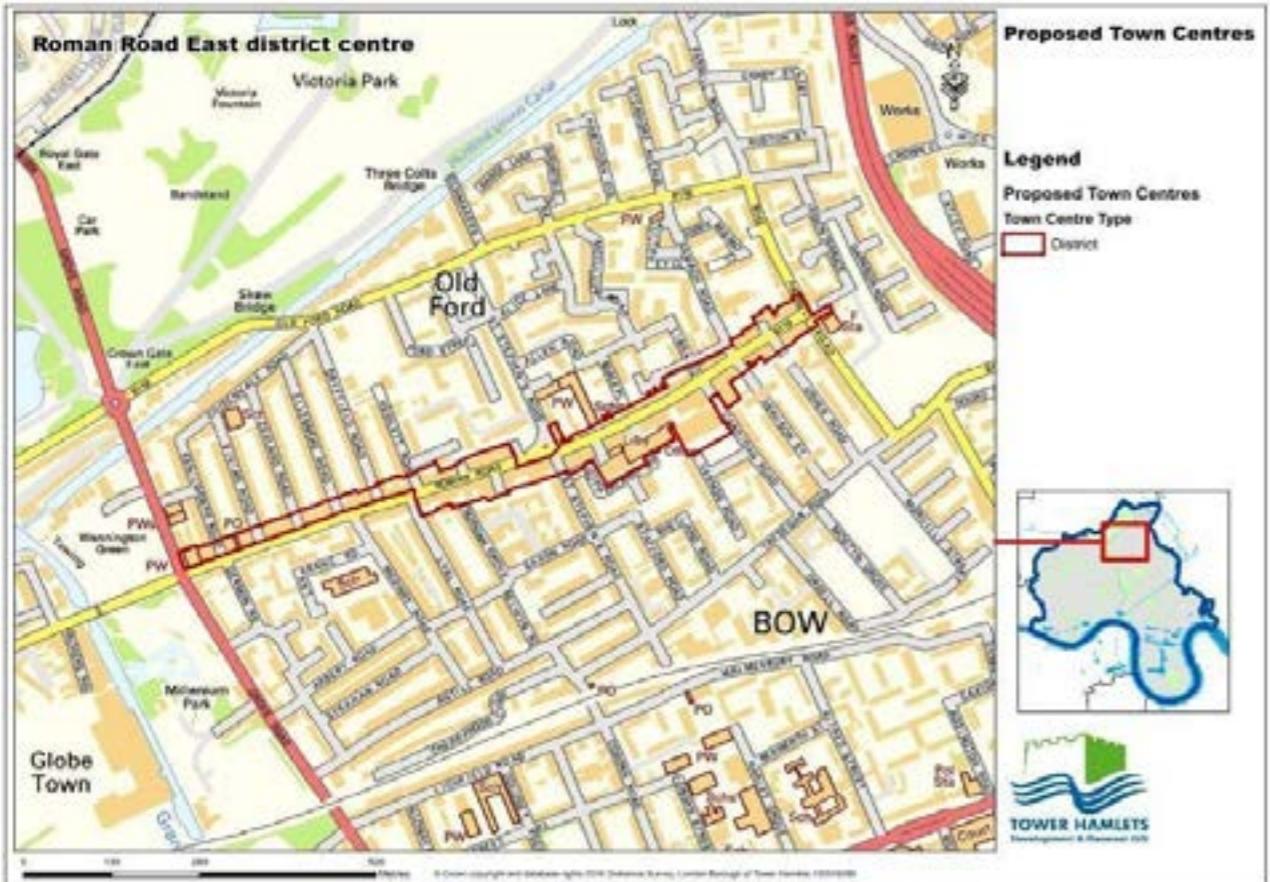
Action CF5

Action to improve accessibility to health and social care facilities

Action CF6

## **OBJECTIVE 1: THRIVING HIGH STREET AND LOCAL ECONOMY**

By 2031, Bow neighbourhood offers a wider variety of shops and other amenities. There are fewer vacant units, Roman Road having adapted its offer to reflect the range of different needs of the population, providing a more lively and safe local centre throughout the day and into the evening. Overall, retail is a smaller part in the local economy, the district centre having a broader range of uses and activities, including, the charitable sector, leisure, arts and culture, health and social care services. Modern local landmarks such as Bow House Business Centre, are fully occupied, and provide much needed space for businesses and other local groups.



### **4.1 Summary of current issues**

Shop units on Roman Road are under-occupied, and many are in poor condition. On 1st November 2019, before the Covid 19 pandemic, 10% of shops (12) in the street market area and 17% (19) of shops between St. Stephen's Road and Grove Road were not in use.<sup>12</sup> High rent and rates make viability for many small businesses difficult. Residents have commented on the narrow range of shops, lack of restaurants and small evening economy.

### **4.2 Policy encouraging flexible use of premises**

#### **4.2.1 Key issue**

High rent and business rates, combined with an over-reliance on retail, duplication of a narrow range of businesses and rigidity in how premises are used, has led to many vacant premises.

#### **4.2.2 Policy**

##### **Policy LE1: Encouraging flexible use of premises**

In order to support the Bow economy, proposals to deliver class E uses that are capable of supporting maker spaces, cultural or leisure activities and social enterprises will be strongly supported. Such proposals must ensure that they do not have a detrimental impact on the amenity of surrounding occupiers, particularly residential occupiers.

#### **4.2.3 Conformity with other policies**

##### **The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) [...] Regulations 2020; clause 7**

Buildings and land previously classed as shops, financial and professional services, restaurants and cafes or businesses will be treated as being used for the single class E, "commercial business and service". When new buildings are built for a use under Use Class E, they need to be constructed with adaptability (in terms of use) in mind.

##### **The London Plan 2020, Policy E3: Affordable Workspace**

This states that "In defined circumstances..., planning obligations may be used to secure affordable workspace (in the B Use Class) at rents maintained below the market rate for that space for a specific social, cultural or economic development purpose..." (page 271)

##### **The London Plan 2020, Policy HC6: Promoting the night-time economy**

The London Plan actively promotes local night-time economies. (page 343)

##### **The London Plan 2020, Policy SD6: Town centres and high streets**

The vitality and viability of London's varied town centres should be promoted and enhanced by: encouraging strong, resilient, accessible and inclusive hubs with a diverse range of uses that meet the needs of Londoners, including main town centre uses, night-time economy, civic, community, social and residential uses.

##### **Tower Hamlets Local Plan 2031, Section 4: Delivering Sustainable Places - Vision for Central**

"By 2031, the distinct character and identity of the Central sub-area will have been enhanced and strengthened. Growth will be focused around vibrant and revitalised town centres and neighbourhood parades, including Roman Road and Mile End town centres. New development will complement the well-established streetscape and character and the area's many heritage assets, and their settings will be preserved or enhanced through opportunities for new heritage-led development." (page 222)

## OBJECTIVE 1: THRIVING HIGH STREET AND LOCAL ECONOMY

### **Tower Hamlets Local Plan 2031, Policy S.EMP1**

"District Centres and larger Neighbourhood Centres also provide opportunities for purpose-built office buildings with ground-floor retail and leisure uses." (page 98)

### **Tower Hamlets Local Plan 2031, Policy S.TC1, Supporting the network and hierarchy of centres**

District Centres, including Roman Road East: "Promote as vibrant hubs containing a wide range of shops, services and employment." Neighbourhood Parades, including Bow Road: "Ensure that Neighbourhood Parades meet the needs of their local catchments and complement the role of other centres further up the hierarchy." (page 110)

### **Tower Hamlets Local Plan 2031, Policy D.TC7 Markets**

"1. Development proposals impacting existing markets will only be supported where:  
a. they demonstrate that the overall quality of the market and public realm will be improved;  
b. the capacity for existing numbers of pitches is maintained, and  
c. they protect or re-provide appropriate storage and servicing facilities.  
2. Proposals for new markets, including farmers' markets and 'streetfood' markets, will be encouraged. They will be directed to Major, District or Neighbourhood

Centres and should enhance the centre's existing offer and contribute to vitality and cohesion." (page 126)

New local planning guidance emphasises the importance of flexible and shared workspaces and affordable workspaces being provided by specialist providers:

#### **Planning Obligations: SPD March 2021**

"Workspace can take a range of forms, such as flexible or shared workspace where tenants have a flexible agreement through a workspace provider. It can also include discounted floorspace for one or more SMEs, or shared industrial workspace for businesses or artists. The Council's preference is for developers to deliver the Affordable Workspace, via a specialist workplace provider...." (page 29, paragraph 5.59)

#### **4.2.4 Justification**

The need for local, flexible and affordable workspace is demonstrated by the Mainyard Studios 2020 application to construct music studios and creative workspace in the garden of 35-37 Bow Road, E3 2AD.<sup>13</sup> The Leaside Area Action Plan (AAP) Policy LS6 states that within the AAP area major developments with workspace should provide 10% of that floorspace as smaller, flexible units of between 25-50sqm that can be aimed at makers, micro-businesses, start-ups, and creative enterprises. The idea of these units is to provide a small, affordable space for local

businesses to be started and to grow, and to encourage quick occupation and ease of access they should be fully fitted out as 'plug and play' units, rather than requiring occupiers to finish the fit-out. This policy will not apply to E-class office uses,....'

#### **House of Commons; High Streets and Town Centres in 2030 (2019)**

This national report identifies major trends that have made it harder for local high streets to thrive, including the growth of online shopping. Four structural issues were identified:

- Too much retail space, with retail acting as the main anchor for many high streets.
- Fragmented ownership, which makes working collectively with local businesses very hard.
- Retailers' high fixed costs: business rates and rents. The retail sector accounts for 5% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and pays 25% of business rates.
- Business taxation. Government action is needed to level the playing field between online and high street retailers.

"Achieving the large-scale structural change needed will require an intervention led by the local authority, using all its powers and backed by cross-sector collaboration. However, given the financial pressure faced by local authorities, central government funding will be needed for this, as well as significant private sector investment." (page 25, paragraph 54)

The **Future High Streets Fund** launched by Central Government in December 2018, is an example of the sort of intervention needed at a national level. The Covid-19 pandemic only

strengthens the case for such National Government intervention, supported by committed, consistent local authority action.

#### **Q Consult Business Survey; Queen Mary College students; December 2019**

A recommendation in the Q Consult report into multiple use-classes was to offer more information to the local community. "The idea of use-classes and multiple use-classes may be new to many businesses on the high street, including those that have operated for a longer period of time. An increase of awareness, as well as an explanation of the benefits of dual use-classes may encourage owners to reconsider. Therefore, raising awareness and giving more information through leaflets, mailing subscriptions, or local meetings should be continued."<sup>14</sup>

### **4.3 Site specific action: Bow House Business Centre**

#### **4.3.1 Key issue**

Tower Hamlets is a popular location for entrepreneurs to establish and grow their businesses. A common factor that restricts local enterprise development is the lack of suitable, affordable workspace and business premises.

## **OBJECTIVE 1: THRIVING HIGH STREET AND LOCAL ECONOMY**

### **4.3.2 Action**

#### **Action LE2: Bow House Business Centre, 153-159 Bow Road E3 2SE**

Planning applications will be encouraged that support Bow House Business Centre as a provider of affordable workspace for local businesses, social enterprises and other organisations.



Fig. 15: Bow House Business Centre

### **4.3.3 Conformity with other policies**

#### **The London Plan 2020, Policy E3: Affordable Workspace**

"In defined circumstances, planning obligations may be used to secure affordable workspace at rents maintained below the market rate for that space for a specific social, cultural or economic development purpose. Such circumstances include workspace that is:

1. dedicated for specific sectors that have social value such as charities or social enterprises
2. dedicated for specific sectors that

have cultural value such as artists' studios and designer-maker spaces  
 3. dedicated for disadvantaged groups starting up in any sector  
 4. providing educational outcomes through connections to schools, colleges or higher education  
 5. supporting start-up businesses or regeneration." (para. A; page 271)

### **4.3.4 Justification**

Tower Hamlets Affordable Workspace Evidence Base – policy review, February 2018

"Based on the above review of existing evidence-base documents, there is demand for affordable workspace throughout the borough and the proposed 10% reduction of market rent on 10% of office floorspace is viable ." (page 18, paragraph 3.7)

**Bow House Business Centre** planning history: The 1930s former Poplar Town Hall was granted Listed Building Status (grade II) in 2009. The site also falls within a Conservation Area. It has over 40,000 square feet of space over four floors.

The London Plan E3 policy states particular consideration should be given to the need for affordable workspace in several circumstances, including 'in locations where the provision of affordable workspace would be necessary or desirable to sustain a mix of business or cultural uses which contribute to the character of an area.' (E3 paragraph B)

'It can be provided directly by a public, charitable or other

supporting body; through grant and management arrangements (for example through land trusts); and/or secured permanently by planning or other agreements.' (6.3.1)

### **4.4 Action for support to job seekers and local businesses**

#### **4.4.1 Key issue**

**Trust for London** data on poverty and inequality in Tower Hamlets, reported that in October 2020 figures showed an unemployment rate of 6%, and that "The child poverty rate is the highest of all the London boroughs, with 57% of children judged to be living in households in poverty, compared to 38% in the typical London borough."<sup>16</sup>

#### **Tower Hamlets Growth and Economic Development Plan 2018-2023**

Priority 3 describes the challenge of creating the conditions for business growth: "Tower Hamlets has a strong economy but it is very much polarised between very large firms and small businesses. Providing the support and opportunity for small firms to grow can create more skilled and semi-skilled roles that allow hard working people with a variety of talents to earn a living wage." (Page 24)

#### **4.4.2 Action**

#### **Action LE3: Sustained support for job seekers and local businesses**

The Neighbourhood Forum supports the continued funding of programmes such as WorkPath, Young WorkPath and the Education Business Partnership to help local residents get work-ready and find jobs, and the Enterprise team's Ready programme to help businesses start, grow and reach new markets. Targeted support is needed for charities, voluntary and

community organisations and social enterprises.

The Forum supports the strengthening of links between local employers and secondary schools, such as:

- Mulberry UTC, which has established partnerships with larger employers,
- Bow School, which encourages enterprise learning,
- Central Foundation Girls' School, which actively support all students to plan for their futures after leaving school.

There are opportunities for work experience and employment to be developed, especially for students wanting to stay local and pursue more practical training and employment.

Apprenticeship schemes need to be expanded, enabling small businesses to offer these. Training is largely government funded, with businesses contributing 5% of the overall training costs. New City College in Tower Hamlets and Hackney offer a wide range of apprenticeship training opportunities.

### **4.4.3 Conformity with local policy**

#### **Planning Obligations: SPD March 2021**

"Tower Hamlets has an above average unemployment level within Greater London, with a very low proportion of Tower Hamlets' residents finding employment within the borough. Employment opportunities from new developments must be accompanied by training to upskill residents so that they can compete for the jobs." (paragraph 5.43)

"The Council will seek to ensure that jobs are provided for local people, both in the construction phase of development and by the

## **OBJECTIVE 1: THRIVING HIGH STREET AND LOCAL ECONOMY**

end users / tenants (in commercial developments). To enable local people to benefit from development growth the Council has introduced a number of programmes, working with partners to support job brokerage, employer-led training, construction skills training, apprenticeships, and job opportunities. The Council will support and encourage London Living Wage to be paid where possible for employment, skills, training and enterprise obligations." (paragraph 5.44)

### **Tower Hamlets Growth and Economic Development Plan 2018-2023**

"We will ensure all working age residents in the borough get the best possible outcomes in terms of their jobs and careers – by looking where we can complement and strengthen existing ongoing projects such as WorkPath." (page 5)

#### **4.4.4 Justification**

##### **Tower Hamlets Council website, business and enterprise page**

"Tower Hamlets has a thriving economy worth £6bn per annum that provides almost 1.4 jobs for every working-age resident of the borough. The enterprise economy is one of the most significant contributors to this growth and performance. The borough has experienced enormous economic growth over the last few

decades, increasing employment levels by 60 per cent and giving Tower Hamlets the fifth highest job density in London."<sup>17</sup>

Many businesses have been hit hard by the pandemic, and the work of the Tower Hamlets Council Enterprise team and other sources of help to local businesses and social enterprises are needed more than ever.

Tower Hamlets Work Path is a unique employment service for all Tower Hamlets residents, providing support for people at all levels of work, skill or experience.

Council initiatives such as Workpath and Young Workpath will continue to be vital to ensure the potential of local people is nurtured and people are equipped for new opportunities that will arise as the economy recovers.

#### **4.5 Action for local cross-sector collaboration**

##### **4.5.1 Key issue**

Many people lack the knowledge and skills to enter or move on in employment, and face challenging personal circumstances. A comprehensive, integrated network of support is vital to enable people to take advantage of the many opportunities for training and employment.

##### **4.5.2 Action**

##### **Action LE4: Local cross-sector collaboration**

The Neighbourhood Forum supports a sustained cross-departmental approach by the Council, linking economic development, regeneration and environmental improvements, and partnerships in Bow across public, private and voluntary sectors. This is aimed at facilitating inclusive growth and economic and community development.

##### **4.5.3 Conformity with local policy Tower Hamlets Growth and Economic Development Plan 2018-2023**

"We believe that 'inclusive growth' is the way forward to address the challenges and opportunities ahead. It is an absolute necessity to achieve greater prosperity, independence and access to opportunities for all our residents." (Page 4)

"This plan is being developed in parallel with the Tower Hamlets Regeneration Strategy, which will take an overview of the borough's development as a place to live and work. Complementing the Regeneration Strategy's focus on place, this Growth plan looks at thematic interventions to help people and businesses across the borough succeed." (Page 5)

"It goes without saying the council cannot deliver inclusive growth alone. We will therefore involve, engage and seek views from our communities, to ensure that residents can take advantage of opportunities and investments whilst working with our partners to make this a reality." (Page 6)

##### **4.5.4 Justification**

##### **House of Commons; High Streets and Town Centres in 2030 (2019)**

The report identifies major trends that have made it harder for local high streets to thrive. Its recommendations included: "Achieving the large-scale structural change needed will require an intervention led by the local authority, using all its powers and backed by cross-sector collaboration. However, given the financial pressure faced by local authorities, central government funding will be needed for this, as well as significant private sector investment." (page 3)

## **OBJECTIVE 2: GREEN STREETS THAT ENCOURAGE WALKING AND CYCLING**

By 2031, we have a high quality network of pedestrian and cycle connections and supporting infrastructure such as secure short-term cycle parking. The area is more accessible to get to and move around in. Liveable Neighbourhoods funding has delivered a network of attractive green routes that are safe to use. Instead of driving, people choose to walk and cycle, reducing local traffic volumes, associated air pollution and parking issues.

### **5.1 Summary of current issues**

People are discouraged from walking and cycling in the area because most routes are along busy main roads that are dangerous, and with high levels of air pollution. It is likely that more people would walk and cycle if there were attractive routes through green areas away from main routes.

### **5.2 Policy for improving safe walking and cycling routes**

#### **5.2.1 Key issue**

The high volume of commuter and local traffic produces air pollution and discourages walking and cycling. There is a lack of connected safe cycling and walking routes and infrastructure.

#### **5.2.2 Policy**

##### **Policy GS1: Improving safe walking and cycling routes**

Development is required to enhance the pedestrian and cyclist experience

by improving pavements, cycle routes, cycle storage, access through public spaces and wayfinding, particularly along routes away from busy main roads and key routes in support of School Streets. This shall be achieved, where appropriate, by:

1. Contributions to the improvement of existing cycle lanes and paths.
2. Contributions to the provision of safe and well designated cycle routes, including Grove Road, Tredegar Road, Old Ford Road, Parnell Road and Roman Road.
3. Contributions to the provision of new cycle lanes and paths within and across the development site
4. Contributions to the provision of new public cycle stands across Roman Road Bow, including for non-standard cycles and cargo bikes along Roman Road.
5. The provision of appropriate cycle storage in residential and commercial development.
6. The provision of convenient, safe and well-signed footways designed to appropriate widths - a minimum of 1.5m. This might require frontages of developments to be set back from the plot edge where existing pavement widths are appropriate.
7. Other features associated with pedestrian access, to the development where needed, including seating for pedestrians and signage
8. The provision of safe road crossings where needed
9. The provision of bus stops, shelters, passenger seating and waiting areas, signage and timetable information where needed

#### **2. Increasing accessibility**

Developments are to reduce street clutter, and show consideration for accessibility, including dropped kerbs and tactile paving, and clear routes through the public realm. This is particularly important along key routes to and from Roman Road, including from Grove Road and St Stephen's Road.

**3. Blue badge parking.** Developments should ensure Blue Badge parking provision is maintained. Loss of Blue Badge parking or changes to the highway that remove black taxi access will not be supported.



Fig. 16: Proposed improvements to new and existing cycle network in Bow.

#### **5.2.3 Conformity with other policies**

##### **Mayor's Transport Strategy, March 2018; Chapter 2: The vision - policy 1**

This Neighbourhood Plan is in line with the Mayor of London's Transport Strategy and approach to Healthy Streets. This framework aims to improve air quality, reduce congestion and help make London's diverse communities greener, healthier and more attractive places to live, work, play and do business. These have a central aim "...for 80 per cent of all trips in London to be made on foot,

by cycle or using public transport by 2041." (page 21)

##### **Mayor's Transport Strategy, March 2018; Chapter 3: Healthy Streets and healthy people - policy 2**

The best way to get more people out walking and cycling is to improve the quality of the experience of being on our streets, including for disabled residents, and to discourage car use, in order that "...by 2041, all Londoners do at least the 20 minutes of active travel they need to stay healthy each day." (page 49)

## **OBJECTIVE 2: GREEN STREETS THAT ENCOURAGE WALKING AND CYCLING**

### **Tower Hamlets - A Cycling Borough; chapter 2, paragraph 2.1**

"We want Tower Hamlets to be one of the easiest and safest places to cycle in London and to make cycling the natural choice of transport for most people. A Cycling Borough means:

- a healthier population;
- a less congested road network;
- and a more prosperous place."

(page 3)

### **Spatial Planning and Health - Tower Hamlets Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, November 2016**

Recommendation six states that: "Pedestrians, cyclists, and users of other transport that involve physical activity need the highest priority when developing or maintaining streets and roads. This can mean reallocating road space to support walking and cycling, restricting motor vehicle access, introducing road-user charging and traffic-calming schemes, and creating safe routes to schools and childcare settings." (page 1)

### **Tower Hamlets Local Plan 2031, Policy S.DH1, Delivering high quality design**

"Development must [...] create well-connected, inclusive and integrated spaces and buildings which can be easily adaptable to different uses and the changing needs of users." (page 44, para f)

### **Tower Hamlets Local Plan 2031, policy D.TR3 Parking and permit-free**

'3. Development is required to prioritise sustainable approaches to any parking through ensuring:  
a. Priority is given to space for cycle parking .....

e. Where suitable, publicly-accessible shared cycle hire scheme docking station(s) are provided as part of the development (or through a financial contribution).'

### **Central Area Good Growth SPD August 2021**

Design principle 8: Developments should integrate bin and bike storage into the layout and design of the building.

### **Liveable Streets Bow, results booklet; Tower Hamlets Council**

More than 2,100 people responded to the 18 months of community engagement on proposals for improving road safety and air quality. 70% of respondents in Bow backed plans for timed restrictions for motor vehicles around Roman Road Market, schools and residential roads to reduce the 16,000 vehicles cutting through the area each day without stopping.

### **Liveable Streets Bow, Consultation outcome report; Tower Hamlets Council; 25 Nov 2020**

In November 2020 the Council cabinet approved the final scheme design, whilst requesting an additional report on the details of the proposed bus gates, and the devising of a scheme to exempt blue badge holders: "The objectives are to be achieved through a combination of footway improvements, road closures, improvement of shared public spaces, greening and safety improvements."<sup>18</sup> The implementation of these improvements will go some

way to making it easier to walk and cycle around the neighbourhood, by creating improved walking routes, public space and reducing rat-running traffic. They will also reduce local pollution levels, supporting the overarching London strategy of encouraging more trips to be taken on foot or by bike.

### **High Density Living Supplementary Planning Document; Tower Hamlets Council Dec 2020 Design guideline AB.5**

"Public realm, including streets, should be designed to prioritise the pedestrians and, where appropriate, cyclists. The public realm should also encourage incidental play." (page 68)

### **5.2.4 Justification**

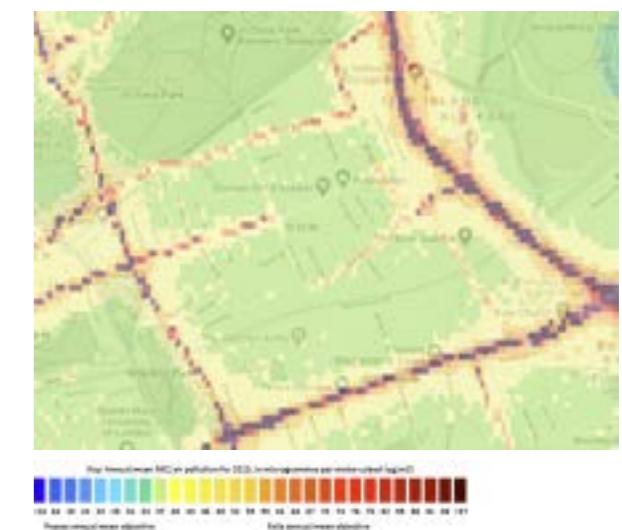
#### **Air Pollution**

A number of news articles in The Guardian from 2018 and 2019 provided evidence of the negative impacts of air pollution on our mental and physical health. As well as discouraging visitors and healthy activity, air pollution from vehicles<sup>19</sup> has significant adverse effects on local residents in the form of nitrogen dioxide, which is known to shorten lives and reduce the quality of life for tens of thousands of people. In recent studies it has also been linked to health problems from dementia<sup>20</sup> to heart disease<sup>21</sup> and miscarriage<sup>22</sup>. Children are most at risk: exposure to air pollution when young can have lifelong effects as it can stunt the lungs and affect intelligence<sup>23</sup>.

Dangerous levels of air pollution "made a material contribution" to the death of nine-year-old Ella Kissi-Debrah in London in 2013, a coroner ruled in December 2020, following a second inquest into the child's death.<sup>24</sup>

### **Monitoring Air Quality in Tower Hamlets, 2018, Final project report**

Local monitoring as shown in Figure 9 on page 15, and on the map in appendix 1, page 25, highlights high levels of air pollution along Grove Road, Roman Road and Tredegar Road (as well as at the edges of the planning area on Mile End Road and near the A12). Spot monitoring (Station ID 45) has shown that the junction of Tredegar Road and St Stephen's Road has consistently been above the annual mean safe limit of 40ug/m<sup>3</sup> of Nitrogen Dioxide since 2016.



## **OBJECTIVE 2: GREEN STREETS THAT ENCOURAGE WALKING AND CYCLING**

### **Tower Hamlets Green Grid Strategy: Update 2017; Section 3 - Opportunities to enhance the Green Grid**

"There is a lack of connectivity to a number of community facilities, including schools, transport hubs and open spaces." (page 20, para 3.5)

Three schools in the NPA and all three tube/DLR stations that serve the area are not connected.

Local children at Malmesbury, Olga and Chisenhale schools have produced a banner asking to lower pollution levels around their schools.

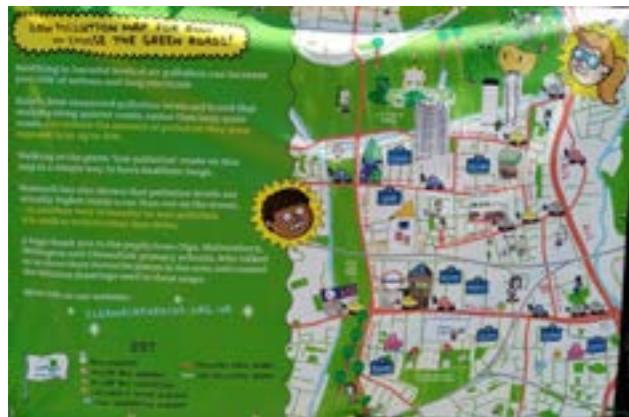


Fig. 18: Low Pollution Banner produced by local primary schools

### **Busy and Dangerous Roads**

Currently, people are discouraged from walking and cycling in the NPA because most routes are along busy main roads that are dangerous and with high levels of air pollution. 66% of local residents want less traffic and 51% want better footways. It is likely that more people would walk and cycle if there were attractive routes through green areas away from main

routes. This could also bring more people into the area to visit local businesses.

### **Liveable Streets Bow, results booklet; Tower Hamlets Council**

Approximately 49% of traffic in the neighbourhood between 6am and 8pm on weekdays is rat-running - the equivalent of over 13,000 non-resident vehicle journeys a day.

### **Transport for London, London Collision Map**

TfL data<sup>25</sup> shows that in the last three years there have been over 100 collisions involving pedestrians or cyclists (nearly all caused by cars) in Tower Hamlets. This has included multiple fatalities. As well as the A11, accident black spots include Grove Road, Roman Road and Tredegar Road. All these roads in the NPA are also used for rat running.

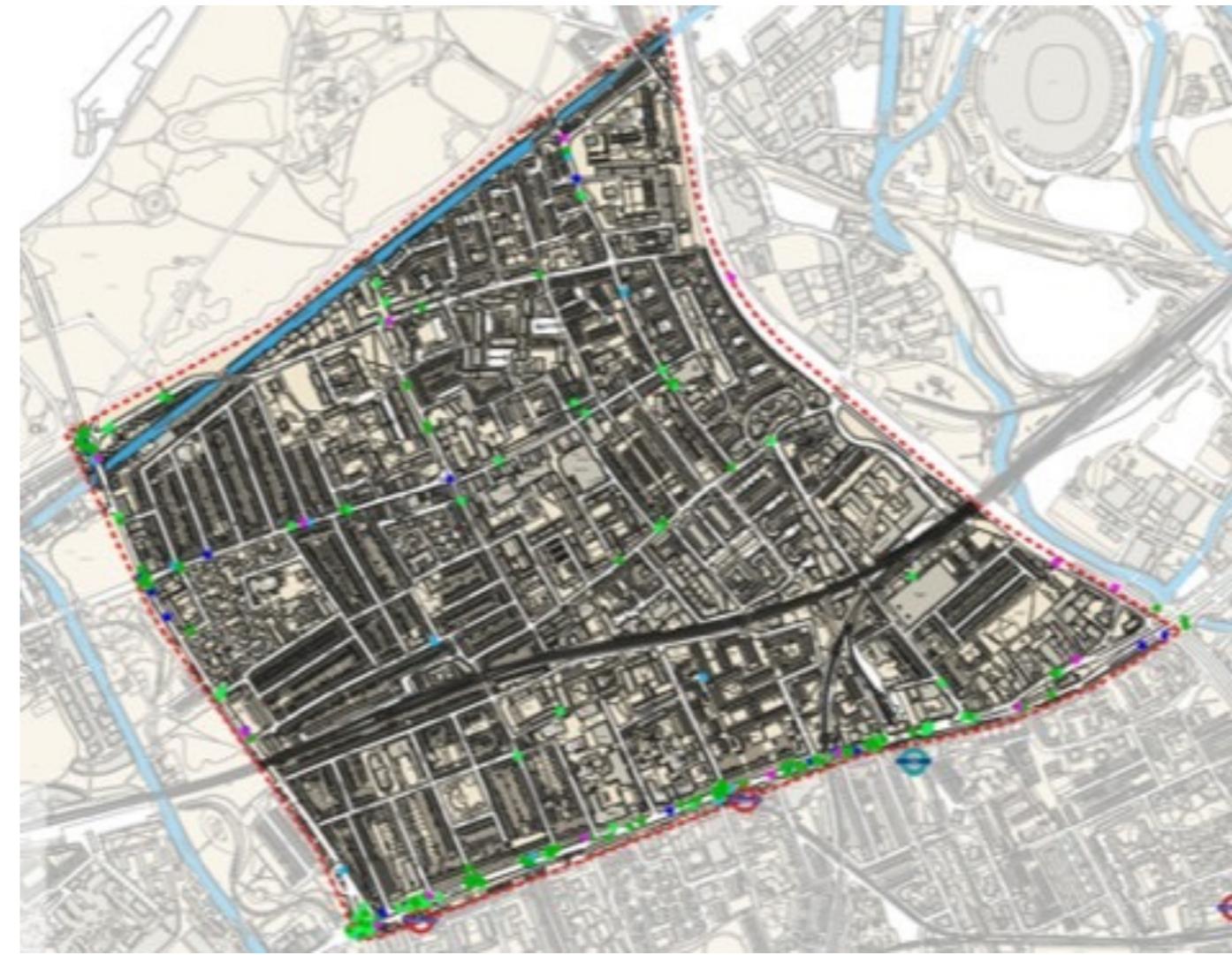


Fig. 19: Transport for London, London Collision Map

### **Bike Life 2019, Tower Hamlets; Sustrans study**

The study found 48% of residents don't cycle (or cycle less) because they are concerned about safety. (page 12)

### **Accessibility Low Traffic Neighbourhoods; Transport for London; September 2020**

London's streets need to be welcoming to ensure that our communities prosper. According

to the Mayor's Low Traffic Neighbourhoods study, 65% of disabled Londoners consider the condition of pavements to be a barrier to walking (page 9).

## **OBJECTIVE 2: GREEN STREETS THAT ENCOURAGE WALKING AND CYCLING**

### **Difficulty of walking and cycling around the area**

**Bike Life 2019, Tower Hamlets; Sustrans study**

The study found security is an issue with 1,536 reported cycle thefts in 2018/19, which is one theft per 47 owners. There is also only one cycle parking space per nine resident cycle owners. This is particularly an issue in the neighbourhood with large numbers of people living in flats. (page 13)

76% of people overall think space should be increased for people socialising, cycling and walking on their local high street and 47% think more cycling would make their area a better place to live and work. (page 5)

According to Transport For All, 81% of disabled people polled felt concerned that the 'new normal' would be inaccessible to them. Barriers such as the lack of dropped kerbs, inconsistent tactile paving, uneven or steep pavements, potholes and tree roots, street clutter and bollards, make the streets difficult to traverse for disabled individuals.

Concern for personal safety is highlighted by a local petition to stop mopeds and motorised scooters riding through the pedestrian walkway at Tom Thumb's Arch.<sup>26</sup>

### **5.3 Actions to improve walking and cycling**

#### **Action GS2: To improve safe walking and cycling**

The following are considered to be

priority actions to improve safe walking and cycling:

- **Improving safe walking and cycling routes:**
  - a. Improvement of public routes to Roman Road and Victoria Park, in line with the UCL MSc Spatial Planning student study, including on Wennington Green and through Tom Thumb's Arch.
  - b. Provision of quiet cycle routes connecting to the strategic London network, including a high quality route along Grove Road.
  - c. Improved connection to Fish Island and the Olympic Park to give Bow residents better access to the East Bank and the new buildings of the UCL campus, V&A, Sadler's Wells Theatre, BBC music studios, and London College of Fashion.
- **Making streets safer for children:**
  - a. Support applications for School Streets for all schools in the area, where these restrict motorised vehicle access at drop-off and pick-up times.
  - b. Work with developers and the highway authority to ensure accessible footways of an appropriate width outside of new developments.
- **Step-free access at Mile End:**

Encourage LBTH and Transport for London to work together to ensure step-free access at Mile End underground is included in TFL's step-free programme.

#### **5.3.1 Conformity with other policies**

The action is consistent with policies cited above: the Mayor of London's



Fig. 20: Proposed School Streets

## **OBJECTIVE 2: GREEN STREETS THAT ENCOURAGE WALKING AND CYCLING**

Transport Strategy March 2018,  
Tower Hamlets - A Cycling Borough;  
chapter 2, paragraph 2.1 and High  
Density Living Supplementary Planning  
Document; Tower Hamlets Council  
Design guideline AB.5

### **London Underground, Making rail accessible: helping older and disabled passengers**

'Policy summary. London Underground is committed to helping all our customers travel more easily. This includes: Improving physical access to and within our stations and trains, including making more stations step-free.' (page 4)

#### **5.3.2 Justification**

##### **Green Spaces and Connectivity: Roman Road Bow Neighbourhood Plan; report by UCL MSc Spatial Planning students (2019)<sup>27</sup>**

The students drafted policy proposals and proposed an implementation plan for open spaces and improved walking and cycle routes in the NPA, based on a detailed study of the spatial characteristics of the open spaces and movement networks. The students highlighted current priority pedestrian and cycle routes through the NPA.

The most used pedestrian routes connect the transport hubs of Mile End and Bow Road stations into the NPA, through to Roman Road and Victoria Park using bottlenecks under the railway such as Tom Thumb's Arch.

For cyclists the key routes are off CS2 (particularly along Grove Road) and east-west along Roman Road and Tredegar Road. These also correlate to dangerous routes. Mile End Park and the Regent's Canal towpath were also identified as important cycle routes.

##### **Fish Island Area Action Plan; Tower Hamlets Council; September 2012; chapter 3 - Connecting Fish Island**

The proposals to improve connectivity to Fish Island and the Olympic Park, addressing the current challenges highlighted in the AAP on page 32, para 3.3, could give Bow residents better access to the East Bank, the emerging cultural and educational district where major institutions such as UCL, the V&A and Sadler's Wells Theatre are building new facilities.

##### **Towards child friendly local high street - developing an analytical framework; MSc Dissertation by Gargi Roy<sup>28</sup>**

In 2018/19, MSc Spatial Planning students studied the Roman Road Bow NPA and some used the evidence they gathered as the basis for their dissertations. Gargi Roy's MSc Dissertation found that many footways were overly narrow and there was often unnecessary street furniture and buildup of litter.

Mile End is a strategic central location in the borough, and is served by the Central, District, and Hammersmith and City tube lines. The lack of step-free access is a major barrier for the less

mobile. Transport for London's plans<sup>29</sup> up to 2024 do not include step-free access for Mile End underground station.

In 2016, the issue was raised by a student who is a wheelchair user from nearby Queen Mary College. She gained 1,500 signatures for a petition in support of step-free access.<sup>30</sup>

In 2019, a local campaign for lift access<sup>31</sup> was started by a Tower Hamlets local ward councillor. Stuart Wilson, marketing and communications coordinator for Ability Bow, a local inclusive community gym, said: "Acceptable access for vulnerable people is obviously really important." A lift in the busy interchange station "could really help somebody with severe complexities, disabilities or long-term health conditions." He warned that without the lift, climbing Mile End tube station's 45 steps would leave someone with a heart condition seriously out of breath, and would be dangerous for someone with limited sight or hearing.

## OBJECTIVE 3: BEAUTIFUL PUBLIC SPACES

By 2031, investment has transformed the public realm by creating green and de-cluttered local streets. Popular play areas designed to encourage free play and a love of nature now replace former neglected spaces. The former car park on the corner of Roman Road and St Stephens Road plays a valuable role as a community space. The improved public realm has helped to reduce anti-social behaviour. Residents and businesses are proud of their high quality, litter-free environment - fly-tipping is no longer tolerated following vigorous campaigning and local action by the community.

### **6.1 Summary of current Issues**

Existing public spaces are often dirty, cluttered and of poor quality. The borough's rising population and demand for housing mean there are limited opportunities to create new open spaces. Cuts in Council budgets makes maintaining public spaces challenging.

### **6.2 Policy to enhance public realm spaces**

#### **6.2.1 Key Issue**

Inadequate provision for recreation and play on local housing estates, and the unattractiveness of open spaces along the Roman Road, Mile End Road and Bow Road.

#### **6.2.2 Policy**

##### **Policy PS1: Enhancing public realm spaces**

Proposals to enhance existing public spaces will be supported where they address the following specific needs :

Improved provision for recreation and play on housing estates at;

- Lawrence Close E3 2AS
- Heylyn Square E32DW
- Rectangular paved area with hedges at foot of Wilmer House, Daling Way E3 5NW
- Tarmac square outside Forth House E3 2HQ
- Sutherland Road football court (to become a multi-use court) and adjacent children's play space to be re-designed. E35HG

All proposals will be expected to accompany such provision with high quality landscaping.

Public realm improvements through parklets or similar environmental measures at:

- Pavement at entrance to Lanfranc Estate on Roman Road, E3 5QP
- Ford Close off Roman Road E3 5LX
- Ford Road off Roman Road E3 5JN (outside Common Room)
- Pavement outside Territorial Army base at Mile End E3 4PD
- Corner of Bow Road and Alfred Street E3 2AD



Fig. 21: Public realm spaces map

#### **Enhancing public realm spaces**

Improved provision for recreation and play

- 1 Lawrence Close E3 2AS
- 2 Heylyn Square E32DW

- 3 Wilmer House, Daling Way E3 5NW
- 4 Forth House E3 2HQ
- 5 Sutherland Road E35HG

Public realm improvements

- 6 Lanfranc Estate E3 5QP
- 7 Ford Close E3 5LX & E3 5JN
- 8 Basilica Place E3 4EL
- 9 Territorial Army E3 4PD
- 10 Corner of Bow Road and Alfred Street E3 2AD

## OBJECTIVE 3: BEAUTIFUL PUBLIC SPACES

### **6.2.3 Conformity with other policies**

#### **Potential sites for improved spaces for play and recreation; Roman Road Bow Neighbourhood Forum<sup>32</sup>**

This supporting document lists Council owned open spaces in the NPA, showing photos of proposed sites for parklets, and includes proposed tree types.

#### **Tower Hamlets Green Grid Strategy: Update 2017; Appendices Adapted opportunities from 2010 Green Grid Strategy**

Section 6, Roman Road: "There is some unused space on the wider pavements, which could be used to create additional seating and associated landscaping including planters, street trees and pocket parks, as well as better signposting the rest of the Borough and city from here, so it does not feel so isolated. The area has a rich history particularly as the Suffragette heartland, which could be better celebrated through public realm interventions including art and community events." (page 20)

#### **Roman Road Market Conservation Area, Tower Hamlets Council, 2009**

"Despite recent improvements, there is still potential for the general quality of the landscaping in the street to be improved, and the area could benefit from a public realm strategy to coordinate physical features with management procedures. The fragile character of Roman Road has been eroded in the past by unsympathetic

alterations and re-building, and further attrition of this character must be prevented." (page 11)

### **6.2.4 Justification**

#### **Roman Road Bow Neighbourhood Planning, Engagement Report, April 2018**

In the consultation, one person identified 'parklets'<sup>33</sup> as a good idea for improving public spaces.

"New developments along the canal do not have much green space - new developments that come forward should have a certain specified minimum amount of green space, especially if they create new walking routes through."

#### **Green Spaces and Connectivity: Roman Road Bow Neighbourhood Plan; report by UCL MSc Spatial Planning students (2019)<sup>34</sup>**

The neighbourhood plan project by Spatial Planning students at University College London summarised the Forum's community engagement findings as: "A desire to protect and enhance the built environment, improve green spaces and under-used public spaces and strengthen community-led initiatives... are part of this consensus. These are themes that we can build upon as we develop policies and projects for our neighbourhood plan." (Page 25)

"A review conducted by 'Tower Hamlets Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee' and 'Tower Hamlets

Homes Residents Panel' demonstrated that the open spaces in areas of social housing across Tower Hamlets are currently underused. Both Malmesbury estate and the areas of social housing to the east of St Stephen's Road currently have small green spaces that are underused. Furthermore, the consultations held by the forum highlighted the need for additional play spaces across both these areas. Therefore, there is a need to encourage social landlords to better utilise these green spaces through small scale interventions." (page 38, para 6.2.1)

"Smaller play areas for younger children offer another method to revitalise the existing green spaces. Additionally, the football court on Sutherland Road is limited and currently requires improvements. This should be replaced with a multi-use court to facilitate a variety of sports for both children and adults. These initiatives will provide additional play space for children of different age groups; encouraging social interaction and achieving health and wellbeing benefits." (page 38, para 6.2.1)

## **6.3 Policy to designate Local Green Spaces**

### **6.3.1 Key Issue**

There is a need to protect and preserve small green spaces for enjoyment by both people and wildlife that otherwise could be encroached on by development.

### **6.3.2 Policy**

#### **Policy PS2: Designating Local Green Spaces**

The following are designated as Local Green Spaces:

- Daling Way, E3 5NB;
- Holy Trinity Churchyard, Morgan St, E3 5AT.
- Lockton Green, Ruston St, E3 2LP
- Matilda Gardens E3 2GS,
- Trellis Square E3 2DR 39
- Brodick House E3 5HH
- Roman Road Adventure Playground, 48 Hewlett Road, Bow, London, E3 5NA.
- Wennington Green, Junction of Roman Rd and Grove Rd E3 5TG

Managing development on a Local Green Space should be consistent with national planning policy for Green Belts. Proposals for built development on Local Green Spaces will not be permitted unless it can be clearly demonstrated that it is required to enhance the role and function of that Local Green Space or that very special circumstances exist, for example where it is essential to meet specific necessary utility infrastructure and no feasible alternative site is available.

## OBJECTIVE 3: BEAUTIFUL PUBLIC SPACES



Fig. 22: Publicly accessible open spaces map

### LOCAL GREEN SPACES

Spaces listed in Tower Hamlets' Parks and Open Space Strategy 2017-27

1. Four Seasons Green  
Caxton Grove E3 2AX

2. Garrison Road Legion Terrace  
(Lefevre Park) E3 2EY

3. Gladstone Place  
E3 5EU

4. Grand Union Canal  
(Regent's Canal) E3 5BE

5. Grove Hall Park  
E3 2QA

6. Harley Grove  
E3 2AH

7. Harley Square  
E3 2AT

8. Hertford Union Canal  
E3 5SB

9. Mile End Park  
E3 4QY

10. Roman Road Market  
E3 5JL

11. Selwyn Green  
E3 5EA

12. St Stephen's Road  
(St. Stephen's Green) E3 5JU

13. St. Mary Bow  
E3 3AH

14. Tredegar Square  
E3 5EA

15. Daling Way  
E3 5NB



Lockton Green  
Ruston St, E3 2LP

16. Holy Trinity Churchyard  
Morgan St, E3 5AT



Matilda Gardens  
E3 2GS

18.

19. Trellis Square  
E3 2DR



Roman Rd Adventure Playground  
48 Hewlett Road, Bow, London, E3 5NA

21.

20. Brodick House  
E3 5HH



Wennington Green  
Junction of Roman Rd and Grove Rd, E3 5TG

22.

## **OBJECTIVE 3: BEAUTIFUL PUBLIC SPACES**

Fig. 22a: Conservation areas in Bow

### **6.3.3 Conformity with other policies**

#### **National Planning Policy Framework**

**2019**

"The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services.

Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period." (page 31, para 99)

"The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:

a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;

b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and  
c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land." (page 31, para 100)

#### **Tower Hamlets Local Plan 2031, Policy D.DH2: Attractive streets, spaces and public realm**

"Development is required to contribute to improving and enhancing connectivity, permeability and legibility across the borough, ensuring a well-connected, joined-up and easily accessible street network and wider network of public spaces through:  
a) improving connectivity to public transport hubs, town centres, open spaces, water spaces, social and community facilities and surrounding areas

b) maintaining existing public routes or appropriately re-providing access routes during the construction phases of new development, and  
c) incorporating the principles of 'secured by design' to improve safety and perception of safety for pedestrians and other users." (page 46, para 1)

#### **Tower Hamlets' Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2017-27**

Bow West is forecast to have a 'moderate' deficiency of open space in 2031. The strategy states that: "It is expected that new publicly accessible open space will be owned and maintained by the respective land owners, with public access to the space secured through legal agreements as part of the planning process. Such an approach will secure new publicly accessible open space whilst recognising the council's financial position in years to come. Legal agreements will be required to secure the widest possible access to these new spaces." (page 82)

#### **Green Spaces and Connectivity: Roman Road Bow Neighbourhood Plan; report by UCL MSc Spatial Planning students (2019)**

The study identified the following objectives to protect, enhance and create green spaces through site-specific interventions:

- To improve the health and well-being of residents and the environment.
- To revitalise green spaces which are currently underused.
- To increase the number of green spaces in the neighbourhood by adding green infrastructure where desirable and feasible.
- To protect the existing green spaces from damage or loss through development and to grasp development opportunities and funding to enhance the quality of green spaces.

The study highlighted the opportunity for revitalising Wennington Green, stating: "The site lacks permeability and maintenance but has potential to attract visitors due to its location on the high street and its proximity to Victoria Park." (page 40, para 6.2.2)

A planting intervention is proposed as a means to improve this open space.

#### **6.3.4 Justification**

All the designated Local Green Spaces are near to those who benefit from them, special to local residents and small in size, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework. Detailed evidence for each space is provided in **Potential sites for improved spaces for play and recreation; Roman Road Bow Neighbourhood Forum<sup>35</sup>**

## **OBJECTIVE 4: NEW LIFE FOR OUR LOCAL HERITAGE**

By 2031, an updated Bow Heritage Trail links historic buildings, parks, galleries, pubs and restaurants, street market and shops along pedestrian friendly routes. Undervalued heritage assets such as Bow Wharf, and the scheduled monuments of the Three Colts and Parnell Road bridges over the Hertford Canal are better conserved. Our precious heritage resource is protected and enhanced to ensure that it continues to be appreciated and enjoyed by future generations.

### **7.1 Summary of current Issues**

Many of the heritage assets in the NPA are under-valued and in need

of improvement and better care, particularly public houses and the historic infrastructure associated with the canals and waterways.

There are 9 conservation areas in Bow, 7 of them in the plan area: Clinton Road, Driffield Road, Fairfield Road, Medway, Roman Road Market, Tredegar Square, Victoria Park (which includes Cadogan Terrace). Each one has an adopted character appraisal and management guidelines document. Their character and appearance contribute positively to the quality of life and can often be enhanced to generate greater benefits. The appraisal and management documents need to be reviewed and updated regularly.



#### **HERITAGE Conservation Areas in Bow**

1. Roman Road Conservation

2. Fairfield Road Conservation

3. Tredegar Square Conservation and Buildings

4. Tower Hamlets Conservation

5. Carlton Square Conservation and Buildings

6. Carlton Square Conservation and Buildings

7. Medway Conservation Area

8. Tomlins Grove Conservation

9. Victoria Park

● Conservation Area

There is also much older local heritage. Some evidence of prehistoric activity has been found within the Old Ford Archaeological Priority Area (APA) during archaeological investigations at Lefevre Walk and Parnell Road. The Old Ford APA encompasses the known extent of a Roman settlement and the likely location of the Roman river crossing of the Lea.

The Bow APA covers the historic settlement and surrounds of Bromley-by-Bow. This centres on Bow Road and St. Mary's Bow, the former Lady Chapel of the Benedictine nuns of St. Leonard's Priory, destroyed in the

dissolution of 1536.<sup>36</sup>

This rich heritage offers potential sources of themes to feed into public realm works, cultural events and a heritage trail.

### **7.2 Policy for Bow Wharf waterway infrastructure conservation and enhancement**

#### **7.2.1 Key Issue**

Bow Wharf is a major heritage asset at the junction of the Regent's and Hertford Union canals. Its historic, low-density setting has been eroded

## **OBJECTIVE 4: NEW LIFE FOR OUR LOCAL HERITAGE**

by piecemeal development and the absence of a comprehensive heritage plan.

Planning consent was granted in 2014 for 34 residential units and a small commercial space. The Canal and River Trust worked with H2O Urban LLP, a national joint venture company owned 50% by the Trust and 50% by private developer, Bloc Ltd. H2O is working on a series of urban regeneration and redevelopment projects across the UK with the Canal and River Trust.

The scheme flanks the canal path and has resulted in the loss of the wharf cottages and has weakened the visual link between Victoria Park and Mile End Park.

### **7.2.2 Policy**

#### **Policy HE1: Bow Wharf waterway infrastructure conservation and enhancement**

Development proposals at Bow Wharf must demonstrate how they reflect the historic character of the area and how they will enhance both its heritage significance and cultural vibrancy. Proposed development must therefore submit a comprehensive statement of historic significance clearly demonstrating how proposals positively reflect and are informed by the existing historic context and how the proposals will enhance the historic character of the area. Developers are advised to ensure plans are developed in consultation with the Council's conservation team, Neighbourhood

Forum and the Canal and River Trust. Proposals must demonstrate widespread consultation with local businesses, residents and community groups.

Development proposals must provide for an appropriate mix of uses that include leisure and recreational activities and affordable workspaces for small businesses. Recreational provision that improves connectivity with the Green Grid and better links Victoria and Mile End parks and/or Hackney Village with the Roman Road, will be strongly supported.



Fig. 23: Bow Wharf

### **7.2.3 Conformity with other policies**

#### **Tower Hamlets Conservation Strategy 2026**

"Proposals that are regarded as improving the borough's historic environment will be positively supported, whereas proposals which could cause permanent harm to

historic assets will be opposed unless there are considerable public benefits that would outweigh the harm. The council will use its influence and local planning authority powers in partnership with local communities, property owners and other interested stakeholders to achieve this aim."

(page6)

### **7.2.4 Justification**

The Forum consulted with Historic England and the Canal & River Trust. Historic England proposed the above policy wording, and the Canal and River Trust have expressed their support for this.

Tower Hamlets Water Space Study, September 2017 Engaging Stakeholders: "Due to the varied land ownership and because many opportunities relate to site allocations for future development, the Council will need to work in partnership with a wide range of organisations and developers to effectively deliver the water space opportunities" (page 62, para 4.13)

Poor design of development: "With regards to the heritage value of water spaces, developments have also been designed out of keeping with the historic scale and form of waterside development, and without consideration of the canal and towpath edges." (page30, para 3.9)

#### **Bow Wharf: The character of the conservation area in the vicinity of the proposed development; Friends of Regents Canal, October 2013**

"In addition to the junction's intrinsic geographical and historical significance, it retains within a small area several historic structures of types now rare on London's canals (cast-iron-girder bridge, stop lock, stone-way, remains of wharf cottages, chimney from sawmill, canal carrier's warehouse.) Their setting retains a relatively low density of built

development that was characteristic of the canals of this area until recent years. It also has a fair number of trees, which combine with the small scale of the buildings to produce a calm and pleasant environment, and which also form a link both visual and ecological between the public parks to the north and south. The canals of inner London are rapidly becoming dominated by modern waterside developments of a new scale, mostly residential, but of high activity where commercial, so that Bow Wharf provides a now scarce enclave of calm and historic character that it is necessary to protect and sustain."

(page1)  
The wharf cottages were demolished and were replaced as part of a development, completed in 2018, with three taller blocks of 34 residential units and a small commercial space.

See pages 5-6 of **Local Heritage; Roman Road Bow Neighbourhood Forum**<sup>37</sup> regarding ownership of canal bridges.

### **7.3 Policy for public houses to become locally designated heritage assets**

#### **7.3.1 Key Issue**

An evidence-based study titled "Pubs in Tower Hamlets" prepared for the council, highlighted that, of 275 public houses open on 1st January 2000, well over half (161 pubs, 58.1%) had closed by 2017 (page 13). The Covid 19 pandemic has hit the hospitality sector especially hard, and remaining pubs are at risk of closure and loss to the community.

#### **7.3.2 Policy**

#### **Policy HE2: Public houses to become locally designated heritage assets**

The following are identified as locally designated heritage assets:

- a. The Albert, 74 St. Stephen's Road E3 5JL