

Committee: Cabinet	Date: 5 March 2008	Classification: Unrestricted	Report No:	Agenda Item No:
Report of: Emma Peters - Corporate Director of Development and Renewal		Title: Blackwall Reach Regeneration Project - Development Framework		
Originating Officer(s): Owen Whalley - Service Head, Major Projects		Wards Affected: Blackwall and Cubitt Town		

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report advises Members of the outcome of recent resident and stakeholder consultation on the draft Development Framework for the Blackwall Reach Regeneration Project, following its consideration by Cabinet on 1st August, 2007. This was developed in line with the Council's Housing Investment Strategy which sets out a vision for housing in Tower Hamlets and outlines a range of approaches depending on different investment needs and investment opportunities for different estates and housing types within the Borough. Homes within the Blackwall Reach area were identified for the comprehensive regeneration masterplan approach.
- 1.2 The Development Framework sets out the vision for the comprehensive regeneration of Blackwall Reach and is intended to guide future planning applications for the area. If adopted, it will enable the Council to ensure that development applications coming forward serve both the local and wider Tower Hamlets' communities, by harnessing the residential and commercial development investment opportunities to provide new and better affordable homes and other essential facilities and amenities in this historically deprived area.
- 1.3 The consultation exercise, undertaken over 3 months, in collaboration with English Partnerships (the National Regeneration Agency), has resulted in a number of changes to the Development Framework. These are now incorporated into proposals for the redevelopment and comprehensive regeneration of 1-214 Robin Hood Gardens, 1-22 Anderson House, 1-11 Mackrow Walk and 2-10 Woolmore Street, E14.

Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (as amended) "Background Papers" used in the preparation of this report, given limited circulation in conjunction with this report on CD-ROM

Brief description of "Background paper" of holder and address where open

Name and telephone number

Robin Sager Tel: 020 7364 2439

Blackwall Reach - Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) Scoping Report
Blackwall Reach - Statement of Community Participation
Blackwall Reach - Regeneration Needs Assessment
Blackwall Reach - Interim Sustainability Appraisal
Cabinet Report CAB 039/078 (1 August 2007) - Blackwall Reach Draft Regeneration Framework

- 1.4 However, the consultation identified a number of key issues which, it is proposed, will need to be addressed in a Rehousing Strategy for Blackwall Reach, if the Development Framework is adopted. These issues are outlined in Section 6 (below). This Rehousing Strategy would need to be devised in tandem with the preparation of an outline planning application.
- 1.5 Cabinet approval is being sought separately to dispose of the Council owned St Matthias site to English Partnerships to enable the first phase of the Blackwall Reach Regeneration Project. This is set out in paras. 6.6 - 6.8
- 1.6 The Blackwall Reach Project is one of the major regeneration projects within the Borough. The joint work of the Council and English Partnerships, which is to be subsumed within the newly created Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), on this project is seen as an exemplar model for future work of HCA with local authorities to regenerate estates and increase supply of new affordable homes.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is recommended to:-

- 2.1 Agree the approval of the amended Development Framework set out in Appendix 1 as Interim Planning Guidance for the Blackwall Reach area.
- 2.2 Agree the key recommendation for the comprehensive regeneration of the Blackwall Reach area with the amendments set out in section 7 of this report, including the demolition of properties at Nos.1-214 in Robin Hood Gardens, 1-22 Anderson House, 1-11 Mackrow Walk and 2-10 (Evens) Woolmore Street.
- 2.3 Authorise the Corporate Director Development and Renewal, after consultation with the Leader of the Council and Lead Member for Housing and Development, to make any necessary minor amendments to the Development Framework.
- 2.4 Agree that the Corporate Director Development and Renewal develop a Rehousing Strategy in accordance with this report and that decant status be granted for the affected homes in Robin Hood Gardens, Anderson House, Mackrow Walk and Woolmore Street, with effect from September 2008, as set out in paras. 6.1.1.
- 2.5 Agree that the Corporate Director Development and Renewal shall develop a strategy, in liaison with English Partnerships, for the buy-back

and precautionary compulsory purchase of affected home owners, for future consideration by Cabinet; including the requirement that RSL or developer partners must make provision in the scheme for replacement homes on an affordable, flexible ownership (shared equity) basis, for existing resident home owners who wish to remain in the area but may not be able to purchase at full market value.

- 2.6 Authorise the Corporate Director Development and Renewal to negotiate voluntary buy-backs with private home owners listed in para 1.3 who wish to leave the area to make their own arrangements, in accordance with standard Council practice, as set out in paras. 6.2 to 6.3. and that the costs of securing vacant possession of tenanted and privately owned properties can be contained within the project on the basis described in para. 6.9.
- 2.7 Agree that the Corporate Director Development and Renewal assist in English Partnership's procurement of an RSL partner for the St Matthias site (this is subject of a separate report on this agenda), to bring forward proposals to commence the first phase of new-build homes as quickly as possible.
- 2.8 Agree that further community engagement activity will continue, as set out in paras. 9.1 to 9.5, to:-
 - 2.8.1 Consult on the proposals in the Development Framework as these are worked up in more detail to form an outline planning application.
 - 2.8.2 Enable residents aspirations to be understood and thereby accommodated within the outline planning process. The partners have committed to working with the LVG to develop a residents' charter to articulate these aspirations.
 - 2.8.3 Provide more information about the proposed Rehousing Strategy, decant process and option to return, and provide tenants with comparative information about RSL and Council tenures, to help them decide whether to opt to return to a new RSL home, or for an alternative Council home through the decant process.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 'Blackwall Reach' comprises eight hectares of homes, businesses and open space that lie between Cotton Street, Aspen Way, the Blackwall Tunnel Approach and East India Dock Road in E14 (See Map 'Appendix 2').

- 3.2 Blackwall Reach is characterised by run-down homes and business premises in need of investment, a lack of decent shops and community facilities and poor quality, under-used open spaces. Years of under-investment, compounded by poor urban design, have led to a community suffering serious environmental decline.
- 3.3 There are approximately 250 homes in the Blackwall Reach area most of which are in Robin Hood Gardens, but also including Anderson House and homes on Mackrow Walk and Woolmore Street. There are 206 Council rented homes, 34 leaseholders and 10 freeholder properties in the area.
- 3.4 Some 214 of these homes are in Robin Hood Gardens, which comprises two blocks of flats, built in 1972, and requiring substantial repairs. There are significant defects to the external envelope, roof coverings, bathrooms, kitchens, electrical wiring and other service infrastructures. It is estimated that at least £20 million will be required to remedy these defects and bring the dwellings up to a satisfactory standard to deliver sustainable improvements. It is possible that this work would require a temporary decant.
- 3.5 Robin Hood Gardens was identified as having scope for a comprehensive regeneration masterplan approach. This was approved by the Council in March 2007, as part of the Council's "Housing Investment Strategy".
- 3.6 Blackwall Reach is isolated from the wider community by the busy roads which border it. There are no shops within the area, getting to the nearest shopping areas of Poplar High Street and the Chrisp Street shopping centre require residents to cross busy roads.
- 3.7 Whilst there is an enclosed sports court, play equipment and green space between the two blocks of Robin Hood Gardens, these are in poor condition and use of the green is limited by the steep sided mound at its centre. Access to other areas of open space outside the site is difficult.
- 3.8 Woolmore Primary School is included in the project area. There is a need to plan for an expansion of this from one form entry school to three form entry to provide sufficient school places for the local community, including families living in new homes in the area. This is within the context of the Council needing to increase primary school places in the Borough overall, particularly in the south eastern area of the borough, to meet the needs of the rising population. Proposals for Woolmore School will take into account the need to keep the existing school open during construction of new facilities and as well as the need to plan for additional community services which may be provided from the school.

- 3.9 In order to support the Blackwall Reach community, and create a new sustainable neighbourhood, the Council has been working closely with English Partnerships to prepare a Development Framework for the area.
- 3.10 A Draft Development Framework, which included two main options, was agreed by LBTH Cabinet on 1st August 2007 for consultation with the local community. Option 1 proposed redevelopment of Anderson House and homes on Mackrow Walk and Woolmore Street, but the retention and refurbishment of Robin Hood Gardens itself. Option 2, which offered substantially wider regeneration benefits, including around 800 new affordable homes, proposed comprehensive redevelopment of the whole area, including the two blocks on Robin Hood Gardens.
- 3.11 The Development Framework (Appendix 1) has been amended to take into account the views of the local community and statutory agencies gathered during the consultation period, and the technical and financial arguments supporting a comprehensive approach to tackling the long-term regeneration needs of this area.
- 3.12 The Framework thus sets out a vision for Blackwall Reach, providing around 800 new affordable homes for rent and shared ownership (550 more than at present) within a wider commercial and residential development, including the replacement of the existing rented and leaseholder homes on Robin Hood Gardens, new shops, broader community uses, improved connectivity, new business premises and attractive new open spaces, all underpinned by high quality urban design and architecture.
- 3.13 A number of key issues arose in the community consultation which are summarised in Section 5 of the report. Consultation highlighted the need, as detailed proposals are developed, to prepare a clear Rehousing Strategy, to reinforce links to other economic and social regeneration programmes within LBTH, and for ongoing community engagement, which is addressed in Sections 6 and 9 respectively.
- 3.14 The Development Framework, if approved by Cabinet, will form a material consideration in the determination of all planning applications in the area, and will therefore be a key tool in shaping the future of this key community in Tower Hamlets. Approval of this strategic planning guidance document will help the Council to direct development within the project area, and to harness investment from potential neighbouring development, which is likely to go ahead independently and in a fragmented way if the Council does not take this chance to direct it to maximize the opportunity to fund its regeneration aspirations.
- 3.15 This report confirms that the adoption of the Framework will be a step towards providing not only new and better affordable homes, including replacement homes for those who wish to stay in the area, but also other essential facilities and community amenities in this historically deprived area.

3.16 For ease of reference this report comprises the following sections:-

Section 4: summary of the proposed option for regeneration.

Section 5: consultation and key issues.

Section 6: developing a proposed Rehousing Strategy.

Section 7: amendments to the Development Framework.

Section 8: planning issues.

Section 9: ongoing community engagement.

Section 10: project programme.

Sections 11 to 17: comments on legal, financial, Children's Services, equal opportunities, anti-poverty, action for a greener environment and risk management .

Appendix 1 Blackwall Reach Regeneration Project Development Framework

Appendix 2: Map of the Blackwall Reach area

Appendix 3: Details of formal representations

4 SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED OPTIONS FOR REGENERATION

4.1 Members were advised in the 1st August 2007 Cabinet report about the 2 main options for regeneration. These included either the retention (Option 1), or the demolition and redevelopment (Option 2), of the 214 homes in the two Robin Hood Gardens blocks; both options also included the redevelopment of around 38 homes in Anderson House, Woolmore Street and Mackrow Walk.

4.2 Following consultation with the local community, and technical review, a number of amendments have been made to the Development Framework. These are set out in Section 7. The recommended proposal is now for comprehensive regeneration of the Blackwall Reach area (formerly Option 2) which is based on the following key principles:

- Redevelopment including the provision of up to 3000 new homes, a range of new local shops and a variety of new commercial premises which can house a range of local businesses.
- The redevelopment of Robin Hood Gardens, which will enable the provision of around 800 new affordable homes, including potential replacement homes for displaced tenants and resident home owners who wish to remain in the area.
- The Woolmore Street properties of 1-22 Anderson House, 1-11 Mackrow Walk and 2-10 (Evens) Woolmore Street will be demolished, to enhance the available public space.

- Freehold ownership of the land on which the Council's homes are replaced will remain with the Council.
- Additional residential development will need to provide a minimum of 35% affordable housing, together with the required levels of family housing across all tenures, in accordance with the Council's policies.
- New affordable homes for rent and shared ownership / shared equity are likely to be built and managed by an RSL partner, or by more than one RSL.
- It is recognized from consultation that many residents may wish primarily to remain Council tenants: they will be able to do so through the decant process which will be set out in the Rehousing Strategy. Alternatively those tenants wishing to remain in the immediate Blackwall Reach area would be able to take up an option to apply for one of the new affordable rented RSL homes. This is explained further in paragraph 6.1 below.
- That there is no net loss of public open space and that there is the opportunity to increase the amount of open space provision in the area and greatly improve its quality.
- That the existing education, health, youth and community facilities (including Poplar Mosque) are redeveloped and fully replaced with modern and improved facilities, of at least the same size, to ensure they have the capacity to serve an increased residential population.
- That pedestrian and cycle linkages to and from the area are improved.
- Meet and exceed the Mayor's standards for carbon reduction and renewable energy

5 CONSULTATION AND KEY ISSUES

Methodology

- 5.1 The consultation to date has been undertaken by a community consultation team, managed jointly by English Partnerships and Council officers, and has been wide-ranging. It included 110 home visits and a successful keynote event, involving the whole community in November 2007, which was attended by 225 adults and 40 children. Apart from the exhibition, which illustrated the proposals and outlined the rehousing opportunities, there were dedicated workshops on a range of topics, including tenant decants and leaseholder issues.
- 5.2 In the wider process there were also consultation workshops with the Poplar Mosque, women and local youth, and officers met with the governing body of Woolmore School, which is a strong lynch-pin for the

local community. A freephone helpline was set up and a website (www.blackwallreach.co.uk). Leaflets and newsletters have been delivered to the residents in the area.

- 5.3 The project also engaged with the key statutory authorities and stakeholders to ensure that they are involved in shaping the future regeneration of Blackwall Reach.

Key Issues

- 5.4 The consultation identified a number of key issues that have either influenced amendments to the amended Development Framework, or must be addressed as part of the proposed Rehousing Strategy. If the recommendations in this report are agreed, the Rehousing Strategy will be prepared for ongoing community engagement during the outline planning period.
- 5.5 **Support for redevelopment:** information gathered, in particular from the home visits, highlighted that there is strong support for replacing rather than retaining Robin Hood Gardens, with 81% preferring this option. This was substantiated at the keynote event where, following a panel discussion, majority indicated their support by an informal show of hands for the proposed redevelopment of the main Robin Hood Gardens blocks.
- 5.6 **Desire to remain in the area:** many residents expressed a strong desire to have an opportunity to return, or to remain in the area, with 77% saying they would wish to stay in the neighbourhood following redevelopment.
- 5.7 **Concerns about RSL tenure:** during the course of the consultation event and through a subsequent petition, many residents have reiterated their loyalty to Council tenure. 36% interviewed would consider an RSL rented home whilst many indicating they would also wish to remain Council tenants, if this were possible; it was explained during consultation that this might preclude the opportunity to apply for a new home in Blackwall Reach itself, as under current Government regulations these are likely to be developed and managed by an RSL partner.
- 5.8 Consultation showed there is:-
- strong support for demolition and the provision of new affordable homes;
 - a likelihood that many residents would like to remain in the area, to benefit from its regeneration.
- 5.9 As set out in Section 9 below, Members are asked to note that more detailed ongoing community engagement work is planned to address the concerns that some tenants have about RSL tenure, and thus reassure

those who may wish to take up the proposed option to rent a new affordable RSL home in the area.

5.10 Information will be provided to explain that RSL tenure is a viable and secure option for local people who need to rent an affordable home, on comparable terms with Council tenure, particularly given the Government's requirement for parity of rent levels between RSL and Council homes by 2012.

5.11 Other issues arising from the consultation include:

- The **requirement for full decant of the affected homes**, and how this will be managed in a way that tenants can understand, and that limits inconvenience.
- **The potentially high number of hidden or emergent households** – this would be gauged fully when the Council carries out individual housing needs assessments, following the proposed award of decant status, but it may impact on the decant process.
- **The desire of most residents with children at Woolmore Primary School for their needs to be considered** when temporary and / or permanent rehousing offers are made, so that they can remain as near to the school as possible.
- **The need for Woolmore Primary School to continue to function fully during regeneration** works, and to be made larger, rather than be replaced, with no loss of staff or pupils in the interim.
- **The need for clear advice and assistance on the rehousing process**, especially among the elderly, sick or disabled.
- **Tenants' desire to know when key decisions will be made**, who will make them, and the rational processes behind them. This will be addressed through ongoing engagement and specific consultation on decants and rehousing.
- **Timescales and phasing of the programme**, to minimize disruption to the community, and to enable options to return and/or remain for those wishing to do so.
- **Need for continued community engagement** on a range of issues, particularly decant and rehousing.
- **Consideration of the proximity of future community facilities and provision of an improved Mosque.**
- **Noise pollution concerns** regarding the tunnel approach road.

- **Connectivity improvements** required to the South and West of the area.
- Adjustment of the red-lined Development Framework area **to prevent blight by removing the existing private developments** in Bullivant Street, Delta Building and Indigo Mews.

5.12 **The statutory consultees and key stakeholders** all responded positively to the draft Regeneration Framework. The Greater London Authority, Transport for London, Docklands Light Railway and London Thames Gateway Development Corporation all supported the overall regeneration proposals and all wish to play a role in the ongoing evolution of the project. A summary of the respective representations are contained in Appendix 3 to this report. The respective bodies identified a number of detailed issues which will need to be addressed as the proposals are worked up in more detail in the preparation of the outline planning application. These include:

- the need to ensure that **decking over the Blackwall Tunnel approach road** does not create level differences which may restrict permeability
- further **justification for tall buildings** in this location
- the importance of ensuring that there is **sufficient capacity within education and transport facilities** to accommodate the additional population as well as appropriate provision of open space for both the development itself and the wider community
- the need to ensure that any **development does not compromise the operational requirements of the Docklands Light Railway**

5.13 **A formal representation** was submitted on behalf of Avrin & Sons Limited of Prestage Way (Appendix 3). The representation expressed general support of the framework but objected to the inclusion of their client's site within the Framework, stating that it should be able to be brought forward independently from the wider regeneration proposals. However, this would be contrary to the fundamental objective of the Framework which is to ensure that new development is undertaken on a comprehensive basis rather than a piecemeal, individual site basis in order that the aims and objectives of achieving a sustainable community can be successfully delivered.

6 DEVELOPING A REHOUSING STRATEGY

Addressing Tenants and Homeowners Needs

6.1 A number of recommendations are made to Members to enable the further development of the Blackwall Reach regeneration proposals, and in recognition of the key issues and concerns raised by tenants and home owners during the consultation process. These recommendations include:-

6.1.1 That decant status be granted for the affected homes in Robin Hood Gardens, Anderson House, Mackrow Walk and Woolmore Street, deferred to September 2008, to allow:-

- review by LBTH of the wider lettings implications arising from regeneration related decants across the borough;
- development of a detailed Rehousing Strategy, in liaison with English Partnerships and community representatives through the Local Voices Group, including indicative phasing and a clear decant strategy, to reduce the requirement for double-decants and temporary rehousing, as far as possible.

6.1.2 That existing tenants should have an option to return, if they wish, to the new (RSL) homes for affordable rent, subject to developing the terms after consideration of the issues raised by the wider lettings review and the Rehousing Strategy.

6.1.3 Noting that secure Council tenants wishing to remain in Council tenure will be able to apply for alternative Council accommodation which meets their requirements, through the decant process. It will be explained to tenants why this will probably preclude them from returning to the new homes on Blackwall Reach, as these are likely to be built and managed by RSL partners.

6.1.4 Noting that officers will develop a strategy, in liaison with English Partnerships, for the buy-back and precautionary compulsory purchase of affected home owners, for future consideration by Cabinet. This includes a requirement that RSL or developer partners must make provision in any scheme for replacement homes on an affordable, flexible ownership (e.g. shared equity) basis, for existing resident home owners who wish to remain in the area, but may not be able to purchase at full market value.

6.1.5 Recognition that the adoption of the Development Framework may blight the privately owned homes in the locations listed in para.2.3. It is therefore proposed that LBTH officers be permitted to negotiate voluntary buy-backs with home owners wishing to leave the area, to make their own arrangements. Offers would be made in accordance with standard Council practice, which is based on legal guidelines, and has been the subject of previous reports to Cabinet. Partner RSL's are required to follow the same approach.

- 6.2 When leaseholders' or freeholders' homes are repurchased, they receive the full current market value of their property. Leaseholders who occupy their properties as their "principal" homes receive an additional 10% of the final market value as a statutory "Home Loss" payment. Leaseholders who do not occupy their homes may be eligible for an extra 7.5% of the purchase price as a "Basic Loss Payment," if they have maintained their property.
- 6.3 To help displaced leaseholders move to their new homes, their reasonable moving costs are paid: for example, solicitors' and valuers' professional fees, the hire of private removal companies, disconnection and reconnection of cookers, washing machines, and all associated domestic costs of moving from one property to another, including an allowance for carpets and curtains etc.
- 6.4 In addition to this standard option the buy-back strategy would reflect that a future RSL partner may be able to offer further options when leaseholders' homes are purchased. These options would be developed in consultation with affected home owners, English Partnerships and the future RSL partners, and would include provision of replacement homes on an affordable, flexible ownership (shared equity) basis. Other options might be lease swaps and "do it yourself" shared ownership options, for residential leaseholders prepared to find their own replacement properties.
- 6.5 The aim is that home owners are treated fairly, and that resident owners have opportunities to remain living on the improved estate if this is their preference.

Appointment of RSL Partner for St Matthias Site

- 6.6 Cabinet approval is being sought separately in a report titled "St Matthias Site Disposal" to dispose of the Council owned St Matthias site to English Partnerships. This will enable the site to come forward as the first phase of the Blackwall Reach Regeneration Project. In particular it will enable English Partnerships and the Council to secure new development that will provide initial re-housing of residents from Robin Hood Gardens – which is to be replaced under the wider regeneration proposals – as part of a wider mixed tenure scheme.
- 6.7 English Partnerships will lead the procurement of an RSL partner for the St Matthias site, in close liaison with LBTH, to ensure that the requirements and standards of both organisations are fully met. The intention is to procure a mixed tenure scheme which is likely to maximise the number of affordable homes for rent and shared ownership / equity, to help meet the decant requirements of residents affected by the proposed redevelopment.
- 6.8 Authorisation is sought in recommendation 2.7 for LBTH officers to assist in English Partnership's procurement of an RSL partner for the

St Matthias site, to bring forward proposals to commence the first phase of new-build homes as quickly as possible.

Securing Vacant Possession

- 6.9 The costs of securing vacant possession of tenanted and privately owned properties in the locations listed in para. 2.3 can be contained within the project and will be cashflowed through the following means:-
- 6.9.1 Ring-fencing part of the capital receipt from the leasehold disposal of St Matthias site to English Partnerships to cashflow the initial costs of leaseholder buyouts – this part to be repaid to the Council’s Local Priorities Programme next financial year.
- 6.9.2 English Partnerships has an in-principle commitment (subject to their Board approvals) to further invest in the project to help meet any short to medium term gap funding requirements. This will be dependent on all project partners agreeing what is the best value and most sustainable delivery mechanism as part of the detailed business planning process which will follow the adoption of a preferred option. A report will follow on this when an in principle agreement has been reached will all prospective partners.

7. AMENDMENTS TO THE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

- 7.1 The consultation identified a number of areas where the proposals for the physical development could be improved. The consultation also identified substantial support for a redevelopment option because of the decay and design problems of Robin Hood Gardens. Residents have strongly articulated that this support is linked to the detail of the Rehousing Strategy and particularly around housing costs, landlord and overcrowding issues.
- 7.2 Having reviewed the regeneration benefits to the community of a comprehensive approach and the technical and financial disadvantages of a refurbishment option, it is proposed that the improvements to the framework option be incorporated into a revised demolition and rebuild option (the former option 2. A key part of the revised option is the more clearly articulated set of Council commitments about the process and the desired outcomes of the housing strategy which are outlined in section 6.
- 7.3 The physical amendments are as follows:-
- 7.3.1 **Connectivity** - Cotton Street has been included within the boundaries of the project to overcome the difficulties residents experience trying to cross such a busy road

- 7.3.2 **Minimising Blight** - The red line setting out the boundary of the Blackwall Reach area has been adjusted to exclude the homes on Bullivant Street, Indigo Mews and Delta Building, which might otherwise be blighted as a result of the uncertainty about possible redevelopment in the area.
- 7.3.3 **Community facilities** - Issues will be taken forward as part of the outline planning permission. The location and accessibility of these were considered important, as was the capacity to accommodate a growing community for example within the school and mosque.
- 7.3.4 **Decking Options (over the tunnel approach)** - The problems of the tunnel approach experienced by the residents are fully acknowledged in terms of noise, air pollution and connectivity. The proposal for decking as a solution is being assessed to ascertain whether this is technically and financially feasible within the context of the whole scheme. The technical team will also explore further the design quality and personal safety concerns raised by the GLA about the impact of building an isolated deck 6m above ground level. It is anticipated that this matter will be resolved in early 2008 and will inform the outline planning application.

Alternative methods to improve the acoustic and air quality around the proposed development are being considered. These include:

- Ensure the existing accommodation meets the acoustic and air quality standard.
 - Provide an acoustic barrier on the west side of the Blackwall Tunnel Approach, which will also improve air quality, and improve east west connectivity by the introduction of a bridge.
 - Improvements to the appearance of the Transport for London and police control facilities.
- 7.4 **Wider Regeneration Initiatives** - The proposed development will help attract investment to the Borough and will result in enhanced educational, community and public realm facilities. It will help cement the Borough's relationship with English Partnerships as the National Regeneration Agency committed to regenerate sustainable communities through working collaboratively with other public sector partners. The scheme and the connectivities proposed should assist neighbouring areas and give rise to opportunities for further local and funding initiatives that will be discussed with Members as they emerge.

- 7.5 The retention of Robin Hood Gardens is not considered viable for a number of reasons, because it achieves far fewer affordable homes within the regeneration scheme. Retaining Robin Hood Gardens would mean less land available to work with, and less new development. This in turn would reduce the number of new homes it would be possible to build by up to a thousand, and as a consequence less affordable homes as a proportion, and fewer receipts from sales to fund some of the wider regeneration proposals.
- 7.6 Retention would mean losing a quarter of the potential green space, restricting the area to 1.5 hectares rather than 2 hectares possible with a wider redevelopment. There would also be less community and health facilities with 1,150m² rather than 1,650m² of floorspace available, and significant 500m² reduction in the space available for new education facilities to enlarge Woolmore School.
- 7.7 If Robin Hood Gardens were retained it would still need to be renovated to the Government's Decent Homes Standard. Due to its poor condition this will require substantial works to the interior of each Council rented home. It is possible that this work would require a temporary decant. Extensive works will also be required to the exterior of the buildings. It would also be very difficult for structural reasons within the existing building blocks to provide larger units to respond to the evidence overcrowding.
- 7.8 The projected costs of full scale renovation to deliver sustainable improvements are likely to be more than £20 million. As things currently stand, Robin Hood Gardens, including the surrounding blocks, will form part of the stock that will be managed by Tower Hamlets Homes (Arms Length Management Organisation) on behalf of the Council.
- 7.9 Even if Tower Hamlets Homes achieves a minimum two-star status at an Audit Commission inspection there is not likely to be sufficient capital investment available to achieve the wider regeneration objectives, including substantially more new replacement affordable homes for local people, and the other community benefits, which could be delivered by the proposed scheme.
- 7.10 If the existing Council homes are retained there would also be an implication for leaseholders as some of the works required would carry a recharge contribution.
- 7.11 **Poplar Mosque** - Negotiations will be required with representatives of Poplar Mosque on the corner of Woolmore Street and Bullivant Street regarding reprovision of this facility. It is recognized that the Mosque has a key role in the local community, and negotiations will include the offer of providing appropriate new premises within the wider development.

- 7.12 **Design** - It is envisaged that a regeneration scheme, if agreed, should provide opportunities for new homes in the area for existing residents, within a vibrant and sustainable new residential and business community. The basic design concepts are outlined in the appended Framework, see chapters titled 'The Vision' (Page 15) and 'Building Blocks for a Sustainable Community' (Page 16).
- 7.13 A key aim of the regeneration of Blackwall Reach is to provide high-quality, well designed homes that meet existing and future needs of residents and which they can afford. It is also recognized that new buildings should adhere to best practice guidance including 'By Design – Better Places To Live' and 'The Urban Design Compendium', including requirements that new buildings must:–
- relate well to the new open spaces provided, encouraging natural surveillance of these areas;
 - have building materials and finishes of the highest quality;
 - be designed to ensure that appropriate amenity space is incorporated, including children's playspaces;
 - employ innovative design solutions to ensure that family housing and higher-density urban housing can be provided together;
 - be designed so that there is no difference in quality of materials or design between social rented, intermediate and market housing.
 - be designed as sustainable homes and addressing carbon reduction.

8 PLANNING ISSUES

Planning Policy Context

- 8.1 English Partnerships and LBTH have worked within the planning policy context established by the London Plan, the Lower Lea Valley Opportunity Area Planning Framework and the Council's Interim Planning Guidance – in particular the Leaside Area Action Plan – to prepare a Development Framework that will enable the sustainable regeneration of the area.
- 8.2 The Draft Development Framework, approved by Cabinet, set a positive planning context for the regeneration area, building on the Leaside Area Action Plan's vision for Blackwall Reach as a location suitable for high density mixed use residential, employment (industrial and office), retail and community uses.
- 8.3 English Partnerships has continued to work with LBTH to ensure that the Development Framework is in line with the objectives that all key stakeholders have for the area to ensure that the regeneration area benefits are maximised. A planning strategy approach has been set out in order to identify the key processes and milestones for preparing the

necessary planning applications following approval of the Development Framework. This incorporates the Council's own procedures for pre-application discussions. The Strategy includes the statutory requirements relating to Environmental Impact Assessment and will enable detailed consideration to be given to the evolving design of Blackwall Reach proposals to ensure the highest design standards, delivery of the necessary linkages to the wider area and ensure appropriate treatment of development abutting conservation areas.

- 8.4 As part of this Strategy, English Partnerships intends to submit an Outline Planning Application, which should be capable of determination without reliance on further detailed applications or reserved matters, based upon the Development Framework for the Blackwall Reach Regeneration Area, which will establish the development parameters for the regeneration.
- 8.5 A Detailed Planning Application will need to be taken forward to enable the commencement of first phase of the scheme. Timescales for this are still to be agreed.

9 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 9.1 The regeneration partners, English Partnerships and Tower Hamlets are committed to developing an accessible and meaningful approach to ongoing resident involvement in the Blackwall Reach Regeneration Project. The initial consultation and engagement work has provided the foundations for the initiation of a Local Voices Group (LVG), which it is hoped, will become the principle way for the partners to engage with key community stakeholders for the foreseeable future. Two Local Voices Group meetings have been held to date.
- 9.2 English Partnerships has made a commitment to funding the costs of community engagement consultants, capacity building opportunities and further newsletters so that the LVG can develop the skills and knowledge to discuss and influence the complex technical and planning issues associated with this regeneration.
- 9.3 There will be ongoing consultation with specific groups such as Woolmore School and Poplar Mosque.
- 9.4 Recommendation 2.8 proposes that wider community engagement activity will need to focus on:-
 - Consult on the proposals in the Development Framework as these are worked up in more detail to form an outline planning application.
 - Enable residents aspirations to be understood and thereby accommodated within the outline planning process. The partners

have committed to working with the LVG to develop a residents' charter to articulate these aspirations

- Provide more information about the proposed Rehousing Strategy, decant process and option to return, and provide tenants with comparative information about RSL and Council tenures, to help them decide whether to opt to return to a new RSL home, or for an alternative Council home through the decant process. It is planned to do this initially through the LVG and then to report back to residents as a whole.

9.5 If deferred decant status is awarded, as recommended, a household housing needs analysis would be undertaken as part of the pre-decant preparation. This will also give an opportunity to explain the decant process and the likely housing options available on a more individual basis.

10 PROGRAMME

10.1 If a scheme is developed and agreed, the Council and English Partnerships would work together closely as delivery agents for the regeneration.

10.2 The timetable set out below illustrates the proposed broad redevelopment programme as it is currently projected.

Key Milestones	Target Date
LBTH Approve Development Framework	Spring 2008
Submit Outline Planning Application	September 2008
Consultation on Planning Application	September 2008
Resolution to approve Planning Application	December 2008
Planning Approval granted	January 2009
Works on site start	September 2009
Works completion	2015

10.3 The works would be phased over different sites in the regeneration area, each commencing when the site becomes available. The first phase is new homes targeted for completion by 2010/11 on the St Matthias site, which would provide decant rehousing opportunities for residents from Blackwall Reach.

11 CONCURRENT REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (LEGAL)

11.1 The Development Framework will in due course become a Supplementary Planning Document established by the Planning and

Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Planning Policy Statement PPS12. This has statutory status as part of Local Development Framework.

11.2 The requirements of section 105 of the Housing Act 1985 as to consultation with Residents are being complied with under the current consultation process. Any future use of compulsory purchase powers will be part of a separate report in due course.

12 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

12.1 This report updates Cabinet on the outcome of the consultation to date regarding the proposed Blackwall Reach regeneration and seeks approval of the amended development framework, arising from that consultation, as Interim Planning Guidance for the area.

12.2 The Development Framework will form the basis from which to develop outline planning consent, although it is intended that further community engagement will be undertaken prior to submission of an application. The costs of community consultation and engagement will be borne by English Partnerships as the lead agency in the proposed development.

12.3 As part of the housing strategy for tenants and homeowners in the area, authority is sought to negotiate voluntary buy-backs. Initial funding for this, subject to Cabinet approval, will be through utilisation of part of the receipt arising from the sale of the St. Matthias site, plus additional funding from English Partnerships. There may be, in the short-term, an adverse impact on rental income due to the likelihood of increased turnover resulting from the designation of decant status with regard to tenanted properties.

12.4 At this stage, except for potential expenditure outlined in paragraph 12.3 above, the key costs to the Council relate to officer time and associated costs in developing the scheme. These will be contained within the Major Project Development budget.

13 COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDRENS' SERVICES

13.1 The expansion of Woolmore Primary School as part of the development will form a key element of the overall strategy to ensure there are sufficient primary school places in the borough for the increasing population. The school will be part of the wider delivery of community services and will be planned for community use of facilities out of school hours.

14 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 The proposed regeneration programme is specifically aimed at addressing the causes and consequences of social exclusion.
- 14.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) Scoping report is included in the background papers to this report, and there is a commitment for a full EqIA to be produced as part of the Outline Planning Application.

15 ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 The statistical 'Output Area' the Blackwall Reach Regeneration Project falls in was identified in the 2001 census as one of the most deprived in England (ranked 1,189 out of 32,482 most deprived being 1). This project aims to revive the community and create a new sustainable community to fully meet the needs of local people now and in the future.

16 SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

- 16.1 The development framework itself recognises that proposals should address all aspects of environmental sustainability, and will aim to meet and exceed the sustainability targets set out in the London Plan.
- 16.2 In addition, The London Borough of Tower Hamlets and English Partnerships commissioned Capita Symonds Ltd to undertake an Interim Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) of the Options proposed in the Draft Development Framework. Although not a statutory requirement, this Sustainability Appraisal (SA) has been undertaken to deliver a more sustainable approach to future development, and broadly adheres to the Department for Communities and Local Government's Sustainability Appraisal Guidance document 'Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents' (November 2005), whilst also incorporating the requirements of Strategic Environmental Assessment as set out in the European Union Directive 2001/42/EC.
- 16.3 In summary, the proposals outlined in the Draft Blackwall RDF (August 2007), if implemented, should result in the realisation of significant social, economic, and environmental benefits for present and future residents of the Site to be realised.
- 16.4 Measured relative to the Baseline Case (i.e. if no action was taken to regenerate Blackwall Reach) , the option of redevelopment of Robin Hood Gardens in combination with measures to address the impact of the Blackwall Tunnel Approach Road is assessed as delivering the greatest sustainability gain, providing the greatest benefits to present and future

residents on the Site. There are minor environmental drawbacks, with increased waste arisings, both of a temporary (demolition and construction) and permanent nature (household waste arisings) , as well as the possibility of a net increase in CO2 emissions, largely caused by a slight growth in local population. However, these negative effects will largely be offset through the construction of new energy efficient housing.

16.5 The Outline Planning Application will be subject to a full Environmental Impact Assessment which will provide a more detailed appraisal of the environmental impacts of the development together with identification of necessary mitigations measures.

17 RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

17.1 This consultation may have prompted anxiety within the community. The development framework sets out a series of principles which seek to reassure residents and other land users about future land ownership, the replacement and enhancement of affordable housing provisions and the replacement of any displaced community facilities.

17.2 The recommendations in this report recognise the need to engage further with tenants and homeowners to address their specific concerns in the contexts of the achievement of the Council's wider regeneration objectives. This included amendments to the framework to undertake to meet planning requirements in a collaborative way for the long term.

18 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Blackwall Reach Regeneration Project Development Framework.

Appendix 2 - Map of the Blackwall Reach area.

Appendix 3 - Details of formal representations.

Appendix 4 - Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D (as amended)
Background Papers given limited circulation on CD ROM in conjunction with this report.