



# Tower Hamlets Green Grid

STRATEGY



APRIL 2010



Tower Hamlets Partnership



LDÄ DESIGN



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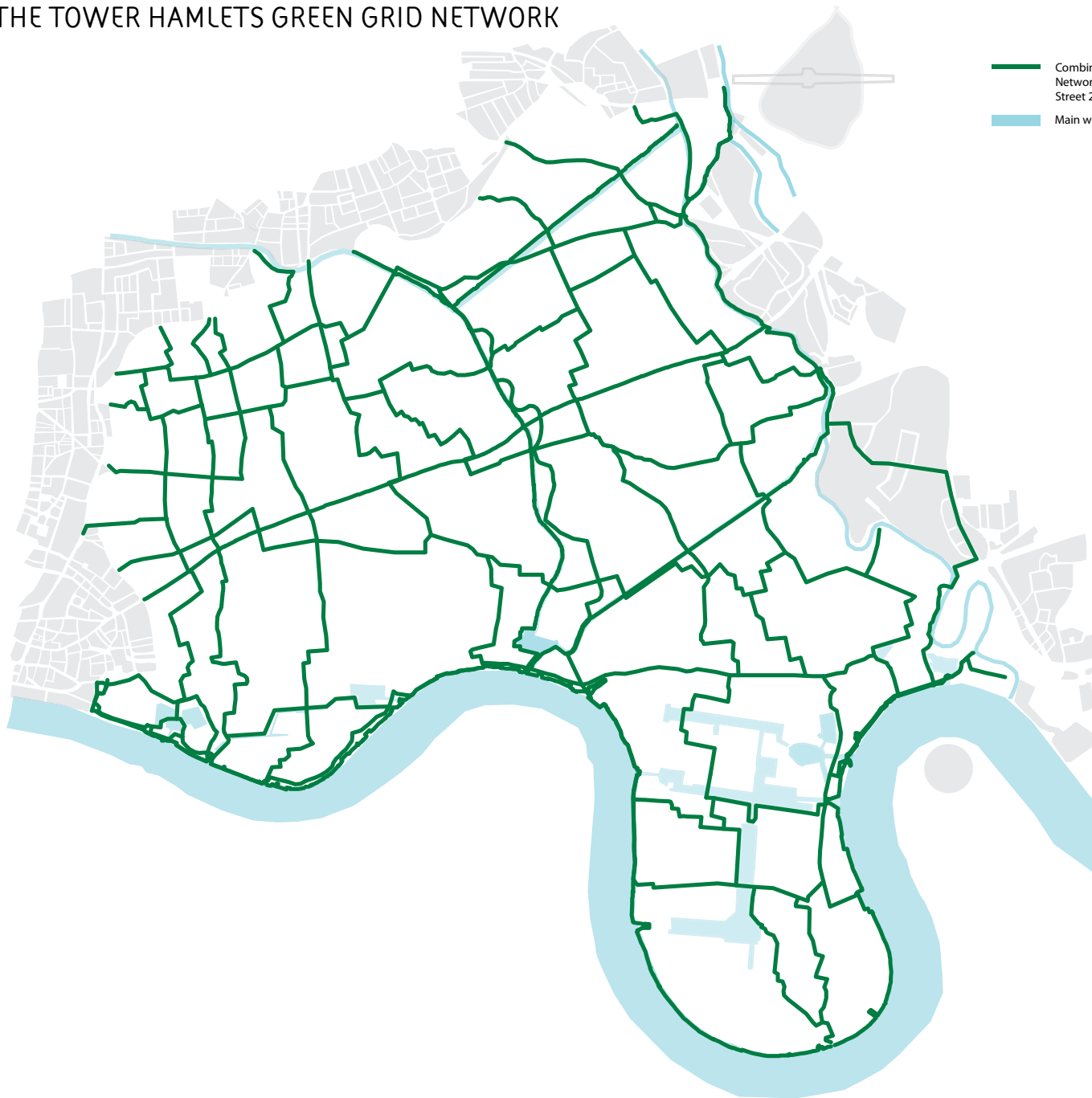
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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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## THE GREEN GRID CONCEPT

The Green Grid is a combination of spaces and routes that encourage people to walk, cycle and enjoy their local environment. Put simply, the more attractive, safe and convenient these spaces and routes are, the more people will use and care for them. And at the same time, greener spaces and routes can help tackle climate change, promote regeneration and enhance biodiversity.

A successful Green Grid in Tower Hamlets has the potential to change the lives of its many thousands of residents and businesses. It is therefore one of the core initiatives of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) and its partners.

The Tower Hamlets Healthy Borough pilot programme, funded by the Healthy Community Challenge Fund, and for which Tower Hamlets is one of nine 'Healthy Towns' nationally, is aimed at understanding how social and environmental factors (often in combination) influence an individual's ability to eat healthily and to be active. The Green Grid is one of the key means by which walking can be promoted as a viable, convenient, safe and enjoyable alternative to private transport.

## PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

This is the Tower Hamlets Green Grid Strategy published by London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH). The purpose of strategy is to:

- Describe the Green Grid concept and its potential benefits in coming years;
- Understand how the Green Grid concept can help realise and aims and objectives of 'One Tower Hamlets', the 'Tower Hamlets Core Strategy' and the 'Tower Hamlets Healthy Borough' pilot programme;
- Propose a strategy for stimulating and responding to the demand for investment in the Green Grid in the coming years.

The Tower Hamlets Green Grid will form a part of the wider East London Green Grid. This is a sub-regional framework for the enhancement and integration of a green infrastructure network into the development and regeneration of East London. The Green Grid is defined in the East London Green Grid Framework Supplementary Planning Guidance of 2008 as:

*"A network of inter-linked high quality and multi-functional open spaces, rivers and other corridors and links in between that maximises opportunities for*

*improving the quality of life"*

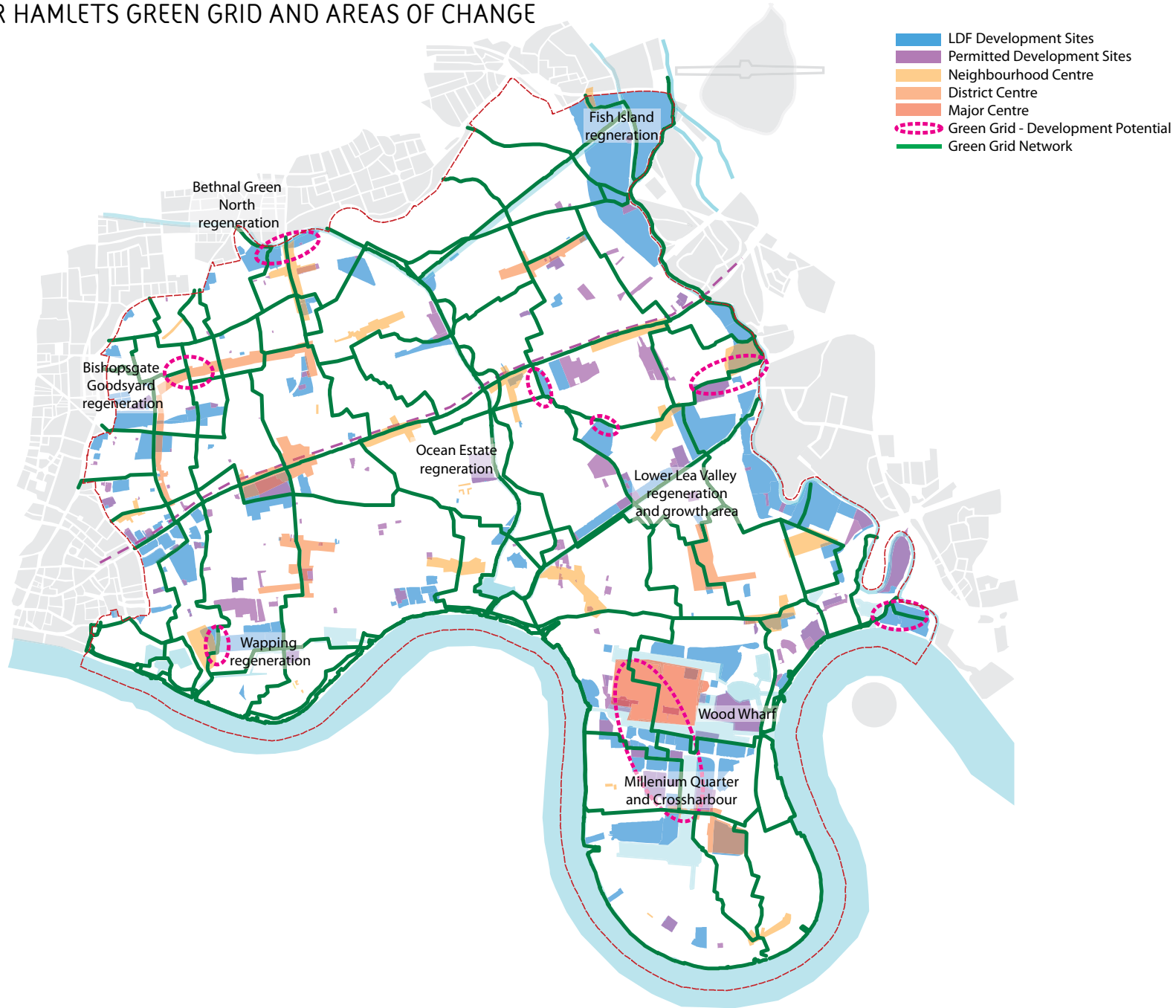
The LBTH has adopted this same definition for the Tower Hamlets Green Grid Strategy. Specifically, the Green Grid therefore includes:

- Parks
- Natural habitats
- Recreation grounds & playing fields
- Burial grounds
- Amenity spaces
- Children's play areas
- Walking routes, including pavements and footpaths
- Rivers, canals and docks

Although it is expected that all local people will benefit from the Green Grid, there are some groups that stand to benefit in particular, notably parents and carers with young children and older people. Both groups depend most on the quality of the local environment to access shops, public transport, public services, schools and parks.

The strategy has been prepared to contribute to the delivering the objectives of 'One Tower Hamlets',

# TOWER HAMLETS GREEN GRID AND AREAS OF CHANGE



the Tower Hamlets Core Strategy and the Tower Hamlets Healthy Borough pilot programme. These three key policy initiatives anticipate the quality of the local environment across the Borough improving considerably in the coming years and that this improvement will lead to many other economic, social and environmental goals.

The duration of the strategy is therefore between ten and fifteen years through to 2020 – 2025. However, the strategy will be continuously managed and monitored once adopted to ensure that it remains well-aligned with these other strategies and prevailing national and regional issues. Whilst its vision and objectives are unlikely to change during this period, nor the structure of its response, the actions it focuses on may change.

## METHOD

The strategy has been prepared on behalf of the LBTH by a project team under the guidance of the Tower Hamlets Green Grid Steering Group.

It has been prepared using initial baseline data gathered across the Borough that defined a network of routes connecting parks and other green spaces. From this network of routes, four routes were selected by the council as pilot routes to test the potential of the Green

Grid and to form the basis of this strategy (see ‘Green Grid Strategy for Tower Hamlets: Baseline Report’, September 2009).

The council commissioned LDA Design, in association with the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) to survey these four routes to understand in detail the scope and potential for action to shape the Green Grid. The routes were selected on the basis of initial analysis that identified the potential of each route to be used to promote healthy living, e.g. connecting residential areas to the Borough’s open spaces, town centres, schools and public transport hubs and, to a lesser extent, its tourist attractions and leisure centres.

All four routes cross the Borough either north-south or east-west and therefore pass through a wide variety of its residential and commercial areas. As such, these routes are typical of the Green Grid so their selection as pilots will mean that conclusions drawn from surveying these routes can be suitably applied across the Green Grid.

The survey work was undertaken during September-October 2009 using a combination of TRL’s ‘Pedestrian Environment Review System’ (PERS) methodology and an analysis of current and anticipated plans for change along each route, e.g. planning applications,

masterplans, planning policies and an assessment of the likely beneficiaries of the Green Grid. This survey and analysis information is contained in a separate ‘Tower Hamlets Green Grid Technical Report’ that accompanies the strategy.

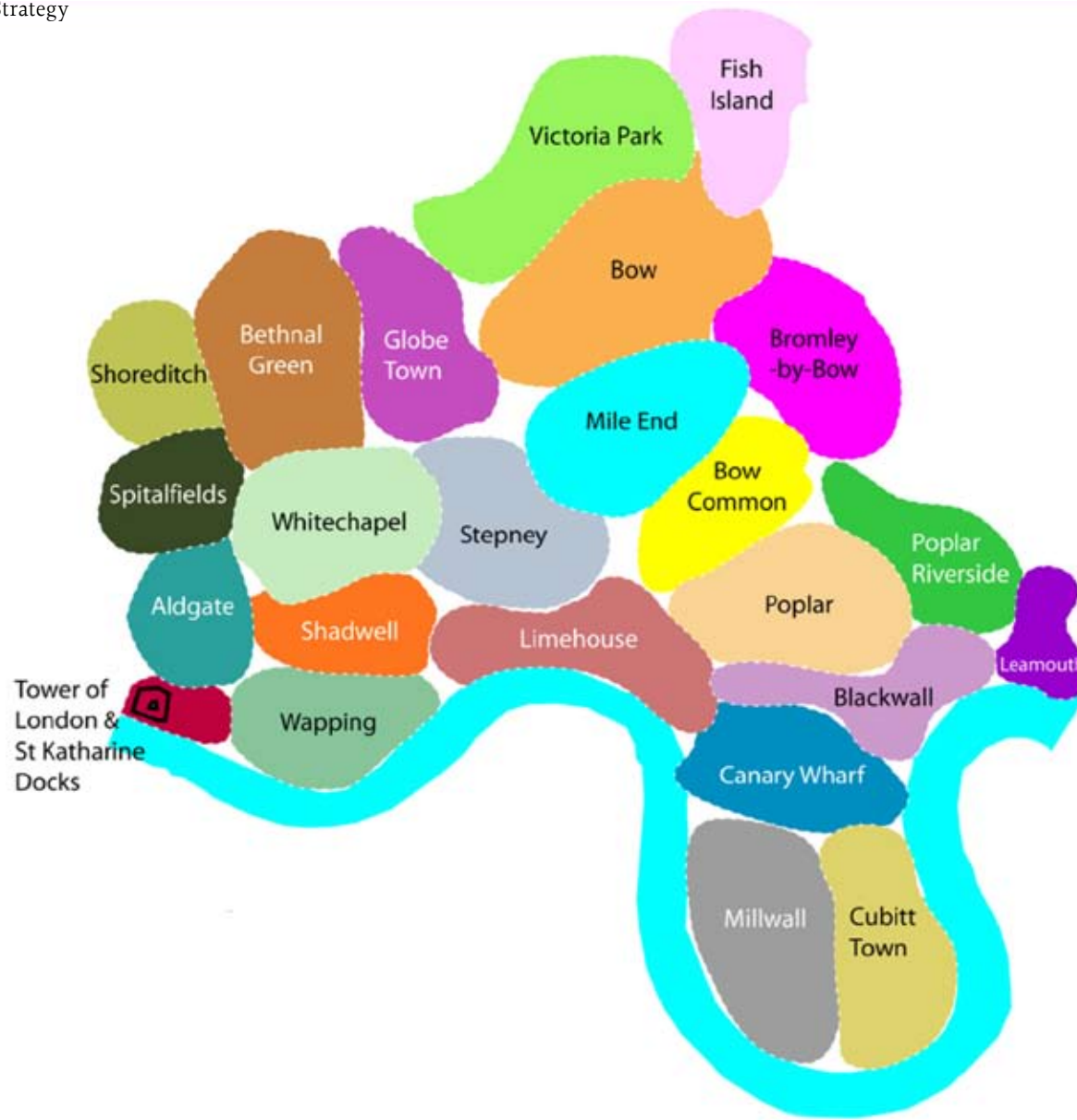
Since the completion of the survey, the council has taken the opportunity to revisit its baseline report and revise the Green Grid network. The outcome is that the network has significantly increased in its length as more routes have been added to original nine (see plan on p4). The council believes this better reflects the value of the Green Grid in connecting local communities with the open spaces, shopping centres, schools and other destinations they use regularly. In some cases, the new network is aspirational as it anticipates new routes that will be enhanced or created through regeneration schemes. The survey and analysis of the extended network will be carried out in due course.

## RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER INITIATIVES

Not surprisingly, given its scope, the strategy is closely related to a number of other local strategies and initiatives. It is expected that it will inform and influence these strategies and initiatives.

# REINVENTING THE HAMLETS.

Source: Tower Hamlets LDF - emerging Core Strategy  
London Borough of Tower Hamlets, 2009.





The LBTH is also preparing new Public Realm and Open Space strategies in Tower Hamlets. The focus of the emerging Public Realm Strategy is on establishing the right approach by the council to enhancing, managing and maintaining the public realm through the services it operates.

The Open Space Strategy, which is currently being reviewed, provides a framework for the council to decide how, where and when its public open spaces should be improved and issues of local deficiency and accessibility can be addressed. Its current review has also identified the Green Grid strategy as an important means of shaping its priorities for council investment in this respect. This strategy is therefore being prepared alongside these other strategies, where necessary shaping them and also being shaped by them.

There are many other public policy areas to which the Green Grid can contribute. These include building conservation, urban design, area regeneration and public transport. For the most part, the strategy has used the interpretation of these policy areas by the Tower Hamlets Core Strategy to shape its response.

## STRUCTURE

In Section 2, the strategy summarises the context that

is shaping the Green Grid concept in Tower Hamlets. This context comprises the spatial and public policy drivers of 'One Tower Hamlets', the 'Tower Hamlets Core Strategy' and the 'Tower Hamlets Healthy Borough' pilot programme respectively.

In section 3, the strategy proposes a vision for the Tower Hamlets Green Grid and sets out a number of objectives and targets that the council and its partners should strive to deliver in the coming years.

In section 4, the strategy proposes three types of complementary strategic initiatives as the main means by which the strategy will be successful: Investment Programmes, Strategic Projects and Area Frameworks.

Finally, in Section 5, the draft strategy sets out proposals for how the strategy should be delivered, covering its governance, management, financing, marketing and design (including the role of the local planning policy and development management system).

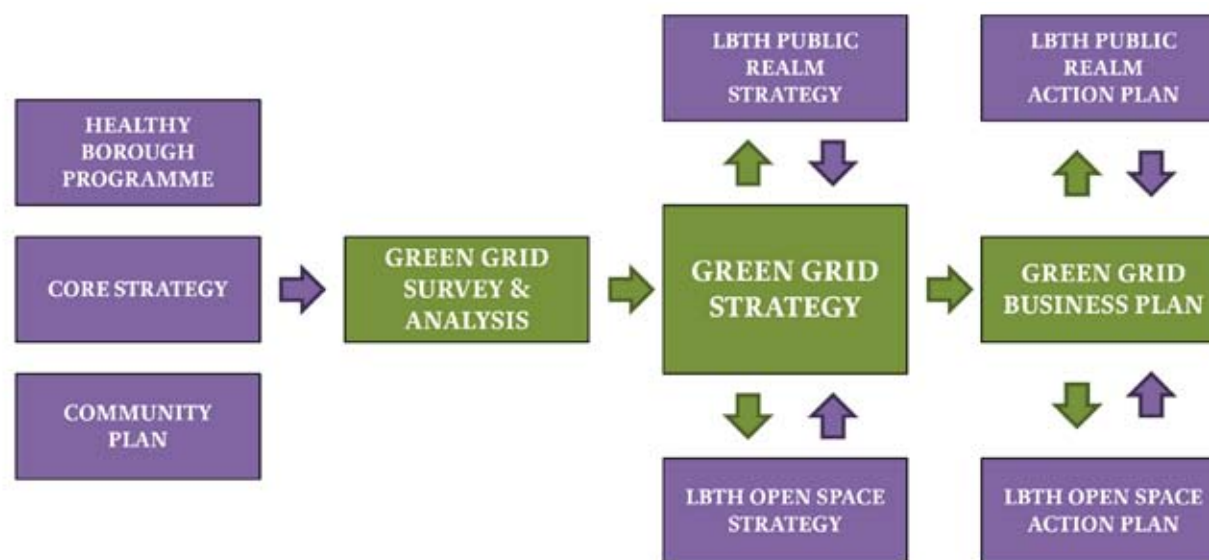
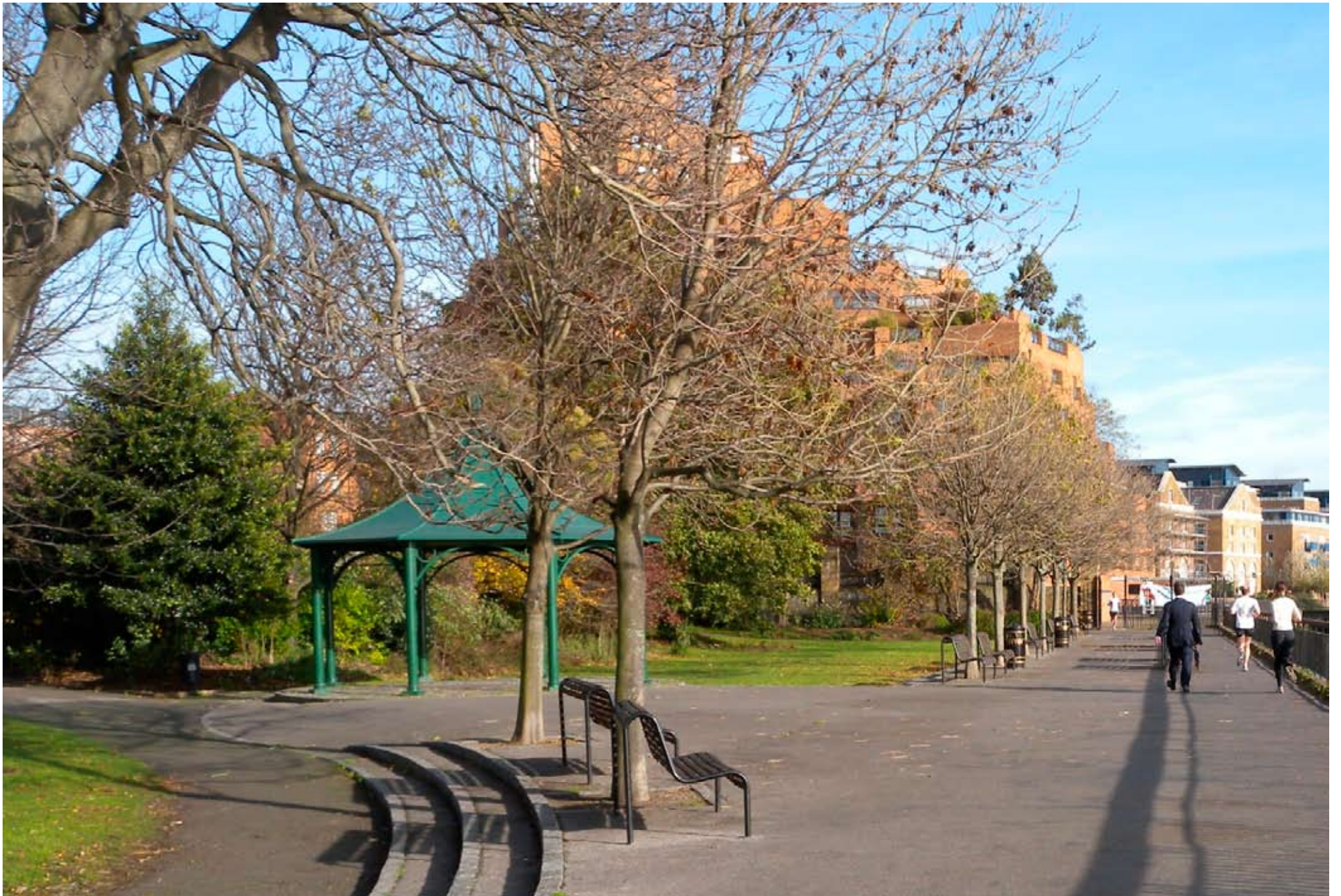


Diagram showing how the Green Grid Strategy and Business Plan relate to other LBTH policy areas



# 2.0 THE GREEN GRID IN TOWER HAMLETS

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## TOWER HAMLETS: THE PLACE

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets is one of the most fascinating urban communities in the UK. At 20 sq.km., it is one of the smallest local government administrations in the UK but with a population of over 200,000, one of its most densely populated areas.

The borough is part of the significantly larger eastern London metropolitan area with the boroughs of Hackney and Newham to its north and east, the City of London to its west and the River Thames forming its southern boundary.

The Borough has relatively high rates of ill health and low average levels of physical activity. However, local health and fitness levels show signs of improvement, with leisure centre attendances increasing to a record 1.45 million and the number of older people using local facilities is increasing.

Although things are improving, average life expectancy at birth is 75 for men and 80 for women, ranking Tower Hamlets 383rd and 361st respectively, out of 432 local areas. The proportion of young people living in Tower Hamlets currently stands at 35%, which is much higher than the 18% average for the rest of inner London, and over 70% of its young people are from minority ethnic

backgrounds.

The Borough's Children's Centres offer health, employment, education and parenting support to families with children under five. Education standards in the borough have improved dramatically; it is the most improved borough in the country for GCSE results.

In recent years, over £420 million of investment has been secured for local estates, and through the setting up of Tower Hamlets Homes, further significant investment could be available. There has been investment in high quality activities and places to go for young people. Around a third of all young people are in contact with youth services and schools are being opened to local people to provide sporting, recreational and cultural opportunities.

Since 1998, the number of jobs has increased in the borough by nearly 40%, and it is projected that there will be over 250,000 jobs in Tower Hamlets by 2020, making it one of the top growth areas in the country.

Throughout all this change and improvement, Tower Hamlets remains a place of contrast, where wealth and affluence sit beside poverty in many areas. It is also a place of diversity, variety and considerable opportunity. By 2020, it is projected that there will be a further 31,500

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new homes in the Borough. Housing affordability is low by national standards, with an average price that is more than double the average in England and Wales and out of reach for most local people. Whilst in 2008 the average salary for those working in Tower Hamlets was nearly £69,000, 18% of families were living on less than £15,000, resulting in the borough being the third most deprived in the country.

Tower Hamlets is one of the most ethnically diverse areas in the country. About half of the total population are from black and minority ethnic communities, and around 110 different languages are spoken by our school pupils. There are many new communities moving into the Borough which will contribute to a changing community profile over the next ten years. The population is expected to reach nearly 300,000 by 2020.

The borough will help host the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012. A number of events will be taking place, including the marathon which will pass along Whitechapel Road, Mile End Road and Bow Road – ‘High Street 2012’.

## ‘ONE TOWER HAMLETS’

The Tower Hamlets Community Plan was agreed and published by the Tower Hamlets Partnership in 2008/9 as the Sustainable Communities Strategy for the borough.

The Plan acknowledges that the landscape has altered vastly since the first Community Plan was published by the Tower Hamlets Partnership in 2001. The population has grown and diversified. East London is preparing to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games - and new local and national priorities have emerged.

An emerging priority, which wasn’t prominent in 2001, is climate change. As a dense urban area with a high level of development, local energy use and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are high.

Helping to tackle climate change and improving air quality is therefore a significant challenge. Lifestyle changes and difficult choices will have to be made in future years.

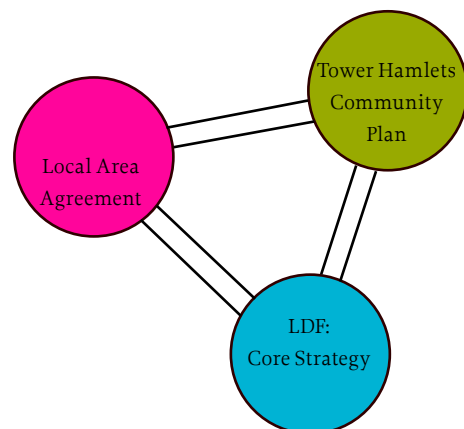
The new Community Plan recognises that Tower Hamlets is a ‘community of communities’, with the key challenge being to make sure that the many

different and specific needs that exist in Tower Hamlets are identified, understood and addressed.

A number of common issues have emerged as significant priorities:

- The need for more affordable housing , particularly for families
- Concern about the level of crime and the fear of crime
- The need for more opportunities for residents to get into training, access lifelong learning opportunities and acquire the skills for employment to exploit job opportunities
- The importance of retaining the richness of Tower Hamlets’ diversity
- The importance of ‘place shaping’ and ensuring connected and cohesive communities through planning and design
- Reducing health inequalities
- The need to have, and encourage, respect among communities
- The importance of personal responsibility
- Making sure that the whole community benefits fully from growth

These are the key drivers for the idea of One Tower Hamlets, a borough of shared and equal opportunities for all its residents. These priorities have shaped and informed the 2020 Community Plan.



The aim of the 2020 Community Plan is to “improve the quality of life for everyone who lives and works in the borough.”

To turn this vision into reality, the plan is split into four themes – each designed to meet the challenges and opportunities highlighted in previous sections and deliver lasting improvements for local people:

- A Great Place to Live
- A Prosperous Community

- A Safe and Supportive Community
- A Healthy Community

Underpinning all these themes is a desire to build One Tower Hamlets – a borough where everyone has an equal stake and status; where people have the same opportunities as their neighbours; where people have a responsibility to contribute; and where families are the cornerstone of success.

Those objectives within each theme that are most relevant to the Green Grid Strategy are:

### **A great place to live**

- By 2020 Tower Hamlets will continue to be a place that attracts people – to settle and to raise families, to study, to work in a thriving local economy and enjoy the rich cultural life
- Many neighbourhoods and estates will undergo major investment to improve the quality of homes and public spaces
- Older residents will enjoy fulfilling retirements with access to first class leisure and support services with more activities delivered from improved community centres.
- Our focus on long lasting and environmentally friendly improvements will benefit current and

future generations.

- The economic growth in Canary Wharf and elsewhere in the borough will be used as a vital tool to secure improvements for local people.
- Our town centres will be vibrant places to shop, spend our leisure time and do business.
- The Olympic Park will be a distinctive, high quality new place providing world class sporting venues and parkland for local people.
- Schools, children’s centres and youth services will be at the heart of their communities.

### **A prosperous community**

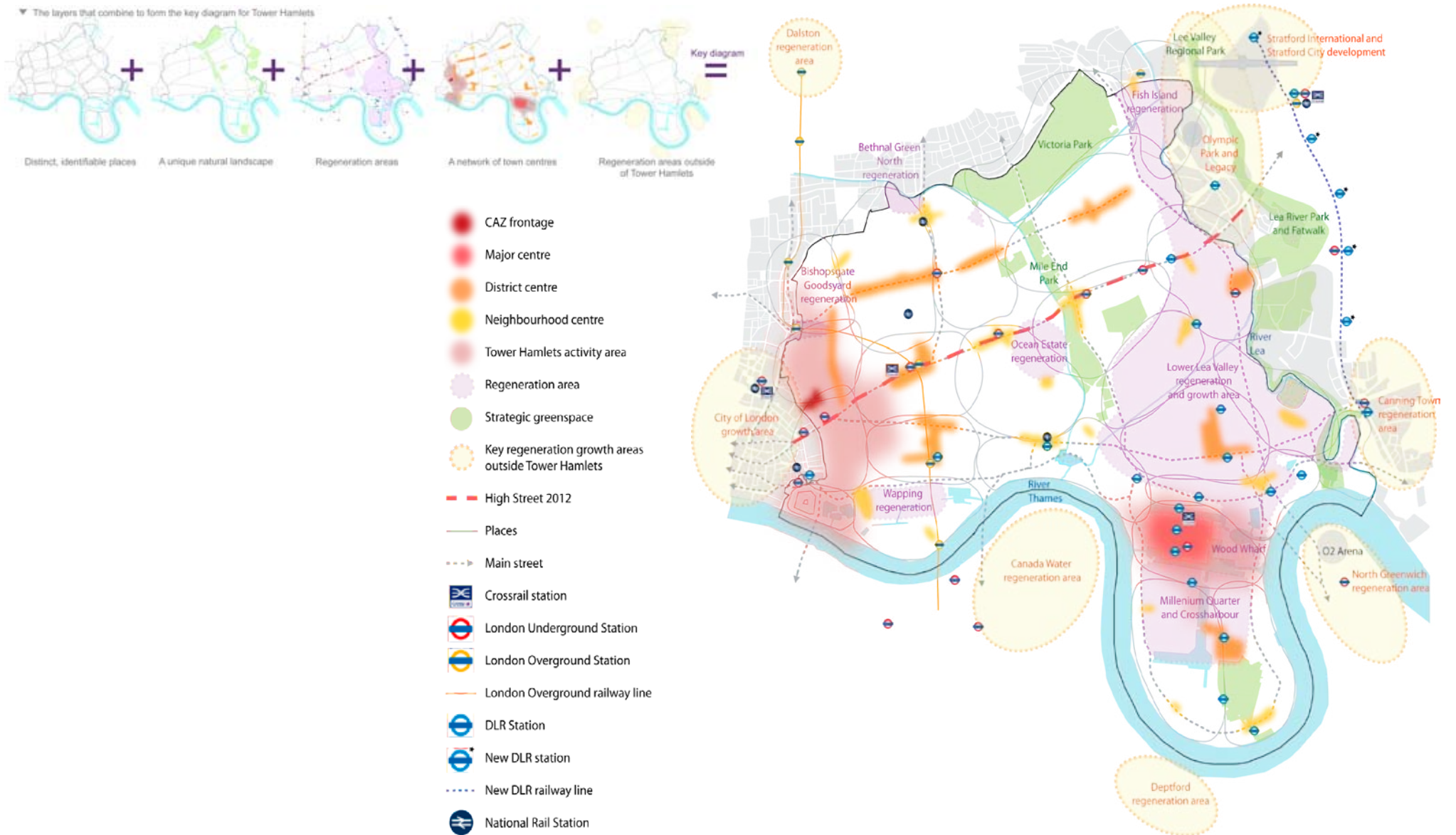
- Our Third Sector will thrive, contributing more to Partnership efforts to improve the quality of life for all those who live and work in the borough.

### **A safe and supportive community**

- By 2020 crime and antisocial behaviour will be greatly reduced in our neighbourhoods so that all residents and visitors, young and old, feel safe and confident in their homes and on the streets

# KEY DIAGRAM.

Source: Tower Hamlets LDF - emerging Core Strategy  
 London Borough of Tower Hamlets, 2009.



## A healthy community

- By 2020 local people will live longer and healthier lives.
- Everyone in our communities will be aware of how lifestyle choices affect their own and their family's health and wellbeing, and there will be more opportunities and support to make healthy choices.
- Health inequalities will be greatly reduced as people choose to become more active
- Health care will focus more on health promotion and prevention of illness, and schools, workplaces and all partners will promote healthy lifestyles.
- More children and young people will make healthy lifestyle choices, improving their health now and as they grow up.

## TOWER HAMLETS CORE STRATEGY

The Tower Hamlets Core Strategy 2025 is the principal document of the Local Development Framework (LDF) for the Borough, setting out the spatial planning to 2025. The Core Strategy is currently at the Submission stage, with its independent examination commencing in Spring 2010. The LDF will also include the London

Plan, a Development Management Development Plan Document (DPD), a Site & Placemaking DPD and Area Action Plans as required.

At the heart of the Core Strategy are two themes: 'Re-inventing the Hamlets' and 'Achieving Wider Sustainability'. The former shapes the spatial vision:

*“Tower Hamlets will reinvent, strengthen and transform the places that make this borough unique. It will continue to be a place for diverse communities, building on its strategic importance as a unique part of inner London. Set alongside the iconic River Thames and the Tower of London, and within a network of parks and waterways, Tower Hamlets will continue to prosper as a collection of places, coming together to build One Tower Hamlets.*

*Tower Hamlets will play a significant part in developing London as a successful, sustainable, global city. It will prosper through sustainable regeneration which stems from the major economic hubs of Canary Wharf, the City and Stratford.*

*This will filter down to the connected network of vibrant and regenerated locally distinct places that has evolved from the borough's rich history. From Spitalfields to Poplar and from Canary Wharf to*

*Bow, each place will have a distinct identity, role and function but all will be well-designed, vibrant, and above all, a great place to live.”*

This spatial vision is underpinned by a number of key principles which guide and steer the Local Development Framework and its long term implementation:

- Optimise the use of land
- Integrate movement and land use
- Reinforce a sense of place
- Work in partnership
- Conserve and reuse resources
- Diversify and grow the economy
- Good design from the outset
- Evidence based decisions
- Support community cohesion
- Live within environmental limits
- Support human health and wellbeing
- Access to nature and open space

Delivery of the spatial vision is an essential element of the Core Strategy; without which the vision will

not be achieved. The council and its key partners are committed to ongoing delivery and pro-actively drive five transformational programmes that form a 'Programme of Delivery' to assist in the delivery of the spatial vision. The programmes are:

- Comprehensive regeneration areas (areas which are key to deliver regeneration e.g. Olympic Area (LMF), Aldgate, Whitechapel, Fish Island, Bromley-by-Bow, Millennium Quarter, Wood Wharf, Bishopsgate Goodsyard, High Street 2012, Aspen Way, Wapping, St Pauls Way).
- Infrastructure Delivery Framework (e.g. Building Schools for the Future, Crossrail and the East London Line).
- Housing investment programmes including the Decent Homes Programme, Ocean Estate, Blackwall Reach and Poplar housing regeneration
- Policy and strategy programmes (e.g. the Community Plan, Local Development Framework, Health and Well-being Strategy and the Town Centre Implementation Programme).
- Tower Hamlets Green Grid (e.g. the new River Lea Park and FAT Walk)

This Programme of Delivery underpins the delivery and implementation of the Core Strategy and its spatial themes. This ensures that a clear, consistent and wide-

ranging delivery approach is embedded throughout the Core Strategy.

The second of the two key themes is the strategic objective (SO3) of 'achieving wider sustainability', which is of particular importance in defining the role that the Green Grid can play in the borough:

*"Tower Hamlets will achieve environmental, social and economic development simultaneously; the improvement of one will not be to the detriment of another. Where tradeoffs between competing objectives are unavoidable, these will be transparent and minimised. This will be realised by:*

- *Planning for healthy environments that recognise the important, interrelated health benefits of: well designed neighbourhoods; high quality housing; access to employment opportunities; access to open space; and shops and services*
- *Mitigating and adapting the built environment to climate change by limiting carbon emissions from development, delivering decentralised and renewable or low carbon energy and minimising vulnerability to a changeable climate*
- *Minimising the use of natural resources.*
- *Working pro-actively to protect and enhance the quality of the environment.*

- *Improving air, land and water quality by minimising air, noise, land and water pollution.*
- *Ensuring the capacity of existing and new infrastructure is adequate to support development and growth with the cumulative impact of this development being considered."*





The Core Strategy then sets out a series of strategic objectives (SO) and policies (SP), the following of which have a direct relationship with the Tower Hamlets Green Grid strategy:

### Strategic Objectives & Targets

SO10 “to deliver healthy and liveable neighbourhoods that promote active and healthy lifestyles and enhances people’s wider health and well-being”

- LOI22 (1.2 Ha open space/1,000 population)
- LOI30 (increase of 1% per annum in pedestrian network length)

SO12 “to create a high quality, well-connected and sustainable natural environment of green and blue spaces that are rich in biodiversity and promote active and healthy lifestyles”

- LOI22 (1.2 Ha open space/1,000 population)
- LOI30 (increase of 1% per annum in pedestrian network length)
- SEI19 (no net loss to population of species within Local BAP)

SO13 “to reduce the risk and impact of flooding on people, property and the environment”

▪ LOI22 (1.2 Ha open space/1,000 population)  
SO20 “deliver a safe, attractive and well-designed network of streets and spaces that makes it easy and enjoyable for people to move around on foot ...”

- LOI1 (increase citizen satisfaction with the built environment by 10% over base by 2025)
- LOI30 (increase of 1% per annum in pedestrian network length)

SO21 “create streets, spaces and places that promote social interaction and inclusion and where people value, enjoy and feel safe and comfortable”

- LOI1 (increase citizen satisfaction with the built environment by 10% over base by 2025)
- LOI30 (increase of 1% per annum in pedestrian network length)

### Strategic Policies:

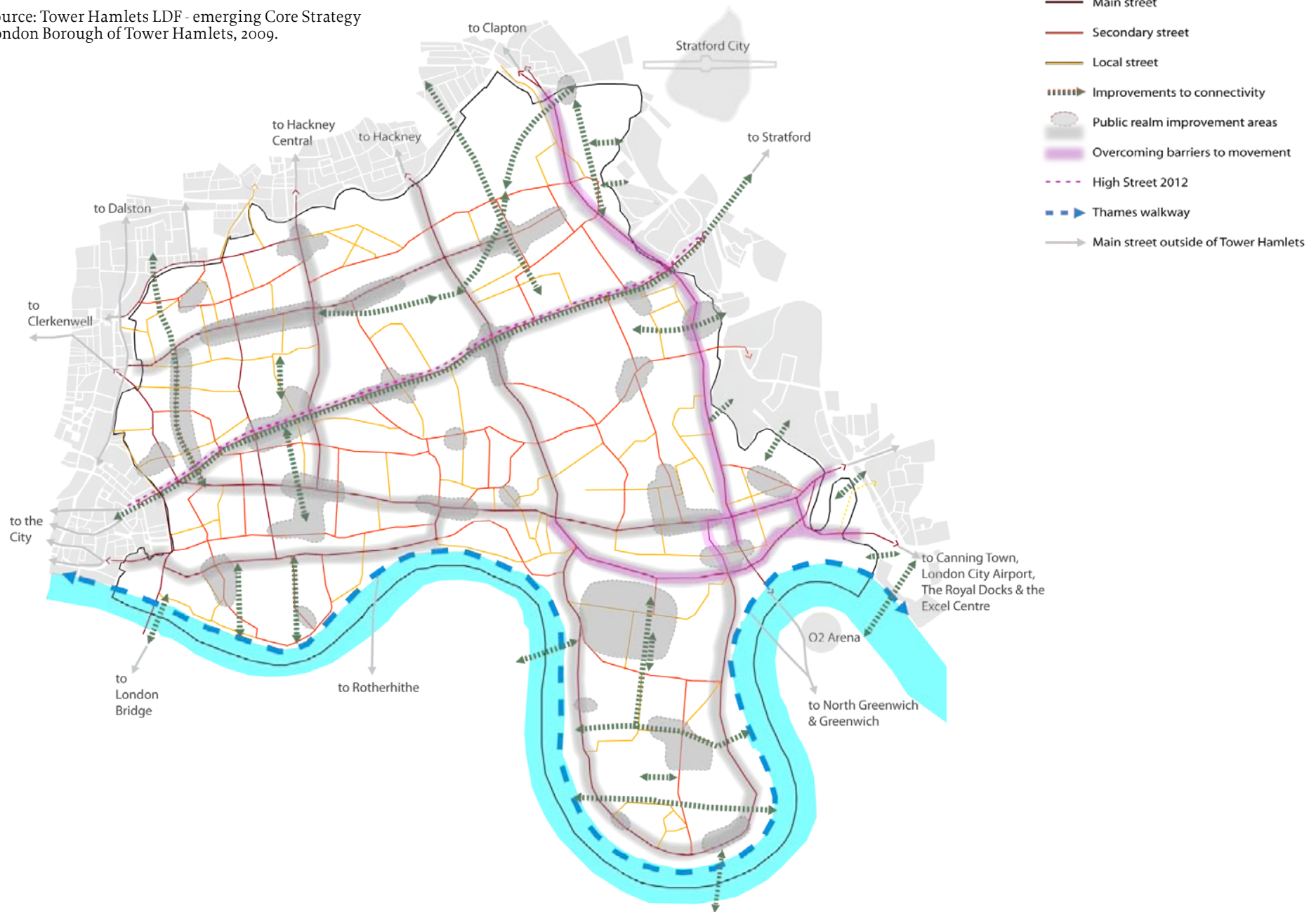
- SP01 (3) “promoting the good design of town centres and their connectivity to surrounding areas”
- SP02 (6) “ensuring all housing is well-designed requiring adequate provision of housing amenity space for new homes and for play space for

children”

- SP03(1) “support opportunities for healthy and active lifestyles through: providing high quality walking routes, excellent access to leisure and recreation facilities and promoting and supporting local food-growing and urban agriculture”
- SP04(1) “to deliver a network of open spaces by protecting, creating, enhancing and connecting”
- SP04 (2) “promote and support new development that provides green roofs and other measures to green the built environment”
- SP04(3) “protect and enhance biodiversity value through the design of open space”
- SP09(1) “implement a street hierarchy that puts pedestrians first ”
- SP09(2) “protect, promote and ensure a well-connected street network that integrates street types and users”
- SP12 “improve, enhance and develop a network of sustainable, connected, well-designed places across the borough”
- SP13 “the council will negotiate planning obligations in relation to proposed development delivered in kind or through financial

# CREATING ATTRACTIVE AND SAFE STREETS AND SPACES

Source: Tower Hamlets LDF - emerging Core Strategy  
 London Borough of Tower Hamlets, 2009.



contributions the council's priorities (include) publicly accessible open space, biodiversity enhancements, public realm, public art”

## TOWER HAMLETS HEALTHY BOROUGH

The Tower Hamlets Healthy Borough pilot programme is piloting environmental approaches to make it easier for children and families to be more physically active and eat more healthily wherever they live, work, travel, play or learn.

The long-term goal is to help everyone to maintain a healthy weight throughout their lives which will reduce the risk of diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer. The Programme is based in the Tower Hamlets Partnership and brings together NHS Tower Hamlets, the local authority, voluntary and community organisations, the private sector and local people.

Tower Hamlets is the only London Borough to be awarded ‘healthy town’ status and there are eight other ‘healthy towns’ nationally. It is part of the Government’s national Change 4 Life initiative.

The Healthy Borough Programme is funded until March 2011 to actively promote:

- Active Travel
- Active Lives
- Healthy Food

## SUMMARY OF OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

The Community Strategy, the Core Strategy and Healthy Borough pilot programme highlight the importance of the Green Grid to the success of their visions of Tower Hamlets by 2025. The benefits of investing in the Green Grid are considered to have direct links to all four strategic themes of the Community Plan, and especially in ‘A great place to live’. The same benefits are identified as playing a key role across most of the Core Strategy’s policy areas, hence its choice as one of five ‘Programmes of Delivery’ on which the strategy depends.

The Green Grid has an important role to play in promoting active travel as part of the Healthy Borough programme. Removing physical and perceived barriers to access convenient walking and cycling routes and public open spaces are crucial.

The implications for this draft strategy are therefore numerous:

- To succeed, it has to have a focus on the most important of the many potential roles that the Green Grid can play in order to avoid spreading resource across too many initiatives
- To focus, it has to make choices about what to prioritise
- To make the right choices, it has to identify and align its benefits most closely to match the targets of its higher order strategies and communicate these choices to partners and local communities
- To communicate effectively, it has to explain its rationale clearly

There is also a premium on how the Green Grid brand is developed and managed. Its identity is not referred to consistently in the higher order strategies and there will no doubt be some confusion between this initiative and other public realm and open space strategies. It is also important that the Green Grid brand is communicated to be accessible to the widest audience (See Marketing Section 5).



# 3.0 VISION, OBJECTIVES & TARGETS

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## INTRODUCTION

This part of the strategy sets out the proposed response to the opportunities and challenges presented in Section 2 above.

The response comprises a vision of how the Green Grid will contribute to the success of Tower Hamlets over the next few years and a series of objectives and targets that translate this vision into tangible outcomes.

## VISION

*“To create an interlinked network of high-quality, multi-functional accessible, ‘green’ open spaces and waterways in Tower Hamlets which will encourage active lifestyles and improve the quality of life”*

This vision captures the essence of what the Green Grid is really about. It blends the desire for quality places and spaces with the value of connecting them for the enjoyment of local communities. Although the Green Grid will have many functional benefits, the vision has chosen those benefits that will most directly lead to healthier lifestyles and community satisfaction and pride in their local area. In practice, this means protecting existing open spaces and walking routes and increasing their number where opportunities arise.

The strategy will seek to maximise the contribution that other benefits of the Green Grid may make for other ends – adapting to and mitigating climate change; promoting economic development, improving biodiversity for example – but only as part of strategic initiatives that have first addressed health and well-being.



## OBJECTIVES & TARGETS

The following are proposed as the long term objectives of the Tower Hamlets Green Grid Strategy:

GG1: Retain all existing open spaces and walking routes.

- No net loss of existing publicly accessible open space through development
- No net loss of walking routes through development

GG2: Enhance the quality of selected existing open spaces.

- 100% of Green Grid Open Spaces enhanced through measures to improve accessibility, safety, attractiveness, functionality as appropriate

GG3: Create new publicly accessible open spaces.

- Significant increase in currently restricted or partially restricted existing open space made publicly accessible and managed
- Increase in new publicly accessible open space created, managed and protected

GG4: Connect open spaces to local communities with enhanced and new walking routes.

- Significant length of the Green Grid network enhanced through measures to improve safety, accessibility and attractiveness as appropriate.

GG5: Manage the Green Grid to a high standard.

- 100% of the Green Grid network and Green Grid Open Spaces with approved and resourced management plans.

These objectives and targets have been set to reflect the relative scale and pace of change expected as a result of this strategy. They also acknowledge that there will be other investments made in open spaces and walking routes throughout the Borough that are not specifically related to the Green Grid.





# 4.0 STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

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## INTRODUCTION

The strategy proposes three distinct types of response, or 'strategic initiative'. The first two – Invest Programmes and Strategic Projects - are intended to provide the most effective means by which new investment into the Green Grid can be secured and delivered on the ground. The third – Area Frameworks - is intended to capture investment that has already been committed to, or will be in due course, on the back of development proposals and shape it into proposals that contribute positively to the Green Grid.

All three strategic initiatives should be pursued with vigour; none is necessarily more important than the other. Collectively and over time they will represent the best chance of this strategy being a success. Their relative emphasis will change over time so it is important that both the strategy and its accompanying business plan (see Section 5) are continuously monitored so that the right investments and projects are chosen at the right time.

In all cases, the strategic initiatives proposed have been chosen on the basis that they will make a significant contribution to the stated objectives and targets outlined in section 3. They will touch the largest number of local people – especially parents/carers, young children and

older people – at locations with relatively high footfall.

## INVESTMENT PROGRAMMES

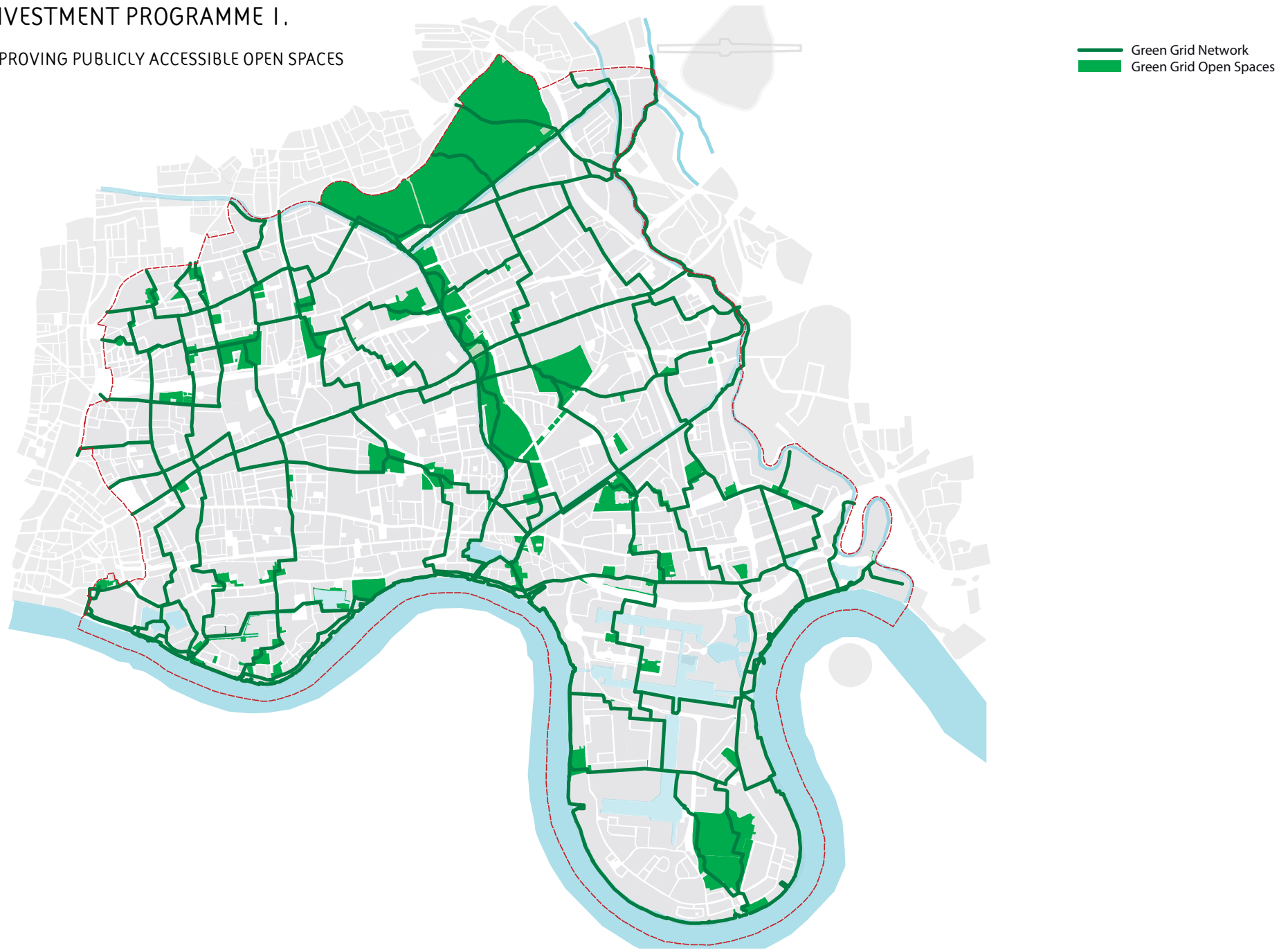
The investment programmes are a means for the strategy to capture a collection of local projects of the same type. Collectively, these Programmes will contribute to achieving the strategy vision and objectives.

The exact location of projects within each programme is left to the appropriate delivery agents to determine in due course. This approach recognises the dynamics of market conditions, the development sector and social change among other factors and does not seek to predict exactly when, where and how public realm and open space investments will happen over the next few years.

These programmes are defined here and the factors that will govern their successful development and delivery are set out below. Similarly, there has been no attempt in this strategy to prioritise the programmes. Each has its own rationale and role to play in achieving the vision and objectives. The availability of public funding for such programmes is likely to continue to ebb and flow as public policy changes. The motivation for the private sector and others to invest in the Green Grid will also change in relation to market conditions although planning consent should always ensure that investment

# INVESTMENT PROGRAMME I.

IMPROVING PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE OPEN SPACES



opportunities are realised through scheme design and financial contributions.

Between them, the four investment programmes address both types of interventions outlined in the Green Grid concept:

- Protecting, enhancing and creating publicly accessible open spaces in the Borough
- Creating new routes and improving the attractiveness of existing routes between these spaces and other destinations in the Borough and its surrounding areas

However, the emphasis for active travel in the programmes is on walking rather than cycling. This is because of the focus of the strategy at this stage on improving the Green Grid for parents and carers with young children and older people in particular. Where possible, programmes and projects will seek to accommodate the interests of cyclists.

### **1. Improving Publicly Accessible Open Spaces**

This investment programme is focused on improving the quality and accessibility of existing publicly accessible open spaces along the Green Grid routes. All

parks and open spaces that either adjoin or are in close proximity to the Green Grid (known here as ‘Green Grid Open Spaces’) should be managed to an acceptable standard, ideally the Green Flag Award/Green Pennant Award standard, where resources allow.

The ‘Green Grid Open Spaces’ (shown in Investment Plan 1 opposite) are those that should be prioritised for investment as part of this strategy as their impact will be greatest on the Green Grid. They are not intended to create another designation of public open space.

The main focus for investment in the chosen open spaces should be on:

- Improving safety and security for users, e.g. appropriate thinning or removal of vegetation from important lines of sight, relocation of seating areas, new/improved lighting, more visible management
- Increasing opportunities for physical activity, e.g. new play equipment provision
- Diversifying functionality, e.g. seating areas with tables, dedicated space for mobile refreshment concessions

In making these investments, design solutions should seek to exploit opportunities to diversify planting to

add visual interest and to enhance biodiversity value.

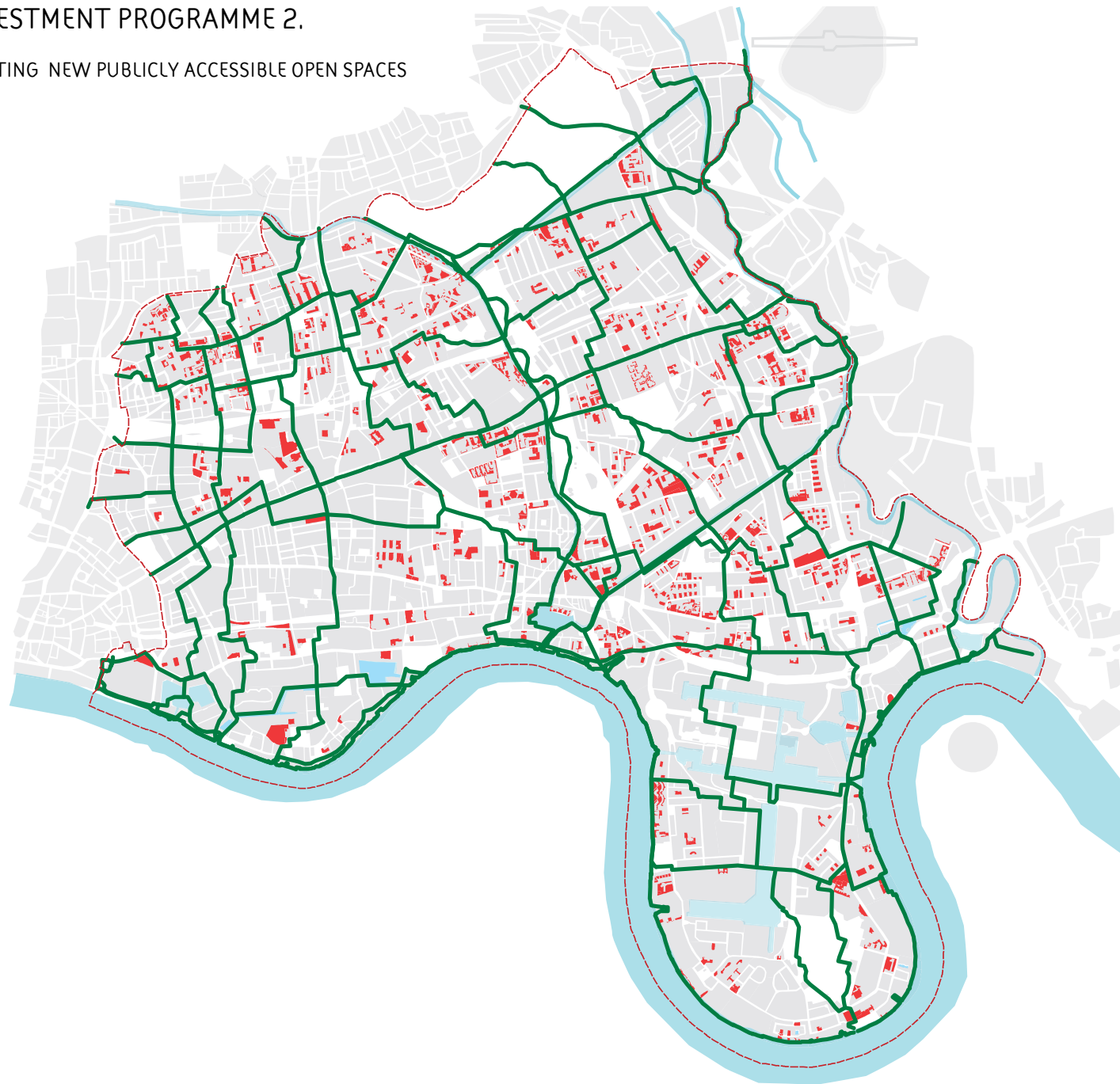
#### **Example:**

An example of a key space in need of improvement is St Mathew’s Church Gardens. This is a relatively large open space along a green route that is currently underused. Improvements to the path network, planting and site furniture would significantly increase the functionality of the space and promote healthy living in the neighbourhood.



## INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2.

### CREATING NEW PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE OPEN SPACES



- Green Grid Network
- Land with restricted access with potential to widen access

#### Note:

The land shown on this plan as having restricted access has been identified using a desktop survey only. Most, but not all, the Borough has been surveyed. Some locations have been investigated for their potential to widen access, notably on land in the ownership of Registered Social Landlords and these are highlighted as examples in Section 4.

## 2. Creating New Publicly Accessible Open Spaces

It is known that the opportunities to create new publicly accessible open space in the Borough, irrespective of proximity to the Green Grid, will be few. Even those new spaces created as part of large development schemes may often find it a challenge to allocate sufficient land for this purpose to meet the needs of new residents. It will therefore be more effective to seek to make publicly accessible the significant amount of existing open space in the Borough to which there is no current means of public access or access is severely restricted.

The possible quantity and distribution of such open space is shown in Investment Plan 2. Initial survey work in the Borough (shown here) indicates that much of this land is in the ownership and management of a small number of Registered Social Landlords (RSL). Many of the existing open spaces along the Green Grid routes are amenity spaces around blocks of flats set back from the road. These spaces are semi-private and can currently only be accessed by the residents. Most are areas of mown grass and may be under used. These areas have the potential to offer a much wider range of functions including food growing, informal play, flower gardens and seating. If public access cannot be

negotiated to these areas of open space, enhancements, especially diversification of planting, would still be visible from the street contributing to the greening of the Green Grid routes.

The council should therefore focus its efforts on working with its RSL partners to find practical ways of enabling wider public access to RSL-owned open spaces that does not compromise the RSL's obligations to tenants. The council should invite and encourage RSLs to participate in a project team to identify and resolve issues restricting public access at present and a strategy agreed to reduce those restrictions. These issues are likely to include:

- Maintenance of open space including paving, planting and furnishings.
- Management of access and use including accessible hours.
- Security for adjoining residents.
- Finance and funding.

Larger areas of RSL land adjoining the Green Grid routes and those with the potential to provide links to nearby open spaces should be prioritised over smaller areas or 'strips'. Green strips along the routes play an important role in the greening of the routes, and may provide opportunities for rest and relaxation, however,

larger areas with greater set back from existing residents provide greater potential for multi-functional use

### Examples:

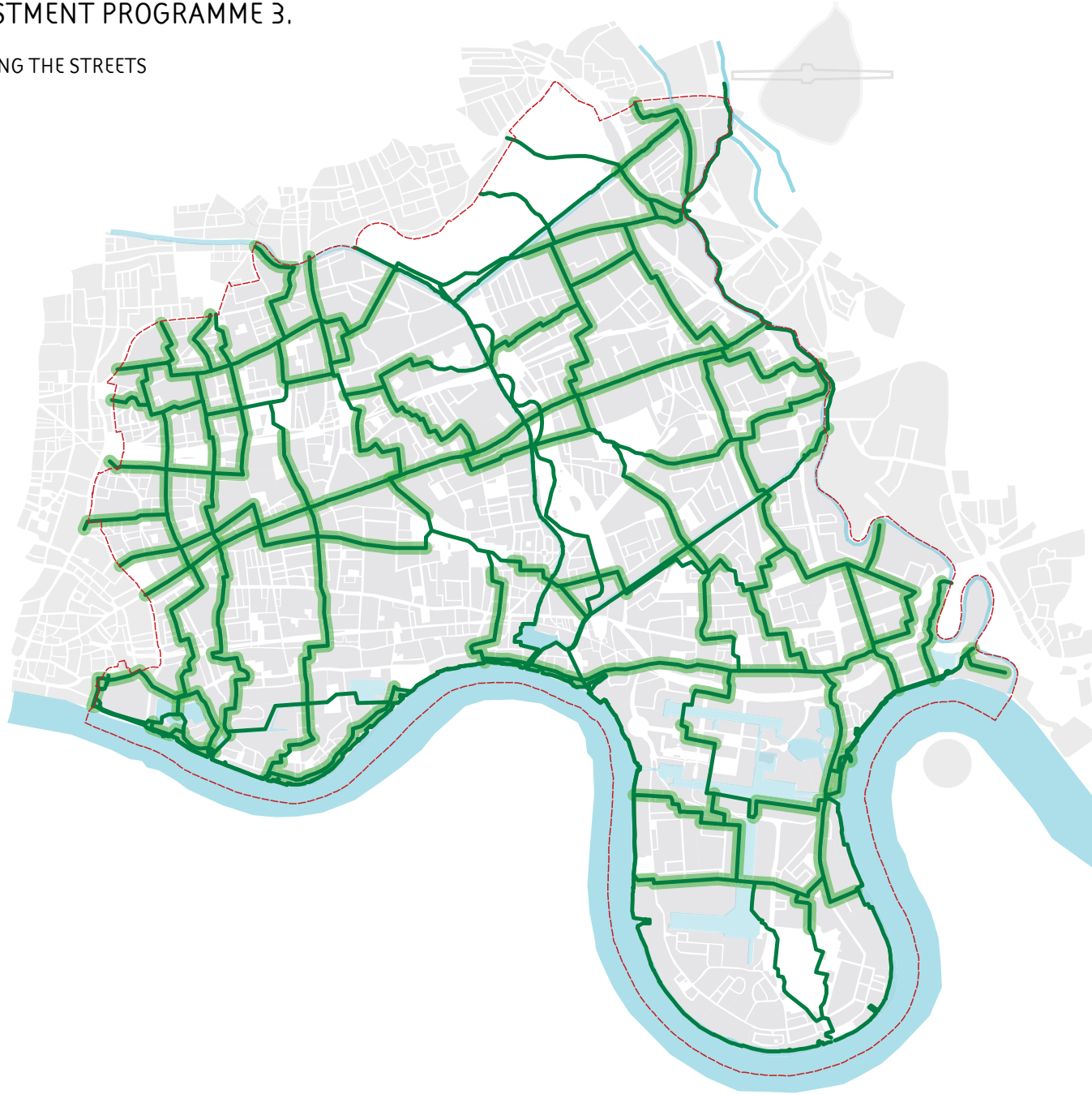
- Enhance green spaces and develop existing green verges along Vaughan Way into community gardens/public open space incorporating 'plug and play' initiatives;
- Reclaim wide pavements at Vaughan Way/Thomas More Street/Kennel Street junction to create new public space.
- Negotiate lease/land swap/partnership with Housing Estate along St Stevens Road and Harley Road to develop existing green verge into a 'Community Garden', linking with other larger amenity open space.



# INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 3.

## GREENING THE STREETS

— Green Grid Network  
— Greening The Streets



### 3. Greening The Streets

Many parts of the Green Grid would benefit from street greening, in terms of enhancing the visual quality and giving identity to the routes, and improving the biodiversity value. Where pavements are wide enough or where there is adjacent amenity space, street tree planting can take place. There are also opportunities to provide planting in existing car parking spaces. Other street greening initiatives could include planting of climbers on building facades, boundary planting and encouraging the use of window boxes.

The programme will deliver other secondary benefits, including improving local biodiversity and adapting to (and mitigating) climate change in terms of 'heat island effect' and surface water drainage. Investment may also promote economic development by increasing the appeal of vacant shops or other commercial premises.

The Investment Plan 3 shows all those sections of the Green Grid that follow roads or streets. No detailed analysis has been undertaken to identify specific opportunities for this initiative. Rather, the plan shows 'areas of search' for further investigation once priority locations have been determined.

The council should develop this programme with Transport for London and relate it closely to its own emerging Public Realm Strategy. The priority areas for action will be those local lengths of the Green Grid that coincide with locations that are the subject of other Investment Programmes, Strategic Projects or Area Frameworks to maximise the local impact of investment.

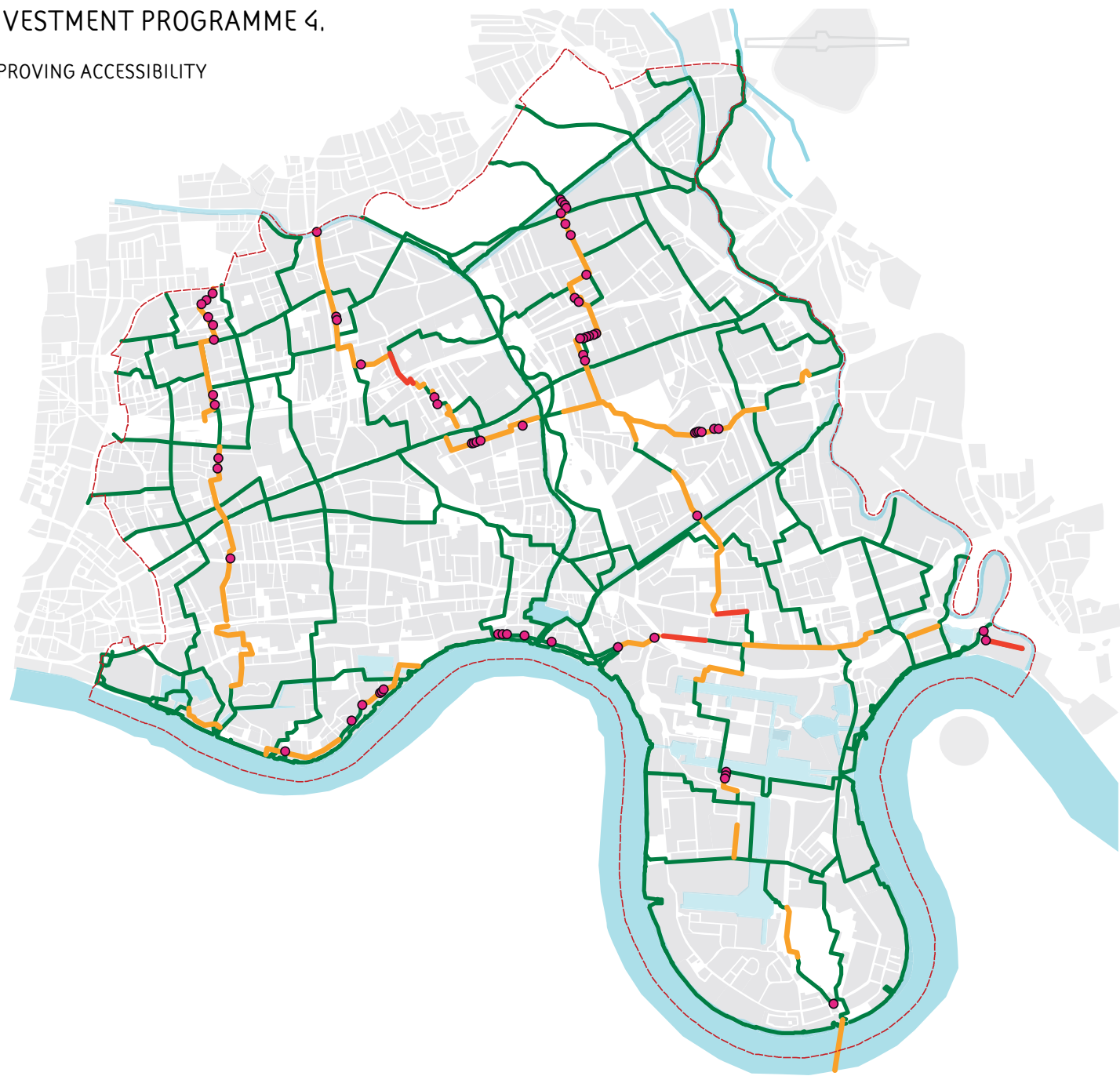
#### Examples:

- Vaughan Way is a street where there is opportunity to develop the existing green verges into community gardens or public open space incorporating 'plug & play' initiatives.
- Free Trade Wharf is another area where habitat improvements including incorporating green infrastructure, planters and brown/green roofs to existing underutilised paved areas, boardwalk, jetties and timber pilings could improve the visual quality and encourage wildlife to this underutilised area of open space adjacent to the Thames.



# INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 4.

## IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY



- Green Grid Network
- High priority locations
- Medium priority locations
- Location of key obstructions



#### 4. Improving physical accessibility along the routes

Accessibility is one of the fundamental principals for the Green Grid. The full value of investment will not be realised if there are real and perceived obstacles and inconveniences to walking safely, especially for parents/carers with young children and older people. An invest programme focused on addressing poor or inadequate walking routes is therefore required.

There are several interventions that can improve the accessibility and safety of the routes. Improving crossings by major roads such as Mile End Road and The Highway will be important given these locations have the highest footfall. Home zone environments with shared surface streets and pedestrian priority can be created along quieter residential streets. In many places the footpaths are too narrow. Where possible these footpaths can be widened to improve accessibility and the width of the carriageway reduced to slow traffic. The pavement surfacing can be enhanced using a consistent approach throughout the Green Grid to support wayfinding and create a unified identity. Drop kerbs and tactile paving by road crossings should also be provided. Decluttering the routes by removing or relocating obstacles on the pavements will also enhance access. Finally, given

the Green Grid focus on active travel, there may be opportunities to locate play equipment/activities in convenient places on wider routes that do not add unnecessary clutter.

The Investment Plan 4 shows those sections of the four Green Grid pilot routes that have been identified by the PERS audit (see Section 1) as either poor (in red) or adequate with opportunity for improvement (in amber). In total, these sections comprise at least two thirds of the Green Grid pilot route lengths, i.e. over 20km. Refer to the Transport research Laboratory (TRL) Technical Report for further detail on the PERS audit. It is safe to assume that the rest of the Green Grid has similar characteristics, resulting in perhaps as much as 50km of the Green Grid in the Borough requiring attention and over 5km of this in currently poor condition.

Priority should be given to those sections in poor condition of existing high footfall (e.g. proximity to a town centre or school) with the potential to form part of other proposed investments, e.g. 'Greening the Streets' or a Strategic Project.

This investment programme should also be led by the council, in partnership with Transport for London, and be fully integrated with its emerging Public Realm Strategy.

#### Examples:

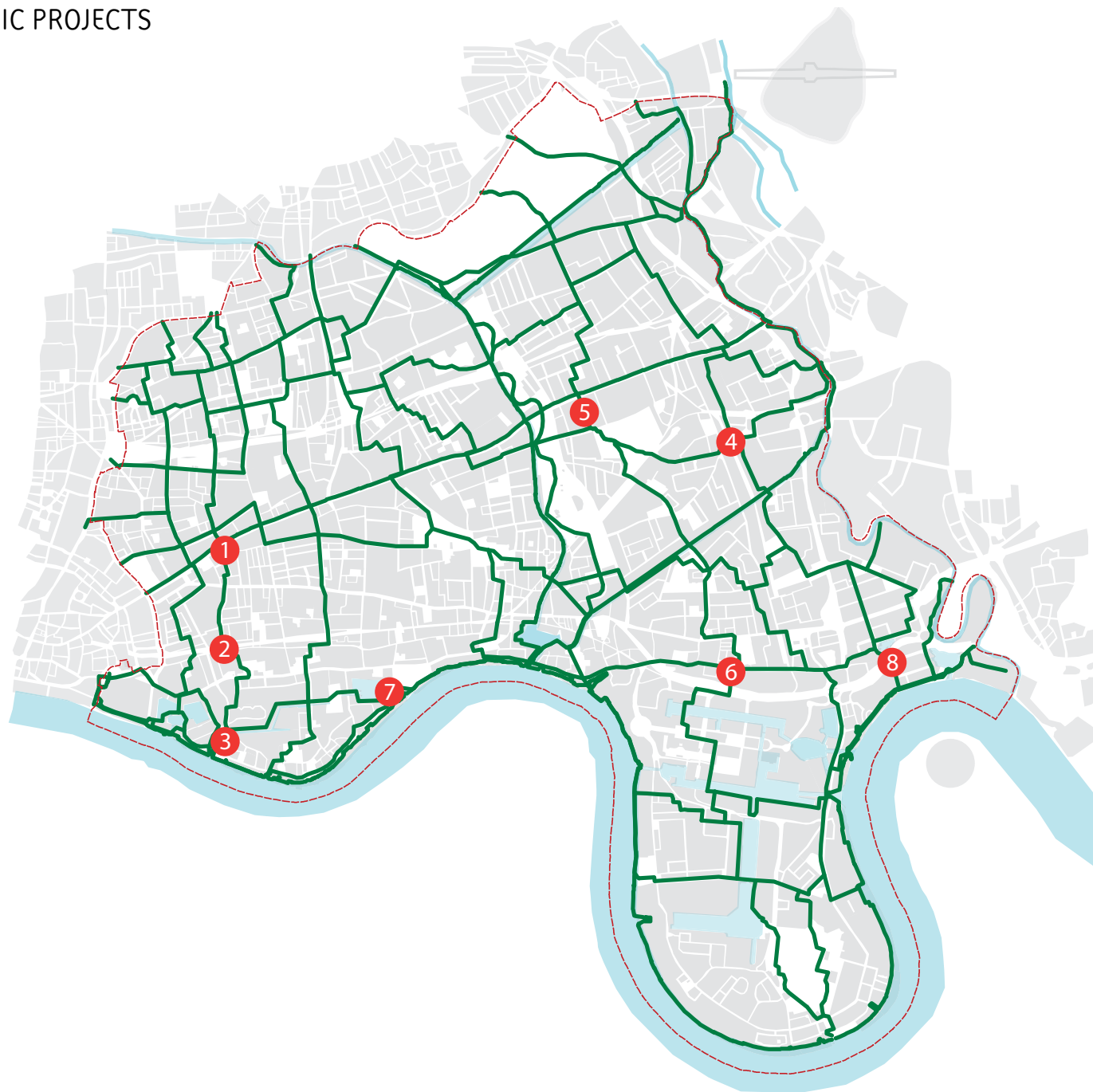
Globe Road/Massingham Street/Carlton Square and Gardens/Mile End Place Improvements:

- Improve pedestrian link across Mile End Road;
- Potential re-direction of route along Globe Road to avoid restricted access through Jewish Burial Ground;
- Incorporate visual links to adjacent green spaces;
- Improvements to path network, planting and site furniture.

Wapping High Street/Bridewell Place:

- Improve legibility of route and pedestrian link in area with narrow carriageway and pavements;
- Utilise undeveloped site as a new open space or an extension to Wapping Rose Gardens;
- Reconcile pedestrian and vehicular conflicts and improve pedestrian links across carriageways.

# STRATEGIC PROJECTS



Green Grid Network  
Strategic Projects

1. Bell Foundry Square
2. Cable Street / Wellclose Square Improvements
3. Canal Square
4. Devon's Road Interchange / Circus
5. Southern Grove Lodge
6. Poplar High Street - Poplar DLR Station Link
7. Shadwell Basin
8. East India Station / Blackwall Way

## STRATEGIC PROJECTS

The second type of strategic response to the opportunities and challenges presented by the Green Grid are Strategic Projects. Here, the intention is to identify a small number of projects that by their location, scale and nature will have more than a local impact. In essence, they are the 'beacons' or 'exemplar' Green Grid projects that will each build and maintain a high profile for this initiative across the Borough in the coming years.

In addition to their strategic impact, enough is already known about each of them to be confident that they can be delivered, if not immediately then in the next five years or so, resources permitting.

The Strategic Projects Plan shows the location of eight projects identified on the Green Grid pilot routes. Each is described briefly below. Those that are selected by the Green Grid Steering Group for inclusion in the Business Plan (see section 5) will be developed into greater detail for implementation.

As the strategy is monitored and reviewed, and survey work on the remainder of the Green Grid is completed, so other strategic projects will emerge. The challenge here will be to ensure the list remains small

by focusing on those projects that will have a genuine strategic impact.

All strategic projects should seek to implement best practice place making principles addressing the following key issues:

- Improving safety
- Improving security
- Ensuring accessibility
- Enabling visual connectivity
- Ensuring legibility including wayfinding
- Creating high quality environments
- Creating opportunities for play
- Encouraging biodiversity

### Strategic Project 1: “Bell Foundry Square”

This space at the junction between Whitechapel Road and the Green Grid, beside the Whitechapel Bell Foundry – ‘the world’s most famous bell foundry’, offers an opportunity to create a strategically significant open space, linking in with the proposed High Street 2012 initiative. The large setback of

buildings and wide road verges, combined with the carriageway itself, create a generous area, making a valuable contribution to the open space provision in the vicinity.

### Strategic Project 2: Cable Street/Wellclose Square Improvements

**Cable Street/Wellclose Square Improvements**  
The area of the Green Grid that links Back Church Lane, via Cable Street and the DLR/railway line bridge to Wellclose Square and Wilton’s Music Hall provides an interesting environment with which to create a dynamic and exciting public realm. This space, and the Green Grid generally, would benefit greatly from improvements to legibility and wayfinding, and a stronger setting to Wilton’s Music Hall.

### Strategic Project 3: Canal Square

The open space between Vaughan Way and Wapping High Street links the canal through to the River Thames and a local park via a (currently empty) basin and Hermitage Wall. It is located at an important local node alongside a bus stop and links with other pedestrian and cycle routes. Focussing on the basin and interface with the canal, this sequence of spaces



and features provides an opportunity to create a large, cohesive open space and establish water based activities and other opportunities for recreation and relaxation.

### **Strategic Project 4: Devons Road Interchange/Circus**

The existing environment along Devons Road between Prospect Park and the local centre to the west, including the Devons Road DLR station is heavily dominated by the car, with significant visual clutter and convoluted and confusing pedestrian access. This area includes a series of spaces including Prospect Park, the DLR station, and a number of large street verges and open street corners. Improvements to pedestrian movement along here, combined with improvements to streetscape and improved links between pedestrian spaces would create a significant and vibrant public realm serving residents and those using the local centre.

### **Strategic Project 5: Southern Grove Lodge**

This stretch of the Green Grid runs along Southern Grove between Tower Hamlets Cemetery and Mile End Road. The environment here is dominated by large brick tower blocks, hard surfaces and amenity grass,

with little planting and pedestrian scale features. The sequence of spaces including housing amenity land, Southern Grove Lodge and garden (ex council offices), the Cemetery entrance and wide pedestrian verge at Mile End Road combined with significant footfall and resident population, presents an opportunity to develop a popular and successful public realm.

### **Strategic Project 6: Poplar High Street-Poplar DLR Station Link**

The pedestrian environment linking Poplar DLR station and Poplar High Street is a significant transport node on the Green Grid. This space also links to valuable community facilities including Poplar Park, Tower Hamlets College and the adjoining Workhouse Leisure Centre. Improvements to the public realm here enabling clearer movement and stronger visual links between the community facilities, and features orienting pedestrian traffic to the Green Grid Routes would make a significant contribution to the Green Grid and improve the pedestrian experience of this important link.

### **Strategic Project 7: Shadwell Basin**

Shadwell Basin and its surroundings is an attractive piece of public realm, adding valuable amenity for

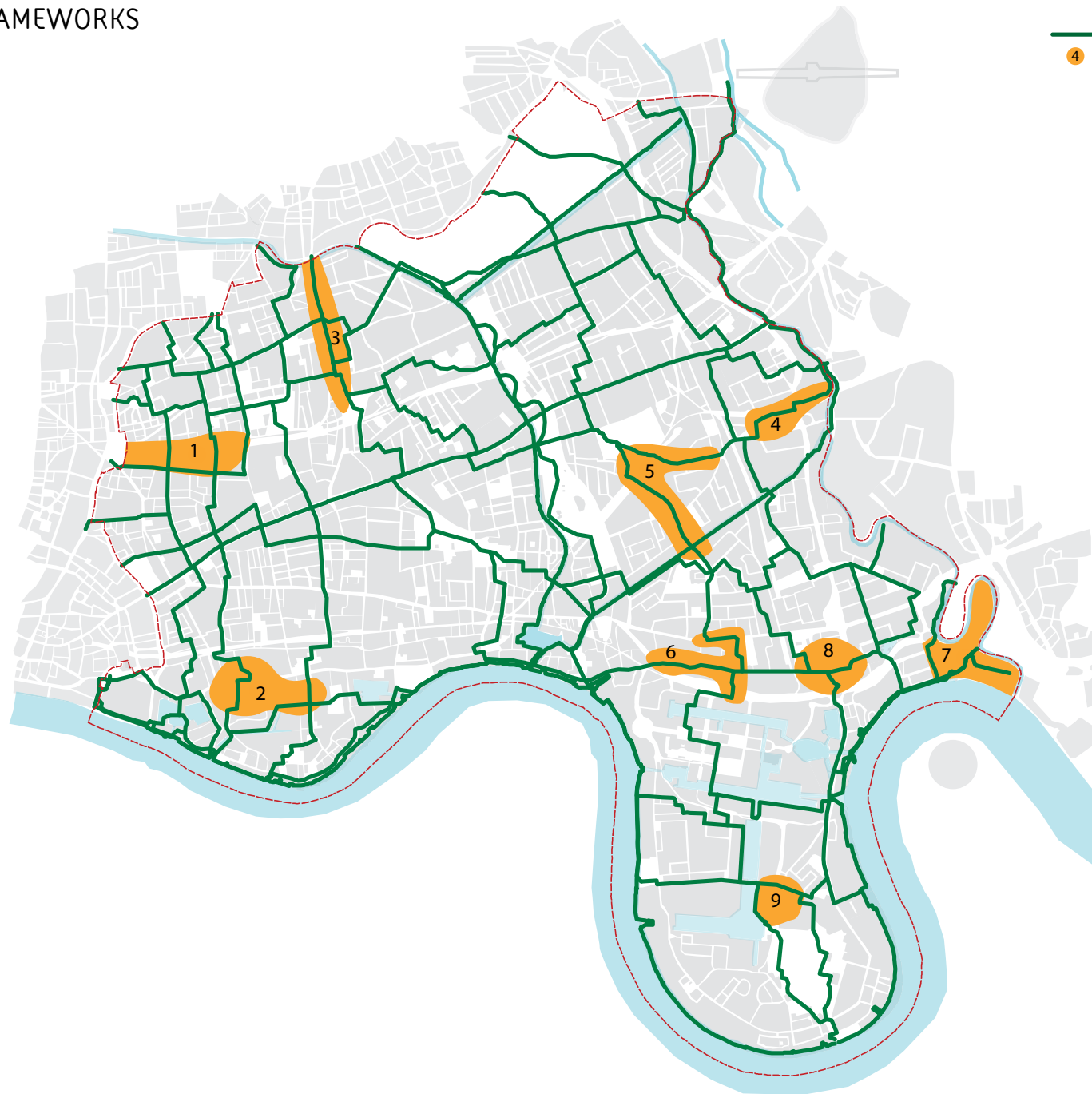
the local residents. It links well to the nearby heritage buildings along Wapping Wall, and other pedestrian and cycle links servicing the area. There is further potential here to increase the offer of the space and create greater appeal to a wider audience through 'greening' initiatives, water based activities and events programmes. This space could become a significant destination and an important node on the Green Grid.

### **Strategic Project 8: East India Station/Blackwall Way**

East India Station serves as a key transport interchange as well as a vital key pedestrian link over Aspen Way on the Green Grid. Along with the adjacent Blackwall Way, it also provides a link to existing open space at Virginia Quay, along the River Thames and on to East India Dock Basin.

There is potential to improve route legibility through signage and other public realm improvements, and to maximise connectivity with existing open spaces and the River Thames. There is also potential to introduce new green elements along streets and the riverfront, both improving the attractiveness and offer of open space and maximising on the heritage assets and significant views along the riverfront.

# AREA FRAMEWORKS



Green Grid Network

Area Frameworks

1. Bishopsgate Goodyard / Bishopgate East / Allen Gardens / Spitalfields Farm
2. Swedenborg Gardens / News International Site
3. Cambridge Heath Road (from Regent's Canal to Bethnal Green Road / Roman Road)
4. St Andrews Hospital / Imperial Street - Tesco Site
5. Bow Common Lane / Cantrell Road Green Link
6. Pennyfields / Poplar High Street / Hale Street
7. Orchard Place / Orchard Wharf / Leamouth Peninsula
8. Blackwall Reach
9. Crossharbour Town Centre

## AREA FRAMEWORKS

Area Frameworks are locations on the Green Grid network where relatively intensive change is expected to happen, with an impact on existing walking routes and open spaces and with opportunities to create new routes and spaces. It is in these locations where getting Green Grid investment made in the right place, of the right type and at the right time is most crucial to the delivery of the strategy.

The Area Frameworks Plan indicates the location of nine Area Frameworks along the four Green Grid pilot routes. In most cases, the precise area of opportunity for investing in the Green Grid is not yet known or may change as development proposals and plans emerge and therefore only the general location is shown. As specific Area Frameworks are chosen to shape development then their spatial definition will be agreed.

These opportunities may be realised through the preparation and implementation of local planning policies (e.g. Area Action Plans, Supplementary Planning Documents, development/design briefs), a number of which have already started and which this strategy should seek to influence.

It is proposed the Green Grid Steering Group should

use the Business Plan (see Section 5) to select a small number of those Area Frameworks where the timing is right to shape forthcoming development proposals, resources permitting. The nature of the task is likely to differ from location to location. Generally, it will include an understanding of how the Green Grid can add value to emerging proposals through creating new accessible spaces and public realm and connecting those proposals into the neighbouring communities. Simple landscape/urban design analysis and proposals plans should result that may then be used by the council and the London Thames Gateway Development Corporation, as the local planning authorities, to frame design briefs and future masterplans for example.

As the strategy is monitored and reviewed, and survey work on the other Green Grid routes is completed, so other Area Frameworks will emerge. The challenge here will be to ensure the list remains small by focusing on those locations on the Green Grid where it is known that change will happen and where this strategy can shape that change.

### **Area Framework 1: Bishopsgate Goodsyrd/ Bishopsgate East/Allen Gardens/Spitalfields Farm**

- Creation of new 'City Garden' for community use, incorporating existing green spaces;
- Improved pedestrian access to existing and new green spaces;
- New sustainable resource management and play facilities incorporated within new green space;
- Integrate new permitted and proposed development sites within new green fabric;

### **Area Framework 2: Swedenborg Gardens/ News International Site**

- Existing park extended as green link across carriageway and integrated with future development proposals;
- Reconcile pedestrian and vehicular conflicts to improve link across carriageway and enhance accessibility.

### **Area Framework 3: Cambridge Heath Road (from the Regent's Canal to Bethnal Green Road/Roman Road)**

- New public realm opportunities to connect proposed development sites and improve quality of streetscape along high-profile section of route;
- Creation of new arrival/interchange spaces at Regent's Canal and Bethnal Green;
- Extend and link these spaces via green infrastructure along Cambridge Heath Road, incorporating and enhancing existing green spaces;
- 'Greening the Street' - introduce green elements along street to improve visual connections to green spaces to south, to enhance character, to improve air quality and to absorb noise pollution;
- Improve pedestrian links and accessibility, and provide more opportunities for seating.

### **Area Framework 4: St Andrews Hospital/ Imperial Street-Tesco Site**

- Reconcile pedestrian and vehicular conflicts and improve links across A12 and along route;

- Integrate proposed green space as linear park along route, incorporating 'plug and play' initiatives;
- New public realm opportunities to connect interchange points and integrate future development sites.

### **Area Framework 5: Bow Common Lane/ Cantrell Road Green Link**

- Improve pedestrian links to existing green spaces and accessibility along street through new public realm Improve visual links between the Green Grid route and adjoining open space;
- Integrate new permitted and proposed development sites at Bow Common Gasworks and Furze Street;
- Ensure green frontage within future residential development.

### **Area Framework 6: Pennyfields/Poplar High Street/Hale Street**

- Develop area as local activity hub, linking Recreation Centre, schools, housing estate and

parks;

- Incorporate new green elements along street to link existing and disjointed parks and green spaces to create more cohesive network;
- Address accessibility issues through provision of street improvement programme;
- Improve pedestrian links to existing open space and play areas;
- Reconcile pedestrian and vehicular conflicts and improve pedestrian links across carriageways;
- Maintain high standard of management and maintenance for existing open spaces.

### **Area Framework 7: Orchard Place/Orchard Wharf/Leamouth Peninsula**

- Capitalising on heritage and views across river by enhance the riverside spaces and development areas, improving pedestrian access and circulation to area, including seating and wayfinding to improve accessibility;
- Enhance existing biodiversity and create new opportunities for wildlife habitat;
- Integrate new permitted and proposed development sites;



- Further highlight area's industrial and maritime heritage.

### **Area Framework 8: Blackwall Reach**

This section of the Green Grid may be part of the Blackwall Reach regeneration project and runs along Naval Row, between the Robin Hood Gardens estate, Blackwall Reach, the DLR line/Aspen Way, and the Blackwall Tunnel (Northern Approach).

Existing open space and play areas within Robin Hood Gardens serve as a valuable patch of green within an area otherwise dominated by development and transport infrastructure. There is great potential to extend this open space by incorporating new green elements, such as street trees, as part of future development proposals.

This would improve the appeal for pedestrians both increasing the legibility of the Green Grid and enhancing its visual appearance and local character. There is further potential to coordinate these improvements along with the creation of new public realm as part of the redevelopment of both the Robin Hood Gardens estate and Blackwall Reach.

### **Area Framework 9: Crossharbour Town Centre**

In Cubitt Town, the Green Grid passes the Crossharbour DLR Station then heads south to Millwall Park. There are plans to revitalise and extend Crossharbour town centre to better serve and connect with Pepper Street, Millwall, Manchester Road and Canary Wharf. The new town centre will see improvements to public transport facilities and a new public square. An Area Framework here will identify how the Green Grid can extend into this area to add value to these proposals.



# 5.0 STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

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## INTRODUCTION

No matter how robust the Strategy, it will not succeed if its execution has not been properly thought through. Investing in the Green Grid will require a wide variety of public agencies to co-ordinate and support each others' actions. Crucially, therefore, this means identifying who will provide leadership for the Strategy and take responsibility for its delivery and what approach is taken to managing the Strategy on a day-to-day basis.

The following section presents proposals for each of the key components that are essential to successful strategy execution, namely:

- Governance
- Management
- Investment
- Business planning
- Marketing
- Planning

### **Governance**

The strategy has demonstrated the long term corporate value to the council and its partners of investing in the

Green Grid. Its ownership must therefore reflect this importance and ensure that it receives sufficient and sustained attention by key decision takers, policy makers and opinion formers in the county.

In considering the options for strategy governance, the Steering Group should take the following responsibilities into account that should shape a future governance structure:

- Publish this strategy and business plan (see 'Investment')
- Monitor and review the performance of the strategy on an annual basis and the business plan on a quarterly basis
- Be accountable for and report strategy performance to the council and other relevant partners
- Bid for public funds for Green Grid investment in its name
- Offer endorsement to others' bids for public funds for Green Grid investment
- Promote the Green Grid investment opportunities with private and third sector organisations



In addition, the role of Green Grid Champions should be considered. They should be figurehead positions. The role is suitable for a Councillor or senior figure in the Tower Hamlets Partnership. The role of a Green Grid Champion should encompass the following activities: maintain a high profile in the local media to promote the Green Grid; attend Green Grid promotional events; and represent the Green Grid on other relevant bodies.

A Green Grid Champion must be well aligned with the political structure and members of the local authority and its partners and other stakeholder organisations. Collaboration with local partners is essential with sufficient funding to resource the governance and management of this Strategy, ideally committed on at least a three year basis.

## Management

There will be a need for a dedicated Green Grid Co-ordinator with funding, delivery and promotion responsibilities, as managing the delivery of the strategy on a day to day basis will be crucial to its success.

In practice, the council is best placed to provide this service and post, though its funding may be secured in

part from other sources.

The primary responsibilities of the Green Grid Co-ordinator should include:

- Take interim ownership of new Investment Programmes and Strategic Projects and identify and secure appropriate new owner organisations
- Monitor and review the performance of the strategy
- Be accountable and report performance to the governance body with recommendations for actions
- Oversee all strategy marketing activities and communications
- Prepare the Business Plan for approval by the governance body and monitor its performance
- Lead or support the preparation of external bids for public funds for Green Grid investment
- Evaluate and recommend to the governance body the endorsement of others' bids for public funds for Green Grid investment
- Lead the promotion of Green Grid investment opportunities with private and third sector organisations

- Lead the securing of financial support from local businesses to sponsor Green Grid projects
- Lead arranging events with local communities to promote the use and care for the Green Grid
- Provide specialist Green Grid guidance to the local planning authorities (i.e. LBTH and the London Thames Gateway Development Corporation) in advising on Green Grid related planning applications and development policies and plans.
- Support the Green Grid Champion.

In practice, much of the role will be working alongside council officers and those working for other partner organisations to co-ordinate activities. It is crucial therefore that the Co-ordinator is able to work well with others and can command the authority of the governance body to align resources and offer day-to-day leadership for the Strategy. It is also important that the role uses the Strategy to quickly shape the new Investment Programmes and Strategic Projects and engages with prospective owner organisations to develop them. Each Investment Programme and Strategic Project should have a lead organisation/ officer and action plan agreed by the end of 2010.

The role should also build early linkages with key landowners, the RSL's for example, to gauge their level



of interest in the Strategy and with masterplanning teams working on the major development proposals across the Borough to determine what value can be added from a Green Grid perspective.

It is also recommended that the governance body adopts a Strategy Map & Scorecard management tool to track performance in delivering the Strategy, with the coordinator being responsible for collecting, analysing and reporting the data on a quarterly basis. This tool will be developed as part of the final strategy document.

## Investment

The level of investment required by this strategy will likely represent a step change in Green Grid investment in the Borough. The proper financing of the strategy over its full duration will therefore be a major challenge. The strategy has been formulated to acknowledge and align with the drivers of future investment in the Green Grid. In most cases, this demand is latent and expressed, i.e. the strategy will need to realise this demand and stimulate further demand, especially from non-public sector sources.

In this respect, the Strategy and Business Plans cannot ignore this reality and risk raising expectations

among local communities and partners. Much greater emphasis will have to be placed on securing investment from such sources than has been traditional in public realm and open space initiatives. Given the selection of project types, there will be opportunities to attract investment from these private and third sector sources, e.g. business sponsorship and community enterprise. In addition, the council should be aware that there are parts of the routes that do not coincide with its own related designations, e.g. Public Realm Improvement Areas, which may dilute its limited resource or create unhelpful competition for internal resources.

Securing the ongoing revenue expenditure and adhering to high quality maintenance service standards will be crucial to ensure the quality of the Green Grid is maintained. A failure in this respect is likely to undermine the long term success of the Strategy.

At present, the following potential sources of funds have been identified:

### Public Sector

- Local authority capital and revenue programmes, especially in relation to public open space,

publically owned land, leisure services and highways/footpaths etc.

- Public agency infrastructure funding, e.g. Transport for London, London Thames Gateway Development Corporation, London Development Agency, BIG Lottery/Heritage Lottery Fund, Homes & Communities Agency, English Heritage, Design for London, Working Neighbourhoods Fund, Natural England: Access to Nature; Forestry Commission: London Woodland Grants
- Public and other agency revenue funding, e.g. TfL, RSL, BID.





- Public and other agency revenue funding, e.g. TfL, RSL, BID

#### Private Sector

- On-site development costs controlled by planning conditions and governed by S106 agreements
- Financial contributions governed by S106 agreements (including commuted sums, contributions of land in lieu of payment and biodiversity/recreational land mitigation ‘banking’) and possible future development tariff (e.g. Tariff/Community Infrastructure Levy – especially suited to funding Strategic Projects)
- Land management and improvement funds.
- Local business/organisation sponsorship and/or carbon offsetting.
- Endowments.
- Landfill tax credit scheme.
- Aggregates Levy.

#### Third Sector

- Local community groups
- Voluntary contributions as part of community

action

- Social enterprises
- Third sector member’s funds, e.g. wildlife trusts
- Charitable trusts

The type of investment will most often be determined by the nature of the project, programme or development location. Only a local development tariff will offer the opportunity to secure a funding source that, although collected from specific qualifying development schemes, may be invested across a range of projects and programmes. All other sources of funds are likely to be tied to a specific project or programme opportunity and/or to a specific location.

There is also growing interest in the UK in innovative infrastructure investment models that may include Green Grid-type investment. These models include:

- Tax Increment Financing – by which the costs of forward-funded infrastructure are recouped from net additional local business tax revenues retained in the local area.
- Habitat Banking – by which revenues from development schemes requiring off-site mitigation of habitat loss are collected and invested in specific habitat creation projects.

- Carbon Offsetting – by which businesses, organisations and individuals seek (or in due course are likely to be obliged to) compensate for all or part of their unavoidable carbon emissions by investing in Green Grid projects that absorb an equivalent quantum of carbon dioxide

In the case of Tax Increment Financing, the Green Grid will have to be part of a wider infrastructure initiative, the relative merits of which are likely to be assessed in relation to other, more costly, infrastructure types than the Green Grid. At present, UK law does not provide the means by which local authorities can introduce such a mechanism although the Government is currently inviting proposals for pilots.

The two latter models (Habitat Banking and Carbon Offsetting) are currently being researched by DEFRA, Natural England and others and should be considered further in due course. Whilst the wider London region is likely to be a more appropriate scale for such initiatives to be effective and efficient, Tower Hamlets could be taken forward as a pilot area for London to test these ideas.

If the Community Infrastructure Levy mechanism is considered for use by the council then it may become an important future source of investment. In other council areas where this mechanism is being

**tower hamlets**



**green grid**



**Tower  
Hamlets  
Green  
Grid**

**HIGH STREET  
2012**



developed, it is understood that it will be allocated to both strategic projects (say, 20% of funds collected, to be managed by the council) and to local projects (say, the remaining 80%, to be delegated to area committees – the Tower Hamlets Local Area Partnerships? - to invest in each part of their area).

In principle, it would therefore seem sensible for that part of the 20% fund allocated to the Green Grid to be invested in the Strategic Projects identified in this Strategy. The Local Area Partnerships may choose to ‘top-up’ this funding on a project in their area; it is expected that the majority of this funding for the Green Grid will be invested in a combination of Investment Programmes.

### **Business planning**

It is proposed that the future governance body for the strategy prepares, approves and monitors the performance of a Business Plan as the main means by which investment is secured and implemented. The plan should:

- Have a one year duration, beginning 2010/11 and updated on an annual basis
- Propose which of the strategy’s objectives and targets it intends to focus on contributing to

- Select and define the appropriate Investment Programmes, Strategic Projects and Area Frameworks it proposes to focus Green Grid investment on for that period and set out their expected outputs in relation to the strategy’s objectives and targets
- Provide an estimate of capital and ongoing maintenance expenditure based on sketch scheme proposals and budget estimates
- Set out how the necessary investment will be secured to fund delivery
- Set out how the benefits of the selected Green Grid actions will be communicated to local stakeholders
- Be monitored by the Co-ordinator on behalf of the governance body on a quarterly basis.

The process of extending the scope of the strategy to cover the whole Green Grid has yet to be determined. However, it is recommended that this be done in time for new strategic initiatives to be considered for inclusion in the 2011/12 Business Plan. In doing so, it will be sensible to use the same surveying techniques, based on the PERS Audit method used to assess the pilot sections of the Green Grid.

### **Marketing**

The strategy has been prepared to respond to analysis undertaken as part of the initial survey work that sought to identify those segments of the local population that had most to benefit from the Green Grid.

Given the strategy is mostly concerned with influencing the behaviour of people, the most sensible means of segmentation was to use lifestyles; more specifically, by the reasons for using open spaces and the routes that connect them.

The analysis showed that two specific segments – parents/carers with young children and older people – are likely to benefit most from the Green Grid, with the local residents more generally benefiting from its overall impact. The strategy therefore focuses on maximising its benefits to these groups as a priority before considering how those same interventions can be leveraged to benefit other groups. In which case, the marketing effort should ensure that it connects most effectively with these groups.

In communicating with these and all other groups, it must be accepted that the language and terminology common to the Strategy is not that accessible to those outside the immediate stakeholder community. If the



Strategy is to be successfully executed then its vision, objectives and actions have to be well understood, not just by those implementing projects but by the wider community.

The ‘Green Grid’ name is not currently in widespread or common usage but has strong potential. It is well established in local government in East London as an environmental initiative and describes well in two words what the concept is about. For those reasons alone the name should be retained.

The challenge then lies in developing the name into a distinctive brand that can be applied to all those activities that are part of the Green Grid by people and organisations outside of the council and its main partners.

In a traditional commercial context, a brand can be described as an implied promise that builds and maintains customer awareness and loyalty to a value proposition. In this context, the Strategy needs to portray in its name, identity, actions and ways of working, a clear purpose to a wide range of citizens and local organisations so that they want to engage with it and offer continued support over the years to come. This loyalty becomes more valuable when communities and stakeholders choose to favour the

Green Grid above others when resources, over which they have an influence, are limited. In addition, loyalty can only be built by high awareness and by the successful and sustained delivery of actions on the ground.

Another challenge facing the Strategy is the need to appeal to a multi-ethnic audience considerably wider than the normal, albeit significant, environmental ‘niche’. Although the proposed focus of Green Grid action will be to enable and encourage two target population segments the Strategy has demonstrated the broader potential social and economic value of the Green Grid; this value will only be realised if those engaged in planning social and economic change see this value too.

It is proposed that the Business Plan includes proposals for communicating the benefits of the selected Green Grid actions to local stakeholders. These are expected to include how users will be engaged in project design and how the council and its partners will build and maintain an awareness of the benefits of using the Green Grid.

More generally, the council should consider using opportunities to use the Green Grid brand identity with any of its initiatives aimed at promoting active

travel and using open spaces and should encourage other agencies to do the same. The council often promotes these types of initiatives in schools, leisure centres and through other public media. In these cases, it may be most effective to associate the Green Grid brand with these other initiatives rather than develop the Green Grid as another separate brand programme. In which case, the Green Grid brand may become a ‘kite mark’ for high quality local environments across the Borough.

## **Planning**

The planning system will play an important role in promoting opportunities to invest in the Green Grid and in managing development to ensure that improvements and financial contributions are made. The promotion and management of development through the local planning system – the Tower Hamlets Local Development Framework (LDF) – will play this role in executing the Strategy in the following ways:

## **Policy**

The LDF has established a clear policy hierarchy for the Green Grid in the Core Strategy and expects to cascade this policy framework into its other Development Plan



Documents, Supplementary Planning Documents and other planning policy statements and masterplans.

The Strategy will enable the planning authorities to be more prescriptive if they choose to be. It provides a clear and robust evidence base in terms of its Spatial Framework, the aims in its Area Frameworks and its choice of Strategic Projects and Investment Programmes, all of which have benefited from stakeholder involvement in their evolution and choice.

### **Development Management**

At this level, it will be crucial that the development management process, from pre-application meetings through to Reserved Matters and S106 Agreements, is able to fully take into account the aims of the Green Grid. Well-informed officers in the local planning authorities should be able to negotiate on-site provision and off-site contributions in line with this strategy from a strong position, making sure that these contributions are fair, reasonable and directly relate to development and balanced against other planning objectives.

They should benefit from the high level commitment of the council and the day-to-day support of the Green Grid Co-ordinator to understand how the Strategy

can be achieved through development management and how reasonable opportunities for Green Grid investment can be realised.

The Strategy has deliberately avoided being too precise in exactly how and where Green Grid investment may happen in order to provide both the local planning authorities and applicants sufficient flexibility to respond to opportunities as they arise. In particular, all Design & Access Statements of development proposals adjoining or reasonably close to the Green Grid should clearly explain this response and how protected, enhanced and new Green Grid assets will be maintained once enhanced or created.

Contributions including commuted sums should be sought from developers to secure provision of Green Grid asset consistent with adopted plans and standards. This should include provision for on-going maintenance.

Exceptionally, where there are over-riding considerations, variations to the planned provision of Green Grid asset may be permissible provided that it does not adversely affect the overall integrity or value of the Green Grid. In such instances, financial provision for off-site works and/or the funding of land acquisitions elsewhere may be sought.

### **Design Principles**

Design guidance sets out a series of overarching high level design principles within which the design briefs for the individual initiatives, projects and programmes can be written in the subsequent business/ implementation plan. The guidance relates to the design process, future management & maintenance, and delivery and can be embodied in the following principles:

- Central to design process is the realisation that the quality and management of neighbourhoods, streets and green spaces are directly related to civic pride, community and civic values or perceptions, and identity. Creating an inspirational vision that wins the support of local communities and decision makers is crucial in pulling together broad-based partnerships that deliver new schemes effectively and efficiently.
- The early engagement with key consultees, stakeholders and the community to develop and refine the vision and agree an overarching set of objectives for the streets and spaces should be central to the design process helping to build momentum towards regeneration, raising aspirations where necessary and reaching consensus on the priorities to deliver the vision;





- The design should maximise multi-functional benefits to ensure that the demands for different users are considered and incorporated;
- The design and specification for aftercare should promote co-ordination and continuity of design to ensure the vision for the project can be maintained. Appropriate long-term maintenance, governance and management arrangements and funding need to be secured to retain quality green infrastructure and ensure that the benefits are long lasting, the lifetime cost of the design should be considered to minimise future maintenance costs.
- The designs for and promotion of green space and networks play a direct role in improving the lives, livelihoods and health of local people and communities and therefore the primacy of end users and the target audience and their preferences should be considered;
- Increase the effectiveness and accessibility of the existing greenspace network whilst creating an interlinked network of high quality, multi functional accessible spaces and waterways;
- Ensure that the improvements proposed are sustainable in the short and the longer term

### **Health Impact Assessment**

The council believes that the Green Grid concept is intended to deliver widespread beneficial health impacts. The value of preparing a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) in this context is therefore limited. However, in formulating the strategy, consideration was given to which particular users in the general population stood to benefit the most, given their relatively higher dependence on walking routes and open spaces.

This analysis is summarised in the Marketing section above. It concluded that two specific groups will benefit the most from the Green Grid – parents and carers with young children and older people – and that the strategy should ensure that these two groups’ needs are given greatest weight in the choice and design of specific actions. In practice, however, investments to improve streets and open spaces are very likely to benefit every user.

The analysis is the equivalent to the screening step in the initial stages of an HIA. On the basis that there are likely to be only positive health impacts arising from this strategy and that the means of achieving these impacts are obvious and reflected in the strategy, then no additional assessment of health impacts is required.

LDĀ DESIGN



#### London

<sup>A</sup> 14-17 Wells Mews  
London W1T 3HF  
United Kingdom

<sup>T</sup> +44 (0)20 7467 1470

<sup>F</sup> +44 (0)20 7467 1471

#### Oxford

<sup>A</sup> Worton Rectory Park  
Oxford OX29 4SX  
United Kingdom

<sup>T</sup> +44 (0)1865 887 050

<sup>F</sup> +44 (0)1865 887 055

#### Peterborough

<sup>A</sup> 17 Minster Precincts  
Peterborough PE1 1XX  
United Kingdom

<sup>T</sup> +44 (0)1733 310 471

<sup>F</sup> +44 (0)01733 553 661

#### Exeter

<sup>A</sup> Kings Wharf, The Quay  
Exeter EX2 4AN  
United Kingdom

<sup>T</sup> +44 (0) 1392 260 430

<sup>F</sup> +44 (0) 1392 260 431

<sup>W</sup> [www.lda-design.co.uk](http://www.lda-design.co.uk)

LDA Design Consulting LLP  
Registered No: OC307725  
17 Minster Precincts, Peterborough PE1 1XX

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