

## 11. Revitalising our town centres

### Introduction

11.1 Town centres form an important part of the borough's distinct identity and character, acting as anchors for local neighbourhoods with a mix of uses and activities that draw our diverse communities together. The nature of our town centres continue to change and evolve – they are increasingly becoming hubs for leisure, social and community activities, not just for shopping. They also provide significant opportunities for employment and housing, particularly on upper floors. Additionally, across the borough, there are other areas of commercial, leisure and retail activity (including individual stand-alone units) which have a role in supporting the borough's needs.

11.2 These policies seek to ensure that our town centres remain vibrant and sustainable while continuing to meet the needs of the people that use them. They also underpin our strategic mission as set out in the Tower Hamlets Town Centre Strategy 2017 to 2022 to 'create places that are at the heart of the community, celebrate local heritage and improve health and well-being' and to 'improve the attractiveness, appeal and ease of use to make each of our town centres more in tune with the shopping and leisure needs of local residents and other visiting consumers'<sup>42</sup>.

11.3 This section contains the following policies.

- Policy S.TC1: Supporting the network and hierarchy of centres
- Policy D.TC2: Retail in our town centres
- Policy D.TC3: Retail outside our town centres
- Policy D.TC4: Financial and professional services
- Policy D.TC5: Food, drink, entertainment and the night-time economy
- Policy D.TC6: Short-stay accommodation
- Policy D.TC7: Markets.



<sup>42</sup> Tower Hamlets Town Centre Strategy 2017 to 2022

**Policy S.TC1****Supporting the network and hierarchy of centres**

1. Development is required to support the role and function of the borough's town centre hierarchy and the provision of town centre uses in line with the principles set out below.

<b>Tier</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Functions / roles</b>
Central Activities Zone	Refer to the Policies Map	a. Apply the London Plan's approach to development within the Central Activities Zone.
Major Centre	Canary Wharf	a. Provide a high proportion of comparison retail compared to convenience along with leisure and civic uses. b. Continue to support its role as a key global employment centre. c. Improve local accessibility to Canary Wharf and its strategic transport interchange, and legibility and way-finding across the area.
Tower Hamlets Activity Areas	Refer to the Policies Map	a. Provide areas of transition between the scale, activity and character of the Central Activities Zone and Canary Wharf Major Centre and their surrounding areas. b. Support a mix of uses which make a positive contribution to health and well-being. c. Promote active uses at ground floor level.
District Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bethnal Green Road</li> <li>● Brick Lane</li> <li>● Chrisp Street</li> <li>● Crossharbour</li> <li>● Roman Road East</li> <li>● Roman Road West</li> <li>● Watney Market</li> <li>● Whitechapel</li> </ul>	a. Promote as vibrant hubs containing a wide range of shops, services and employment. b. Direct a new civic centre for the borough to Whitechapel District Centre.

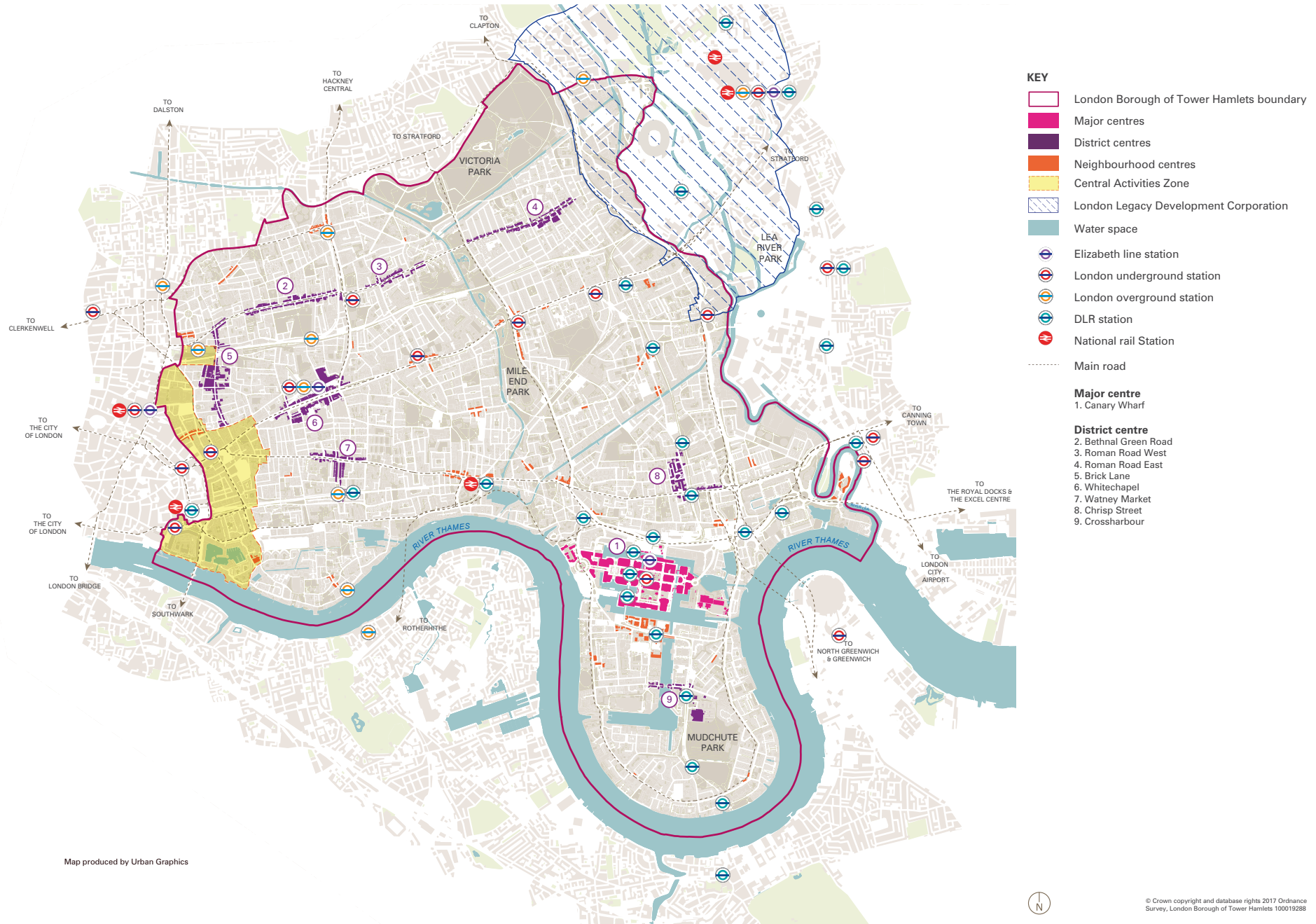
Tier	Location	Functions / roles
Neighbourhood Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Aberfeldy Street</li> <li>● Barkantine Estate</li> <li>● Ben Jonson Road</li> <li>● Burdett Road South</li> <li>● Cambridge Heath</li> <li>● Columbia Road</li> <li>● Devons Road</li> <li>● Limehouse</li> <li>● London City Island</li> <li>● Mile End</li> <li>● Poplar High Street</li> <li>● Redchurch Street</li> <li>● Salmon Lane</li> <li>● South Quay</li> <li>● Stroudley Walk</li> <li>● Stepney Green</li> <li>● Thomas More</li> <li>● Wapping Lane</li> </ul>	<p>a. Provide a range of shops and services to meet the needs of their local catchments.</p> <p>b. Support the specialist functions that exist within Redchurch Street and Columbia Road Neighbourhood Centres to continue providing vibrant shopping and leisure destinations which attract visitors to the borough.</p> <p>c. Ensure development is appropriate to the nature and scale of each individual centre.</p>
Neighbourhood Parades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bow Road</li> <li>● Burslem Street</li> <li>● Cambridge Heath Road</li> <li>● Caspian Wharf</li> <li>● Castalia Square</li> <li>● Cleveland Way</li> <li>● Manchester Road</li> <li>● Mile End Road</li> <li>● Old Ford Road</li> <li>● St Leonards Street</li> <li>● St Pauls Way</li> <li>● Westferry Road</li> <li>● West India Dock Road/ Pennyfields</li> </ul>	<p>a. Ensure that Neighbourhood Parades meet the needs of their local catchments and complement the role of other centres further up the hierarchy.</p>

2. New development within the Central Activities Zone, Tower Hamlets Activity Areas and Major, District and Neighbourhood Centres will be expected to support the delivery of new retail and leisure floorspace to meet identified needs.
3. New development must contribute positively to the function, vitality and viability of the Major Centre, District Centres and the Columbia Road and Redchurch Street Neighbourhood Centres. New development within other Neighbourhood Centres and Neighbourhood Parades must ensure sufficient provision of local shops and services to meet the day-to-day needs of local communities. The scale and type of development within the town centres hierarchy should reflect the character, scale and role of each centre through:
  - a. ensuring town centres are accessible, active, well-used and safe during the day and night
  - b. encouraging evening and night time economy uses that contribute to inclusiveness, economic vitality and viability and complement existing activities, where appropriate
  - c. promoting mixed-use and multi-purpose town centres (which include new residential uses where appropriate) with a mix of unit sizes and types to assist in the creation of vibrant centres that offer a diversity of choice, and meet the needs of local communities
  - d. supporting multifunctional, diverse and inclusive leisure and cultural venues and promoting associated uses
  - e. promoting and focusing markets in town centres and recognising their role in adding variety, promoting local enterprise and contributing to local character, and
  - f. supporting temporary and community uses where they help to activate and revitalise vacant town centre units and sites.

## Explanation

11.4 This policy defines the network of centres across the borough (as illustrated on Figure 11) and describes the role and function of each centre and how they will continue to serve the needs of the borough and the wider area. The boundaries of these centres are shown on the Policies Map.

Figure 11: Town centre hierarchy



Map produced by Urban Graphics



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**11.5** Development within these centres will need to demonstrate how it accords with policies and guidance within the hierarchy as appropriate.

**11.6** The western part of the borough (as shown on Figures 5 and 11) lies within the Central Activities Zone. The Central Activities Zone is the geographical, economic and administrative heart of London, one of the world's most important financial and business centres, and contains the major employment, leisure and retail designations within London.

**11.7** All development proposals within this zone should primarily refer to the relevant policies set out in the London Plan and the Central Activities Zone Supplementary Planning Guidance.

**11.8** Major Centres generally contain over 50,000 square metres of retail and leisure floorspace and serve a borough-wide catchment area<sup>43</sup>. Development within the Major Centre of Canary Wharf would be expected to demonstrate that it contributes to the continuing growth of Canary Wharf and supports its role as an important centre for international business and finance within the Primary and Secondary Preferred Office Locations, as well as its emerging residential neighbourhood at Wood Wharf.

**11.9** Canary Wharf is already fulfilling the role of a metropolitan centre because it serves a wide catchment area, extending over several boroughs and into parts of the wider south east region. It contains over 100,000 square metres of retail, leisure and service floorspace with a significant proportion of high-order comparison goods relative to convenience goods as well as significant employment, service and leisure functions. This policy sets guidelines to help facilitate and support the re-designation of Canary Wharf as a Metropolitan Centre.

**11.10** The Tower Hamlets Activity Areas (as shown on the Policies Map) are specific areas bordering the Central Activities Zone and the Major Centre of Canary Wharf where the scale, continuity and intensity of town centre activity and land use is different to that found across the rest of the borough. Within the Tower Hamlets Activity Areas, applicants will be expected to demonstrate how the proposals will enhance movement and connectivity to and through the designation, in particular improving links between Canary Wharf and surrounding areas to the north and south.

**11.11** Where the proposed site is within a Tower Hamlets Activity Area but outside of a Major, District or Neighbourhood Centre boundary, applications should include assessments of the mix of uses within a reasonable surrounding radius, outlining how the proposed use would contribute to and support the area's function to avoid over-concentrations of uses.

**11.12** District Centres (as shown on the Policies Map) generally meet more local needs, with catchments of around 800 metres and provision of convenience goods and services. Typically, they contain around 10,000-50,000 square metres of retail, leisure and service floorspace, and often have specialist functions. They have high levels of accessibility. They are also generally suitable locations for housing and employment.

**11.13** While Whitechapel currently has the status of a District Centre, the opening of the Elizabeth line and the emergence of a nationally important high-tech and bio-science cluster means it has the potential to be re-designated as a Major Centre before the end of the plan period. Such growth in Whitechapel to enable re-designation would include delivery of a new civic centre, additional employment and retail space and public realm improvements, with a relatively high proportion of comparison goods relative to convenience goods. Each year, we will monitor the development of the Canary Wharf and Whitechapel town centres over the course of the plan period to provide evidence to inform future reviews of the London Plan.

<sup>43</sup> The Central Activities Zone, Major Centres and District Centres are defined in the London Plan (GLA, 2016)

**11.14** Neighbourhood Centres (as shown on the Policies Map) contain clusters of retail and services to meet the needs of a more local catchment and typically contain at least sixteen units. Units are predominantly small-in-scale, with convenience supermarkets of around 500 square metres tending to be the largest occupants. Larger neighbourhood centres may also have particular specialist functions, and can be appropriate for some leisure and night-time economy uses. Three new neighbourhood centres have been identified at the following locations: Burdett Road South, London City Island and South Quay, whose designation reflects existing mixed-use activity and/or responds to recent developments and anticipated population growth. In particular, the designation of South Quay reflects the aspiration within the South Quay Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document to create a 'high street' environment along Marsh Wall, with an enhanced convenience offer and other local services to meet the immediate needs of residents. Such provision would complement rather than compete with the adjacent major centre at Canary Wharf.

**11.15** Columbia Road and Redchurch Street have individual characteristics in comparison to other neighbourhood centres that have emerged in recent years, with a growth in specialist retail along with some leisure provision. As such, development proposals within those designations will be subject to additional requirements in comparison to other neighbourhood centres and these are set out in subsequent policies to help maintain their uniqueness and appeal.

**11.16** Table 3 provides a breakdown of the retail floorspace capacity requirements across Major, District and Neighbourhood Centres during the plan period.

**Table 3: Proportion of new retail floorspace required to 2031**

Type of centre	Name	Amount of convenience floorspace (square metres) <sup>44</sup>	Amount of comparison floorspace (square metres) <sup>45</sup>
Major Centre	Canary Wharf	1,119	No capacity
District Centre	Bethnal Green	919	1,868
	Brick Lane	54	63
	Chrip Street	381	1,077
	Crossharbour	504	No capacity
	Roman Road East	565	1,523
	Roman Road West	48	No capacity
	Watney Market	471	389
	Whitechapel	2,262	3,105
Neighbourhood Centres	All	2,033	2,066
<b>Borough-wide capacity</b>		<b>7,941</b>	<b>No capacity</b>

<sup>44</sup> Tower Hamlets Town Centre Retail Capacity Study (2016)

<sup>45</sup> Tower Hamlets Town Centre Retail Capacity Study (2016). Please note: Where identified that there is 'no capacity', this represents a negative retail capacity figure as a result of committed development.

11.17 The level of need for retail floorspace set out in Table 3 is based on a constant market share approach over the plan period. It takes into account the impact of committed development, which is why some town centres do not have any floorspace capacity in the comparison retail sector as a result of the growth potential in these areas, particularly in Canary Wharf.

11.18 These figures should not, however, represent a ceiling to new development. New floorspace and investment may enhance the profile of a town centre, helping to claw back expenditure, and increase market share and trade retention. Furthermore, there is still no certainty that committed development will come forward as planned in the short term, highlighting the importance of ensuring these figures are kept under review throughout the plan period.

### Policy links

- Policy S.DH1: Delivering high quality design
- Policy S.EMP1: Creating investment and jobs
- Policy S.CF1: Supporting community facilities
- Policy D.CF3: New and enhanced community facilities

### Evidence links

- Tower Hamlets Town Centre Retail Capacity Study (2016)
- Town Centres Supplementary Planning Guidance (GLA, 2014)





## Policy D.TC2

### Protecting retail in our town centres

1. Within the Primary Frontages of the District Centres and within the boundaries of Columbia Road and Redchurch Street Neighbourhood Centres, as shown on the Policies Map, development should:
  - a. contribute to achieving a minimum of 60% of ground floor units as A1 (retail) use, and
  - b. contribute to the activity and vitality of the town centre by offering space to meet and relax, subject to A1 (retail) units not falling below the threshold set out above.
2. Development will not be supported where it would have a negative or potentially negative impact on the vitality and viability of Primary Frontages and Columbia Road and Redchurch Street Neighbourhood Centres as well as the health and well-being of local people.
3. Within the Secondary Frontages, development should:
  - a. contribute to achieving a minimum of 40% of ground floor units as A1 (retail) use, and
  - b. support a broad range of non-retail commercial and community uses which support the overall function of the town centre.
4. Outside of the Primary and Secondary Frontages within the District Centres, uses that do not require high levels of footfall (e.g. offices) and supporting town centre functions will be supported alongside retail uses.
5. Within Neighbourhood Centres (except Columbia Road and Redchurch Street) and Neighbourhood Parades, the proportion of units within A1 retail use should not fall below 40% of all units within the designated centre. New development should also be appropriate to the nature and scale of the individual Neighbourhood Centre/Parade.
6. Where the loss of A1 retail units is proposed that results in the overall level of A1 units falling below the proportions set out within parts 1, 3 and 5, it must be demonstrated that the shop has been vacant for a period of more than 12 months and robust evidence of efforts made to market the shop over that period at an appropriate rent (providing three comparable shop unit rents within the town centre) is provided.
7. Where a reduction of A1 retail floorspace is proposed within Major, District and Neighbourhood Centres, development must demonstrate that:
  - a. where there is sub-division of a large unit, the new units are of a size and scale conducive to supporting the role and function of their surroundings
  - b. within Primary Frontages and the boundaries of Columbia Road and Redchurch Street Neighbourhood Centres, any loss of floorspace is of a scale that will not materially alter the nature of the unit, its future viability and the function of the host shopping area, and
  - c. outside of Primary Frontages and the boundaries of Columbia Road and Redchurch Street Neighbourhood Centres, robust evidence is provided demonstrating the existing level of floorspace genuinely cannot be maintained and that appropriate height, width and depth of floorspace would remain for town centre uses.

## Explanation

**11.19** This policy identifies a series of Primary and Secondary Frontages within the District Centres (as shown on the Policies Map). Primary Frontages include a high proportion of retail uses, while Secondary Frontages provide opportunities for a greater diversity of uses to support the vitality and viability of the town centres.

**11.20** Where comprehensive redevelopment alters the layout of existing Major, District or Neighbourhood centres, proposals to change the use of a retail unit within the redeveloped town centre will be assessed based on the character and mix of uses of the surroundings within the redeveloped site.

**11.21** Development will be expected to contribute towards achieving a minimum of 60% of units as A1 retail use within the Primary Frontages and 40% of units as A1 retail use within the Secondary Frontages. Due to their unique nature and characteristics, the minimum 60% figure should also be applied to Columbia Road and Redchurch Street Neighbourhood Centres to promote and maintain the specialist function of those areas. This will ensure that retail remains the dominant use within these areas and core function of the town centre to reinforce its vitality, viability and attractiveness. The Primary Frontages (see Part 1) will have the highest levels of activity and footfall. As such, it is also appropriate to locate uses to these areas which enhance the character and attractiveness of the town centre as a place to visit, such as cafés, restaurants and drinking establishments. Other uses would be appropriate on upper floors within the primary frontages, such as offices, gyms or residential uses. However, access to upper levels must be designed to promote street-level activity and not undermine the viability of ground-level units.

**11.22** Within the Secondary Frontages, a wider mix of uses (e.g. financial and professional services, community and leisure facilities) which contribute to the vitality and viability of the town centre will be supported. On this basis, a lower minimum retail threshold will be appropriate. However, it would not be appropriate to allow the clustering of non-retail uses where it would have negative impacts on the health and well-being of the town centre within these or any other locations.

**11.23** Undesignated frontages are areas within the District Centres (see Part 4) that contribute to the overall offer of the centre but perform a more tertiary function (e.g. small offices, wholesalers and market storage) or community functions with little or no retail use.

**11.24** Frontages have not been designated within the Canary Wharf Major Centre. This is because it is a predominantly undercover shopping complex in single, private ownership that functions differently to other town centres in the borough.

**11.25** A minimum proportion of 40% of units within Neighbourhood Centres (excluding Columbia Road and Redchurch Street) and Neighbourhood Parades should be within A1 retail use.

**11.26** As part of the planning application process, applicants are advised to undertake surveys (e.g. vacancy rates) to justify that changes of use would not result in the proportions of A1 units within the Primary and Secondary Frontages falling below the proportions set out in the policy above. Where marketing evidence is required as part of Part 6, applicants should outline where and how marketing has been undertaken, having regard to our guidance on marketing which will be regularly updated. For instance, marketing activity must include evidence that the asking rent has been set at a realistic rate and the site has been advertised on national commercial and retail property websites. Developments should utilise the most recent information

available to justify changes of use from A1 retail use within the Primary and Secondary Frontages to accord with the minimum percentage figures set out in parts 1, 3 and 5. We will regularly monitor the mix of uses within the borough's town centres through the Annual Monitoring Report. Frontages are calculated as a whole across the centre, not within individual stretches of units.

**11.27** The design, accessibility and layout of town centres will have an important impact upon their success, and in turn the health and wellbeing of local people. This policy seeks to promote a range of unit sizes and types within each centre to meet the needs of different users and occupants. In relation to Part 7(a), applicants need to demonstrate that development proposals would not lead to an over-supply of particular unit types which confirms that there is a range of unit types across the wider town centre and that there is a need for the size and type of unit being proposed. In addition, the Transport for London's Healthy Streets principles should be applied to the design, accessibility and layout of town centres in order to ensure they remain attractive and competitive.

**11.28** Whilst the changing nature of town centres and consumer demands may mean less need and demand for retail space in some locations, the requirements set out in the policy where loss of retail (A1 use) is proposed ensures that any loss will need to be clearly justified (e.g. where units are too large to let as a single entity; therefore subdivision would increase attractiveness to potential occupants).

**11.29** However, it is acknowledged that there may be instances where some loss of floorspace within the Primary Frontages contributes to achieving wider objectives, such as the redevelopment of the site or improving access to upper levels. In such cases, street-level retail units should remain of a size and scale that is viable to current or future occupants and that access to upper levels has been designed so as to not undermine the activity and function of the Primary Frontage. In order to satisfy Part 7, applicants will need to provide examples of other retail units of similar proposed size and layout in the area which are occupied and the types of occupants that such units attract. Information on the local market should also be submitted, including details of retailer demands and lettings in the local area to ensure that development does not result in 'token' retail units being created that are too small for the requirements of occupants.

### Policy links

- Policy S.DH1: Delivering high quality design
- Policy D.DH9: Shopfronts
- Policy D.DH10: Advertisements, hoardings and signage
- Policy S.EMP1: Creating investment and jobs

### Evidence links

- Tower Hamlets Town Centre Retail Capacity Study (2016)
- Town Centres Supplementary Planning Guidance (GLA, 2014)

## Policy D.TC3

### Retail outside our town centres

1. Outside of the borough's Major, District and Neighbourhood Centres, new retail development will be subject to:
  - a. a sequential test, and
  - b. an impact assessment where individual units or extensions exceed 200 square metres gross floorspace.
2. Development resulting in the loss of A1 shops outside of Major, District or Neighbourhood Centres will only be supported where:
  - a. the shop is within a 300 metres walking distance of the nearest alternative A1 shops, and
  - b. the shop has been vacant for a period of more than 12 months and robust evidence is provided of efforts made to market the shop unit over that period at an appropriate rent (providing examples of three comparable shop unit rents within the vicinity), or
  - c. the site is unsuitable for continued retail use due to its accessibility, size or condition and there is no viable prospect of a retail use on the site, taking account of the projected residential growth in the vicinity.

## Explanation

**11.30** New retail development will be directed towards existing centres in accordance with the sequential approach set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which assesses the suitability of alternative sites in the following order of priority: town centres, edge-of-centre sites and other out-of-centre locations which are well connected to existing centres. However, subject to meeting the requirements set out in Part 1, we recognise that demand for retail also exists in locations outside of Major, District and Neighbourhood Centres to meet the immediate convenience needs of local people and/or support the function of designated employment locations.

**11.31** New retail units or extensions outside of the centres set out in Part 1 should not exceed 200 square metres gross floorspace to ensure that they are local in nature and do not harm the vitality and viability of existing centres. Where individual retail units exceed the size limit set out in Part 1, applicants will be required to submit an impact assessment in accordance with the NPPF. The primary shopping areas of the Major and District Centres are illustrated on the Policies Map. For Neighbourhood Centres, their boundaries (as illustrated on the Policies Map) will equate to the primary shopping areas of these centres.

**11.32** The Central Activities Zone and Tower Hamlets Activity Areas have a unique role in the town centre hierarchy. New retail uses may be appropriate in these areas, especially those of a smaller scale, where they would not detrimentally affect the vitality and viability of Major, District or Neighbourhood Centres. We take a judgement-based approach to proposals within these areas and a sequential test and/or impact assessment may still be required where a proposal has a potentially adverse impact on one or more Major, District or Neighbourhood Centre.

**11.33** Part 2 contains a general presumption against the loss of retail space outside of town centres. However, in certain circumstances, such losses may be justified. Applicants should outline where and how

marketing has been undertaken, including evidence of advertising on national commercial and retail property websites and a realistic asking rent. However, it is recognised that in some cases requiring marketing evidence may be counterproductive to enhancing local character if the condition of the property is such that attempting to let it would be unrealistic. In such cases, the applicant should submit a detailed report on the history and condition of the property to robustly justify why marketing evidence should not be required and that re-provided retail space as part of redevelopment would not be viable at the location.

### Policy links

- Policy S.EMP1: Creating investment and jobs
- Policy D.DH9: Shopfronts

### Evidence links

- Tower Hamlets Town Centre Retail Capacity Study (2016)

## Policy D.TC4

### Financial and professional services

1. Outside of the borough's Major, District or Neighbourhood Centres, financial and professional services uses will be supported where they are local in scale and there is a reasonable prospect of the unit being occupied.
2. Payday loan shops will only be permitted in the Central Activities Zone, Major Centre, Tower Hamlets Activity Areas and secondary frontages of the District Centres providing there would not be an over concentration of similar businesses.

### Explanation

**11.34** Part 1 of the policy seeks to guide the location and scale of uses within the A2 use class (financial and professional services). Such uses are appropriate both inside and outside of the borough's Major, District or Neighbourhood town centres, although within out-of-town-centre locations, adequate information must be submitted to demonstrate that the anticipated asking rents/purchase price of the space would be appropriate to the location (taking account of our indicative figures) or that a suitable occupier has been secured.

**11.35** Under Part 2 of the policy, applicants proposing new payday loan shops will need to submit details of other businesses within the Major or District Centres (or within a radius of 400 metres where located within the Tower Hamlets Activity Areas or Central Activities Zone) and where such businesses are located in relation to the proposed site demonstrating that the proposal would not give rise to a clustering which could undermine the vitality of the host centre and negatively impact on the well-being of local people.

## Policy links

- Policy D.SG3: Health impact assessments
- Policy S.EMP1: Creating investment and jobs

## Evidence links

- Tower Hamlets Town Centre Retail Capacity Study (2016)
- Town Centres Supplementary Planning Guidance (GLA, 2014)



**Policy D.TC5****Food, drink, entertainment and the night-time economy**

1. Cafés, restaurants and drinking establishments (use classes A3, A4 and AA) will be supported within the Central Activities Zone, Canary Wharf Major Centre, Tower Hamlets Activity Areas, District Centres and Neighbourhood Centres (as shown on the Policies Map) provided that:
  - a. it can be demonstrated that the overall vitality and viability of the town centre would be enhanced, and
  - b. where proposed within Primary or Secondary Frontages, the proportion of A1 (retail) units would not fall below the levels set out in Policy D.TC2.
2. Cafés/restaurants and drinking establishments (use classes A3 and A4) in Neighbourhood Parades and outside of the town centre hierarchy will only be supported provided that they meet the following criteria:
  - a. Cafés and restaurants (A3 uses) can demonstrate that the proposal would support surrounding uses and would not undermine the function of nearby town centres, or form part of a concentration of uses that would cumulatively cause harm to the viability of the borough's town centres.
  - b. Drinking establishments (A4 and AA uses) will only be permitted where they are local in nature and scale.
3. Development of hot food takeaways (use class A5) will only be supported within the Central Activities Zone, Tower Hamlets Activity Areas, Canary Wharf Major Centre, Secondary Frontages of District Centres, Neighbourhood Centres or Neighbourhood Parades where they meet the following criteria:
  - a. There must be a separation of at least four non-A5 units between each new hot food takeaway unit.
  - b. The percentage of A5 units would not exceed 5% of the total number of units within Major, District or Neighbourhood Centres.
  - c. Within Neighbourhood Parades there would be no more than one A5 unit.
- d. The proposal is not within 200 metres walking distance from an existing (or proposed) school and/or a local authority leisure centre.
- e. The proposal will not harm the amenity of surrounding properties.
4. New betting offices/shops will only be supported within the Central Activities Zone, Tower Hamlets Activity Areas, Canary Wharf Major Centre or Secondary Frontages within District Centres; new amusement centres, casinos and lap-dancing clubs will only be supported within the Central Activities Zone, Tower Hamlets Activity Areas or Canary Wharf Major Centre. Such uses will be resisted where:
  - a. there is an over concentration of such uses which could give rise to negative cumulative social impacts
  - b. the site is in close proximity to a school or sensitive community, cultural or social facilities, and
  - c. the proposal would detrimentally impact the amenity and character of the area.
5. Development of entertainment venues within the D2 or sui generis use classes not referenced in Policy D.TC5 will be:
  - a. directed to the Central Activities Zone, Tower Hamlets Activity Areas, Canary Wharf Major Centre and the other town centres (except Neighbourhood Parades) where they are compatible with other uses within the town centre
  - b. only permitted within Neighbourhood Parades or non-designated locations where:
    - i. it can be demonstrated that such uses will not result in adverse impacts on the amenity of the surrounding area
    - ii. the location has good public transport accessibility, and
    - iii. existing venues in town centres would not be undermined.

## Explanation

**11.36** The nature of town centres continues to evolve away from traditional shopping towards leisure and entertainment activities such as cafés, restaurants and drinking establishments (A3 and A4 uses). Such uses have become important in preventing and reducing vacancy in town centres. They can also help to increase activity in town centres outside of traditional shopping hours, thus contributing to town centre vitality and a greater perception of safety from increased natural surveillance.

**11.37** Within the Primary Frontages of the District Centres and the Columbia Road and Redchurch Street Neighbourhood Centres, as shown on the Policies Map, new A3 and A4 uses can be supported where the overall proportion of A1 retail does not fall below 60% of all units. Therefore, where change of use is proposed in those areas, applicants should provide a town centre survey outlining that an appropriate level of A1 retail is being maintained to ensure the vitality and viability of the area as the primary shopping area. Within Secondary Frontages in the District Centres and Neighbourhood Centres, applicants should demonstrate that the overall mix of uses would be conducive to the future vitality and viability of the town centre. Within the Central Activities Zone and Tower Hamlets Activity Areas, proposals involving new A3 and A4 uses will be managed on a case-by-case basis, with the onus on applicants to demonstrate there would not be an over-concentration of similar uses within the surrounding area.

**11.38** We recognise that, in some instances, it may be appropriate and desirable to locate A3 and A4 uses within Neighbourhood Parades or outside of Major, District and Neighbourhood Centres, Tower Hamlets Activity Areas and the Central Activities Zone, although robust justification must be provided (see Part 2). Examples might include

facilities that enhance the enjoyment of open spaces and water spaces; serve transport interchanges or serve out-of-town-centre employment areas. For instance, new or replacement community pubs will be sought to meet local needs in locations where an existing public house may have been lost to redevelopment.

**11.39** Within Neighbourhood Parades and non-designated locations, proposals involving A3 and A4 uses should be of a more modest scale than might be expected in larger town centres. Applicants should robustly state why a café, restaurant or drinking establishment would be appropriate in such a location. Details of any other cafés, restaurants or drinking establishments in the local area should also be provided to mitigate the risk of clusters developing that could undermine nearby town centres. In respect of drinking establishments, a detailed management plan should be submitted alongside the planning application confirming that it will be run as a 'community' public house and that conflicts with neighbouring properties would be avoided. Applicants would also be encouraged to consider our statement of licensing policy.

**11.40** In order to satisfy Part 3, planning applications will be expected to include information (including town centre surveys) in order to ensure that any provision of new hot food takeaways would not exceed the levels set out in Parts (a) to (c).

**11.41** In order to satisfy Part 4, applicants should outline details of other such premises within the local area to demonstrate that there would not be a clustering or over-concentration of such businesses. Please note: sensitive community, cultural or social facilities include but are not limited to places of worship and centres or refuges for the treatment of people with addictions.



11.42 Part 5 seeks to guide the location of leisure and entertainment venues. In certain circumstances, such uses would be preferable outside of town centres due to the impact on surrounding amenity through noise or the negative impact on town centre appearance resulting from inactive frontages or requirements for space.

### Policy links

- Policy D.SG3: Health impact assessments
- Policy S.DH1: Delivering high quality design
- Policy D.DH8: Amenity
- Policy D.ES9: Noise and vibration

### Evidence links

- Tower Hamlets Town Centre Retail Capacity Study (2016)
- Town Centres Supplementary Planning Guidance (GLA, 2014)
- Takeaway Toolkit (GLA, 2012)



## Policy D.TC6

### Short-stay accommodation

1. Development of visitor accommodation will be supported in locations within the Central Activities Zone, Canary Wharf Major Centre, Tower Hamlets Activity Areas and District Centres (as shown on the Policies Map) or along primary routes where adjacent to transport interchanges, providing:
  - a. the size, scale and nature of the proposal is proportionate to its location
  - b. it does not create an over-concentration of such accommodation, taking account of other proposals and unimplemented consents in the local area
  - c. it does not compromise the supply of land for new homes (in accordance with our housing trajectory) or jobs and our ability to meet the borough's housing and employment targets, and
  - d. the applicant can demonstrate adequate access and servicing arrangements appropriate to the scale, nature and location of the proposal.
2. Applications for serviced apartments must demonstrate that they meet the criteria stated in Part 1 above and will be managed appropriately as short-term accommodation (up to 90 days).

## Explanation

**11.43** For the purposes of this policy, visitor accommodation refers to provision within the C1 use class, such as hotels, bed and breakfasts, traveller hostels, serviced apartments and self-catering apartments. This policy seeks to steer visitor accommodation towards the Central Activities Zone, Canary Wharf Major Centre, Tower Hamlets Activity Areas, and the borough's District Centres, or along primary routes (e.g. A-roads) where they are adjacent to transport interchanges (such as Docklands Light Railway/railway/underground/bus stations).

**11.44** Short stay accommodation schemes should be of a size that reflects their surrounding built environment and reflects the function of the location within town centres or employment areas. For example, a large-scale hotel that is appropriate in the Major Centre of Canary Wharf may not be suitable within a smaller District Centre.

**11.45** This policy applies a flexible approach to the assessment of new visitor accommodation. This recognises the different markets that various forms of visitor accommodation may serve, and the way in which customers and service vehicles may access such accommodation. For example, traveller hostels, budget hotels and small boutique hotels are less likely to require significant space for coaches and other vehicles setting down and picking up movements as customers are more likely to arrive via public transport.

**11.46** Developers and applicants will need to submit information detailing how customers would access the accommodation (e.g. whether this would be mostly utilising existing public transport provision and if not there is appropriate provision for vehicles setting down or picking up). This would also apply to any vehicles required to service the accommodation (e.g. to handle laundry and deliver other supplies to the accommodation). It should be demonstrated that such movements would not create unacceptable impacts on residential amenity or highway safety in accordance with Policies D.DH7 and D.TR2.

**11.47** For serviced apartments, development will be required to provide the following details:

- a. Management will ensure rooms will not be occupied for periods of 90 days or more
- b. Management will provide 24-hour servicing
- c. Telephone lines will be provided in the rooms with no opportunity for personal lines installed by the occupier
- d. Management will ensure rooms will be charged out at a maximum at weekly rates
- e. The use will be secured in the form of a licence, not a lease
- f. The occupants of the room will not have exclusive possession of the room
- g. Management will have access to the room.

### Policy links

- Policy S.DH1: Delivering high quality design
- Policy D.DH8: Amenity
- Policy S.EMP1: Creating investment and jobs
- Policy D.TR2: Impacts on the transport network

### Evidence links

- Tower Hamlets Town Centre Retail Capacity Study (2016)

**Policy D.TC7****Markets**

1. Development proposals impacting existing markets will only be supported where:
  - a. they demonstrate that the overall quality of the market and public realm will be improved;
  - b. the capacity for existing numbers of pitches is maintained, and
  - c. they protect or re-provide appropriate storage and servicing facilities.
2. Proposals for new markets, including farmers' markets and 'street-food' markets, will be encouraged. They will be directed to Major, District or Neighbourhood Centres and should enhance the centre's existing offer and contribute to vitality and cohesion.
3. Proposals for new markets outside of Major, District or Neighbourhood town Centres will only be supported where they:
  - a. are temporary in nature
  - b. bring vacant sites back into use
  - c. do not undermine the borough's existing markets and town centres, and
  - d. do not cause unreasonable harm to the amenity of surrounding properties, particularly where evening and night-time markets are proposed.

**Explanation**

**11.48** It is widely recognised that markets act as magnets to create interest and draw people into town centres and support footfall which benefits other businesses. They can also act as incubation space for new ideas and small-to-medium enterprises. This policy aims to protect the borough's existing markets and ensure that new development does not undermine their future role and function (e.g. ensuring that storage facilities are maintained).

**11.49** While new markets within Major, District or Neighbourhood Centres are favoured, this policy also recognises that there may be opportunities for markets outside of town centres where they activate vacant spaces.

**11.50** Applicants and developers should work with our markets team at the earliest opportunity so that information can be provided with the planning application to show that sufficient space will be safeguarded to meet the needs of traders in terms of servicing and storage. Proposals should also detail how the types of goods and services proposed would complement rather than compete with surrounding town centres, as well as how they could contribute to other priorities such as improving access to healthy, affordable food. In addition, a written management and design strategy should be provided which outlines how the proposal will avoid causing negative impacts on markets, such as congestion on footpaths and roads, litter, poor refuse storage and noise.

**11.51** Where proposals seek to re-activate vacant spaces or empty shops, temporary permissions will be favoured. Applicants should demonstrate that the proposed market will have a different offer to nearby Major, District or Neighbourhood Centres to avoid undermining them. They should also demonstrate that noise impacts will be mitigated to protect the amenity of surrounding properties, especially housing.

11.52 Part 1 of this policy refers to our existing street markets at Bethnal Green, Brick Lane, Chrisp Street, Columbia Road, Petticoat Lane, Roman Road, Roman Road Square, Stroudley Walk, Watney Street and Whitechapel.

### Policy links

- Policy D.DH8: Amenity

### Evidence links

- Tower Hamlets Town Centre Retail Capacity Study (2016)
- Town Centres Supplementary Planning Guidance (GLA, 2014)



## 12. Supporting community facilities

### Introduction

**12.1** Tower Hamlets has a range of community facilities such as health, social, education, leisure and sport facilities providing valuable services to both local communities and visitors. The provision of these essential community facilities plays a vital role in creating and sustaining liveable neighbourhoods through providing valuable services.

**12.2** Community facilities are facing increased pressure from higher land value uses, such as housing and employment, in the face of limited public funding and a fast-growing resident and worker population. Specific need gaps and priorities include the provision of public houses, youth centres, local presence facilities/Idea Stores, indoor sport facilities and community halls.

**12.3** These policies will seek to promote and facilitate the delivery of essential community facilities through new development (including changes of use, extensions and new builds) in line with the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, which outlines the existing capacity and future needs and priorities facing some of the community facilities in the borough. In particular, they aim to ensure that sufficient facilities are provided to meet the needs of the borough's growing population in the areas of greatest need and growth, as described in Section 4.

**12.4** This section contains the following policies:

- Policy S.CF1: Supporting community facilities
- Policy D.CF2: Existing community facilities
- Policy D.CF3: New and enhanced community facilities
- Policy D.CF4: Public houses.

### Policy S.CF1

#### Supporting community facilities

1. Development which seeks to protect, maintain and enhance existing community facilities will be supported.
2. Development will be required to contribute to the capacity, quality, usability and accessibility of existing community facilities, particularly where development will increase demand.
3. Development should maximise opportunities for the provision of high quality community facilities to serve a wide range of users. Where possible, facilities or services should be accessible to the wider community outside of core hours and co-located or shared to encourage multi-purpose trips and better meet the needs of different groups.
4. New community facilities will be directed towards the borough's centres in accordance with the town centre hierarchy and/or to locations which are accessible to their catchments depending on the nature and scale of the proposal.

### Explanation

**12.5** This policy seeks to maintain an adequate supply and range of community facilities across the borough to serve local needs and support the creation of more liveable and sustainable places in line with the vision and objectives set out in Section 2. Delivery of new and improvements to existing community facilities will be achieved through the use of developer contributions (as identified in Policy D.SG5) and working together with partners to ensure adequate services are in place to support the sustainable growth of the borough.

**12.6** For the purpose of this policy, community facilities include a range of social infrastructure that provide services to the community such as:

- a. Indoor sports and leisure facilities (e.g. leisure centres and swimming pools)
- b. Health facilities (e.g. hospitals and doctor surgeries)
- c. Cultural facilities (e.g. art galleries, museums and theatres)
- d. Education facilities (e.g. schools, nurseries and universities)
- e. Social facilities (e.g. places of worship, libraries, Idea Stores, local presence and public houses).

**12.7** Playing fields and outdoor sport facilities, such as multi-use games areas and tennis courts, are also important community facilities. These are addressed within Policies S.OWS1 and D.OWS3.

**12.8** Part 1 sets out a presumption against the loss of community facilities to ensure that sufficient provision is available to meet local needs.

**12.9** Part 2 promotes opportunities to expand or improve the capacity and accessibility of existing facilities, taking account of future projected community needs (as set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan).

**12.10** Part 3 seeks to encourage the provision of multi-purpose and shared services which provide opportunities to co-locate or integrate a range of community uses and functions, such as community halls and sport facilities. Consideration should be given to promoting community facilities which can be easily accessed, support a wide range of users in line with the principles of active and inclusive design and make relevant provision outside of core hours, particularly in respect of childcare provision, external recreation space, sport facilities and appropriate classroom space.

**12.11** Part 4 seeks to ensure that community facilities are located within or at the edge of town centres in line with Policies S.TC1 and S.SG1. These locations are considered to be the most accessible places in the

borough and such uses contribute to the vitality and viability of town centres. In addition, new facilities will be directed towards locations which are accessible to their catchment areas.

**12.12** This policy will be delivered in accordance with the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and other relevant strategies, including the Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy, Open Space Strategy, Green Grid Strategy and area-based masterplans. We will continue to work with key stakeholders and other service providers to ensure that new community facilities are provided at locations where there is a clearly demonstrated need.

### Policy links

- Policy D.SG3: Health impact assessments
- Policy D.SG5: Developer contributions
- Policy S.DH1: Delivering high quality design
- Policy S.TC1: Supporting the network and hierarchy of centres
- Policy S.OWS1: Creating a network of open spaces
- Policy D.TR2: Impacts on the transport network

### Evidence links

- Tower Hamlets Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- Tower Hamlets Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy (2017)
- Tower Hamlets Green Grid Strategy (2017)
- Tower Hamlets Water Space Study (2017)
- Planning for Sport Development Management (Sport England, 2014)
- Active Design (Sport England, 2015)
- Building Bulletin 103: Area guidelines for mainstream schools (Department for Education, 2014)
- Baseline designs for schools: guidance (Department for Education, 2014)
- Health Building Note 00-01: General design guidance for healthcare buildings (Department of Health, 2014)

## Policy D.CF2

### Existing community facilities

1. Existing community facilities must be retained unless it can be demonstrated that:
  - a. there is no longer a need for the facility or an alternative community use within the local community, or
  - b. a replacement facility of similar nature that would better meet the needs of existing users is provided.
2. Where community facilities are re-provided on site as part of the development, the quality and accessibility of these facilities (including public access) should be enhanced.
3. Extensions to existing schools should demonstrate that:
  - a. there is a demonstrated local need, and
  - b. the current level of child play space will be enhanced and increased.



## Explanation

**12.13** This policy seeks to protect and enhance the borough's existing community facilities where they are still needed to adequately meet local needs.

**12.14** Part 1 seeks to resist the loss of the borough's valuable community facilities, except in certain circumstances, see (a) and (b). Statements from relevant providers confirming that the existing or alternative community uses would not be needed or possible in the premises will be required. Where the loss of a community facility is justified, the applicant will need to explore the opportunity to accommodate an alternative community use which would better meet local needs, in accordance with relevant strategies, including the Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy, Open Space Strategy and Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Loss of sports and recreational facilities will only be justified where an applicant can provide a robust assessment demonstrating surplus provision or where the proposal includes a replacement of the facility with at least an equivalent function, quality and quantity of sport provision that better meets the needs of the community.

**12.15** We recognise that in certain circumstances site redevelopment will require the relocation of existing uses to a location where the needs of the users will be more adequately met. To ensure that there is no unacceptable disadvantage to existing users, re-provision of community facilities should be within the relevant catchment area and should result in quality and access improvements, reflecting the principles of active and inclusive design. Proposals should also demonstrate that the quantity of floorspace will at least be kept at the same level as the existing uses and, where possible, it should be increased.

**12.16** Part 2 seeks to ensure that new development facilitates and promotes greater public access through good and inclusive design and signage.

12.17 Where practicable, the replacement facility should be provided before the existing facility ceases operation to ensure that local people continue to receive a high quality service.

12.18 Part 3 seeks to ensure that any extension to an existing school results in an increase of existing child play space to accommodate the additional needs arising from the development, with a view to promoting shared community use in line with Sport England's guidance. Proposals to replace indoor sports and recreational facilities must be of at least equivalent function, quality and quantity and in a suitable location.

### Policy links

- Policy D.SG3: Health impact assessments
- Policy D.SG5: Developer contributions
- Policy S.DH1: Delivering high quality design

### Evidence links

- Tower Hamlets Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- Tower Hamlets Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy (2017)
- Tower Hamlets Green Grid Strategy (2017)
- Tower Hamlets Water Space Study (2017)
- Planning for Sport Development Management (Sport England, 2014)
- Active Design (Sport England, 2015)
- Building Bulletin 103: Area guidelines for mainstream schools (Department for Education, 2014)
- Baseline designs for schools: guidance (Department for Education, 2014)
- Health Building Note 00-01: General design guidance for healthcare buildings (Department of Health, 2014)

## Policy D.CF3

### New and enhanced community facilities

1. Proposals involving the provision of community facilities located outside the borough's town centres will be permitted where an up-to-date and robust local need can be demonstrated.
2. Community facilities within larger developments should be easily accessible to people who live and work outside of the host development.
3. Development of new early education and care facilities and primary and secondary schools which respond to local need will be supported where:
  - a. they are in locations which are accessible to the residents of their indicative catchment areas
  - b. they can demonstrate appropriate learning spaces (including external play space) can be provided, and
  - c. the design and layout of these facilities and play space provision reflects the relevant guidance from the Department for Education and Sport England, taking account of the level of air quality and other amenity considerations.
4. New adult, further and higher educational facilities will be required to provide information of the relevant certification and registration details from the Department for Education and meet Sport England's design guidance and other relevant national governing bodies' guidance.



## Explanation

**12.19** This policy seeks to ensure that appropriate high quality community facilities are provided in accessible locations throughout the borough to adequately support the growing population and meet identified needs.

**12.20** Part 1 seeks to ensure that expansion of existing and delivery of new community facilities is directed towards accessible locations such as town centres. However, new community facilities outside of town centres will only be supported where sufficient evidence is provided to demonstrate that there is a local need not being met elsewhere in the neighbourhood. Facilities provided in these locations need to ensure that they are local in nature and scale and that there is no adverse impact on the amenity of the surrounding residents. This includes the impact of people coming and going to the facility and the impact of users within the facility when it is in use, as well as the impact on the highway network and parking facilities. Where the provision of a community facility is proposed as part of a residential development, it should be demonstrated that it is accessible to people living outside of the development and designed to be visible from the street.

**12.21** Part 2 aims to ensure that new community facilities which form part of a wider development are designed to facilitate and encourage wider community use and do not look and feel exclusive to the occupants of the development. Consideration should be given to ensuring that the facility can be easily accessible to a wide range of users.

**12.22** Part 3 encourages the provision of education facilities at early years, primary and secondary level in appropriate locations, where they meet local need and demonstrate high quality and inclusive design in line with the relevant guidance from the Department for Education, Sport England and other relevant national governing bodies (for instance, suitable locations for early years could include the ground floor of residential blocks or secondary frontages in existing town centres).

**12.23** In order to ensure that education facilities are suitably located, applicants should outline the indicative catchment area for the recruitment of pupils and assess the impact of people (including pupils, parents, carers and staff) arriving and leaving the facility as well as the impact on the highway network and parking facilities.

**12.24** Demand for early education and care facilities will increase in the future as the borough's birth rate continues to rise. Early education and care facilities refer to places where a number of children under five years of age are brought together during part or all of a working day on a regular basis where they can play, learn and receive care (e.g. primary school nurseries, children's centres, pre-school and 'wrap-around' childcare). The provision of early year facilities will contribute towards reducing the borough's current below-average levels of achieving good cognitive development at age 5 and enable greater employment rates amongst parents in line with our statutory duty to provide childcare to some 2-year-olds and all 3-and-4-year-olds. Future provision will increasingly require innovative approaches to the use of land and floor space, including the co-location of early education and care facilities with compatible uses, such as primary and secondary schools and office buildings.

**12.25** Further and higher education (see Part 5) refers to the stage of education after secondary school and includes a wide range of institutions including universities and colleges (as defined in the glossary in Appendix 1) which provide lifelong learning. It is noted that some further education colleges do include sixth form provision. In order to meet these requirements, the applicant will need to provide evidence of the relevant certification from the Department for Education as well as details of student and staff numbers, enrolment criteria and curriculum details. Sport and recreation facilities within schools should also reflect Sport England and other relevant national governing body guidance.

## Policy links

- Policy D.SG3: Health impact assessments
- Policy D.SG5: Developer contributions
- Policy S.DH1: Delivering high quality design
- Policy S.TC1: Supporting the network and hierarchy of centres
- Policy S.OWS1: Creating a network of open spaces
- Policy D.TR2: Impacts on the transport network

## Evidence links

- Tower Hamlets Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- Tower Hamlets Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy (2017)
- Tower Hamlets Green Grid Strategy (2017)
- Tower Hamlets Water Space Study (2017)
- Planning for Sport Development Management (Sport England)
- Active Design (Sport England, 2015)
- Building Bulletin 103: Area guidelines for mainstream schools (Department for Education, 2014)
- Baseline designs for schools: guidance (Department for Education, 2014)
- Health Building Note 00-01: General design guidance for healthcare buildings (Department of Health, 2014)

## Policy D.CF4

### Public houses

1. Where the loss of a public house is proposed, the following evidence will be required:
  - a. Evidence that all reasonable efforts have been taken to preserve the facility as a public house, including evidence of appropriate maintenance and upkeep and efforts to diversify the business.
  - b. Evidence demonstrating that the public house has been marketed for at least 12 months as a public house at a reasonable market rent and free of tie and restrictive covenant and following this exercise there has been no interest in the property and there is no realistic prospect of continuing its current use.
  - c. Marketing evidence demonstrating there has been no interest in the property for an alternative community use over a further 12-month period following the marketing period in Part 1(b).
2. Where a public house is replaced or re-provided, adequate floorspace must be provided to ensure the continued viability of the public house.
3. Proposals within the curtilage of a public house must demonstrate that the continued operation and viability of the public house would not be compromised. Loss of converted pubs on the grounds of viability as a result of previous development will not be supported.

## Explanation

**12.26** Like many other London boroughs, Tower Hamlets has witnessed a significant net loss of public houses (otherwise known as pubs) since the millennium. The rate of decline has far exceeded both the London and national averages<sup>46</sup>. This policy therefore aims to afford greater protection to the borough's public houses and guard against their unnecessary loss.

**12.27** In order to satisfy Part 1(a), applicants seeking to demolish or replace an existing public house will need to provide evidence of appropriate maintenance and upkeep and efforts to diversify the business. Alternatively, if the property has not been appropriately maintained, we will expect this has been reflected within the asking rent or price of the pub. Details of pub accounts for current and previous trading years should also be provided.

**12.28** In order to satisfy Part 1(b), applicants will need to submit a full detailed marketing report outlining the asking price or rent for the public house and the terms on which it was offered (e.g. freehold or leasehold: whether or not it included living accommodation and whether any part of the property was excluded). The report should include details of any interest in the property, viewings, and why such interest was not taken forward. This information should also be provided for a subsequent 12-month period outlining attempts to let the property for alternative community uses as described under Part 1(c).

**12.29** Part 2 seeks to avoid future examples in the borough of what are termed 'trojan horse' pubs. This term refers to developments that have met policy requirements through the re-provision of floorspace for pub use but at a level that is insufficient to be practically let as a pub, resulting in a subsequent application to convert the space to an alternative use. This part of the policy seeks to ensure that there is a genuine intention to continue pub use where redevelopment is proposed. It must also be

demonstrated that appropriate soundproofing is to be installed so as to minimise conflict between the pub and any residential use. In order to satisfy this criterion, applicants should submit indicative floorplans demonstrating that, at a minimum, the proposed floorspace for pub use can support a bar area, appropriate seating, storage and toilets.

**12.30** Applicants seeking to reduce or remove outdoor space must demonstrate that the remaining space is of sufficient size and quality for the needs of pub users, and that the pub could continue to operate viably following any loss or reduction. It must also be demonstrated that any smokers displaced from such spaces would not cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of surrounding properties by gathering in alternative locations.

**12.31** Where loss or conversion of ancillary function space or living accommodation is proposed, it must be demonstrated that the pub use would not be undermined through such loss. For the loss of function space, evidence is also required to demonstrate the availability of sufficient and suitable alternative facilities available within the local area.

### Policy links

- Policy S.DH1: Delivering high quality design
- Policy S.DH3: Heritage and the historic environment
- Policy D.ES9: Noise and vibration

### Evidence links

- Pubs in Tower Hamlets – Evidence Study (2017)

<sup>46</sup> Pubs in Tower Hamlets – Evidence Study (2017)

## 13. Enhancing open spaces and water spaces

### Introduction

13.1 Tower Hamlets has a number of valued open spaces and water spaces which offer many important social, environmental and economic benefits, including:

- Enhancing amenity;
- Contributing to healthy lifestyles through providing opportunities for active travel and leisure
- Providing sport and recreation opportunities
- Providing meeting places for community activities and cultural events
- Helping to manage flood risk and mitigating the risks of climate change
- Enhancing biodiversity, and
- Providing a cooling effect to reduce elevated urban air temperature.

13.2 The overall provision of publicly accessible open space remains low with some parts of the borough being acutely deficient, including the Isle of Dogs, Shoreditch and Whitechapel. This equates to 0.89 hectares per 1,000 residents, which is less than the borough's open space standard of 1.2 hectares per 1,000 residents<sup>47</sup>.

13.3 In a densely populated borough like Tower Hamlets facing significant development pressure, there is limited scope to provide major additional open space to accommodate the needs of the growing population, such as new parkland and woodland. Nevertheless, the borough's open spaces make a significant positive contribution to the character and appearance of the borough, reflecting their popularity among residents and visitors, relatively good condition and varied use. Some parks (e.g. Victoria Park) are nationally renowned and have been awarded Green Flag status.

13.4 In order to meet this shortfall, it is estimated that 220 hectares of additional publicly accessible open space will be required across the borough over the period to 2031.

13.5 As the population continues to grow there will be an increasing need to protect and revitalise our existing open spaces as well as secure additional publicly accessible open space, especially within deficient areas (see Figure 13).

13.6 Tower Hamlets has access to more water spaces than any other London borough, comprising the rivers Thames and Lea and the other connecting water spaces (e.g. Limehouse Cut, Regents Canal and Hertford Union Canal) as well as several docks and basins. However, much of the potential of the borough's water spaces remains untapped, due to fragmented public access and limited active recreation and leisure opportunities. Tower Hamlets has also experienced significant historic water loss, particularly around Shadwell Basin and the Ornamental Canal, while a considerable amount of water space has been reclaimed and re-used to frame development around West India Docks, Blackwall Basin and Poplar Dock in Canary Wharf. This has further limited the availability of water spaces for recreation, transport and other water-related activities. It has also impacted on the biodiversity of the waterways as well as the open character of our valuable water space heritage assets.

<sup>47</sup> In particular, Tower Hamlets faces a significant shortfall in the provision of playing pitches, especially outdoor sports provision, due to the fact that most grass pitches are located at parks or areas of open space where often they serve multiple functions, such as recreational open space and non-sports related activities. These requirements are identified within the Tower Hamlets Open Space Strategy (2017).

13.7 Hence, it is important that policies protect our valuable water spaces from permanent infillings and oversailing and seek to improve their continuous public access; enhance biodiversity; promote water-related and water-dependent recreation; and ensure the delivery of high quality design to celebrate the heritage of our waterways.

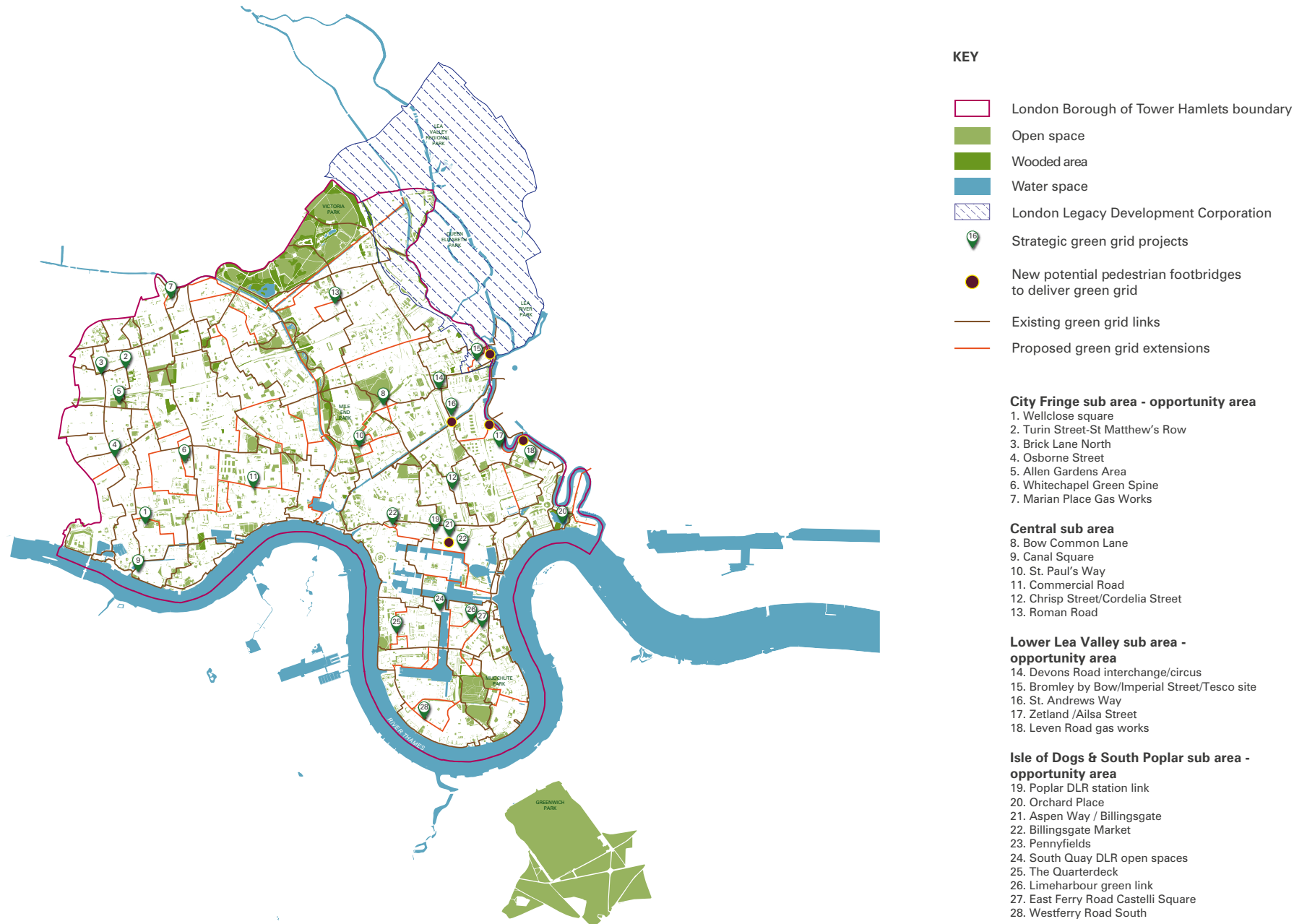
13.8 Figure 12 illustrates the existing and proposed network of well-connected publicly accessible open spaces and water spaces across the borough, drawing upon the principles set out in the All London Green Grid Supplementary Planning Document.

13.9 This section contains the following policies:

- Policy S.OWS1: Creating a network of open spaces
- Policy S.OWS2: Enhancing the network of water spaces
- Policy D.OWS3: Open space and green grid networks
- Policy D.OWS4: Water spaces.



Figure 12: An enhanced network of open spaces and water spaces



## Policy S.OWS1

### Creating a network of open spaces

1. Proposals will be required to provide or contribute to the delivery of an improved accessible, well-connected and sustainable network of open spaces through:
  - a. protecting all existing open space to ensure that there is no net loss (except where it meets the criteria set out in Policy D.OWS3)
  - b. maintaining the open character of Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
  - c. improving the quality, value and accessibility of existing publicly accessible open space across the borough and neighbouring boroughs, in line with the Green Grid Strategy, Open Space Strategy, Local Biodiversity Action Plan and Sport England's Active Design Guidance
  - d. delivering an improved network of green grid links in line with the Green Grid Strategy to enhance access to key destination points (town centres, community facilities and publicly accessible open spaces) and to and along water spaces, as well as provide ecological corridors for wildlife
  - e. maximising the opportunities to create/increase publicly accessible open space (including playing pitches and ancillary sporting facilities) with a range of sizes and for a range of users, particularly in the following locations (which are expected to experience the highest level of open space deficiency)
    - Bethnal Green
    - Blackwall and Cubitt Town
    - Bromley North
    - Bromley South
    - Canary Wharf
    - Limehouse
    - Poplar
    - Shadwell
    - Spitalfields and Banglatown
    - St Dunstan's
    - St Peter's
    - Weavers
    - Whitechapel
  - f. assisting with the delivery of enhanced new strategic publicly accessible open spaces at Lea River Park (including the Leaway) and within site allocations.
2. Inappropriate development on areas designated as MOL (as shown on the Policies Map) will not be permitted unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated in line with the requirements set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

## Explanation

**13.10** This policy seeks to protect and enhance the borough's valuable network of open spaces as well as promote the creation of new publicly accessible open spaces which are better connected and provide a wide range of opportunities for local communities and visitors in line with the Open Space Strategy, Green Grid Strategy and other relevant strategies.

**13.11** The Open Space Strategy sets out where strategic open space (i.e. one hectare or above) will be provided across the borough. This includes the requirements relating to the provision of playing pitches and a detailed action plan on how our open space priorities will be addressed. Further details on the specific needs and priorities for the provision of playing pitches and outdoor sport facilities are outlined in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. The Green Grid Strategy identifies opportunities on how to better connect existing open spaces and create smaller scale open spaces in areas of need.

**13.12** For the purposes of the Local Plan, open space means all land that offers opportunity for play, recreation and sport or is of amenity value, whether in public or private ownership, and where public access is unrestricted, partially-restricted or restricted. This includes all open areas consisting of: major parks (e.g. Victoria Park and Mile End Park), local parks, gardens, squares, playgrounds, ecological spaces, housing amenity land, playing fields (including playing pitches), allotments and burial grounds, whether or not they are accessible to the public. This definition does not include water bodies.

**13.13** Figure 12 illustrates the distribution of publicly accessible open spaces across the borough. Detailed boundaries of the borough's publicly accessible open spaces are shown on the Policies Map. Some of the borough's open spaces and water spaces are designated as Metropolitan Open Land (including East India Dock Basin and Brunswick Wharf, Island Gardens, Lee Valley Regional Park, Meath Gardens, Mile End Park, Mudchute Park, Millwall Park, Tower Hamlets Cemetery and Victoria

Park) which form part of London's strategically defined open space network.

**13.14** Part 1(a) seeks to protect all open spaces regardless of their size, type, ownership and where access is unrestricted, partially restricted or restricted.

**13.15** Part 1(b) seeks to protect the open character of Metropolitan Open Land (MOL). MOL is a unique open space designation in London and is afforded the same level of protection as the Green Belt within the London Plan.

**13.16** Part 1(c) promotes the enhancement of the borough's existing open space to improve their quality and multi-functionality to serve a variety of users. This will be delivered through the provision of new outdoor sport facilities, such as playing pitches (e.g. ancillary facilities and changing rooms), outdoor gyms and multi-use games areas within existing parks (e.g. Victoria Park, Mudchute Park and Mile End Park). Proposals should also aim to incorporate the principles of Sport England's Active Design Guide.

**13.17** Part 1(d) promotes the delivery of a well-connected and high quality network of publicly accessible open spaces through new and improved green grid connections, in accordance with the Transport for London's healthy streets initiative. This can be achieved through new planting in the public realm (including streets, trees and vegetation) and maximising opportunities to create access to nature, natural play and educational elements along the green grid as well as improved signage and posting to enhance way-finding. The Green Grid Strategy has identified a series of strategic green grid projects (as shown on Figure 12) to improve cross-borough connections and help address deficiencies across the borough as well as other parts of London.

**13.18** Parts 1(d) and (e) promote the provision of new publicly accessible open spaces to serve the borough's growing population, particularly where they are of a wider strategic importance (e.g. Lea River Park) and in areas of significant open space deficiency (see Figure 13<sup>48</sup>).

<sup>48</sup> Publicly accessible open space deficiency is mapped using 400 metre catchment areas from parks of 1 hectare or above.



**13.19** The provision of new or improved publicly accessible open space and green grid linkages will be promoted throughout the borough in accordance with the principles set out in the Open Space Strategy, Green Grid Strategy and Mayor of London's All London Green Grid Supplementary Planning Guidance, notably at the following locations:

- a. Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (i.e. improving links to open spaces and the Lea Navigation and Hertford Union canals)
- b. Lea Valley (including a series of new open spaces as part of the Lea River Park and a new continuous north-south route through Lea Valley connecting the Lea Valley Regional Park to the River Thames as well as new pedestrian footbridges)
- c. Mile End Park and Victoria Park (including green grid extensions to the existing canal walkways and nearby schools)
- d. Whitechapel (including the delivery of the Green Spine – a new north-south pedestrian route linking Whitechapel District Centre with Commercial Road along with a series of open spaces featuring new public squares behind the proposed civic centre and next to St Augustine with St Philip's Church)
- e. Thames Path (i.e. maintaining and expanding the Thames Path to provide continuous public access to the river).

**13.20** Larger open space (i.e. one hectare and above) provision will be secured on allocated sites (as identified in Section 4) through new development.

**13.21** Delivery of smaller publicly accessible open spaces such as pocket parks and linear verges will be promoted through new development.

**13.22** Innovative approaches to delivering new open space (e.g. roof-top gardens/greenhouses, community gardens and green/brown roofs) in these areas as well as locating parks in areas of the borough where accessibility to public open space is poor will be promoted.

**13.23** There is a general presumption against inappropriate development on areas designated as MOL (as shown on the Policies Map). Inappropriate development (as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework) will not be allowed in the MOL unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated.

**13.24** Exceptional circumstances necessitating alteration of the boundary of the MOL to exclude land at 82-84 Rhodeswell Road have been established. Please note: this land has been excluded from the extent of the MOL on the Policies Map which illustrates geographically the application of Policy S.OWS1.

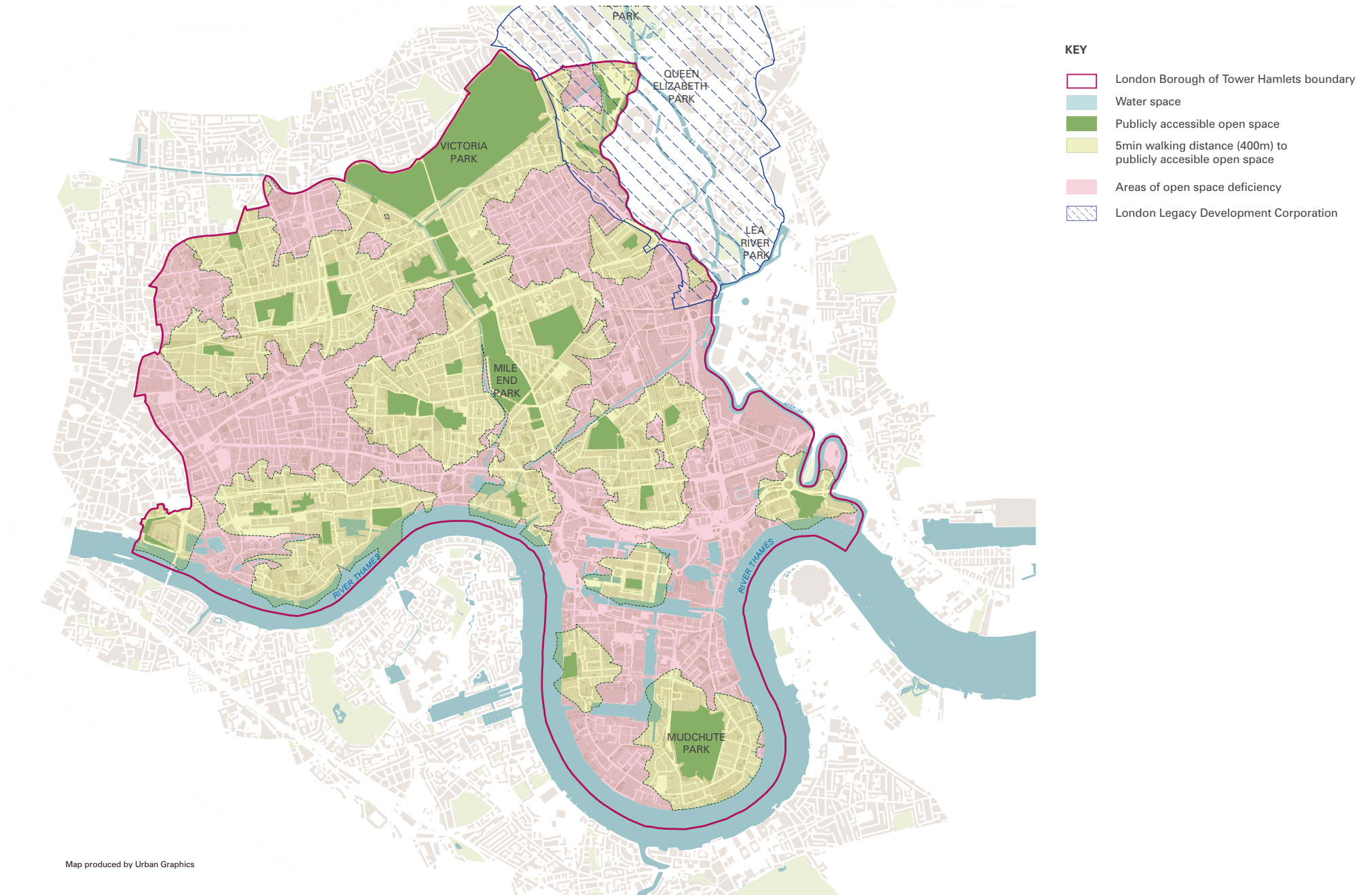
### Policy links

- Policy S.SG2: Delivering sustainable growth in Tower Hamlets
- Policy D.SG3: Health impact assessments
- Policy D.SG5: Developer contributions
- Policy S.DH1: Delivering high quality design
- Policy D.DH2: Attractive streets, spaces and public realm
- Policy D.H3: Housing standards and quality
- Policy S.CF1: Supporting community facilities
- Policy S.ES1: Protecting and enhancing our environment
- Policy D.ES3: Urban greening and biodiversity
- Policy S.TR1: Sustainable travel

### Evidence links

- Tower Hamlets Open Space Strategy (2017)
- Tower Hamlets Water Space Study (2017)
- Tower Hamlets Green Grid Strategy (2017)
- Tower Hamlets Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- Tower Hamlets Local Biodiversity Action Plan (2014)
- All London Green Grid Supplementary Planning Guidance (GLA, 2012)
- Active Design Guidance (Sport England, 2015)
- Tower Hamlets Playing Pitch Assessment (2017)

Figure 13: Areas of open space deficiency



**Policy S.OWS2****Enhancing the network of water spaces**

1. Proposals will be required to support the creation of a network of high quality, usable and accessible water spaces network through:
  - a. protecting the integrity of the borough's water spaces
  - b. maximising opportunities for enhancing the aesthetic, ecological and biodiversity values of the borough's water spaces (including the immediate and surrounding areas) and the water quality, in line with the Tower Hamlets Local Biodiversity Action Plan
  - c. improving accessibility and way-finding to and along water spaces to maximise opportunities for public use and enjoyment
  - d. promote water spaces for cultural, recreational and leisure activities as well as movement, including passenger and freight transport (e.g. along the River Thames)
  - e. working in partnership with the Port of London Authority and the Canal and River Trust to ensure that residential and commercial moorings are in appropriate locations that do not negatively impact on navigation, water quality, the openness and character of the water space and the amenity of surrounding residents, and
  - f. supporting the aims of the European Union Water Framework Directive, Thames River Basin Management Plan, Thames Estuary 2100 Plan, Thames Vision, and any relevant Marine Plans (e.g. South East Marine Plan)

**Explanation**

**13.25** Water spaces make a positive contribution to the economy, society and the environment and should be safeguarded for water-related purposes with priority given to water management, improving water quality, managing land drainage, and avoiding, reducing and managing flood risk.

**13.26** This policy seeks to protect and enhance the borough's valuable network of water spaces and also ensure that they are easily accessible and provide a wide range of water-related opportunities for local communities and visitors.

**13.27** For the purposes of the Local Plan, water space means an area of water (permanently or intermittently) and includes rivers, canals, docks, basins, ponds, marshland and other water bodies.

**13.28** Part 1(a) seeks to ensure that development does not result in further loss or over sailing of the borough's valuable water spaces unless it is a water-related or water-dependent use at appropriate locations. Water-dependent uses are defined as an activity which can only be conducted on, in, over or adjacent to the water because its function requires direct access to, along and across the water or involves, as an integral part of the activity, the use of the water. Appropriate infrastructure to support water-dependent uses includes:

- a. Walkways and slipways for pedestrians, boaters and cyclists
- b. Bridges and tunnels (e.g. across the rivers Lea and Thames)
- c. Water-based sport and leisure (e.g. sailing and kayaking)
- d. Security and safety (e.g. lifebuoys and other life-saving equipment)
- e. Water-based passengers, tourism, transport support and freight infrastructure (e.g. piers and clippers)
- f. Marine support facilities
- g. Moorings (including permanent and visitor moorings) and their support infrastructure.

**13.29** In addition, other water-related uses may also be considered at suitable locations where there is clear evidence that they are specifically designed to enhance the public access, use or enjoyment of the water space and will have a positive contribution to the character of the water space without causing any adverse negative impacts on biodiversity (e.g. activate the water space to enhance it as a waterside destination). An important consideration in decision making will be the cumulative impact of existing and proposed new water related uses in order to ensure that there is no adverse impact on the character and openness of the borough's water space and the amenity of surrounding residents.

**13.30** Despite their urban setting and heavily modified nature, the borough's network of rivers, canals and docks are important for biodiversity, supporting a wide range of species of wild plants and animals (including rare and protected species) and allowing people to come into contact with nature. In accordance with Part 1(b), development will be expected to preserve and enhance biodiversity and increase the resilience of wetland ecosystems. This can be achieved through a range of measures, such as the restoration and creation of priority habitats and planting native species to create more natural landscapes along the waterways, and the prevention of overspill of artificial lighting onto waterways or onto adjacent areas of soft landscaping.

**13.31** Some of the borough's water spaces are difficult to find and access from nearby transport hubs (e.g. River Lea, Shadwell Basin and West India Middle and South Docks) or have restricted and disjointed access (e.g. River Thames). Part 1(c) of the policy seeks to ensure that access to all water spaces is improved through appropriate signage for better way finding. Many of the borough's water spaces (including Blackwall Basin, Hermitage Basin, Limehouse Basin, East India Dock Basin, Limehouse Cut Canal, Millwall inner and outer docks, Poplar Dock, St Katherine's Dock, Wapping Canal, West India Docks and the rivers Lea and Thames) are located within or adjacent to areas of open space deficiency in access to parks. These water spaces and the adjacent land

therefore provide important open space functions and make a valuable contribution to the health and well-being of communities.

**13.32** In delivering Part 1(d), additional opportunities will be explored to maximise the use of the borough's water spaces for transport and freight at suitable locations (e.g. Trinity Buoy Wharf and along the River Thames), including the introduction of additional Thames Clipper stops. Policies S.TR1 and D.TR4 provide further guidance on sustainable transport and freight.

**13.33** Creating and enhancing the borough's high quality, usable and accessible network of water spaces will be delivered through a coordinated approach with a wide range of stakeholders, including the Canal and River Trust, Port of London Authority, Inland Waterways Association, neighbouring boroughs and other relevant organisations, see Parts 1(e) and (f).

**13.34** This policy also recognises the importance of several strategic documents which provide the framework for the sustainable development of the borough's water spaces and, more specifically, the River Thames and its tributaries, see Part 1(f).

- a. The European Water Framework Directive provides a framework for protecting and improving the ecological quality of all water bodies.
- b. Following on from the European Water Framework Directive, the Thames River Basin Management Plan sets out actions to protect and enhance the river's natural environment.
- c. The Thames Strategy East sets out a long term framework to guide the sustainable management of the Thames Policy Area (as shown on the Policies Map) and promotes development principles, such as greater connectivity through improved foot and cycle access to and along the River Thames and the provision of water support infrastructure (e.g. bridges, piers and flood defences, etc) which respects and contribute to the river's character.

- d. The Thames Estuary 2100 Plan sets out a comprehensive action plan to manage tidal flood risk across the River Thames.
- e. The Thames Vision sets out the goals and priority actions to help manage and promote the River Thames, which include: more trade and more jobs associated with the river; improved use of the river for the transportation of passengers and freight; and an improved environment and river heritage.
- f. Tower Hamlets falls within the remit of the Marine Plan for the South East inshore area. Once adopted, the Marine Plan for the South East will influence the sustainable marine development and activities which include a section of coastline or tidal river. The detailed boundaries of the Marine Plan for the South East inshore area (within the borough) are shown on the Policies Map. Until the Marine Plan is adopted, any development and activities within the rivers Thames and Lea should have regard to the Marine Policy Statement, which sets out the policies for managing development and activities for coastal and tidal waters.



### Policy links

- Policy D.SG5: Developer contributions
- Policy S.DH1: Delivering high quality design
- Policy D.DH2: Attractive streets, spaces and public realm
- Policy D.DH8: Amenity
- Policy S.H1: Meeting housing needs
- Policy S.ES1: Protecting and enhancing our environment
- Policy D.ES3: Urban greening and biodiversity
- Policy D.ES4: Flood risk
- Policy D.ES5: Sustainable drainage
- Policy D.ES6: Sustainable water and waste water management
- Policy S.TR1: Sustainable travel
- Policy D.TR4: Sustainable delivery and servicing

### Evidence links

- Tower Hamlets Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- Tower Hamlets Open Space Strategy (2017)
- Tower Hamlets Green Grid Strategy (2017)
- Tower Hamlets Water Space Study (2017)
- Tower Hamlets Local Biodiversity Action Plan (2014)
- European Union Water Framework Directive (Directive 2000/60/EC)
- Thames River Basin Management Plan (Environment Agency, 2015)
- Thames Estuary 2100 Plan (Environment Agency, 2014)
- Thames Vision Project (Port of London Authority, 2016)
- Thames Strategy East (Thames Estuary Partnership, 2008)
- UK Marine Policy Statement (2011)

## Policy D.OWS3

### Open space and green grid networks

1. Development on areas of open space (excluding Metropolitan Open Land) will only be supported in exceptional circumstances where:
  - a. it provides essential facilities that enhance the function, use and enjoyment of the open space (e.g. ancillary sport facilities to the playing field use), or
  - b. as part of a wider development proposal, both an increase of open space and a higher quality of open space can be achieved, and
  - c. in any of the circumstances described in Parts 1(a) and (b), it is demonstrated that it will not result in any adverse impacts on the existing ecological, heritage or recreational value of the open space and the flood risk levels within and beyond the boundaries of the site, and
  - d. it is an outdoor sport and recreational space or facility, the sporting and recreational benefits of which would outweigh the harm resulting from its loss
2. Strategic development should contribute to the delivery of new publicly accessible open space on-site which should:
  - a. be visible and accessible from the public realm surrounding the site
  - b. be of a high quality and inclusive design and provide facilities to promote active recreation and healthy lifestyles
  - c. be well-connected and way-marked to other open spaces, in accordance with the Green Grid Strategy and Open Space Strategy
  - d. contribute towards meeting the demand that they generate through the provision of on-site sport facilities and/or providing additional capacity off-site
  - e. incorporate soft landscaping and sustainable urban drainage systems, and
  - f. enhance biodiversity, contributing to the objectives identified in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan.
3. Development should not solely rely upon existing publicly accessible open space to contribute towards on-site communal amenity space and child play space.
4. Development should not adversely impact on the public enjoyment, openness, ecological and heritage value of the borough's publicly accessible open spaces.
5. Development adjacent or in close proximity to the green grid network (i.e. 200 metres) is required to demonstrate that it will not have adverse impacts on the access, design, usability, biodiversity and recreational value of the green grid network. It should also contribute to the expansion and the enhancement of green grid links to connect communities to publicly accessible open spaces and water spaces as well as other main destination points, such as town centres, schools, health facilities and transport hubs.
6. Development of community allotments, gardens and pocket parks will be encouraged, particularly where they bring into use vacant developable land on a temporary basis.

## Explanation

**13.35** This policy aims to ensure that development does not negatively impact on the existing network of publicly accessible open space and contributes to its expansion and enhancement. It also seeks to maximise the opportunities for delivery of new open space and for enhancing accessibility and connectivity to the wider network, which is considered crucial to addressing the borough's open space deficiency (as shown on Figure 13).

**13.36** Development on areas of open space will be resisted unless in the circumstances specified in Part 2(a) and (b). The types of development that are considered to be acceptable in principle within areas of open space include changing rooms, play equipment and seating. They should be of a scale and function proportionate to the open space in which they are to be located and should be purely ancillary to it.

**13.37** In relation to part 1(b), there may be instances (e.g. in housing estate regeneration schemes) where building on fragmented areas of poor quality open space enables the provision of a larger consolidated area of open space which is more usable for the local community. In these circumstances, the starting point will be no net loss of open space but if the development is resulting in an increase in population then additional open space will be required in accordance with the principles set out in Policy S.OWS1.

**13.38** Part 1(d) seeks to ensure that outdoor sport and recreation facilities are protected against unjustified loss in line with the requirements set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

**13.39** Part 2 seeks to promote delivery of new publicly accessible open space and the provision of new publicly accessible open space on strategic schemes (i.e. more than 100 homes or over 10,000 square metres floorspace) where development is considered to place significant additional demand on existing publicly accessible open space, particularly in identified areas of open space deficiency (see Figure 13).

**13.40** Where publicly accessible open space is provided on site, it should aim to meet the local standard of 1.2 hectares per 1000 residents (as identified in the Open Space Strategy) and be designed to support the key open space functions, as specified in Part 2 (a) to (e) in line with the All London Green Grid Supplementary Planning Guidance. Future management and maintenance of new publicly accessible open space will be secured through planning conditions or legal agreements to ensure the highest possible level of public access, function and use.

**13.41** Where the new publicly accessible open space is delivered to a satisfactory standard that meets all criteria specified in Part 2, we may consider this on-site provision as payment in kind. The provision of amenity space or landscaping required as part of good design to mitigate the impact of development will not be considered as appropriate publicly accessible open space provision. The level and nature of any sports provision should take account of the recommendations set out in Sport England's guidance and our Open Space Strategy and its associated action plan.

**13.42** Where on-site provision of adequate publicly accessible open space is not possible, a contribution will be sought from the developer towards the delivery of the opportunities and the strategic projects identified in the Open Space Strategy and Green Grid Strategy in accordance with the Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document.

**13.43** Part 3 seeks to ensure that residential developments will not place undue pressure on publicly accessible open space and will not be allowed to solely rely upon nearby public open space to contribute to adequate outdoor communal amenity space, including child play space in line with the principles set out in Policy D.H3.

**13.44** In accordance with Part 4, development will be expected to demonstrate that it will enhance and not negatively affect the borough's publicly accessible open space, including the Lea Valley Regional Park (consisting of East India Dock Basin and linear towpaths along the River

Lea Navigation, Hertford Union Canal and Limehouse Cut) the Lea River Park (including the Leaway) and the Transport for London's Lea Valley Walk initiative. The Lee Valley Regional Park forms an important part of the borough's green grid and water spaces network and has the potential to contribute to creating healthy and liveable communities, particularly where links into this network can be enhanced and complemented with new open space delivered as part of development<sup>49</sup>. We will work together with the Lea Valley Regional Park Authority and the Environment Agency to support proposals set out in the Tower Hamlets' Local Biodiversity Action Plan, the Park Plan and Park Development Framework where they relate to the borough. We will also work with neighbouring authorities and relevant stakeholders to support the delivery of the Lea River Park (including the Leaway), which connects Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and the Lea Valley Regional Park to the Royal Docks and the River Thames through a new continuous walking and cycling route along the River Lea. Further development principles and guidance are included in the Lea River Park Primer and Lea River Park Design Manual.

**13.45** For the purposes of implementing this policy, development would be considered to be in close proximity to the green grid where it is located within 200 metres (equivalent to around three minutes walking time) of the green grid network (see Part 5).

**13.46** Development sites located adjacent to or in close proximity to the green grid (i.e. within the Green Grid Buffer Zone, (as shown on the Policies Map) – including the Lee Valley Regional Park, Lea River Park, Thames Path National Trail and canal towpaths - will be required to contribute to linking and improving the connectivity of green grid links in accordance with the Green Grid Strategy and the Mayor of London's All London Green Grid Supplementary Planning Guidance. This should be supported with adequate signage and facilities for visitors and tourists.

<sup>49</sup> The Lea Valley Regional Park Authority has a statutory duty to either provide directly or work with partners to provide facilities for sport, recreation, leisure, entertainment and nature conservation throughout the park.

**13.47** Part 6 encourages the creation of community allotments, gardens and pocket parks which promote healthier lifestyles and greater social interactions.

### Policy links

- Policy S.SG2: Delivering sustainable growth in Tower Hamlets
- Policy D.SG3: Health impact assessments
- Policy D.SG5: Developer contributions
- Policy S.DH1: Delivering high quality design
- Policy D.DH2: Attractive and safe streets, spaces and public realm
- Policy D.H3: Housing standards and quality
- Policy S.CF1: Supporting community facilities
- Policy S.ES 1: Protecting and enhancing our environment
- Policy D.ES3: Urban greening and biodiversity
- Policy S.TR1: Sustainable travel

### Evidence links

- Tower Hamlets Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- Tower Hamlets Open Space Strategy (2017)
- Tower Hamlets Green Grid Strategy (2017)
- Tower Hamlets Local Biodiversity Action Plan (2014)
- All London Green Grid Supplementary Planning Guidance (GLA, 2012)
- Lea River Park Design Manual (2016)
- Lea River Park Primer (2016)
- Park Plan (Lea Valley Regional Park Authority, 2000)
- Park Development Framework (Lea Valley Regional Park Authority)
- Tower Hamlets Playing Pitch Assessment (2017)



**Policy D.OWS4****Water spaces**

1. Development within or adjacent to the borough's water spaces is required to demonstrate that:
  - a. it does not result in loss or covering of the water space, unless it is a water-related or water-dependent use at appropriate locations and of appropriate scale
  - b. there are no adverse impacts on the existing water spaces network, including navigation, biodiversity, water quality, visual amenity, character and heritage value of the water space, taking into consideration the adjacent land and the amenity of existing surrounding developments
  - c. there are no unacceptable impacts on the openness of the water space
  - d. it enhances the ecological, biodiversity and aesthetic quality of the water space, taking into account the design and landscaping of the adjacent land area, in line with the Tower Hamlets Local Biodiversity Action Plan and the European Union Water Framework Directive
  - e. it does not have an adverse impact on other existing active water uses
  - f. it will provide increased opportunities for continuous public access, use of the water space for water-related uses and sport and recreational activities
  - g. it responds positively and sensitively to the setting of water space, while respecting and animating water space to improve usability and safety, and
  - h. it provides suitable setbacks from water space edges to mitigate flood risk and to allow riverside walkways, canal towpaths and cycle paths, where appropriate. Where necessary, development should contribute to the restoration of the river walls and embankments.
2. Development within the Thames Policy Area (as shown on the Policies Map) is required to consider the guidance provided within the most up-to-date Thames River Basin Management Plan and the relevant Southeast Marine Plan, where applicable.
3. Development adjacent to the borough's waterspaces is required to enhance the area's links with the water space and contribute to the delivery of continuous walkways, canal towpaths and cycle paths (e.g. completion of the Thames Path).
4. Development of moorings will be considered acceptable at suitable locations, and where they do not cause any adverse impact on navigation, biodiversity, micro climate, amenity of surrounding residents and the public enjoyment of the water space.

## Explanation

**13.48** This policy seeks to provide details of how the borough's water spaces will be protected and how the various functions they offer are maintained and enhanced.

**13.49** Part 1 requires development to demonstrate that it will not result in loss or covering of water space and that it will not compromise the suitability of the water space for water-related uses (as defined in Policy S.OWS2). Further water loss and over-sailing from development will be resisted throughout the borough, particularly at locations that have experienced significant water space loss, such as West India South Dock, West India Middle Dock, West India North Dock, Blackwall Basin and Poplar Dock in Canary Wharf.

**13.50** In line with London Plan policies and guidance, provision of appropriate water space support infrastructure (including but not limited to: transport and essential access infrastructure into and alongside water spaces, boatyards, moorings, jetties and safety equipment) will be supported at suitable locations. Further details on infrastructure for water-related and water-dependent uses are included in Policy S.OWS2. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan provides information on the current need for some water support infrastructure (e.g. bridges).

**13.51** The sense of openness greatly contributes to a person's perception and enjoyment of water spaces. This is of particular importance in a borough like Tower Hamlets where there is a high deficiency of open space. When assessing planning applications, consideration will be given to the water coverage and human experience of the openness of water space in terms of its visibility and visual connections across the water from the surrounding public realm.

**13.52** Public access to and along the borough's water spaces will be improved, particularly where access is currently restricted, including the docks around Canary Wharf (including West India Middle Dock and Blackwall Basin), the River Lea and the River Thames (e.g. the Thames Path).

**13.53** Safety and public use of the borough's water spaces will be improved through development design which provides good pedestrian access, active frontages to improve surveillance and riparian lifesaving equipment, where appropriate. Increased appeal through active frontages will be particularly important for the docks in Canary Wharf as well as areas around Trinity Buoy Wharf, Limehouse Basin and along the River Lea which can have significant potential to attract visitors.

**13.54** The edges of water space are an extremely important part of the functioning of water space as ecosystems, open space and transport networks. Development proposals must ensure that such areas are protected and provide setbacks from the edges of the water space as well as contribute to restoration following the Environment Agency's Estuary Edges guidance. How this restoration should be undertaken will need to be considered against the functions of the water space and an appropriate balance will be sought between uses on the water space and access to and interaction with the water space and ecological enhancements in line with the Tower Hamlets Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Setbacks from waterways are also required for flood management purposes and further details outlining their use are provided in Policy D.ES4. Where setbacks are required they provide an opportunity to increase enjoyment of the waterways and should be designed to look and feel publicly accessible (e.g. through the use of signposting).

**13.55** The River Thames provides important additional opportunities to that of other water spaces within the borough, acting as a transport link of strategic and historical importance. Developments in the Thames Policy Area (as identified on the Policies Map) should ensure that their use and design establishes a positive relationship with the river in accordance with the most up-to-date guidance within the Thames Policy Area (e.g. Thames Strategy East and Thames River Basin Management Plan) and supplementary planning documents (see Part 2).

**13.56** Part 3 promotes the improved public access to and along the borough's water spaces, particularly where it is currently restricted, partially restricted or fragmented (e.g. along the River Thames, the River Lea and the docks around Canary Wharf, including West India Middle Dock and Blackwall Basin). The Thames Path forms part of the National Trail. We are committed to maintaining the existing National Trail and expanding the Thames Path along the eastern part of the Isle of Dogs to connect it to the Leaway as a publicly accessible continuous route. Developments adjacent to the River Thames should contribute towards the delivery and maintenance of this route. Where the Thames Path cannot be delivered adjacent to the River Thames, due to heritage reasons, we will require the development to contribute towards the signposting, design and maintenance of an alternative route.

**13.57** We will work together with the Port of London Authority and Canal and River Trust to determine the suitability of moorings (including residential and commercial moorings) on the borough's water spaces. Key considerations in assessing the impact of mooring proposals will include: navigation, water quality, biodiversity, openness and character of the water space and surrounding area, surrounding residential amenity, waste management and air quality as well as the adequate supply of electricity provision. The Tower Hamlets Water Space Study identifies some of the locations which may be considered suitable for further development of residential moorings, including at the Regents Canal, Blackwall Basin, Poplar Dock, Milwall Inner and Outer Docks and the West India South Dock.

### Policy links

- Policy D.SG5: Developer contributions
- Policy S.DH1: Delivering high quality design
- Policy D.DH2: Attractive streets, spaces and public realm
- Policy D.DH8: Amenity
- Policy D.DH2: Attractive streets, spaces and public realm
- Policy S.ES1: Protecting and enhancing our environment
- Policy D.ES3: Urban greening and biodiversity
- Policy D.ES4: Flood risk
- Policy D.ES5: Sustainable drainage
- Policy D.ES6: Sustainable water and wastewater management
- Policy S.TR1: Sustainable travel
- Policy D.TR4: Sustainable delivery and servicing

### Evidence links

- Tower Hamlets Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- Tower Hamlets Open Space Strategy (2017)
- Tower Hamlets Water Space Study (2017)
- Tower Hamlets Green Grid Strategy (2017)
- Tower Hamlets Local Biodiversity Action Plan (2014)
- European Union Water Framework Directive (Directive 2000/60/EC)
- Thames River Basin Management Plan (Environment Agency, 2015)
- Thames Estuary 2100 Plan (Environment Agency, 2012)
- Thames Vision Project (Port of London Authority, 2016)
- Thames Strategy East (Thames Estuary Partnership, 2008)
- UK Marine Policy Statement (2011)
- Estuary Edges: Ecological Design Guidance (Environment Agency, 2011)