LBTH RESEARCH

URBAN STRUCTURE AND CHARACTERISATION STUDY

September 2009

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PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This report has been prepared for the London Borough of Tower Hamlets by Neil Double, Melissa Silvester and Matthew Randall. The report has been written to inform the Local Development Framework and other documents.

LIST OF DIAGRAMS

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Districts: sections of the city recognisable as having a particular identifying character.

Edges: these are elements not used as paths or not always seen as paths, limiting movement e.g. building edge or canal.

Landmarks: these are external point references which people experience from the outside, often buildings or structures.

Node: focal places, such as junctions of paths.

Path: channels of movement, such as streets, alleys, footpaths, motorways, and so on.

Public space network: a place that everyone has the right to visit without being excluded for economic, social or cultural reasons.

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Background statement

Tower Hamlets is an important and spatially unique inner-London borough, famous for its East End heritage, its vibrancy, and its multiculturalism. However, Tower Hamlets is not without its challenges. Its spatial challenges, the growth agenda, widespread regeneration and the value of the built environment are each of particular significance.

Historical growth has significantly shaped the physical morphology of Tower Hamlets. The Hamlets grew around key movement routes and connections between the East of England, the City of London and the Thames. Each hamlet was distinctive, having its own economic function, purpose and role to play, and eventually these hamlets began to merge together to form part of the greater London metropolis.

The connection to these distinctive places and their centres has been lost over the years since the Second World War. The function, variety and role of each place has gradually weakened, with their centres being dispersed, fragmented and loosened. This has had an impact on social cohesion and interaction and has contributed to the loss of a shared sense of place, a connection to our history, its distinctiveness and identity.

Aim of study

To identify, analyse and characterise the spatial structure of the borough in order to help formulate future spatial planning recommendations.

Study objective
- To undertake a literature review, building a knowledge framework to assist in analysis
- To identify the historical growth of the borough since 1700 and build into this the knowledge framework
- To perform a structural analysis of the borough based upon this knowledge framework
- To perform a brief characterisation of the places that constitute the borough
- To present a series of spatial planning recommendations

Study methodology

This study aims to identify, analyse and characterise the urban form and structure of the borough. By advocating an urban design led approach, a detailed understanding of the qualities and character of the borough can be presented.

Guidance from a number of key urban design sources has been used, including: *Urban Design Compendium* (1 and 2)[1], *By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System – Towards Better Practice*[2] and *Towards an Urban Renaissance*[3]. These key documents, alongside a wider literature review on urban structure, have informed a series of criteria that have been used to analyse the structure and form of the borough.

1   Urban Design Compendium 1 and 2, English Partnership and Housing Corporation
2   By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System – Towards Better Practice: DETR
3   Towards an Urban Renaissance, Urban Task Force

Structure of study

The study is divided into several chapters. The first part sets out background research into urban structure and public realm.

The second chapter sets out and analyses the historical growth of the borough and its impact on the image, shape and identity of Tower Hamlets today.

The third chapter presents a present-day borough-wide analysis from a series of urban design perspectives, including movement routes and block pattern. This borough-wide analysis, alongside the historical analysis, provides a basis on which to present the places of today.

These places of today are then explored and analysed in brief, illustrated character assessments, setting out the historical and built processes that have come to form the townscape and identity of that place.

Chapter five draws together all the previous analysis to present a series of recommendations for spatial planning in Tower Hamlets.

This study provides part city analysis and part characterisation of the borough. It is rooted in an appreciation and understanding of urban design and how it can assist in creating locally distinct spatial planning. It is therefore not exhaustive in its scope, but is selective in its critique, appropriate to the needs of supporting the creation of a spatial Core Strategy DPD.

POLICY CONTEXT

National Guidance

Using urban design as a tool to create high-quality, liveable, balanced communities has become a significant factor in national government policy guidance – some of which is discussed below.

Planning Policy Statement 1

PPS1 states that "good planning ensures that we get the right development, in the right place, at the right time". This should form the components of a strategic, coherent planning framework.

One of the more relevant principles from PPS1 reminds us to ensure that "development supports existing communities and contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed communities with good access to jobs and key services for all members of the community". Planning needs to recognise its role in helping creating places, communities that will stand the test of time, where people want to live, and which will enable people to meet their aspirations and their potential.

Local Development Frameworks need to provide a robust structure to assist in the creation of sustainable communities based upon a shared vision, and a clear strategy of how to achieve that vision. PPS1 states that:

"Good design should contribute positively to making places better for people. Design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, should not be accepted."

By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System – Towards Better Practice

This document placed urban design at the heart of the planning and development process, arguing that good design should be the aim of all those involved in the development process and should be encouraged everywhere.

It also placed a strong emphasis on "placemaking" **–** bringing together different actors and factors that influence the development of place at the earliest stage of the process, in order to create places that work.

The qualities of place were identified as:
- a place with its own identity
- a place where public and private spaces are clearly distinguished
- a place with attractive and successful outdoor areas
- a place that is easy to get to and move through
- a place that has a clear image and is easy to understand
- a place that can change easily
- a place with variety and choice

Urban Design Compendium

This document expanded greatly upon *By Design* and provided detail and examples of a number of good urban design principles, it has shaped and guided development significantly since it was produced jointly by English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation.

It placed urban design and the tools and knowledge it yields at the forefront of making successful, thriving places across the different scales: from the detailed and local to the strategic.

"Urban design is about creating a vision for an area and then deploying the skills and resources to realise that vision"

Urban Design Compendium questions the success of modern post-war development, its failure to create great places, instead producing banal, monotonous development, humdrum in design and dominated by traffic. It highlights the need to appreciate the context of areas in order to shape and develop local identity, and places that people value and feel proud of. Additionally, *Urban Design Compendium* makes strong reference to understanding and creating the urban structure, by which is meant...

"... the pattern or arrangement of development blocks, streets, buildings, open space and landscape which make up urban areas. It is the interrelationship between all these elements, rather than their particular characteristics that bond together to make a place."

"Urban structure does not imply any particular kind of urbanism; it applies equally to the centre and to the suburb and everything in between; and of course it applies equally to the city, the town and the village."

It linked the understanding and utilisation of urban structure to objectives or place qualities such as;
- integration and connections
- functional efficiency ensuring individual elements work together as part of an efficient whole
- environment harmony ensuring energy efficient and ecologically sensitive urban form
- a sense of place that strengthens local identity
- commercial viability responding to the realities of market influence on development mix and delivery

Understanding urban structure can allow the creation of a spatial framework that can guide, shape and direct development so that it contributes to, and works together in forming, an efficient whole.

Regional Guidance

The London Plan places great importance on design as a tool to achieve the high-quality environment demanded of a global city. Good design is central to all the objectives of the London Plan and the success of London as a whole. It is an essential ingredient in ensuring that higher densities and compact city living works long-term, and promotes sustainability, inclusiveness, health and well-being.

"London must achieve more intensive development in the right places. It must be designed and managed to ensure long-term efficient use, and in forms that are safe and sensitive both to their own operational needs and to their surroundings."

"Design quality is central to this and poorly designed schemes will squander London's valuable resources and can blight the lives of users and neighbours."

Ensuring the right amount of development is located in the right places and designed to a high standard is a pivotal objective, and one which requires a strategic outlook.

The London Plan begins to identify the hierarchy of town centres across London in order to support the development of those town centres and guide the location of retail and leisure. Canary Wharf is classified as a major centre; Wentworth Street is part of Central Area Activities Zone; and the following are district centres: Bethnal Green (3), Chrisp Street, Poplar, Roman Road (east), Watney Market, Whitechapel, Crossharbour.

The Mayor's aim is to implement a polycentric strategy for London's development by:
- sustaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of town centres, including community and civic activities and facilities.
- accommodating economic and housing growth through intensification and selective expansion.

Local Development Framework

Tower Hamlets is set to build 31,500 new homes by 2016[1] and further growth is expected beyond this date as London fulfils its potential as a truly global city. This requires the borough to think carefully and strategically about becoming denser and more compact; making better use of its limited space; regenerating low-intensity industrial areas; its economic vitality and retail offer; and its infrastructure provision. In short, how to become a better place for people to want to live and work in.

The physical growth that is occurring, and will continue to occur, in Tower Hamlets will have a real and physical impact upon the city. This change in the urban fabric will

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1   London Plan 2008

have an impact upon society, as one cannot change without the other one also changing.

The Local Development Framework offers the council an opportunity to develop a clear, proactive, spatial vision and strategy for how the borough will look in 15 years, and identify means and ways to deliver its vision. Developing a robust understanding of the nature of the physical environment, its form and arrangement, and how it can improve people's lives is an important consideration for a spatial strategy.

This report will therefore form part of a wider extensive research pool, which will inform and shape the emerging spatial vision and approach of the Core Strategy, the principal document of the Local Development Framework.

Sustainable Community Strategy

Much of the feedback from the Community Plan consultation has implications for the form and function of the borough, how we move around, and create places where people can meet others, feel safe, comfortable and enjoy themselves.

Identifying and analysing the urban structure affects and relates to the needs arising out of the community plan process. Some of the key points are:

- a need for common ground and space to meet people safe and lively streets
- reducing social exclusion
- opportunities for everyday interaction
- shared sense of place
- a distinctive, local identity
- access and liveliness of centres

How urban environments and their structures shape and influence the above qualities will be explored within this study, as they directly affect the liveability of the borough and its neighbourhoods.

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RESEARCH

THE PHYSICAL ORDER

Urban Structure and the Living City

"Cities are large collections of buildings linked by space. Buildings represent economic, cultural, social and residential opportunities. Space connects them into a system of mutual accessibility."

Here, Bill Hillier describes the structure of cities. From this, it is clear that the elements of buildings and space are the fundamentals of urban structure. Intertwined with buildings and space opportunities, which all successful cities should offer. Opportunities can bring prosperity, choice, growth and a means to solve problems.

Urban design can be viewed as a way to look at parts and wholes, and how they combine to form places, good and bad. Hillier suggests that the spatial form of cities, particularly their part/whole structure, may have been misunderstood in modern planning.

We have distinguished urban form from movement patterns, thinking that these entities can be neatly separated out and still form a coherent whole. Hillier argues instead that movement powerfully shapes urban form and always has done. Most urban movement is what Hillier calls "natural movement", movement which is determined by the grid (the public-realm network) itself rather than by specific attractors or generators. This is because all buildings create some sort and level of movement; they are all nodes in a sense. Therefore all movement is *from* somewhere *to* somewhere else. This creates a situation where most movement is "through movement".

When street patterns create dead ends and cul-de-sacs and do not integrate into the wider movement network, we are seriously inhibiting this "through movement", which is so vital in ensuring legible, connected, and vibrant neighbourhoods and cities.

When such a connected system exists, which allows and encourages through movement from all places to all other places at all scales of movement, it creates the multiplier effect. This happens when the urban structure exploits the fact that all trips produce a by-product, in that each must pass through a certain number of intervening spaces. Hillier argues that this can create patterns of natural co-presence which can be turned to economic, social and cultural advantage. For instance, people taking a certain route to the Tube will encourage shops and other commercial uses to locate along that route to take advantage of their purchasing power. This is a natural ordering law. This is what, in turn, creates urban life, activity, vibrancy and, over time, a sense of place.

"Disurbanism" has created dead environments where bits have been separated out to the point where they don't interact, and fail to generate any activity and vibrancy in the city. Buildings sitting in space – a typology often found with much post-war housing – are so disconnected from the public realm that they can no longer form the vital edge of activity, entrance and surveillance, with natural implications on perceptions of safety. Such development types are concerned disproportionately with internal layout and do not consider the relationship with internal and external structure, and how it fits into the city fabric.

The deformed grid structure, or the "deformed wheel" as Hillier refers to it, was the generic structure of London: different to (not better or worse than) the grand, planned boulevards of Paris, and the unique grid pattern of l'Eixample in Barcelona. This gave London its unique "big city" feel, but also its local sense of place, arising from all the little hamlets and villages that eventually merged. This to some extent has been lost in east London due to modern, post-war developments failing to integrate with this deformed grid structure.

"Good urban space is used space. Most urban space is movement. Most movement is through-movement, the by-product of how the grid offers routes from everywhere to everywhere else in the grid. Most informal space is movement-related, as in the sense and fact of urban safety."

Understanding, and designing the city's urban structure in order to make connections is fundamental to the life and vibrancy of the city, and the success of urban neighbourhoods. When done correctly, a connected street system can bring the whole system of land uses, densities, building heights, active public spaces, and town centres into a structure that maximises opportunities, everyday interaction, and economic prosperity.

Nikos Salingaros argues that there is a need to understand the city as a complex interacting system with hierarchical components that combine to form its structure; only by doing this can we begin to reinstate some sort of urban spatial structure.

"A living city differs radically from what we have built in the twentieth century"

A living city, one that is full of vibrancy and vitality, depends upon an enormous number of different paths and connections.

Salingaros refers to something termed the Urban Web, which links very strongly to Hillier's concept of the wheel like grid structure.

Salingaros discusses the inverse-power scaling law, saying there should be only a few components of large scale, several of intermediate scale, and very many of small size. As humans our minds automatically scale our environment. We recognise what feels natural by its scaling hierarchy and react accordingly.

"In a living city, different types of urban systems overlap to build up urban complexity"

This layering and overlapping of systems can be witnessed in successful urban areas, with local shops, workshop spaces, green parks, streets, bus stops, offices, Tube stations, and housing co-dependent on each other, as each operates as a particular type of node, creating and attracting movement.

"Coherent city form emerges from assembling components hierarchically, using intense local couplings together with long-range connections that reduce disorder... urban coherence can only come about from the correct combination of geometry and connectivity."

The Urban Task Force highlights how important good urban design is to the success and functioning of the city, its districts and for citizens' quality of life. The physical environment can provide the positive framework on which other social, economic and civic functions come together to make a place feel alive, vibrant, successful and self-sustaining.

"Well-designed urban districts and neighbourhoods succeed because they recognise the primary importance of the public realm – the network of spaces between buildings that determine the layout, form and connectivity of the city. The shape of public spaces and the way they link together are essential to the cohesion of urban neighbourhoods and communities. When the framework is well designed and integrated – as in the traditional compact city – it plays a fundamental role in linking people and places together. When it is fragmented and unstructured – as in so many modern urban environments – to contributes to social segregation and alienation"

We as city dwellers know instinctively when a place feels good, safe, comfortable, and lively and makes us want to stay and enjoy it – and we know when a place does the opposite.

Urban design should be used not as an abstract aesthetic tool, but as a way to improve people's lives and their urban experience.

There are some very definite urban qualities which, when combined successfully, can help to achieve a successful urban street, quarter, district etc. These have been outlined in various books, reports and best-practice guidance, and are summarised below:

- a sense of character and identity
- continuity and enclosure – clear distinction between public and private
- a successful and attractive public realm
- ease of movement
- a place that has a clear image and can be easily understood and navigated
- a place that can change and adapt easily
- a place with variety and a high level of choice

Urban Structure can be described as the framework of routes and spaces that connect locally and more widely, and the way developments, routes and open spaces relate to one other. The layout provides the basic plan on which all other aspects of the form and uses of development fit together. In other words, it is how the bits of a city can and should be put together to form a liveable, safe, lively, and enjoyable place.

"So first come urban life (routes), then space (public realm) and lastly buildings (form)."
Jan Gehl, urban designer

Understanding pedestrian movement patterns and how the built form shapes those patterns is therefore important, as is how the quality of space encourages or hinders pedestrian life and movement. It is very much about activity and accessibility.

There is an important inter-relationship between these elements. When combined successfully they can enliven our urban experience making places understandable, coherent and vibrant.

How this understanding can be applied to analysing the urban structure that we experience in Tower Hamlets will form part of chapter four.

Creating opportunities for higher levels of urban intensity in appropriate locations can be an important step towards delivering an urban renaissance. Often space is under-used, poorly watched, and as a result, perceived as unsafe. Increasing the intensity with which this space is used should be a clear objective. Transport hubs and urban centres are examples of where this can be achieved, along with key movement routes.

Generating activity

Accessible places, ones which are easy to understand and move around are only valuable if there is a reason for people to move around. Hence, uses and activities play an equally important role.

An approach to mixing uses is an important step in creating viable, robust and thriving places. A variety of uses encourages different people, at different times, for a variety of reasons, to use, enjoy and spend money in a place.

"Many activities can – with careful design and good urban management – live harmoniously side by side. Except for certain industries or activities that attract very high traffic volumes or create noise at unsociable hours, most businesses and services can co-exist with housing."

Mixing at the right scales is important, from the street, to the block, to the neighbourhood, to the district, to the major centres. Achieving this optimum mix is a careful balancing act and one which needs to be explored on a place-by-place basis.

The greatest mix of uses should occur in the most accessible locations – close to public transport facilities, easy to get on foot and bike; centres with higher densities; landmarks; and meeting places for all kinds of people.

Having a diverse range of small shops, services, markets, art galleries and other unique, local uses is one of the main attractions and benefits of city living. As densities increase and more people live in a certain area, the greater the viability for a diverse mix of uses. More people equals more spending power and greater desire for choice.

The social mix of the population is a related issue. A good mix of incomes and tenures ensures that centres can thrive. There can be a healthier distribution of wealth within a place, spending can be recycled and transferred within a place, rather than having only high-income or low-income households in an area.

Variety and diversity in the city is a central factor in creating successful neighbourhoods, and one which Jane Jacobs expressed in her analysis of city neighbourhoods in America:

"...the fact is big cities are natural generators of diversity and prolific incubators of new enterprises and ideas of all kinds. Moreover, big cities are the natural economic homes of immense numbers and ranges of small enterprises."

The complex variety and mix of activity that naturally occurs in cities is what makes them so inviting for large numbers of people. The city is more than just for living; it is the meeting point for different people.

The quote below criticises modern planning techniques of separating functions and uses of the city into neat, simple parcels and its creation of dead, soulless and boring places:

"Perhaps the city was not after all, an assembly of well planned housing units, but something that required a different kind of inquiry."
The Seduction of Place, Joseph Rykwert

Centres of activity

Highly accessible urban centres of great variety and diversity, located in and around public-transport nodes, can offer real choice and opportunities for interaction. They should be clearly accessible by foot to ensure social inclusiveness.

"The purpose of promoting variety is to increase choice. But choice also depends on mobility: people who are highly mobile can take advantage of a variety of activities even if these are spread over a wide area." (Bill Hillier)

If we are to achieve real social inclusiveness then we need variety close to people – within walking distance. Otherwise people without high mobility are going to remain socially, physically and economically isolated. These people include:

• children
• poor people
• disabled and sick people
• elderly people
• parents with young children
• people without cars
• people without local knowledge

As a rule of thumb people should be able to easily access a network of different centres of different sizes offering a wide variety of choice, opportunities and uses.

• **Local:** 100-250 metres – your local corner shop, pub, dry cleaners, takeaway, etc, perhaps located on the ground floor of a corner building

• **Neighbourhood:** 250-500 metres or five minutes' walk

• **District:** 500-1,500 metres or 10 minutes' walk – restaurants, shops, offices, workspaces, cafés, libraries

• **Major:** 1,500-4,000 metres or 20 minutes' walk – extensive variety of shops, restaurants, offices

• **City:** access to the entire metropolis – theatres, venues, specialist providers, famous department stores

The above is meant to be a rough guide, as different centres have different functions and uses and often change, overlap, grow and shrink to suit social and economic circumstances. Centres also do not sit in isolation, they interconnect and overlap, they support one another, and thus they need to be understood as such.

Access to a number of centres is an important thing for local people, they want to feel belonging to their neighbourhood and have access to a wide range of shops, services and other things you can find in a modern city like London. Interconnection is vital between centres, to encourage a walkable urban environment, and for people to be able to appreciate the scale and hierarchy of centres.

Things that can limit the walkability of a place:

• streets that are dominated by cars

• poor quality, cluttered and dirty public realm

• poor legibility – easy to get lost, difficult to find your way round

• poor permeability – disconnected street network, such as dead ends and cul-de-sacs

All these elements in isolation or in combination can restrict a person's ability to reach the centre of their choice, having a knock-on effect on commercial vitality, opportunities for interaction, and the sense of community.

The public space network and social interaction

The street network should allow people to move from where they are to where they want to go. It should allow them to do this in a multitude of ways.

The public realm can be described as the space between buildings, the space where urban dwellers come together.

"The public realm is a place for all people, regardless of ethnic background, age, socio-economic class, disability, religion, or the like. Residents, visitors, students, workers, children, and the elderly must all be invited to meet in the public realm!"
(Urban Task Force)

Dividing different types of open space into individual units only serves to isolate activities,-not only from each another, but from the movement routes that make them viable, active, dynamic and safe places. Often the public realm we experience is dead, unloved, and poorly connected, with little or no natural surveillance, severely limiting its potential as a meeting place for local people.

"Some urban areas have too much public space, much of which is poorly designed, managed and maintained. Many 20th-century residential developments have a public realm which is simply 'SLOAP' (Space left over after planning) – soulless, undefined places, poorly landscaped, with no

relationship to surrounding buildings."
(Urban Task Force)

The Urban Task Force has clearly recommended an integrated, over-arching, spatial approach.

"Public space should be conceived of as an outdoor room within a neighbourhood, somewhere to relax and enjoy the urban experience, a venue for a range of different activities, from outdoor eating to street entertainment, from sport and play areas to a venue for civic or political functions; and most importantly of all as a place for walking or sitting-out."
(Urban Task Force)

In order to make streets and spaces attractive for people to use and stay in, they have to be of exceptional quality and based on pedestrian scale. Often, quantity is given precedence over quality, resulting in large amounts of under-used, unattractive and unsafe open space that fails to add value to local people. This can be seen in many post-war housing estates.

Creating a quality environment for people is paramount and must be considered before anything else in order to achieve a lively and sustainable public realm.

"There are two main methods of categorising squares – by function and by form. There are numerous examples of recent plaza design where one or other of these two equally important criteria of excellence have been neglected. The empty windswept place surrounded by under-utilised buildings is all too common in the modern city, while its opposite or counterpart, the busy traffic

island or faceless car park around which are scattered collections of non-related buildings, is also endemic in the urban scene."
C. Moughtin and M. Mertens, 'Street and Square'

Jan Gehl, through much of his research, argues for a clear, people-based approach to spatial strategies.

Firstly, he states the need to establish the human dimensions: where people move and why; where they want to stop and why; and the complexity of interactions in the public realm. This then goes to shape the public-realm network of streets and space, which in turn dictates and shapes the urban form and arrangement of buildings. This is needed to ensure that the relationship between people and buildings supports public life and animation.

Gehl has been critical of modern post-war planning and architecture for failing to understand the physiological needs and wants of urban citizens – the reason we all come together. But he also states that:

"They had good intentions. From the 1930s, the prevailing wisdom in planning was that it was healthier to take people out of the cramped conditions of the city and house them away from workplaces, in multi-storey structures (to ensure healthy cross-breezes) which were clean and sun-facing

But they neglected the psychological and social aspects of design, so we ended up with the blank, isolating tower blocks that blight cities all over the world. As Gehl puts it, they literally built life out."
(Jan Gehl)

Gehl recently defined the notion of the "invaded city", where cars, inhospitable developments, and the sidelining of pedestrians have created an urban environment where people would rather not be turning them into "abandoned cities" so unpleasant, boring and inhospitable that no one lingers in the streets and squares than is absolutely necessary.

Gehl states that there are three types of outdoor activities:

• **Necessary:** includes those that are more or less compulsory – going to work, school, the shops, waiting for a bus, etc. These are generally everyday tasks the majority of people need to partake in to some extent, regardless of the conditions and external environment.

• **Optional:** these are activities which occur if there is a wish to do so, and the environment and place make it possible and pleasurable to do so.

• **Social:** these occur when there are sufficient optional activities to generate enough people, as these activities require other people to be in close proximity. Wanting to be around other people in a pleasant environment – hearing, seeing, playing, chatting, people-watching and other passive contacts is a characteristic of

a successful public space. It offers the chance for spontaneous interaction, chance meetings, informal chats, communal activities, and can entice more people who just want to be around other people in a safe, pleasant, comfortable and stimulating environment: the epitome of city living.
Successful places will allow optional and social activities to occur in highest frequency. When the public realm and exterior environment are of a hostile, harsh, unfriendly, poorly maintained nature, then these higher-end social interactions will not occur - at least not to a great extent.

There is a strong interrelationship between the quality of a city's public realm and the quantity of the positive social interactions that occur.

"Safe, well maintained, attractive and uncluttered public spaces provide the vital 'glue' between buildings, and play a crucial role in strengthening communities."
Jjan Gehl)

"Where do people go?" is a question we should be asking ourselves constantly, as without this understanding, development strategies and frameworks may be focusing the wrong development in the wrong place – as has often been the case with modern development.

THE SOCIAL ORDER

Concept of place and community

Place has six key components according to Terry Farrell:

• There is for humans a generic, inherent sense of place for all places

• But urban design and placemaking can only deal with place in specific, not utopian terms. Analysis of existing form, its history and context and what makes the place what it uniquely is, is the starting point. Place can be seen as culture frozen in time.

•Place is always a silent client and often the best clue is what it "wants to be"

• Mono-cultural entities like shopping centres, hospitals and airports are kinds of half-places; but they invariably revert to the natural DNA of human places: diversifying and layering with shopping, chapels, housing etc, and becoming structured with a hierarchy of streets and squares.

• Place is always changing. City planning and designing is invariably about recognising directions and rates of change.

• But in the end, nature and global changes will prevail over all. Less than 10,000 years ago, London's River Thames was a tributary of the Rhine and the UK was not an island. Climate change and changing sea levels have been, and will be, the norm.

If in Tower Hamlets the Community Plan is indeed looking at "community" then the Core Strategy needs to understand and look at "place" as an urban manifestation. Places are real and experienced areas of urban geography and there is a need to understand urban change on the smaller, neighbourhood level from which the community understand and experience it.

Place Identity

"Place identity is the connection and relationship that exists between people and place over time."
Professor Ian Bennett

The temporal element is often overlooked. It takes years and decades for a place to develop and gain identity from its users.

Collective memory of place is important. It connects people to the place in which they live, to its history, and the people who have helped develop the place over the years. This is particularly true of the East End which has a very strong sense of itself, its history, its past citizens and its civic growth. Exploiting this facet is a key element of developing and strengthening a sense of place.

"Memory of place does not mean rebuilding the past, but drawing on its memory to rediscover the paths and footsteps of past generations, guided by topography and the weather which traced the early structure of the city. It also means that in renewing the city for the present and the future we must create places that will strike new memories for the next generations."
MBK Architects

Memory and meaning informs the creation of a place, an image of a place, what constitutes it, where its boundaries lie, where its edges are, where its centre lies.

The built form of cities should be designed to encourage its users to develop a sense of:

• empowerment
• rootedness
• transculturality
• oneness with nature

Producing an urban environment which engenders positive connotations and meanings requires citizens to develop an attachment. This is an important step in the creation of neighbourhood well-being.

THE VISUAL ORDER

When we experience the city we use all our senses, and the image we get is a result of all these senses forming a picture, whether bad or good. Legibility of the city is a crucial element in making places more enjoyable and successful. An image is composed of three components; structure, identity and meaning. These all come together to form a clear or unclear image.

Image quality

Understanding the parts that combine to form the cityscape of Tower Hamlets is an important output of this study. Citizens make sense of their neighbourhood, whether it is Bethnal Green or Bow. They know the best ways to get around. But for people who are not so familiar with an area, its legibility is an important component of its ease of use and enjoyment. Getting lost in a place is rarely an enjoyable experience.

A clear, vivid and integrated physical setting produces a coherent image for the citizens and encourages social life too. It encourages people to use their environment, to move around on foot. People feel comfortable and connected and are more likely to spend time on their streets and spaces. Places may be organised around a set of focal points, and named regions, or linked via remembered routes. These elements build an image.

There are five principal physical elements that contribute to creating a city image:

Paths

Paths are the channels along which the observer customarily, occasionally, or potentially moves. These are the predominant elements in their image. They form the majority of the cityscape. They observe the city while moving along these paths, and along the the other environmental elements are arranged and related.

Edges

Edges are linear elements, not considered paths by the observer – a wall or railway line, for instance. Such edges may be barriers to movement but they may also be seam lines which two regions are related and joined together, such as a canal perhaps. Although not as important as paths, they are important organising features for citizens.

District

These are the medium to large sections of the city, normally considered to be of two-dimensional extent, which observers define themselves as being "inside of" or "outside of". They have some common or identifiable character, which causes the observer to think of it as a place.

Nodes

Nodes are the strategic spots in a city into which an observer can enter. These are the intensive foci to and from which he or she is travelling. They are often formed by the crossing or convergence of paths, a transportation stop, or concentrations of activity related to some use or physical character, such as a market or public square. Nodes, or their wider role as forming centres, are typically the intensive foci of the district in which they sit. They are often the dominant feature for the observer, viewed often as the heart of a place.

Landmarks

Landmarks are a point-reference. They are usually a physical object such as a building, sign, shop or mountain. They are singled out as one element within many elements. They may be distant, strategic landmarks seen from many places, like a tower or dome, or, locally, they may be more visible from a certain angle in the street, such as a pub on a corner.

Reading the urban environment

Each piece of city has a level of clarity or "legibility", which means the ease with which its parts can be recognised and be organised into a coherent pattern.

Kevin Lynch suggests we need to begin developing a clear and comprehensive image of the city, one which is coherent and legible. This has direct implications for urban form and the role it plays in creating a wider piece of city. This environment should reflect the citizens who live there; it should hold meaning and be symbolic; it should promote civility and cohesion as well as allow ease of movement, multiple use and order.

The places that make up a city need to be imagined and read as well-knit, altogether remarkable pieces of city, connected into the whole, yet rich in local history, meaning and tradition. This is what creates the ever elusive desire for "sense of place".

Character, richness and distinctiveness

It should be noted that the city is a product of many builders. It is constantly in flux, being rebuilt as time passes. And there is no final result, just a direction that can be promoted.

A successful piece of city, therefore, manages to conserve its urban form and shape and has significant value that people have embedded meaning and affection into. This is what builds up a place's character and distinctiveness.

There needs to be a reconnection to the art of shaping cities, to create a form that promotes sustainable living and well-being on a neighbourhood level. Creating a city form that is legible and coherent is a crucial condition for the enjoyment and use of the city, as well as its desirability as a place to live.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

The knowledge and understanding of the qualities and components of urban structure can be taken forward in order to use as an analysis base.

From all the research undertaken, the following conclusions can be drawn:

• The paths that allow movement are a key layer in understanding the quality of a particular urban structure.

• That activity nodes are created primarily by the crossing of paths: the more connected the paths, the more intense the activity node.

• These activity nodes are places where most people meet in the city. They are the convergence of pedestrian movement and, as a result, activities such as commerce, shops, etc., locate in such places due to the high footfall and increased prospect of sales.

• Activity nodes in modern cities have also been created where public transport stations or a cluster of buses are located, as these create a great deal of movement.

• That every piece of movement in the city is through movement. To go from one place to another, you have to go via many other places, hence the importance of a connected, understandable street network. This implies the connection between activity nodes are equally important as the activity nodes themselves.

• That the quality of the public realm has considerable impact and influence on the quantity of social interaction and the quality. Here, there is a spectrum that operates.

• That to maximise social-interaction opportunities, you need to have activities, and therefore people. This, in turn, generates more people and more activity, which encourages social activities to take place, which has a direct link with "sense of community" and "social inclusion".

• That an identity for a place can only be successfully developed when you assist in developing the connections between people and a place over time. Buildings, and the activities that occur within them, play a key part in developing a sense of place.

• That centres help to foster a sense identity within a place. They can form the heart of a place, where citizens can meet. But there has to be a reason to be there. There has to be many activities occurring within a high-quality public realm.

• The identity of places is held within its buildings and structures, hence there is a need to preserve and reuse the building stock that is valued and liked by local people.

•That the public realm should be considered as an outdoor living room, a place where social interaction and activities can occur – from chatting on the pavement to a street event.

3 HISTORICAL STRUCTURE

HISTORICAL STRUCTURE

Urban Structure over time

Exploring the historical structure of Tower Hamlets from the 16th century through to the present day allows a story of urban structure to form.

This story is an important link between place identity, historical associations and the role and success of neighbourhoods in Tower Hamlets today. Settlements have history; they have grown and have been formed over many years, by many hands, which contributes to our understanding of urban structure and place identity.

Why is it important?

Understanding the processes that have shaped and created the settlements and urban form over the years is an important step towards understanding urban structure. Structure comes about by many processes, over many years. Taking a chronological approach allows a deeper understanding of where we are today.

You begin to see the key movement routes that have shaped the accessibility of the borough over the years. Some routes have remained constant and important over hundreds of years, and remain our main thoroughfares. How we understand these routes is important in how we plan for them in the future.

The layers of historical development

The years that are presented cover the period from 1755 to present day, which covers a snapshot of the recent historical development of the borough. However, it should be noted that Tower Hamlets has a long history of settlement, of which this analysis only begins to scratch the surface.

"Tower Hamlets has been inhabited for 2,000 years, with a detailed history going back to the Roman invasion of AD43. Developed on marshlands, Tower Hamlets grew from a small cluster of communities, known as the hamlets around the tower – which is the origin of the borough's name – into the vibrant and dynamic borough of today."
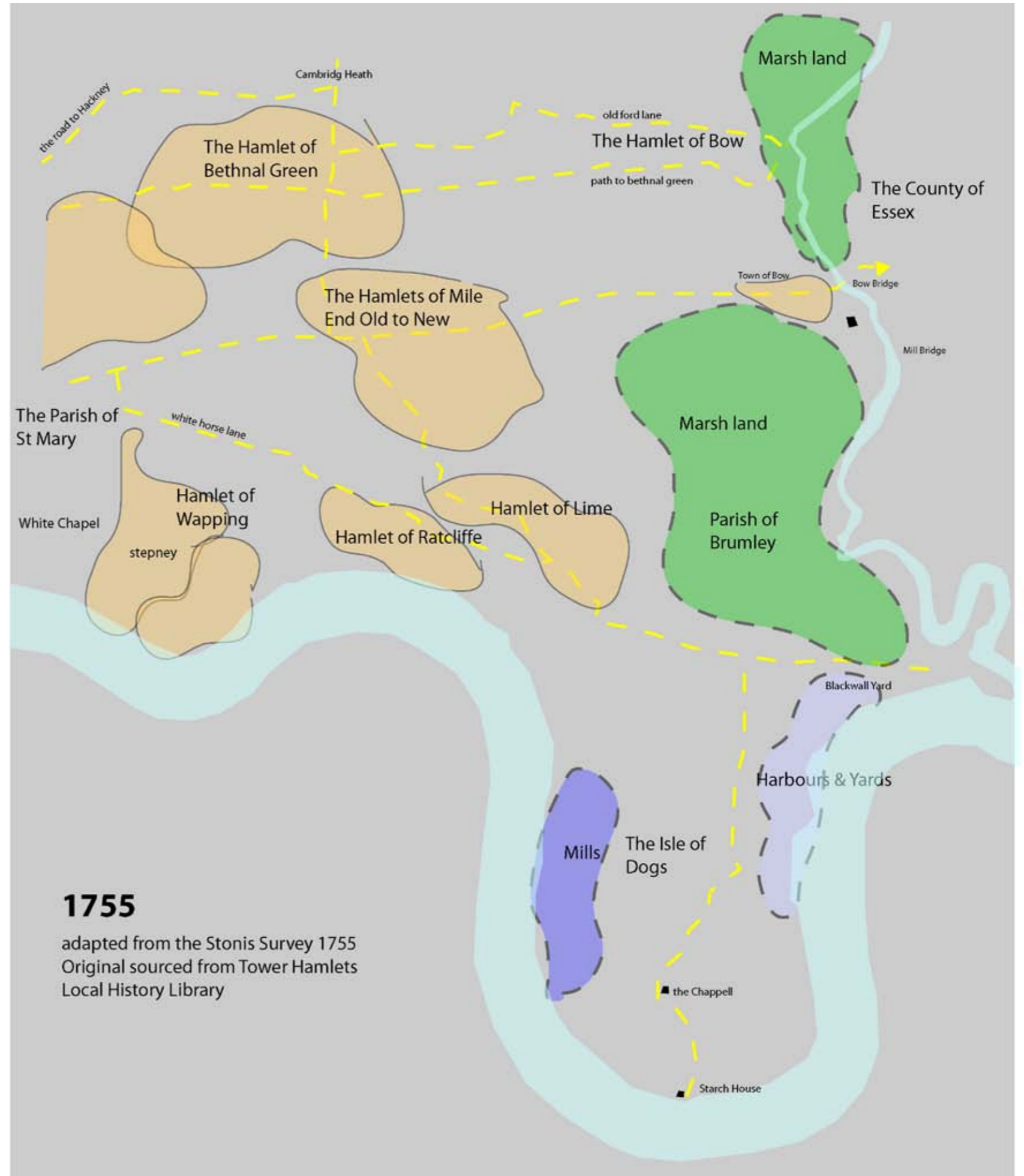*www.towerhamlets.gov.uk*

1755

The three key routes connecting London to the countryside of Essex are apparent, along with Old Ford Lane and a route running north-south through the Isle of Dogs.

Farmland composes much of the landscape in this period, along with several settlements of various sizes. Much of the landscape therefore has been humanised in some form, whether by the building of dwellings or by harnessing it for agriculture. The urbanisation process is emerging at this stage – a process which becomes more apparent in later years. There is a significant amount of non-humanised land in the form of natural marshland, which covers much of the eastern side of the borough and the Isle of Dogs.

Places such as Wapping, Stepney, Lime, Ratcliffe, Mile End, Bow, Bromley and the Isle of Dogs are all evident in this period in some form or another.

Marsh land

Cambridg Heath

the road to Hackney

old ford lane

The Hamlet of Bow

The Hamlet of Bethnal Green

path to bethnal green

The County of Essex

Town of Bow

Bow Bridge

The Hamlets of Mile End Old to New

Mill Bridge

The Parish of St Mary

white horse lane

Marsh land

Hamlet of Wapping

Hamlet of Lime

Parish of Brumley

White Chapel

stepney

Hamlet of Ratcliffe

Blackwall Yard

Harbours & Yards

Mills

The Isle of Dogs

1755

adapted from the Stonis Survey 1755
Original sourced from Tower Hamlets
Local History Library

the Chappell

Starch House

1809

During this period there were a number of small settlements (hamlets) closely connected to the landscape. The people were generating a living from the land through agriculture and from the City of London, which can be seen to be growing eastwards.
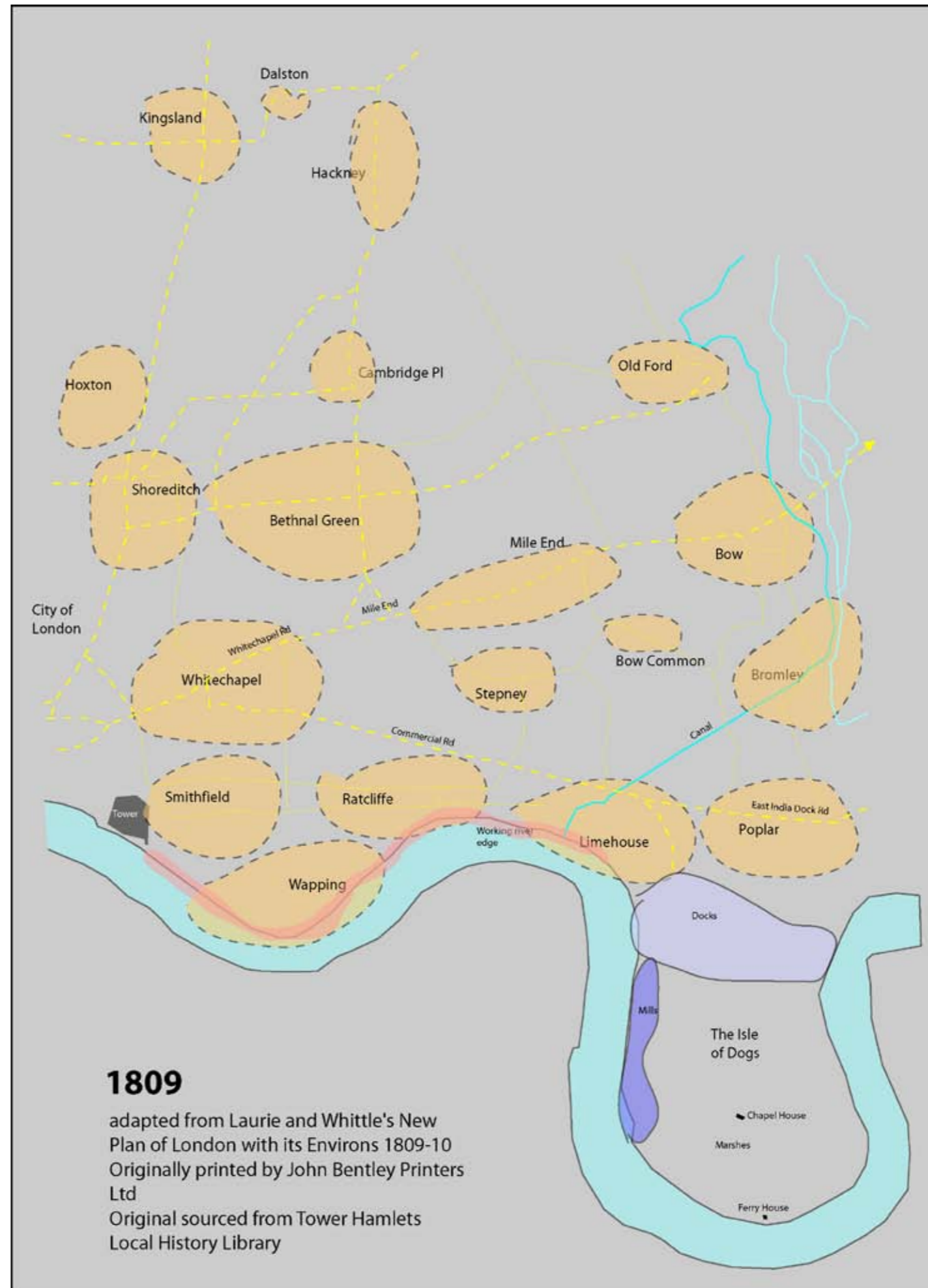
In this time, the key routes are becoming increasingly important as thoroughfares, trade routes and gathering spaces. From the diagram we can see the hamlets growing around these movement routes, interconnected yet developing their own distinct identities.

The growth of London eastwards can be witnessed from maps in this period. Development has clustered along the three main routes that span out of the City of London, creating an altogether larger piece of townscape.

This can be seen in the area we now know as Stepney, which is developing around Stepney Church and the streets that go through the area.

The importance and connection to the River Thames is clearly apparent in this period, with buildings right up to the edge of the bank. These are places to trade goods, getting them off and on the boats quickly and efficiently.

The docks have also started to take shape, with West India Docks on the northern part of the Isle of Dogs being built to cater for the larger ships which were increasingly entering London.

1809

adapted from Laurie and Whittle's New Plan of London with its Environs 1809-10
Originally printed by John Bentley Printers Ltd
Original sourced from Tower Hamlets Local History Library
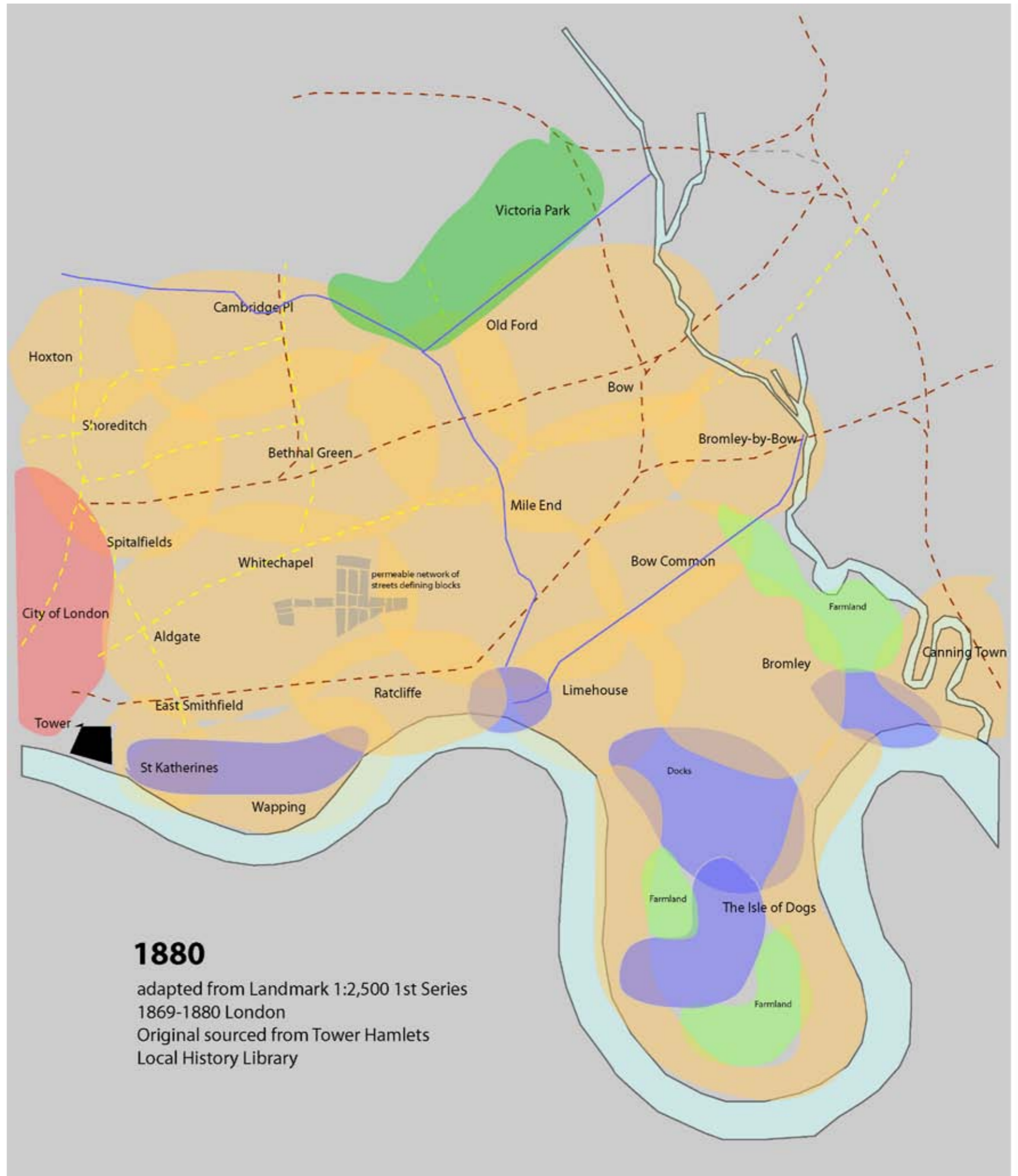
25

1880

The expansion and urbanisation of the area is evident during this period, with much of the previously undeveloped marshland and farmland becoming occupied by new housing and industry.

The industrial expansion of London led to huge demands for industry and housing growth, which this area, with its strategic river access and proximity to the City of London, delivered in spades.

The public garden and parks movement is beginning to take shape, with the creation of Victoria Park alongside other smaller parks and gardens.

1880

adapted from Landmark 1:2,500 1st Series
1869-1880 London
Original sourced from Tower Hamlets
Local History Library

1938

The entire area is now fully urbanised, with marshland and farmland all but disappeared. The extent and growth of the docks displays London's – and Britain's – colonial shipping and trading power. The beginning of the 20th century was a period of growth, change and urbanisation, supporting the country's wider aspiration of the British Empire.

From the morphology highlighted on the map, the compact, tight-knit built form can be witnessed – the way it creates a permeable network of blocks of varying sizes, framing a well connected street network, which is vibrant and full of activity due to the building frontages that edge the public realm.

North-south movement routes are clearly more apparent and legible in this period than they are today. Since the Second World War, many of the long-north-south streets have been cut, disconnected and isolated.

Dalston
Hackney
Victoria Park
a connected street network promotes accessibility
Kingsland
Shoreditch
Bethnal Green
Bow
Bromley-by-Bow
Mile End
Bow Common
Whitechapel
Stepney
clear dinstinction between public street and private block
tigther, more compact urban fabric defines public space
Bromley
clearly defined centes and meeting places
Aldgate
Ratcliffe
Poplar
St Paul Shadwell
Limehouse
Tower
Wapping

1938

Adapted from Landmark 1:10,000 4th Series 1938 London Original sourced from Tower Hamlets Local History Library

1968 MAP OF TOWER HAMLETS

1968

During this period a great deal of post-war redevelopment had either been undertaken or was about to be undertaken. The urban landscape and structure of the borough was changing significantly with a new development typology.

The structure of the path network was significantly altered with the comprehensive redevelopment projects and housing estates. Traditional streets flanked by terraced housing were being replaced, in many areas, by modernist housing estates, characterised by towers and long horizontal slab blocks. These were surrounded by open space and criss-crossed by footpaths, and were beginning to radically change the urban structure of this part of the East End.

Many of the paths that cross through these estates are not seen or read as public streets, and as a result are rarely used by the general public, who prefer to go around the estates using the traditional street network that remains.

Post-war redevelopment also led to depopulation and a de-intensification of land uses. Housing estates were built at densities much lower than the housing that they replaced. Many of these estates turned their backs on the street network, which was becoming more and more dominated by traffic. The once close relationship between residents and their street was being lost. Retail and commerce was often provided within these estates, detached from the wider street and movement network. This discouraged passing trade, and many of these clusters of shops and services failed to thrive due to a lack of trade.

Also during this time, the docks were starting to suffer from larger container ports, and due to the changing nature of shipping, the docks and River Thames became too small for the ever increasing ship sizes. This led to rising unemployment and, some years later, to the eventual closure of the docks, which meant not only loss of livelihood for local people, but contributed to the removal of identity and sense of place in these neighbourhoods.

Bromley had a recognisable identity during this time. This, though, has been lost in recent years as large motorways have been ploughed through the area. It has lost its position and place identity. The same can be said for Bow Common, where a process of urban-form loosening, de-intensification and the loss of focal point has led to it being seen as, and thus becoming, a non-place.

Cable Street is a particularly important street during this period, linking the Tower of London to Ratcliffe, and Limehouse and to the docks and the workers that lived and worked alongside the Thames. Cannon Street is also a key artery, linking Ratcliffe and Wapping to the Whitechapel area, linking people to the activity of the Thames.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets is a political boundary formed in 1963 that contains a collection of old villages linked by, and dependent on, the Tower of London, which gave rise to the borough's name.

The hamlets, which grew and expanded over time, eventually formed the larger conurbation of London, giving rise in the 19th century to the area now known as the "East End". The East End, although having no formal boundaries, is well known by most Londoners who, if asked would probably identify the areas listed below - the original historical Hamlets:

• Spitalfields
• Wapping
• Bethnal Green
• Mile End
• Poplar
• Bromley-by-Bow
• Bow
• Whitechapel
• Shoreditch

These hamlets outside the city walls were, and remain, located along the key routes that connected the growing metropolis of London with the East of England and Harwich, the gateway to Europe. Each hamlet had its own economic role and purpose which sustained its location and prosperity. There was a reason for people to settle there, to build a community and to develop economically, and this over time developed a strong sense of place, pride and attachment, which we still recognise today.

These hamlets began to rapidly expand in the 19th century and the spatial characteristic of small, individual hamlets, surrounded by farmlands and marshes connected by thoroughfares between the City and the countryside, changed. The Hamlets eventually grew and merged to form part of the wider metropolis of London while retaining their unique character and function.

The invention in around 1880 of the term 'East End' was rapidly taken up by the new halfpenny press.

"... and in the pulpit and the music hall ... A shabby man from Paddington, St Marylebone or Battersea might pass muster as one of the respectable poor. But the same man coming from Bethnal Green, Shadwell or Wapping was an 'East Ender', the box of Keating's bug powder must be reached for, and the spoons locked up. In the long run this cruel stigma came to do good. It was a final incentive to the poorest to get out of the 'East End' at all costs, and it became a concentrated reminder to the public conscience that nothing to be found in the 'East End' should be tolerated in a Christian country."
The Nineteenth Century XXIV, 1888

The boundaries of the East End are usually considered to be City Wall in the west, River Lea in the east, the River Thames to the south and Hackney in the north. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets therefore encompasses all these East End "places" which are known to Londoners. But ask where Tower Hamlets is, or where you enter or leave it, and very few people would be able to answer.

The Second World War brought chaos and destruction to the East End, but also revealed the strong "East-End spirit" of not letting such things as war and bombings get in the way of everyday life.

"A wrecked, burnt out East End. The people shattered and exhausted after six years of war. The streets devastated. Forty per cent of houses in the borough of Stepney destroyed by German bombs, 85 per cent of properties near the dock wiped out. Tens of thousands homeless."
E Glinert (2005), 'East End Chronicles' (Allen Lane)

After the war, modern planning, comprehensive redevelopment, slum clearance, depopulation, de-intensification, housing estates and urban motorways brought about a radical physical and social change in the East End. Many families were moved out of the East End into Essex. Long formed relationships, kinships and sense of community was lost, as communities were replanned and redesigned based on new planning methods. Redevelopment came above rehabilitation, with good quality housing, including late nineteenth-century apartment blocks, needlessly demolished.

"The planners put to one side notions that many East End communities, though slums, were successful socially, that people enjoyed where they lived, that they simply wanted better houses, not a new community."
Glinert 'East End Chronicles'

Tower Hamlets was created in 1963 from the amalgamation of the Metropolitan boroughs of Stepney, Poplar and Bethnal Green, and therefore comprise most of what is commonly known as London's East End. The use of this term continues to this day.

Rebuilding and development in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s led to a gradual deintensification, fragmentation and dispersal of urban form, population and uses. Modern urban planning and architecture set about

removing the urban complexity that typified much of the pre-war East End, often resulting in bland, lifeless, desolate urban environments which now populate our cities. Building new roads, widening existing ones making the public realm for car movement, zoning out uses to separate residential from business, creating large mono-tenure housing estates all featured in this new Le Corbusier/CIAM-inspired Tower Hamlets.
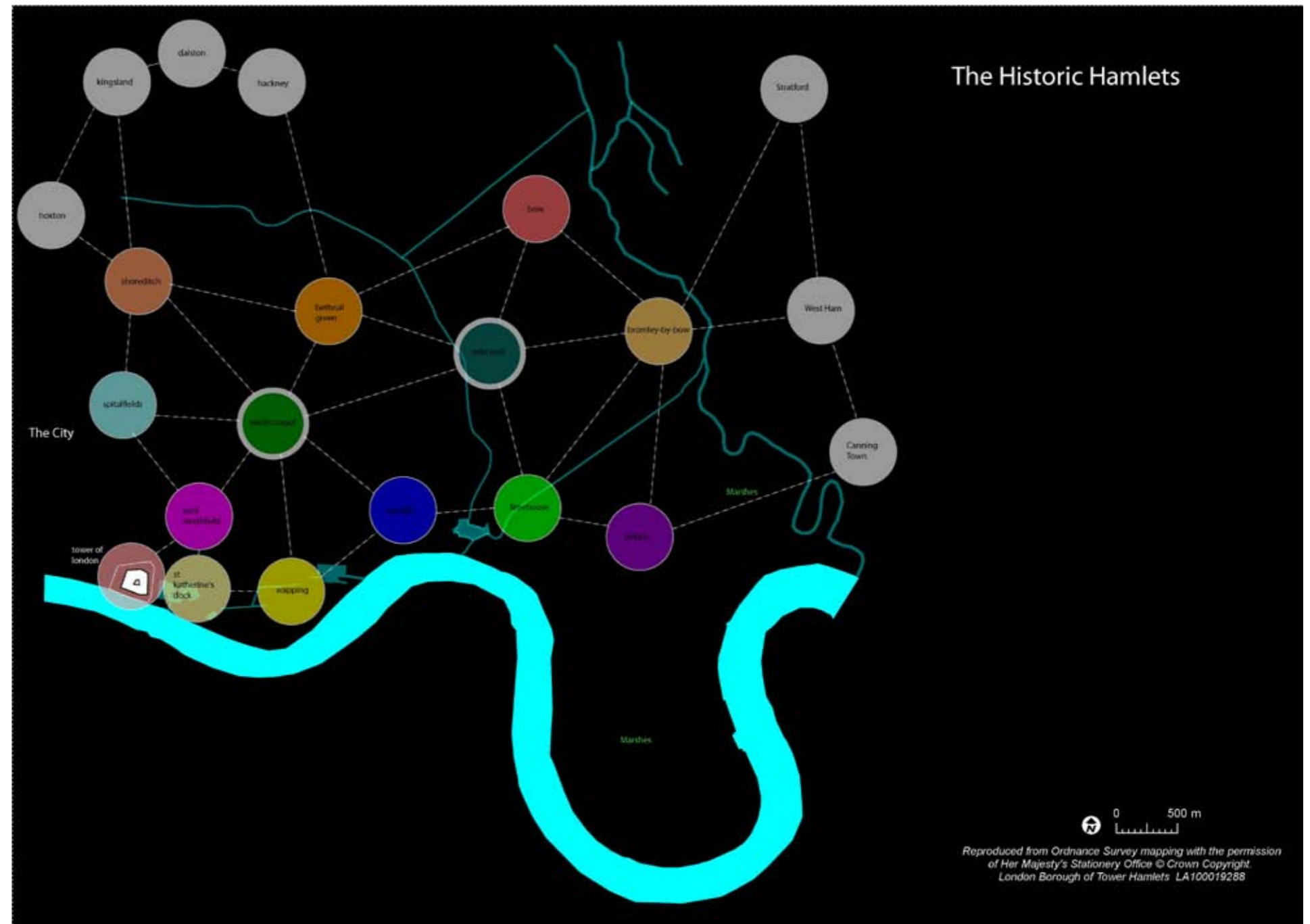
"A new townscape started to appear. Instead of the interesting jumble of roads, alleyways, side streets and junctions that made neighbourhoods such as Spitalfields, Stepney and Whitechapel so visually interesting, the new estates were set in a poor man's version of the late nineteenth century garden city ideal: 'access' roads that dissolved into endless culs-de-sac, sprinkled with concrete slabs or low rise rabbit-hutch 'cottages' dumped arbitrarily on bare patches of grass']
Glinert, 'East End Chronicles'

There has been a disorientation and disconnection of "place" in Tower Hamlets. Planning and administrative boundaries have contributed to this disconnection. Spatial planning needs to link back to place for the purpose of urban planning, design, growth and change.

This reconnection to place for the purpose of proactive future spatial planning and placemaking is important to assist in creating sustainable communities – a key part of the Government's urban agenda.

▶

A diagram showing the interconnected relationship of the places known collectively as the East End. Note the relationship of the Tower of London, set as a landmark, to the collection of hamlets.

The Historic Hamlets

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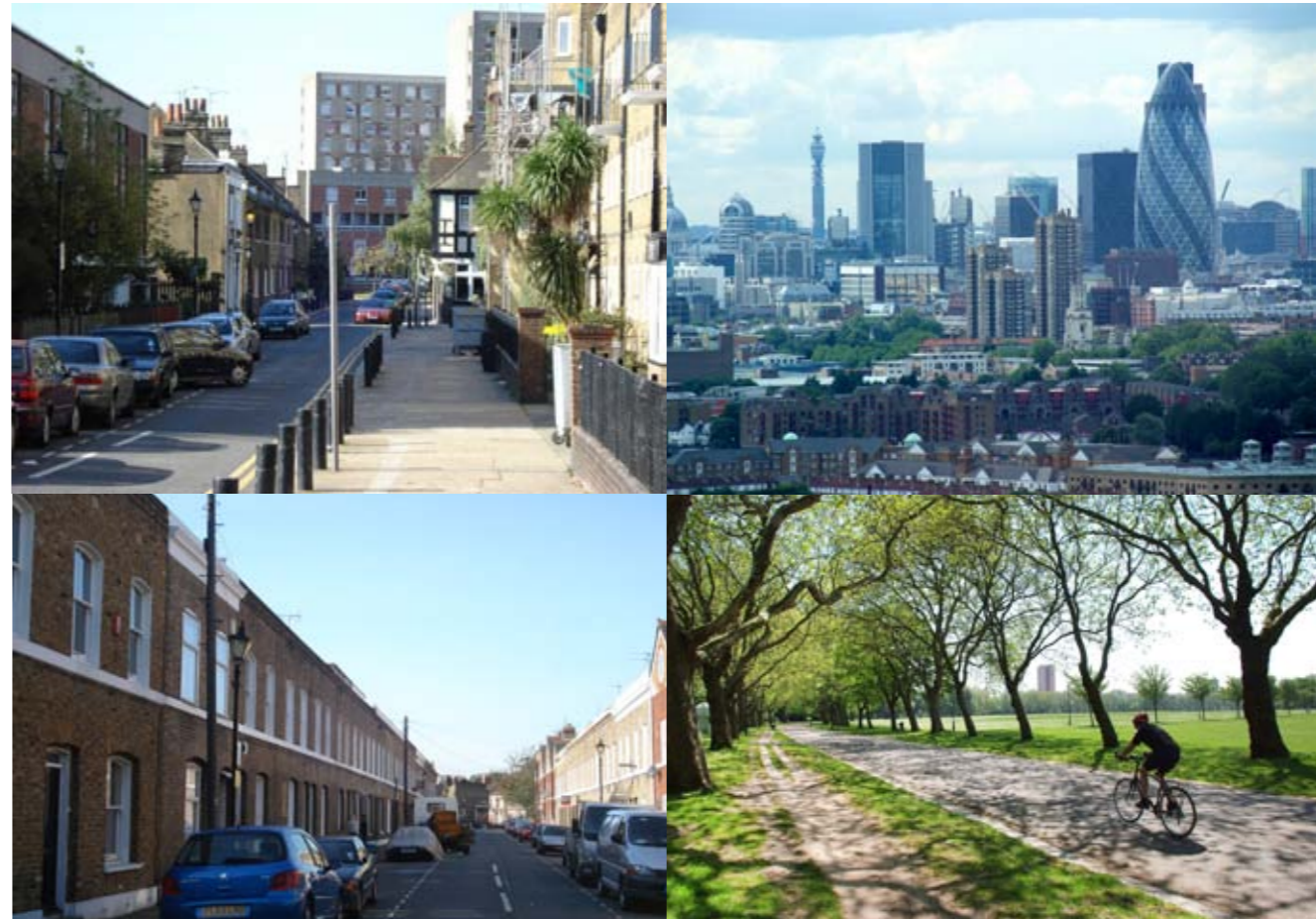
4 URBAN STRUCTURE TODAY

THE SITUATION TODAY

This section of the report will go through the elements that combine to form a place's urban structure, by diagnosing and analysing the borough based on research and historical understanding.

By using a set of guiding criteria as outlined in the methodology section, an understanding and analysis of Tower Hamlets' urban structure can be formed. The criteria is based around a morphological approach, looking at the physical layers that make up the city.

The key criteria are:

• bigger picture - the strategic scale
• paths
• activity nodes
• public transport and social infrastructure network
• public space network
• block pattern
• urban edges
• green landscape
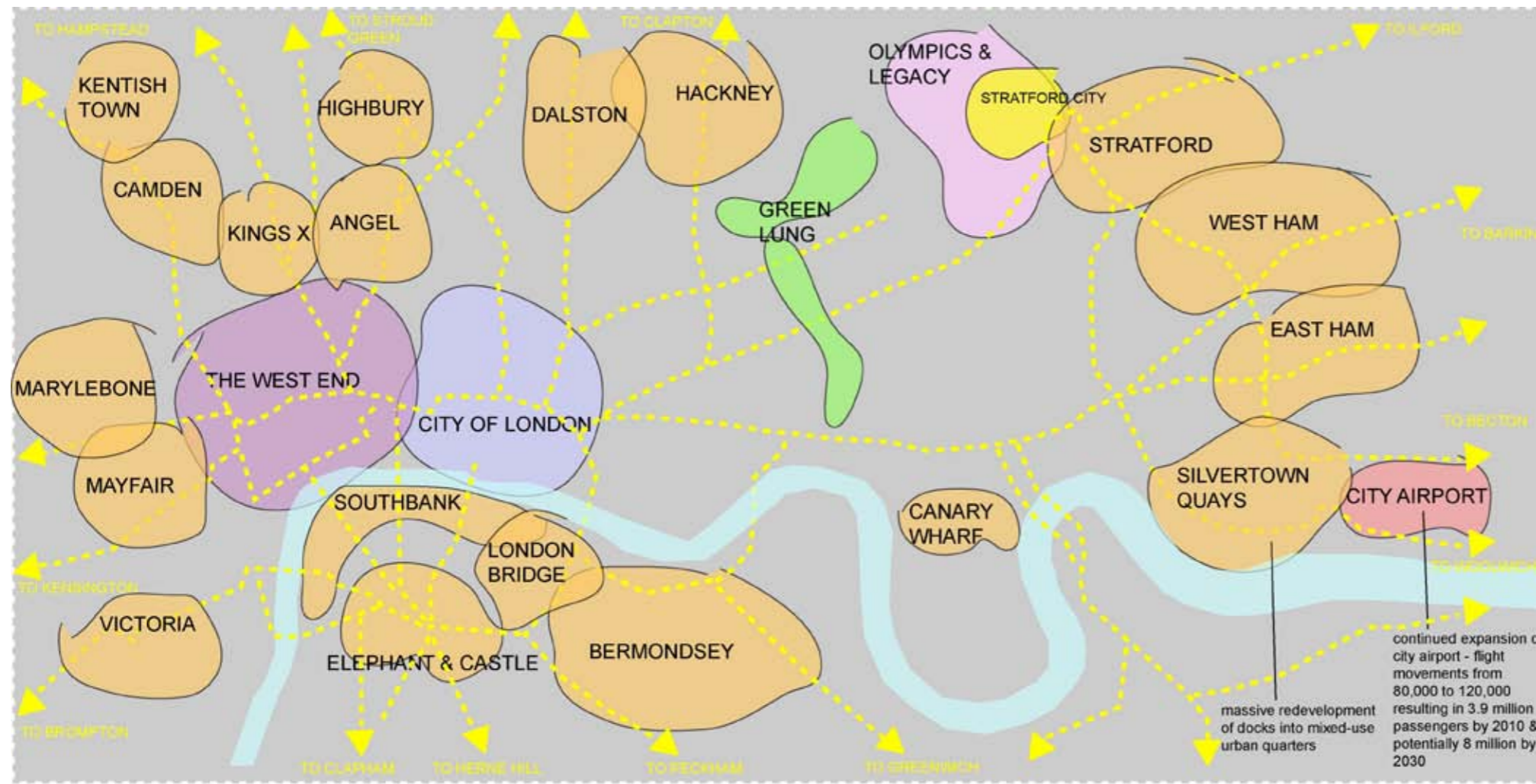
Tower Hamlets, set within its London context, and some of the places that surround this piece of inner London. Includes main movement routes, highlighting the level of connectivity experienced by the borough.

Tower Hamlets set within its London context, and showing some of the places that make up the borough.
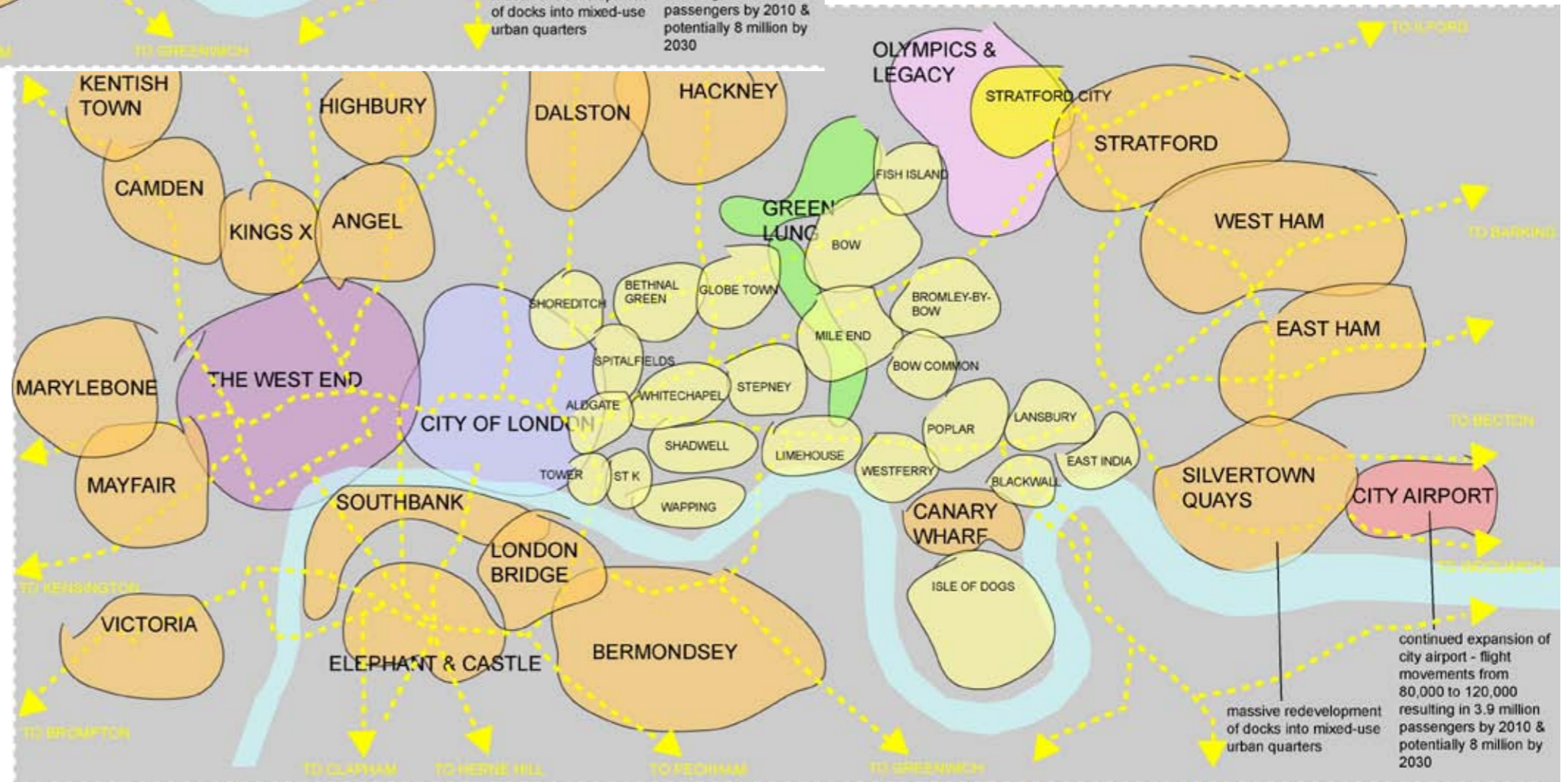
THE BIGGER PICTURE

Tower Hamlets is a piece of London, which itself is a global, multicultural city. Tower Hamlets is an expression of this on a small scale. Its communities are rich in history, multicultural and diverse in nature, and sit side by side with other places that make up London.

London has always been a city of villages and hamlets, which over time merged together as the city grew, prospered and expanded. This pattern is a particular characteristic of the city, and can still be experienced and witnessed today with each "place" still having its own unique character and identity. This is one of the main strengths of London: local communities set within a metropolis of opportunity and choice.

Tower Hamlets sits within central London, as the diagram below shows. It is characterised by relatively high levels of global accessibility. It functions as a place to move through, with routes crossing the borough, connecting the West End and City of London to the rest of east London and East Anglia. This central location continues to shape growth and regeneration in Tower Hamlets, including affecting land values, property prices, investment decisions, accessibility and land uses.
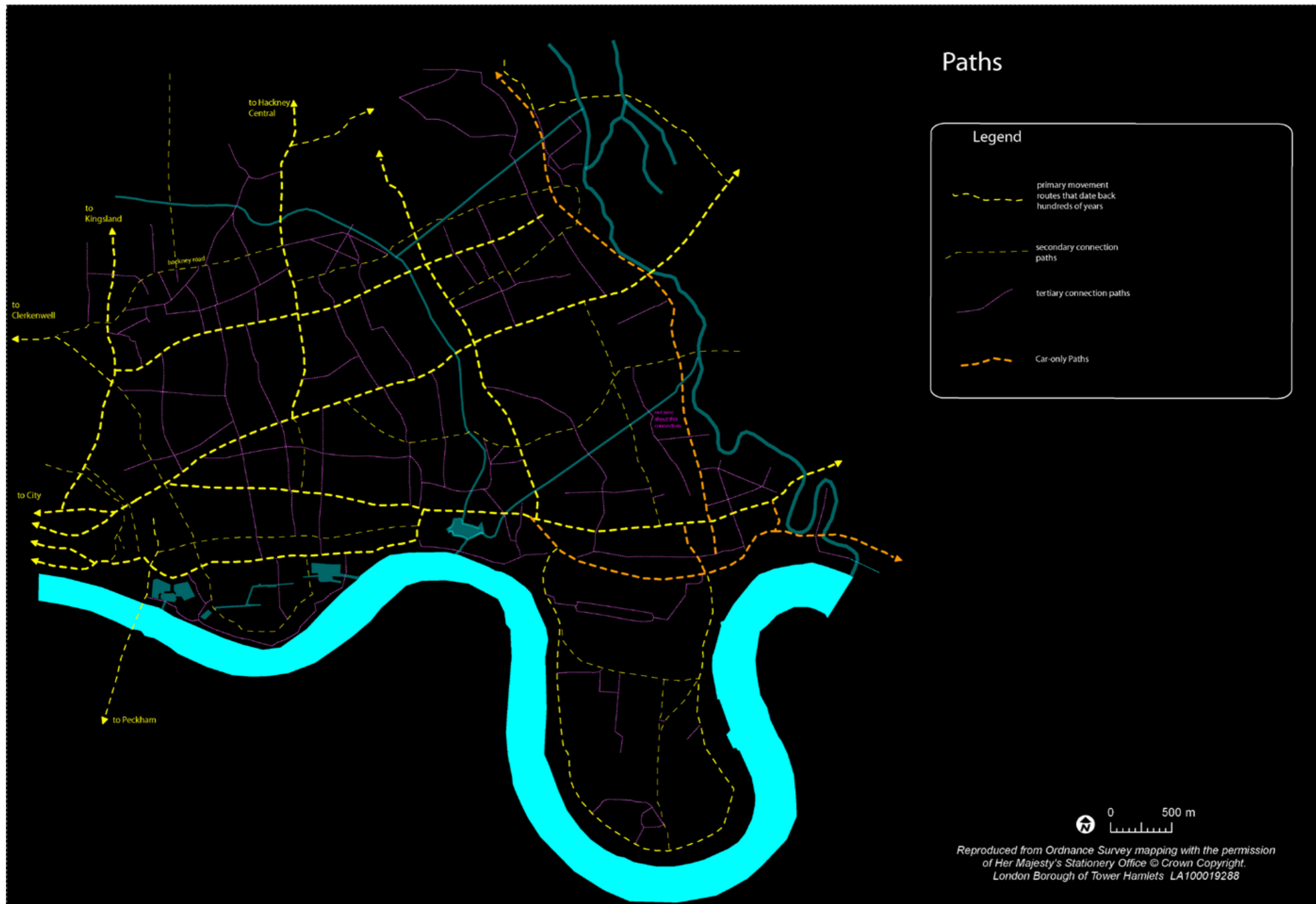
Tower Hamlets and the places that make up this part of London have, to a degree lost some of their global and local connectivity at a pedestrian level. Ease of movement through and to some parts of Tower Hamlets can be difficult and unintelligible. This affects the borough's connectivity at a strategic scale, often reducing the potential accessibility advantages that shape central and inner-London locations.

This global accessibility affects accessibility and quality of place at a local scale. Some of the places within Tower Hamlets have been affected by reduced global accessibility, and have impacted upon the viability and vibrancy of their network of centres – and with that the historical relationships of location advantage that came to form these places.
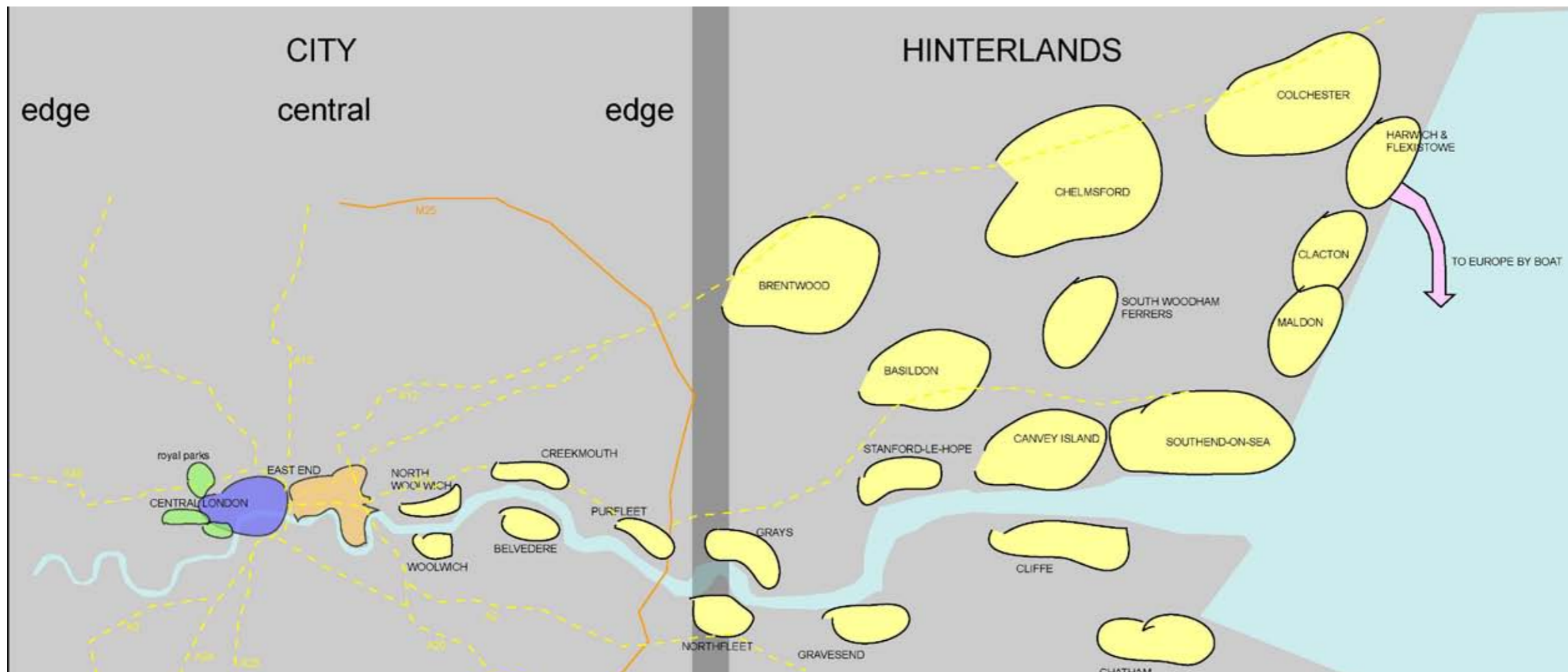
Tower Hamlets set within its Greater London context, and its relationship to the hinterlands of Essex and north Kent.

35

Paths

Legend

primary movement routes that date back hundreds of years

secondary connection paths

tertiary connection paths

Car-only Paths

to Hackney Central

to Kingsland

hackney road

to Clerkenwell

to City

to Peckham

0   500 m

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PATHS

As can be seen from the paths diagram, there is a hierarchy that operates across the borough based upon pedestrian accessibility and the connectivity of that route: from the most connected streets, such as Bow Road, down to less connected streets. Generally the longer the path, the more connected that path is. It will take you to a greater number of places, via a greater number of other places. People naturally read when they are on a street that is well connected. It has more people, more activity, and the buildings are usually of a larger scale.

Tower Hamlets' urban structure is heavily dependent upon the three key paths that run west to east through the borough. These paths have existed for hundreds of years (see *historical maps*):

• Bethnal Green Road, which turns into Roman Road
• Whitechapel High Street, which turns into Bow Road
• Commercial Road, which turns into East India Dock Road

Unconnected paths

Some of the paths in Tower Hamlets do not connect, which limits the connectivity of those routes as people cannot use them to get access to other paths. This impacts upon the overall accessibility of a place. People want a whole variety of movement routes, different ways to get from A to B. The movement network should accommodate this and promote connected, permeable and accessible environments.

There are many instances where paths create dead ends. This impacts upon the intelligibility of a place. When a pedestrian walks down a path that is a dead end, it means they have to back-track in order to find a new route to where they want to go.

Car-only paths

There are a number of paths in the borough that do not allow or encourage pedestrian use. Aspen Way and the A12 are examples of this: roads purposefully excluding the pedestrian in order to fulfil the movement needs of vehicles. They are not as multifunctional paths. Due to their inhospitability to the pedestrian, these paths actually end up forming barriers to pedestrian movement, with people having to go over or under them in order to get where they want to go. This can be seen in places such as Blackwall, Poplar Riverside, Bromley-by-Bow and Fish Island.

Quality of paths

The quality of paths can at times be poor for a number of reasons, often because the pedestrian comes second to the car. The right balance in some cases is not achieved. The pedestrian environment needs greater priority. It is harder to create a quality environment for the pedestrian than it is for the car, therefore greater care, design and importance should be placed upon the pedestrian experience, with the car being accommodated in this balance. Paths such as the Highway, Commercial Road, Burdett Road, and Westferry Road are all unfriendly to the pedestrian, thereby discouraging people from walking or cycling, which impacts upon health and well-being.
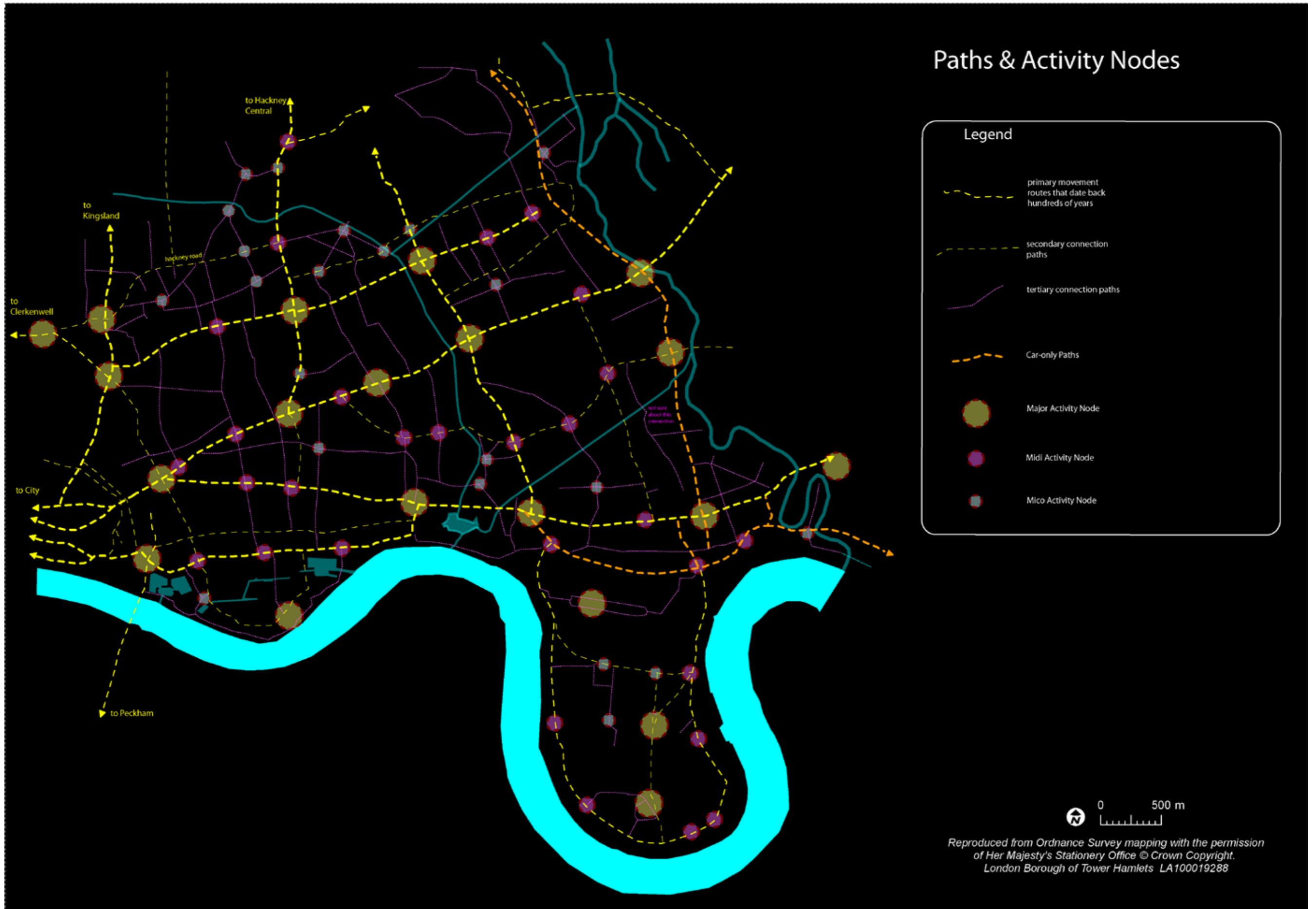
Primary paths

The paths that run north-south through the borough are fewer and less connected than those paths that run east-west. This makes movement in a north-south direction more difficult and complex, as well as impacting upon diagonal movement (south-east to north-west, for example).

Paths such as Globe Road, Burdett Road, and Cambridge Heath Road do not function as primary paths. The built form alongside these paths often fails to frame the space, affecting the clarity and intelligibility of their connection. This supports and partly explains the issue of how poorly connected the borough is to the Thames. It is physically close, yet often very inaccessible. These north-south paths do not make the logical conclusion of connecting to the river and opening up access.

Secondary paths

Primary paths such as Bethnal Green Road, Whitechapel High Street and Commercial Road are relatively coherent, connected and intelligible. This is less the case with many secondary paths in the borough. Many create dead ends, do not read as secondary paths, poorly connect to primary paths and are too few in areas like the east of the borough.

This impacts upon neighbourhood accessibility and the quality of pedestrian movement, making it hard for the pedestrian to go from a local path via a secondary path to a primary path. It discourages through movement and limits the walkability of the neighbourhood.

Paths & Activity Nodes

Legend

- - - - primary movement routes that date back hundreds of years

- - - - secondary connection paths

──── tertiary connection paths

- - - - Car-only Paths

● Major Activity Node

● Midi Activity Node

● Mico Activity Node

to Hackney Central

to Kingsland

hackney road

to Clerkenwell

not sure about this connection

to City

to Peckham

0   500 m

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ACTIVITY NODES

Nodal points, often created by the convergence and crossing of paths serve to act as foci-points in the urban landscape. They are places where people come together. As they are interlinked with paths, they also share a similar hierarchy. When two or more primary paths cross or converge, a major node is created. Similarly, when two more local paths cross, a smaller, less intense node is created.

Many parts of the borough have these nodes, which have a strong relationship to the paths that create them. Tower Hamlets has many linear centres, which run along key movement routes to form high streets, a typically English urban condition. Shops and businesses locate around and along these nodes due to their high accessibility and high levels of footfall.

Historically markets locate along these key routes (Roman Road, Bethnal Green, Whitechapel) supporting and establishing a unique relationship with the shops that operate, helping to create a greater degree of vibrancy.

Unconnected paths create few meeting places

As discussed under the paths analysis, much of our path network fails to join up, creating dead ends and cul-de-sacs. This has implications for the creation of nodes, which function as places where people can meet, as they are predominately only located at the convergence or crossing of paths. This limits accessibility, and thus opportunity for social and economic transaction.

Lack of nodes

There is a lack of smaller and medium-sized nodes across the borough, which impacts upon the creation of successful and connected neighbourhood centres. This has in some cases resulted in a fragmented dispersal of commercial and civic uses which collectively fail to form a critical mass of shops and services that can support one another.
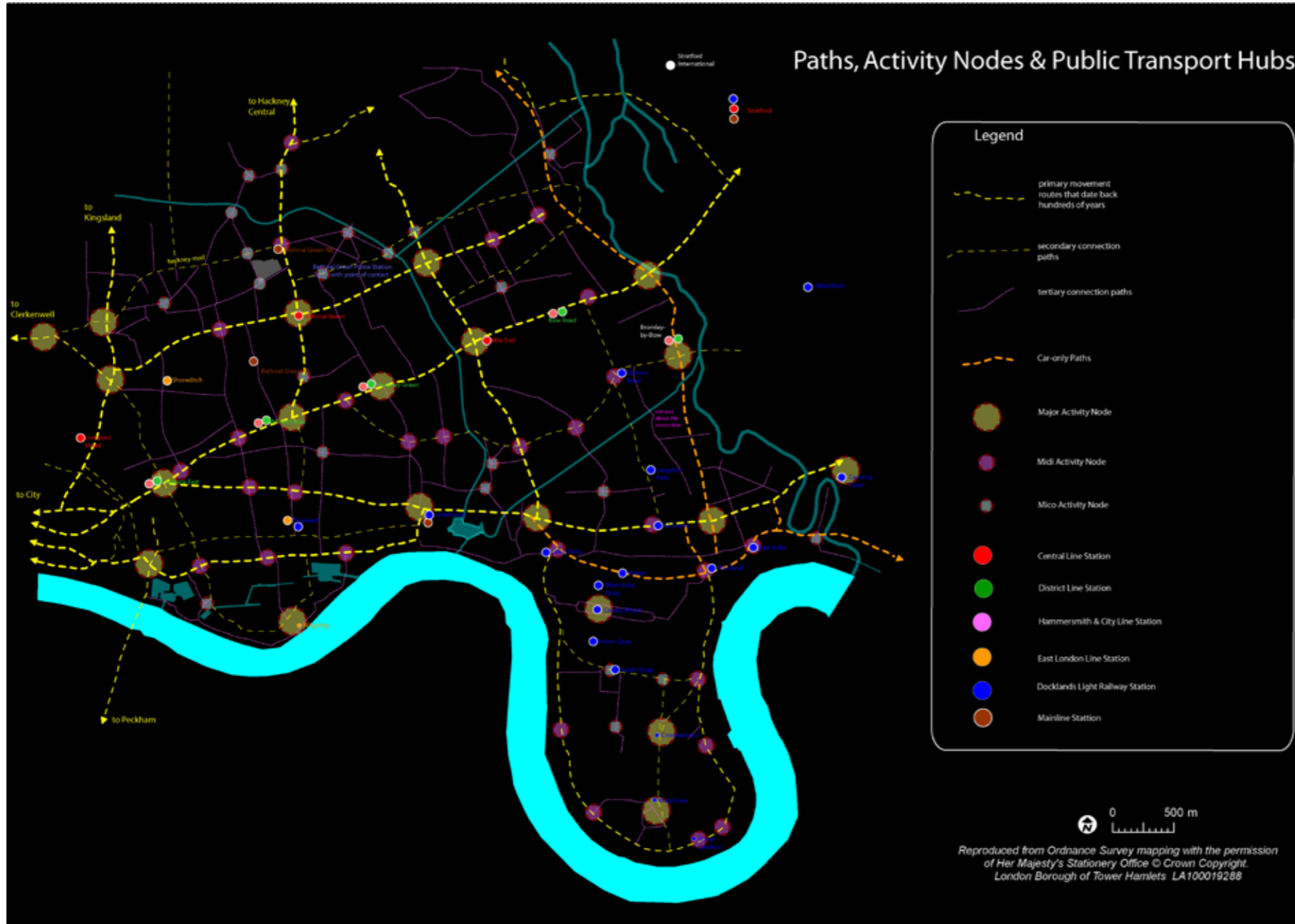
Unfocused nodes

Many existing nodes fail to take advantage of their primary role as framers of activity. Often buildings do not enclose public space adequately; cars dominate the public space and there is very little ground-floor activity. This can contribute to an empty and inhospitable atmosphere. These nodes do not function as places where you would want to meet and linger. The junction of Commercial Road, East India Dock Road, Burdett Road and Westferry Road are good examples of such a condition.

What can be seen from the map opposite is that many areas in the east of the borough have failed to form and capitalise on their nodes; failed to form highly accessible, viable centres which provide a focal point. Commercial and civic uses have instead been dispersed or introverted from the key paths and activity nodes, and disconnected from pedestrian footfall, limiting economic and social transaction. Bromley-by-Bow is such an example, where commercial uses are separated from the path network, making it hard for pedestrians to access the supermarket.
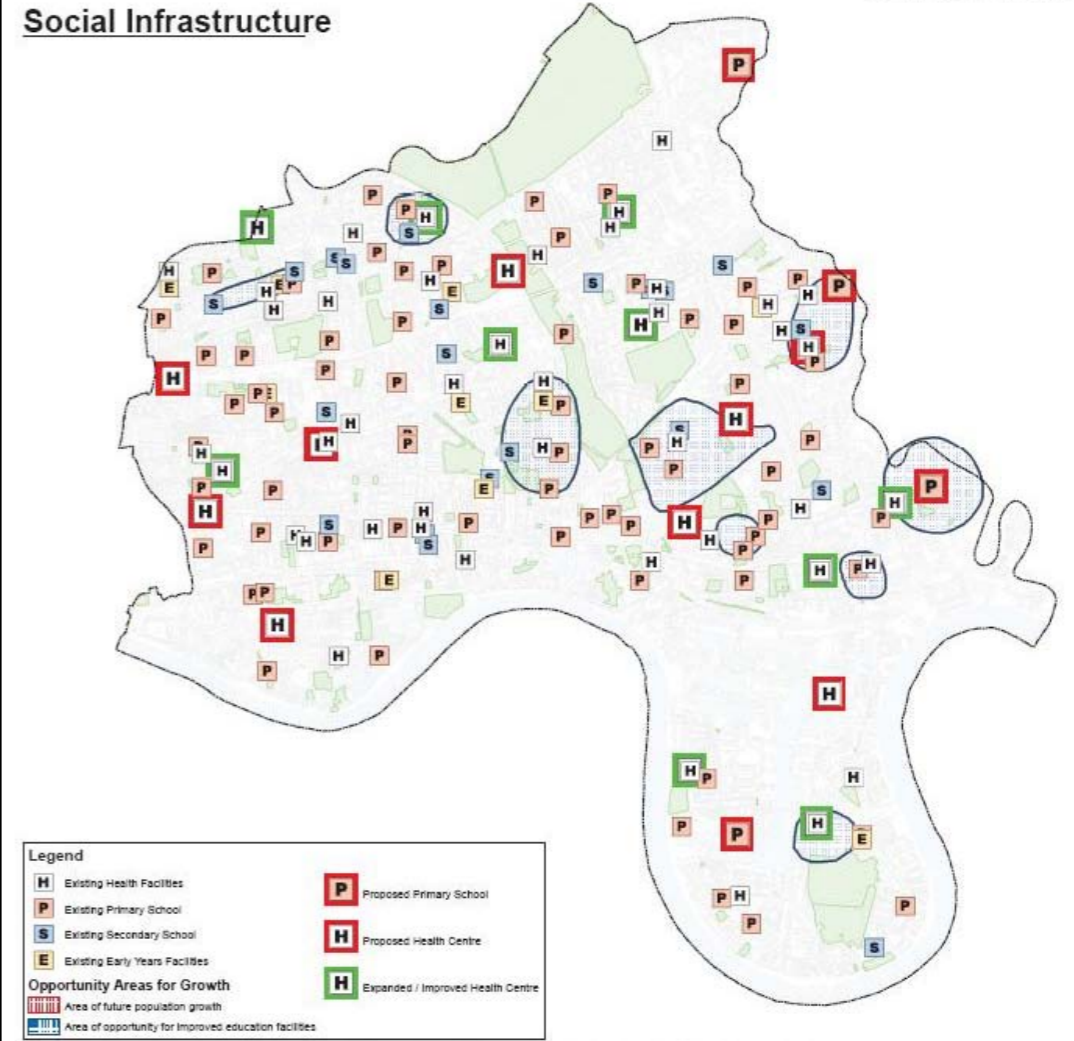
Quality of nodes

In the instances where the nodes do function as places of activity, with a mix of uses – such as in Bethnal Green and Cambridge Heath – the quality of the space between buildings discourages people to linger. Cars often dominate the space; there is a lack of outdoor seating and places to eat and drink, combined with poor quality public space. To function as meeting places, they need to be hospitable, comfortable, enjoyable and safe for pedestrians and cyclists.

Paths, Activity Nodes & Public Transport Hubs

Legend

primary movement routes that date back hundreds of years

secondary connection paths

tertiary connection paths

Car-only Paths

Major Activity Node

Midi Activity Node

Mico Activity Node

Central Line Station

District Line Station

Hammersmith & City Line Station

East London Line Station

Docklands Light Railway Station

Mainline Station

0   500 m

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Data may be incomplete or inaccurate. For indicative purposes only.

Social Infrastructure

Legend

H   Existing Health Facilities

P   Existing Primary School

S   Existing Secondary School

E   Existing Early Years Facilities

Opportunity Areas for Growth

Area of future population growth

Area of opportunity for improved education facilities

P   Proposed Primary School

H   Proposed Health Centre

H   Expanded / Improved Health Centre

PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK

Successful centres need a complex layering of activities and infrastructure, all coming together to reinforce the centrality of a place. Public transport and social infrastructure forms critical components in creating accessible, vibrant centres. They attract and concentrate activity as well as offering transport connections to other areas.

The public transport and social infrastructure network in Tower Hamlets sometimes reinforces existing centres, usually historical ones, as is the case with Bethnal Green, Mile End, Stepney, Whitechapel and Wapping. However, in other cases there is less of a relationship to centres, as is the case with many areas that run alongside the DLR network, which was built in the 1980s. This network brought improved accessibility to many formerly inaccessible areas such as Poplar, Blackwall and East India.

Public transport and nodes

There are new nodes that have been created as a result of new public transport stations. Often these nodes do not connect very successfully with the path network, and limit pedestrian access. DLR stations like Blackwall and East India are examples of where new stations fail to connect to the borough's path network, thereby limiting their potential as activity nodes. Canary Wharf is another example where most people travel in and out via the public transport network, the local path network fails to connect very successfully into Canary Wharf, limiting its accessibility to surrounding areas.

Integration of public transport hubs and centres

In some place such as Limehouse, Shadwell and Westferry the public transport hubs do not visually or physically connect and link up with the key paths. The opportunity to link up these elements is missed, and impacts upon the vitality and vibrancy of centres. Through movement and potential passing trade is not maximised. Creating centres where all elements interlink and are visually and physically connected will help assist in creating meeting places.

New growth areas

Partly as a result of new public transport infrastructure and demand for new housing, there is considerable growth in locations which previously were fairly inaccessible. Places such as Poplar, Bow Common, Poplar Riverside have seen new or improved DLR stations and are experiencing growth in both their resident and working populations.

With this comes a need to improve the local accessibility of the path network. Linking up the new stations, with the street hierarchy and activity nodes to assist in creating new centres is an important part of creating sustainable communities. There is a need for new and improved centres, located around these new public transport hubs, to create the multifunctional centres we see elsewhere in the borough. However, the role, size and function these new centres perform needs to be understood in relation to their location within the path/nodal hierarchy. Having centres only accessible by public transport is not sustainable. There is a need to promote walkable neighbourhoods with centres accessible on foot or by bicycle.

Accessibility of social infrastructure

In-line with principles of centrality, social infrastructure and civic buildings should be located in central and accessible locations in order to maximise opportunities for people to access them. However, as the map opposite shows, much of the Tower Hamlets' social infrastructure is spread out across the borough, not reinforcing areas of centrality.

Collectively this has contributed to the loss of focus on centres as places to access social services and facilities. This has therefore had an impact on their economic vitality, the quality of public space and, to a degree, social cohesion and sense of well-being.

Strategic Public Space Network

Legend

Key Public Realm

Key Major Public Place

Key Midi Public Place

0   500 m

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PUBLIC SPACE NETWORK

How are public spaces in Tower Hamlets used? This is an important question if we are to begin to promote quality of life for our residents. The public realm in which local people spend most of their time, the streets, squares, alleys and green spaces can either encourage or discourage interaction.

To create meaningful and vibrant public spaces there needs to be an understanding of the subtle and definable qualities that encourage people to meet and use public spaces.

Enclosure and continuity

The way in which buildings relate to public space – the relationship between internal and external space – is an important consideration in the perceived quality of the urban environment. Many buildings in Tower Hamlets fail to relate to the public realm and its hierarchy. What is meant by that is twofold:

- Firstly, the form, scale, height and massing of buildings fail to respond to the hierarchy of that street – i.e. taller buildings on main streets and smaller ones on the minor streets.

- Secondly, buildings fail to create continuous frontage to the public realm in a way that responds to the function and importance of that street – i.e. large setbacks, breaks in elevations, and long blank façades fail to animate public space.

In addition, the poor enclosure of space also assists in creating a poor microclimate, where wind vortexes can dominate and make the space unpleasant and uncomfortable for the pedestrian.

Inactive edges to spaces

Spaces become animated from the edges. Evidence shows that people naturally populate the edge of a space. The centre of public space is usually the least used and needs other techniques to animate it, such as fountains, trees, benches and cafés.

Some buildings that frame public spaces in Tower Hamlets do not always offer active, ground-floor uses. There are too many blank, dead edges which fail to encourage activity around the fringe of the space and therefore never gain any activity closer to the centre.

Quality space

Much of the public space in Tower Hamlets is not designed to the quality that encourages optional activities. Many spaces are therefore poorly used, comprising unattractive traffic islands, gyratory's and windswept spaces in which people would rather not stay and linger.

Unconnected spaces

The interconnectivity of the public space network is often poor and unintelligible. The main public spaces do not always relate to the main paths that carry pedestrian flow. The paths that connect need to be of the same high quality as the squares, otherwise the opportunity for greater inclusiveness and vitality is lost.

Public squares

Much of the public space network in Tower Hamlets is linear in typology. There are fewer spaces that have three or four sides, such as squares, triangles, or other shapes. Often these shapes allow more lingering, calm areas and places to meet and stay. The ones we do have are dominated by vehicles. Squares set off paths can offer rest spaces for citizens, relief from the hustle and bustle of the street. If framed by buildings on many sides, these spaces can offer a great sense of enclosure and microclimate.
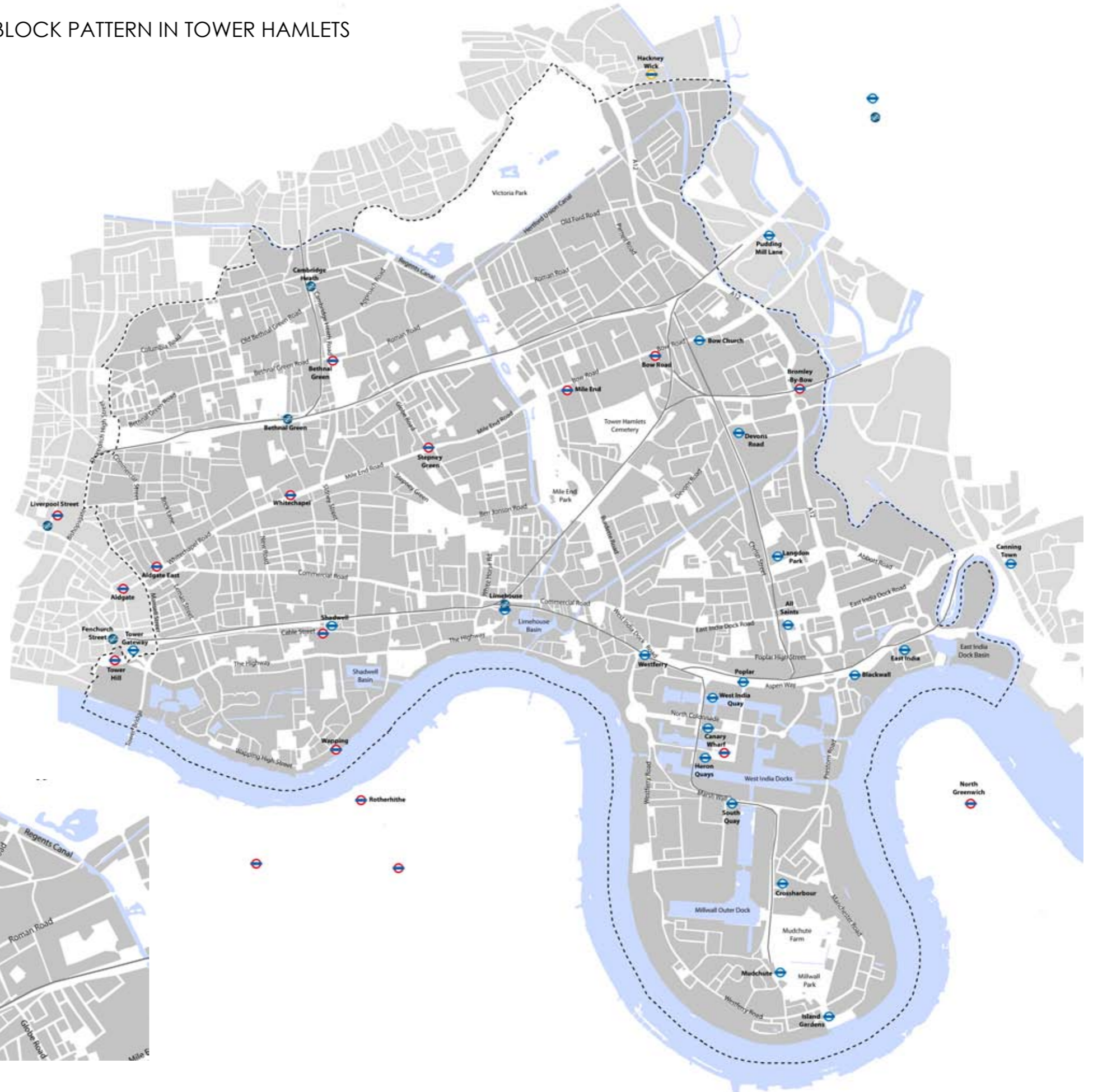
BLOCK PATTERN IN TOWER HAMLETS

URBAN BLOCK PATTERN

The block pattern is created as a result of the path network. Paths are set down and shaped by movement patterns, from which parcels of land are left which we can call blocks. These blocks are then composed of plots, the individual pieces of privately owned land which buildings are built on.

The size and shape of blocks varies considerably from one area to another in Tower Hamlets, which has a direct impact upon the permeability of the borough.

Blocks which create barriers

There are instances where large blocks limit the walkability of a place. Some are over 250m in length which requires a fairly large detour for the pedestrian to get to where they want to go.

Underdeveloped blocks

Many blocks have uses and buildings on them that do not optimise the use of the land. This is wasteful and creates under-used and inactive parts of neighbourhoods. This impacts upon movement patterns with pedestrians avoiding these under-used and isolated areas.

Interface between public and private

Many buildings have their public fronts facing inwards into a block and their private back facing the public realm. This means blocks are introverted, providing no active edge or sense of activity for the public realm, and contributing little to the street scene.

Size in relation to centres

In many centres and activity nodes the blocks that form the structure are often very large, which limits the variety of activities that can occur. Smaller blocks are better located in centres, as with smaller block sizes you can achieve more built edge, and more active frontages, hence more uses and activities can occur. Mile End is an example of where the block structure is too large in and around the centre.

Segregation of users

With many blocks, pedestrians can move through, along and around buildings; cars are sent another way, and cyclists another direction. Separating out users in distinct paths is wasteful and duplicates the land needed for movement. It can lead to a situation where a path is not well used and does not have enough activity to make it feel safe, overlooked and useable. This can also reduce the permeability and walkability of a place.

Through careful design integration these users can successfully use the same path in most cases.

Fragmented block structure and estates

Many large blocks operate as segregated units in the urban fabric, with dead ends and routes that are unintelligible to the unacquainted pedestrian. This can isolate users into those who can navigate these blocks, and those who cannot. This can assist in forming no-go areas and limit the permeability of a place. This can culminate in a situation where residents of an estate feel so detached from the wider urban structure that they form isolated territories.
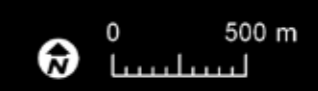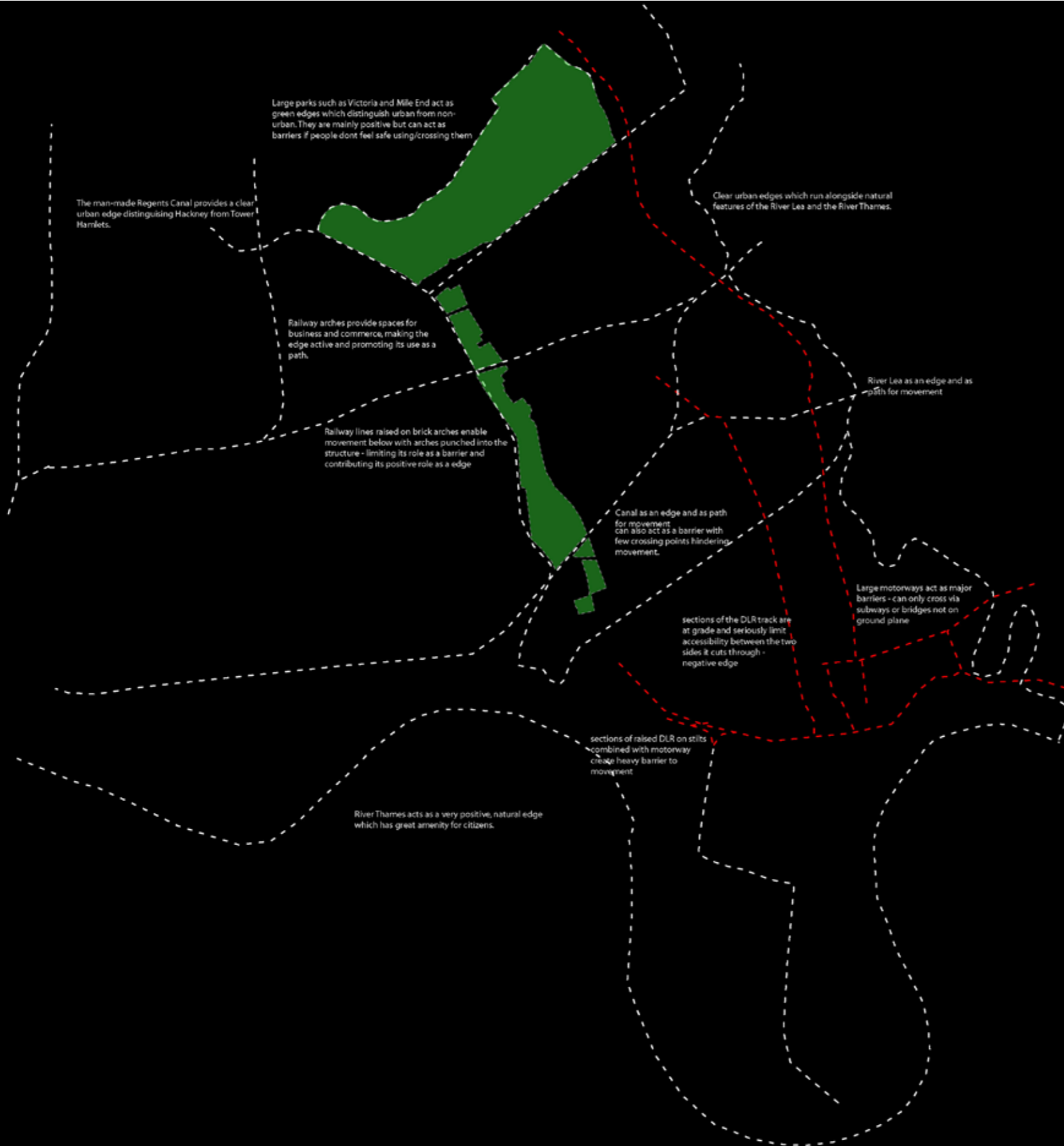
Movement in the east of Tower Hamlets

The block pattern in Tower Hamlets differs across the borough. Generally the eastern edge of Tower Hamlets is comprised of larger blocks. This is largely due to the historic industrial nature of this area, and, to a degree, the post-war housing developments after bombing and slum clearance.

Along the eastern edge of Tower Hamlets there are also a series of physical barriers that reduce permeability. These comprise major roads (including the A12 and Aspen Way) the River Lea, the canals and the railway lines. Smaller block sizes are generally found in the centre of Tower Hamlets, the Isle of Dogs and along the western edge, due the historic, residential-led use in this area.

Edges

Large parks such as Victoria and Mile End act as green edges which distinguish urban from non-urban. They are mainly positive but can act as barriers if people dont feel safe using/crossing them

The man-made Regents Canal provides a clear urban edge distinguising Hackney from Tower Hamlets.

Clear urban edges which run alongside natural features of the River Lea and the River Thames.

Railway arches provide spaces for business and commerce, making the edge active and promoting its use as a path.

Railway lines raised on brick arches enable movement below with arches punched into the structure - limiting its role as a barrier and contributing its positive role as a edge

River Lea as an edge and as path for movement

Canal as an edge and as path for movement
can also act as a barrier with few crossing points hindering movement.

Large motorways act as major barriers - can only cross via subways or bridges not on ground plane

sections of the DLR track are at grade and seriously limit accessibility between the two sides it cuts through - negative edge

sections of raised DLR on stilts combined with motorway create heavy barrier to movement

River Thames acts as a very positive, natural edge which has great amenity for citizens.

Legend

- - - - - An Edge with mostly positive qualities

- - - - - An Edge with mostly negative qualities

0   500 m

URBAN EDGES

Positive edges

Edges can assist in giving distinction and definition to places. You know you are beginning to leave Bethnal Green and enter Whitechapel as you pass under the railway arches. This edge is positive, it frames your place reference, but also allows you to move through it or along it. It increases your urban experience without hindering your movement.

Natural features in Tower Hamlets often act as positive edges. They offer the citizen a connection to the natural landscape, its power as a shaper of the city. This landscape gives us a sense of our place in the environment and puts us into context.

The River Thames is the most obvious natural edge, its edge very distinct, giving you a sense of being in London, on the north bank, offering views across and along the river, and giving a strong sense of connection to the natural environment.

The role of the Thames is under-utilised in Tower Hamlets. Its potential as an edge and as a path could be significantly promoted. At present it is hard to access, both physically and visually. The path network does not always make strong, clear links to the Thames edge. The South Bank is a prime example of how the river's assets can be maximised.

The River Lea offers a similar function to the Thames, but is even more under-utilised. Its industrial use over the years has discouraged its potential as a positive edge and natural movement path. Access to the river is very poor and the quality of the environment discourages people from using it. Also, connections across the river are very infrequent.

The man-made canal network offers positive edges to places and the towpath offers a desirable, attractive movement path for pedestrians and cyclists. Connections across the canals are in most cases frequent, so they do not pose a massive barrier. Their role is also changing, with older industrial uses that clustered along them moving elsewhere, and more residential and mixed development being brought forward.

The man-made environment also offers edges, many of which are positive. The railway arches create edges, often giving a positive edge to a place, a sense of character and vitality, and displaying the strategic role of the city and its transport links. In some places the arches allow at-grade movement and activity making this piece of urban infrastructure sensitive to its surroundings, and useable for local people.

Edges as barriers

Edges, as discussed, play a wide role in the cityscape. Strategic infrastructure across the borough forms, in some cases, negative barriers – both physical and visual.

Bishopsgate Goods Yard is an example where the railway infrastructure has created a large barrier to movement, limiting north-south routes from Spitalfields to Bethnal Green, contributing to a feeling of isolation in the area.

The DLR tracks at grade often cause a significant barrier, stopping ease of movement from one place to another. This is also true of the A12 and Aspen Way, where car-only motorways, heavy with traffic, require people to go under or over them to cross, disrupting their natural desire lines and limiting movement patterns. This has had the effect of severing the centres and hearts of places – as seen at Bromley-by-Bow.

Paths, Activity Nodes + Green Space

Legend

primary movement
Ancient tracks back
hundreds of years

Strategic Landmark

Car-only Paths

Major Activity Node

Midi Activity Node

Mico Activity Node

Strategic green space

0   500 m

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Landscape Components

The Thames

Our waterways

GREEN LANDSCAPE

A network of green spaces is evident across the borough. These parks provide much valued play areas, access to nature, space for events, space to relax and unwind, and help with the general well-being of residents.

In a relatively dense, inner-city part of London green spaces are extremely important. And because of space limitation, the green space network is heavily protected and valued. Issues such as quality, accessibility and the range and types of green space on offer are key considerations. Green spaces in themselves are not necessarily good: they have to be good quality; well maintained; reflect the users; be integrated into local neighbourhoods; and be safe and pleasant to use. If these qualities are not achieved then green spaces can be negative spaces, creating no-go areas and contributing to feelings of danger.

Green spaces acting as barriers

While green spaces can be magnets of activity and people, when they are unloved and little-used, they can act as barriers. This is often the case when dark falls and people are afraid to walk through, or close to, green spaces, for fear of being mugged. It is only if green spaces are well used, attractive and overlooked with enough eyes that people tend to walk through them; otherwise they act as serious barriers to movement.

Edges of Green Space

Activity, and so vitality, is emitted from the edges of buildings and creeps into the central space if there is sufficient activity to cause it to. The same applies to green spaces: often the edges of green spaces are dead, poorly overlooked, with a feeling of emptiness. This prevents the heart of the park from being used, as people don't feel safe venturing into it.

Role and function of green space

Much housing-estate amenity land does not offer the qualities and benefits wanted by locals from their green spaces. Much of this land is semi-public or semi-private, which often means that no one really thinks they are entitled to use it. The residents feel its too open and public for everyday use, and the public regard it as land for people who live on the housing estate. This real confusion between public and private underpins why so much amenity land is unloved, decaying and little-used.

Connecting with nature

Green spaces not only offer places for people to relax and be close to nature, but can also be important assets for local wildlife. This is not automatically the case, and green spaces have too often been designed without regard to how they affect biodiversity.

PLACES OF TODAY

The notion of place operates at a multitude of spatial scales, from the region down to the street. There are a multitude of overlapping and interlinked places which can be broadly recognised and spatially identified within Tower Hamlets.

This is not a definitive list, but a basis on which to draw, and from which to promote, placemaking. There may be some that have very a strong place identity, such as Bethnal Green, others which have lost their identity over the years, such as Bow Common, and others still which are being created by new development and growth, such as Canary Wharf.

1   Shoreditch
2   Spitalfields
3   Bethnal Green
4   Globe Town
5   Whitechapel
6   Aldgate
7   Tower of London & St Katharine's
8   Wapping
9   Shadwell
10 Stepney
11 Limehouse
12 Victoria Park
13 Fish Island
14 Bow
15 Mile End
16 Bromley-by-Bow
17 Bow Common
18 Poplar
19 Poplar Riverside
20 Leamouth
21 Blackwall
22 Canary Wharf
23 Millwall
24 Cubitt Town
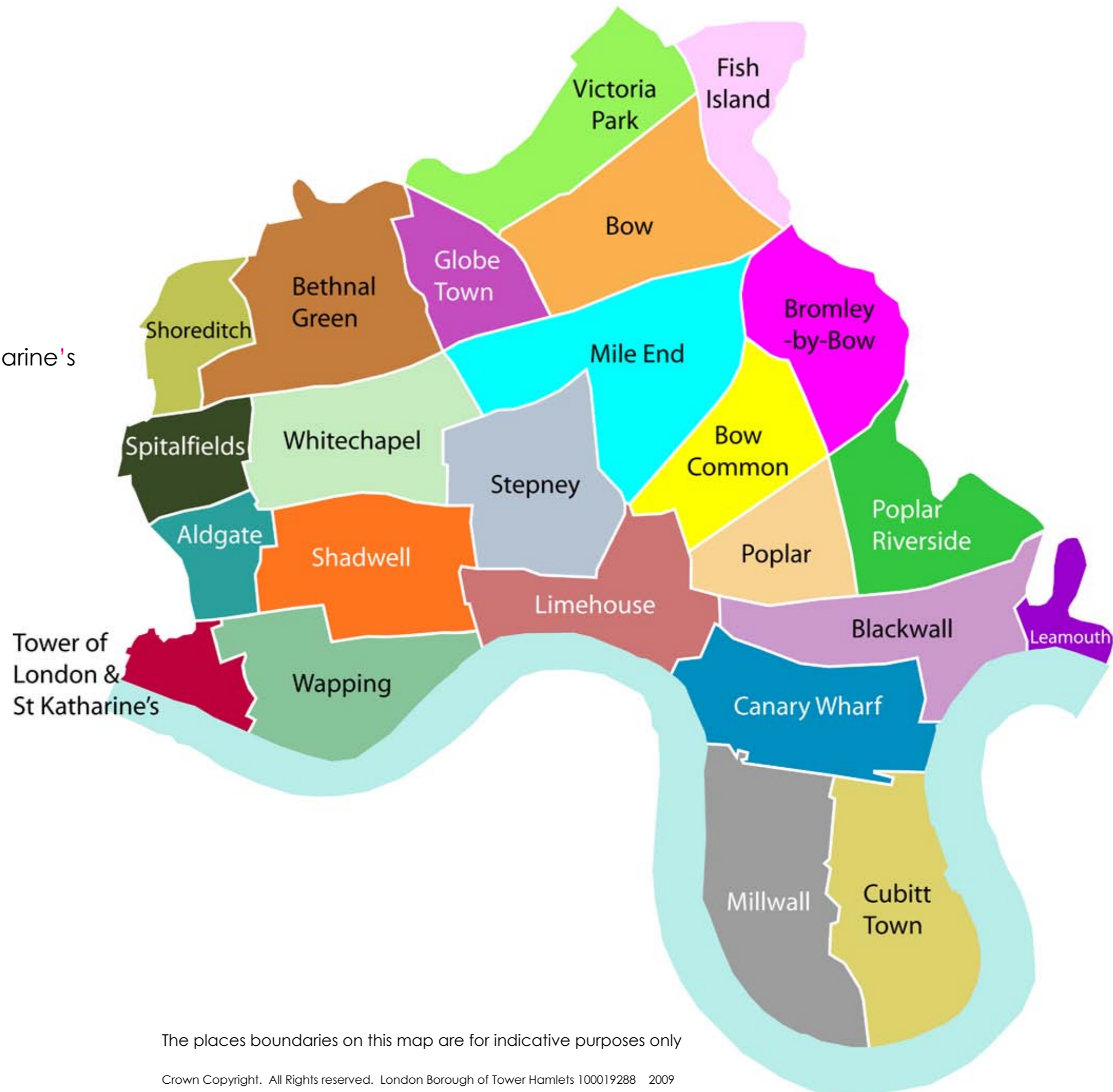
The places boundaries on this map are for indicative purposes only

5 CHARACTERISATION OF PLACES

CHARACTERISATION OF THE PLACES OF TODAY

A character assessment has been undertaken for each of the identified places of today.

A detailed characterisation of each place can help to inform strategy and vision drafting, ensuring it reinforces the positive character of an area, and reduces the negative.

By using a mixture of text, historic maps, diagrams and photos, a picture begins to form of the character of each place.

The characterisation is structured along four strands;

• **Historical character and identity**

• **Landscape and open space**

• **Heritage and townscape**

• **Block pattern and movement**

The four strands have been adapted from best-practice publications including:
1. By Design: urban design in the planning system towards better practice: DETR
2. Urban Design Compendium: English Partnerships & The Housing Corporation
3. Towards an Urban Renaissance: Urban Task Force

SHOREDITCH

historical character & identity

Shoreditch arose on the north-east fringe of the City of London around the junction of two Roman roads, present day Kingsland Road and Old Street, where the parish church of St Leonard still stands. Shoreditch was the site of a nunnery from the 12th century to the 16th century, and afterwards it became a wealthy neighbourhood home to traders and factory owners.

However by the mid-17th century Shoreditch was a disreputable place, frequented by criminals. By the 19th century the area was considered a slum ruled by criminals and prostitutes – one that reflected the East End's perception as "other", having a separate identifiable character.

The post-war era saw Shoreditch remain a place of deprivation, poverty and working-class culture. However, the last 20 years has seen the transformation of its cultural status into an artistic and bohemian quarter, in which a vibrant nightlife meets with the northern borders of the Square Mile.

landscape & open space

Shoreditch is a densely populated area in close proximity to the City of London. Due to this, it includes a limited number of neighbourhood parks, which are all classified as such due to their small size. The neighbourhood parks in Shoreditch include Ravenscroft Park, Jesus Green, Boundary Gardens and Virginia Gardens. Boundary Gardens in the Boundary Estate is Grade II listed, and is one of only three listed parks and gardens in the borough. The bandstand in the gardens forms the centrepiece of the Boundary Estate and many of the mature trees radiating from Arnold Circus are protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). The view from the bandstand along Calvert Avenue towards Shoreditch High Street is considered important.

Shoreditch also includes a number of children's play spaces distributed throughout the area, which provide vital recreation areas for children and their parents.

Columbia Road Flower Market is a lively street market on Sundays

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1896

Crown Copyright. All Rights reserved. London Borough of Tower Hamlets 100019288 2009

1968

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2008

Legend:
- Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
- District park
- Neighbourhood park
- Playing fields and pitches
- Sports centres
- Children's play spaces
- Urban farm
- Allotments
- Churchyard cemetery
- Ecological areas
- MOL - groups of trees and shrubs
- MOL - grassed areas and footpaths
- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines
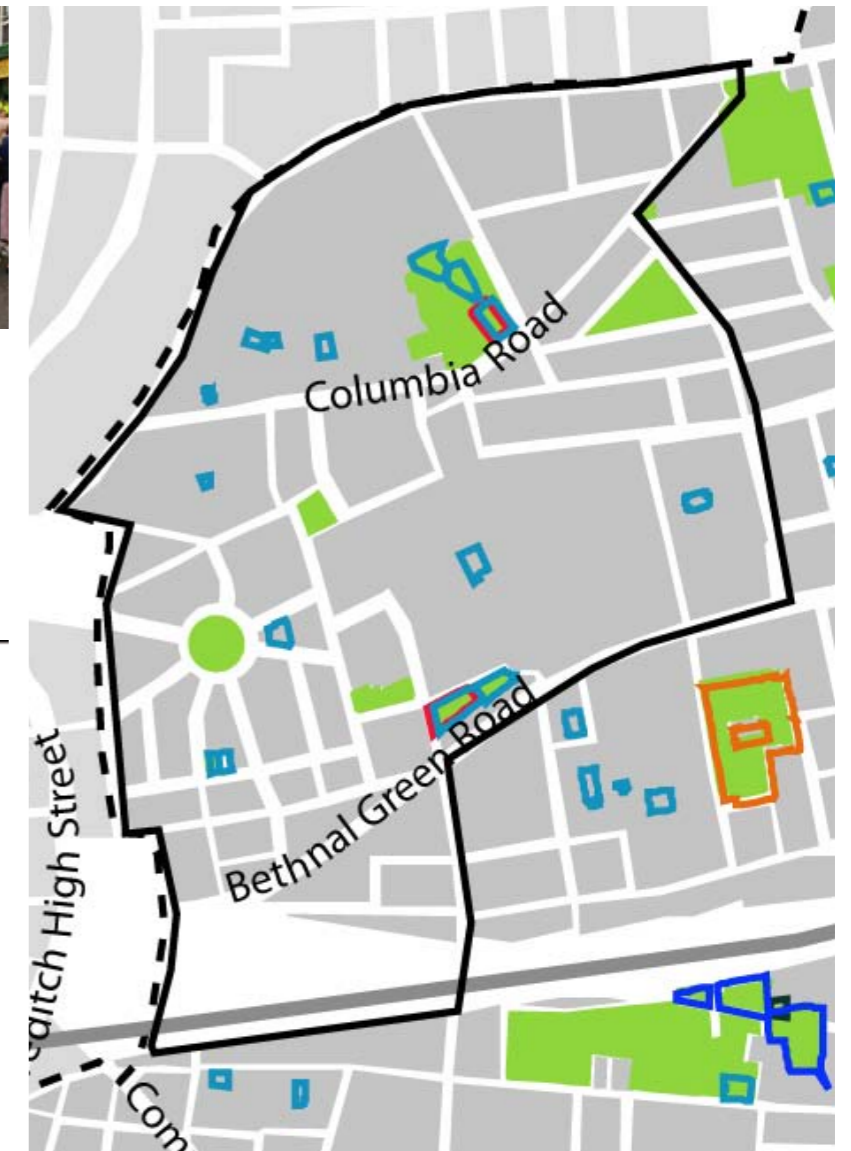
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heritage & townscape

There is a mixed typology of built forms in Shoreditch, demonstrating the constant change and growth that has characterised this area for centuries. The housing stock includes Victorian terraces, London County Council housing estates and post-war estates – all sitting side by side. The scale and density of the area is also greatly varied with two-storey terraced housing, five-storey mansion blocks and 15-storey-plus tower blocks.

The Boundary Estate and Jesus Hospital Estate are two well known conservation areas in Shoreditch. The Boundary Estate, built by the LCC, is an example of successful medium scale, high-density social housing and remains to this day a well-loved collection of buildings. The Jesus Hospital Estate is lower rise and medium density, consisting of rows of mainly two-storey terraced houses, which today are well-kept and sought after properties. Much of the lively Columbia Road Flower Market is also located in the Jesus Hospital Estate and the market draws large crowds of tourists and locals on Sundays.

A considerable number of listed buildings are located in Shoreditch, of which the majority are within the Boundary Estate. The Bishopsgate Goods Yard site is also listed.

Boundary Estate freestanding purpose-built housing blocks
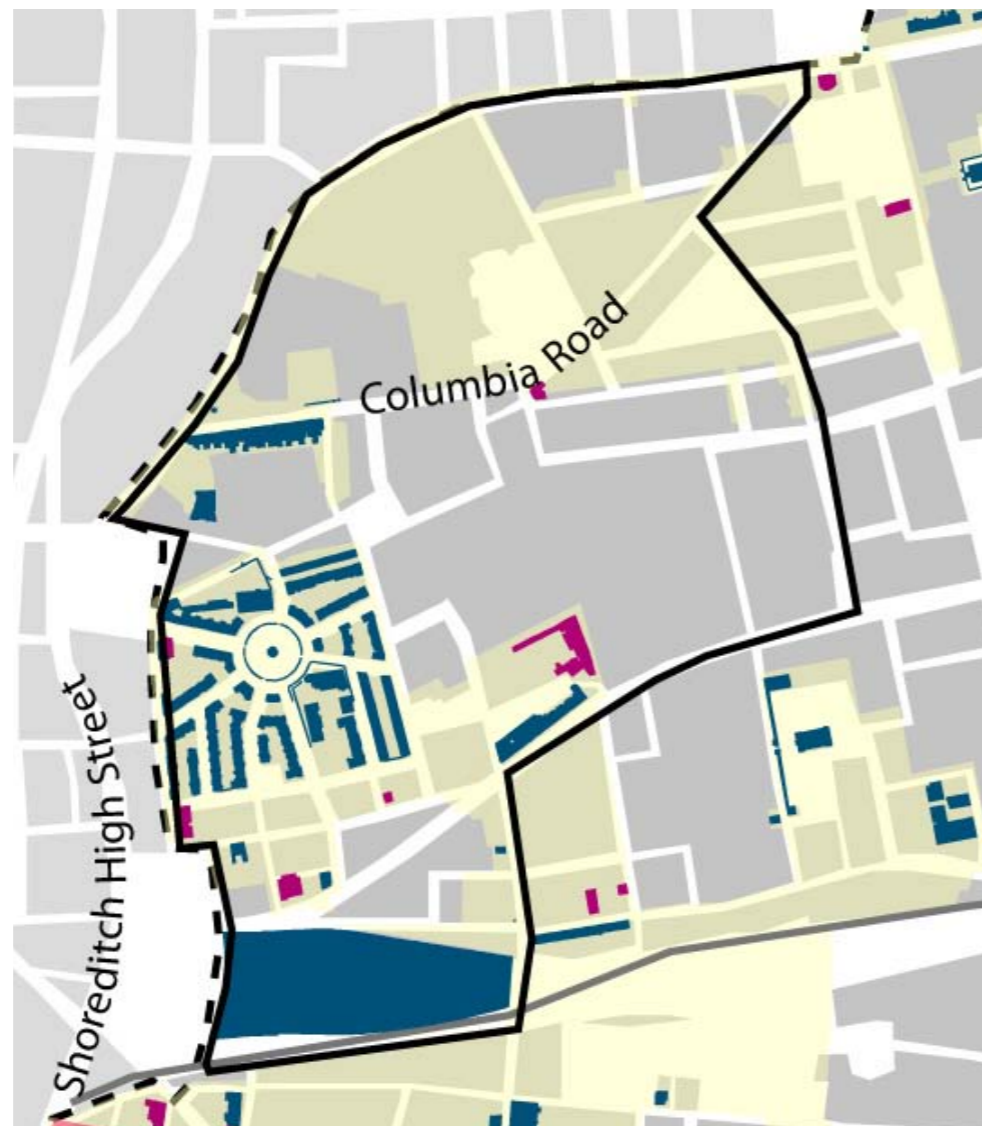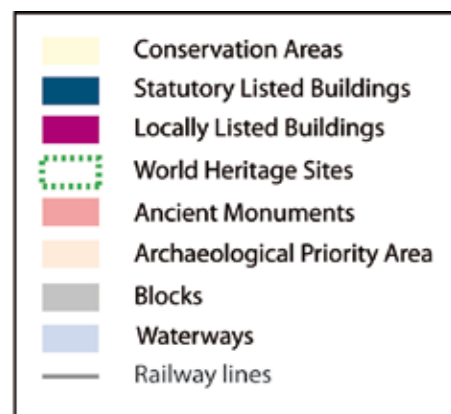
	Conservation Areas
	Statutory Listed Buildings
	Locally Listed Buildings
	World Heritage Sites
	Ancient Monuments
	Archaeological Priority Area
	Blocks
	Waterways
	Railway lines

Columbia Road

Shoreditch High Street

block pattern & movement

The urban grain in Shoreditch is a mixture of fine and coarse, with the majority of the smaller blocks to be found in and around the Boundary Estate and Brick Lane area. Although in general the area is easy to navigate on foot, pedestrian movement is often hindered by very large blocks and post-war housing typologies. These estates often display a fragmented block pattern with no clear distinction between street and building. These blocks also create significant barriers to pedestrian movement, often due the use of cul-de-sacs rather than through roads.

Three highways border Shoreditch, Bethnal Green Road, Hackney Road and Shoreditch High Street. These highways are primary routes and function as busy traffic corridors. The secondary routes in Shoreditch include Columbia Road, which is lively on market days and more friendly in design to pedestrians.

Shoreditch, looking west along Old Street
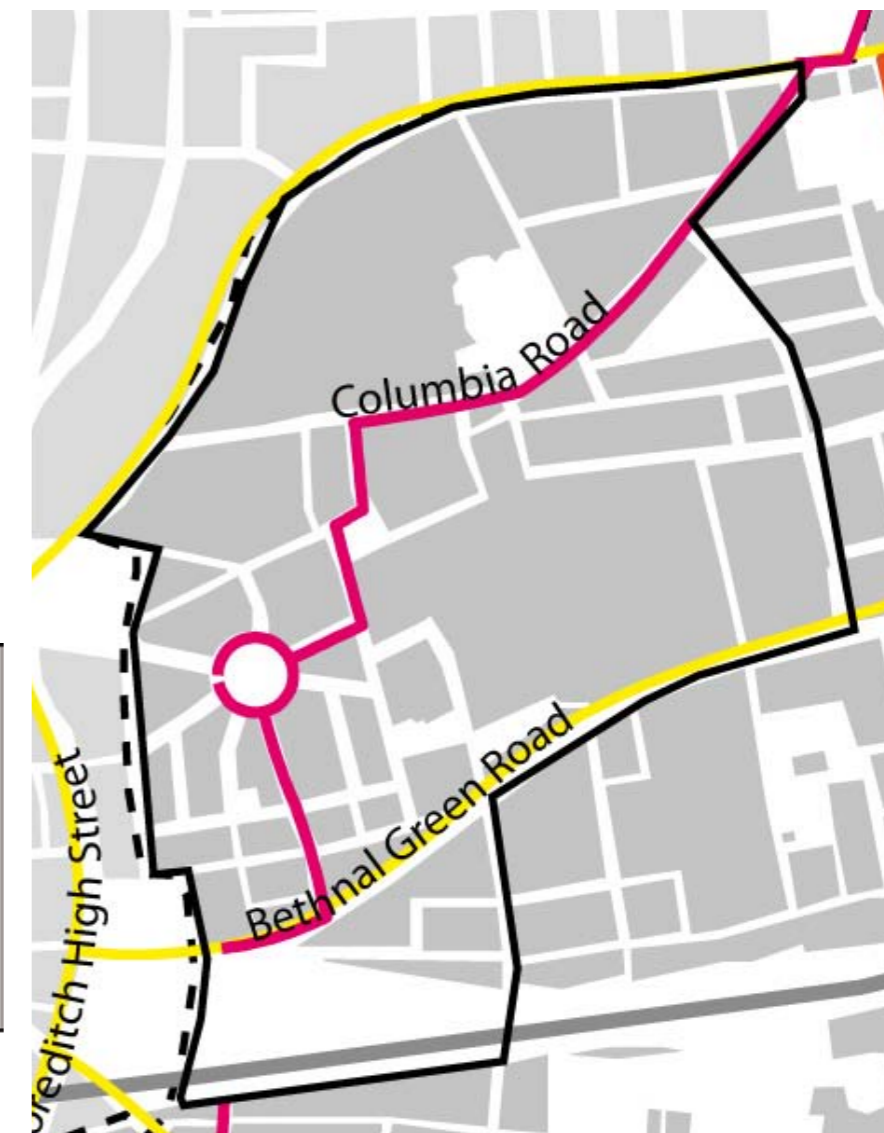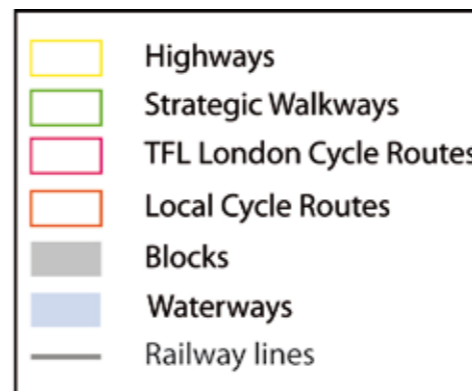
	Highways
	Strategic Walkways
	TFL London Cycle Routes
	Local Cycle Routes
	Blocks
	Waterways
	Railway lines

Columbia Road

Shoreditch High Street

Bethnal Green Road

SPITALFIELDS

historical character & identity

¹Spitalfields¹ was named after a hospital and priory known as St. Mary's Spital, founded in 1197. Standing a little way outside the Bishop's gate, its lands stretched back over the area where the remnants of Spitalfields Market are now.

Spitalfields is historically famous for providing refuge to those fleeing persecution from all over the world. One group that helped to define Spitalfields were the Huguenots that arrived from France after the Edict of Nantes in 1685. Most Huguenots were skilled tradesmen with particular skills in the textile business. The massive influx of immigrants precipitated Spitalfields becoming "all town", and substantial three- and four-storey houses were built to house the cottage industry. It was at this time that the area became world famous for its silk and brocade.

In the 18th century Spitalfields accommodated a thriving and prosperous community with the 1720 Hawksmoor Church adding grandeur to the elegant nearby streets. However, the weaving community flowered for only a short time and by the 19th century was in terminal decline. By the 1850s the weaving industry had completely collapsed. Already run down, the area once again witnessed significant immigration, this time in the form of the chronically poor eastern Jews.

Up to the present day, an emblem of the area's history is the mosque in Brick Lane which has been a place of worship for different faiths over hundreds of years. At present, the mosque serves the Bangladeshi community, whose culture and cuisine imbues Spitalfields with a cosmopolitan feel. This influence is so striking that the area has been dubbed Bangla Town.

In general, Spitalfields' physical image was crafted after the Great Fire of London in 1666. The character of the area is underpinned by the contrasting narrow lanes and alleyways which typify the bustling street life of Charles Dickens' Victorian London. Spitalfields' covered market, which was built in 1682, remains a fine example of this historic hamlet's architecture.

landscape & open space

The area of Spitalfields incorporates a limited number of parks, which is typically characteristic of a dense and built-up area in close proximity to the City of London. The majority of the parks in Spitalfields are also of a small size and are therefore all classified as neighbourhood parks. The largest park in the area is Allen Gardens, while smaller parks include Christchurch Gardens. The area includes a number of children's play spaces and an urban farm known as Spitalfields Farm, which is located adjacent to Allen Gardens. Due to the built-up nature of Spitalfields, the open spaces in the area also consist of paved open spaces, such as Bishops Square, next to the busy Spitalfields Market and shops on Brushfield Street. This is an open space, well-used by office workers and tourists, as well as a busy pedestrian thoroughfare.

Bishops Square in Spitalfields

1896

1968

2008

56

Legend:
- Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
- District park
- Neighbourhood park
- Playing fields and pitches
- Sports centres
- Children's play spaces
- Urban farm
- Allotments
- Churchyard cemetery
- Ecological areas
- MOL - groups of trees and shrubs
- MOL - grassed areas and footpaths
- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines
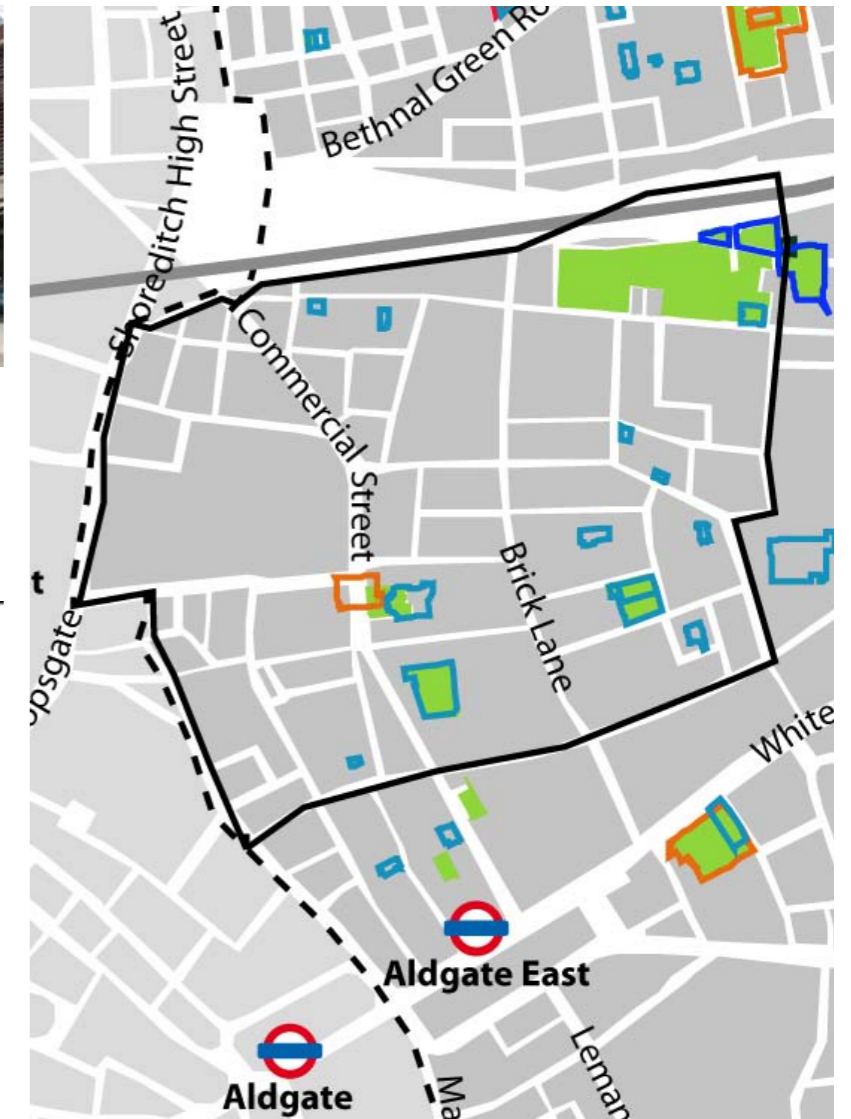
heritage & townscape

Spitalfields is a lively, diverse and historical area that has a rich and complex character. Spitalfields and Petticoat Lane markets, Brick Lane and Truman's Brewery are well known landmarks in the area and contain a diverse mix of fashion, art, restaurants, night-time entertainment and retail.

A large proportion of Spitalfields is located within conservation areas. The Fournier Street Conservation Area is the largest in Spitalfields and contains some of the most architecturally and historically significant buildings in the borough, including both the listed Spitalfields Market and Nicholas Hawksmoor's Christ Church. The ruins of the Priory and Hospital of St Mary (also known as St Mary's Spital) are listed as an Ancient Monument and fall partly within the Elder Street Conservation Area. The Artillery Passage Conservation Area contains historic narrow passages, lanes and courtyards and a 17th-century street pattern.

The scale and densities vary greatly in Spitalfields, from terraced housing to large, modern office blocks built along the western edge of Spitalfields next to the City of London. The proximity to the City of London has led to the character of Spitalfields bearing similarities with the Square Mile, alongside the more residential character within Tower Hamlets.

Shops and restaurants along Brushfield Street

Baishakhi Mela in Brick Lane
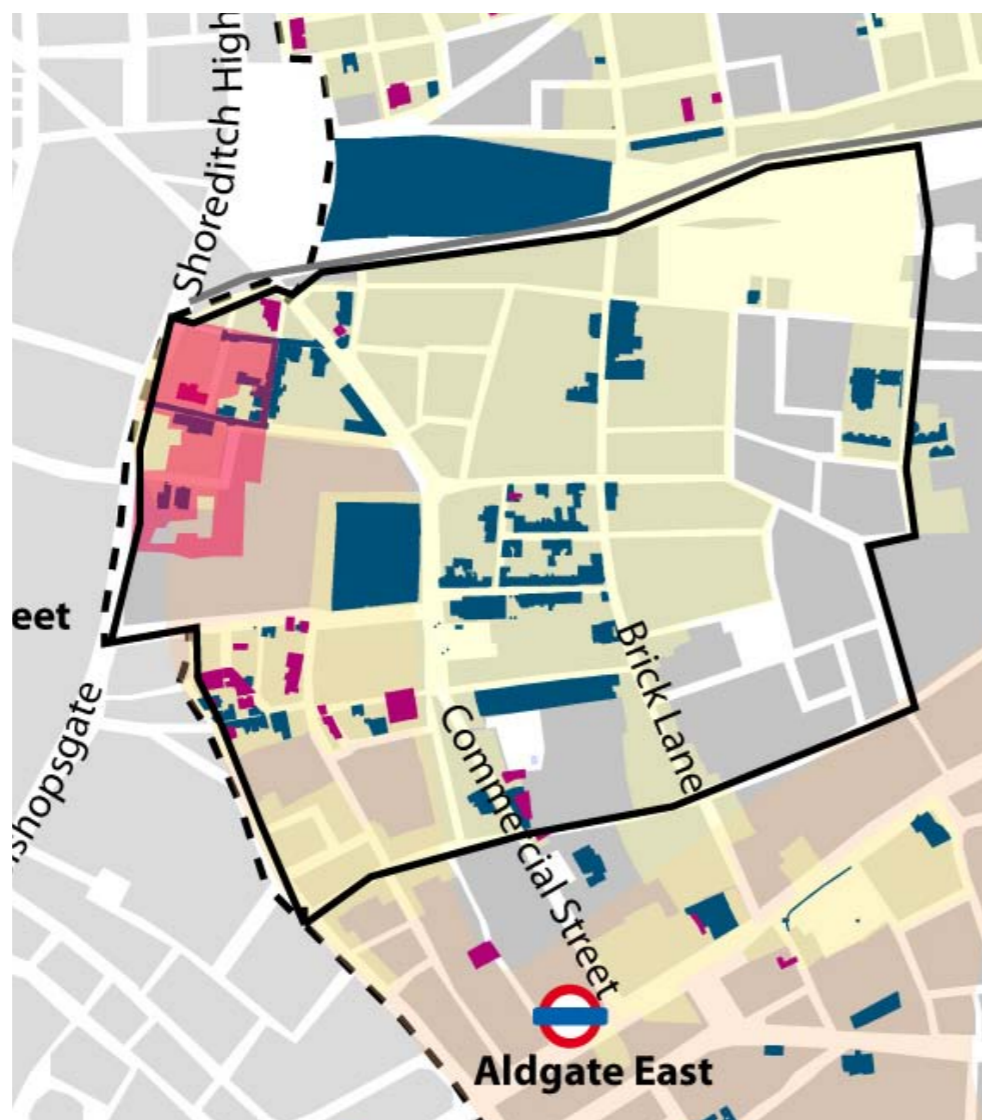
Legend:
- Conservation Areas
- Statutory Listed Buildings
- Locally Listed Buildings
- World Heritage Sites
- Ancient Monuments
- Archaeological Priority Area
- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines

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block pattern & movement

Spitalfields is a pedestrian and cycle-friendly area, with few main roads and excellent public transport links – Aldgate, Aldgate East and Liverpool Street stations being located nearby. Pedestrians are drawn to the area by Spitalfields Market, Petticoat Lane Market and the Backyard Market and Sunday UpMarket in Truman's Brewery on the weekends, as well as the diverse mix of shops and restaurants around Brick Lane.

Bishopsgate/Shoreditch High Street and Commercial Street are the busiest roads in the area and are hence classified as highways. Bishopsgate/Shoreditch High Street acts as an important north-south link from the City northwards. Commercial street is a busy road in the area, though it is also an active street for pedestrians, which contributes to the character of the area.

Spitalfields has a fine urban grain which is seen throughout much of the City and the City fringe areas. Throughout much of Spitalfields, the blocks are small to medium in size and generally follow an irregular grid pattern. This type of block pattern allows for ease of movement for pedestrians and cyclists, due to clear sight lines and increased access points.

Brick Lane

Spitalfields Market

Legend:
- Highways
- Strategic Walkways
- TFL London Cycle Routes
- Local Cycle Routes
- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines
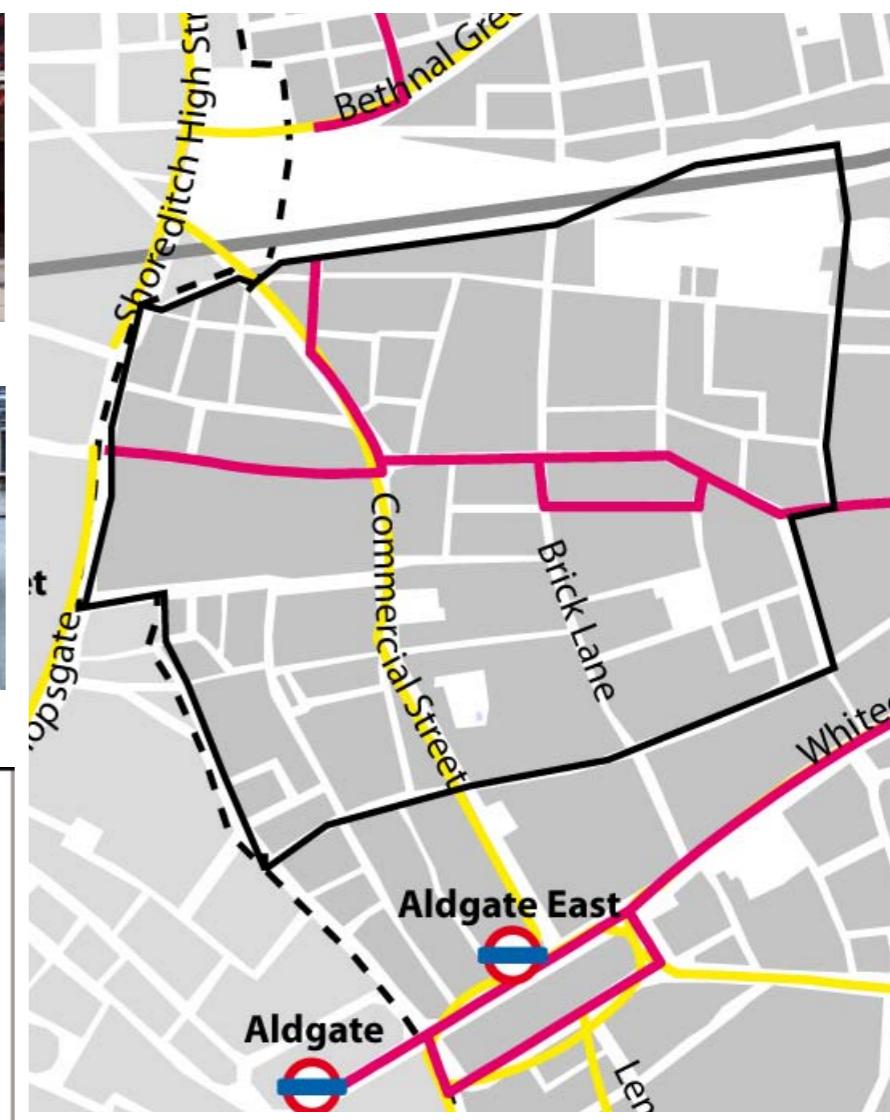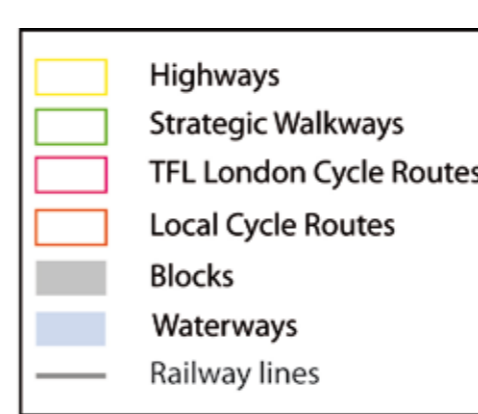
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BETHNAL GREEN

historical character & identity

Bethnal Green was once a quiet rural hamlet within the Manor of Stepney. In the 16th and 17th centuries wealthy merchants or courtiers built mansions here, within easy reach of the City.

Many of the buildings, streets and locations within Bethnal Green echo the social circumstances and character of a particular period. Of 16th-century origin, Netteswell House in Old Ford Road is a reminder of rural Bethnal Green and its elevated status during Elizabeth times. While the impressive 1839 church of St John on Bethnal Green, designed by Sir John Soane, was built in response to the area's swiftly growing population.

Bethnal Green's suburban status began to change in the 18th century through the immigration of Huguenot weavers, whose centre was the nearby hamlet of Spitalfields. During this period Bethnal Green changed more markedly than any other East End village, and by the end of the century it was an overcrowded place with an extremely high mortality rate.

Nineteenth-century industrial and commercial might is reflected in the form of the V&A Museum of Childhood, with its iron frame and construction, while Bethnal Green's social history is reflected in the 19th-century Columbia Road Flower Market. The 20th century is represented in the community hub of York Hall, while Bethnal Green station itself, which was used as an air raid shelter, was the site of a major disaster when on the night of the 3rd March 1943, 174 people died in a crush – the largest death toll among civilians during the war.

landscape & open space

A considerable number of open spaces are located within Bethnal Green. The largest of these are Weavers Fields and Bethnal Green Gardens, which are known as district parks due to their medium size. Both these parks contain children's play spaces, along with playing fields and pitches.

Bethnal Green also encompasses a number of smaller neighbourhood parks, including Museum Gardens, Ion Square Gardens and Warner Green open space. Two churchyards in Bethnal Green also provide valuable open space, and the area also contains a number of children's play places. The northern section of Bethnal Green contains the least amount of open space, although this area is located within close proximity to Victoria Park and Hackney City Farm, the latter being located in the London Borough of Hackney.

Bethnal Green includes a moderate proportion of waterspace frontage, with the Regent's Canal running to the north of the area.

Ion Square Gardens in Bethnal Green

1896

1968

2008

Legend:
- Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
- District park
- Neighbourhood park
- Playing fields and pitches
- Sports centres
- Children's play spaces
- Urban farm
- Allotments
- Churchyard cemetery
- Ecological areas
- MOL - groups of trees and shrubs
- MOL - grassed areas and footpaths
- Blocks
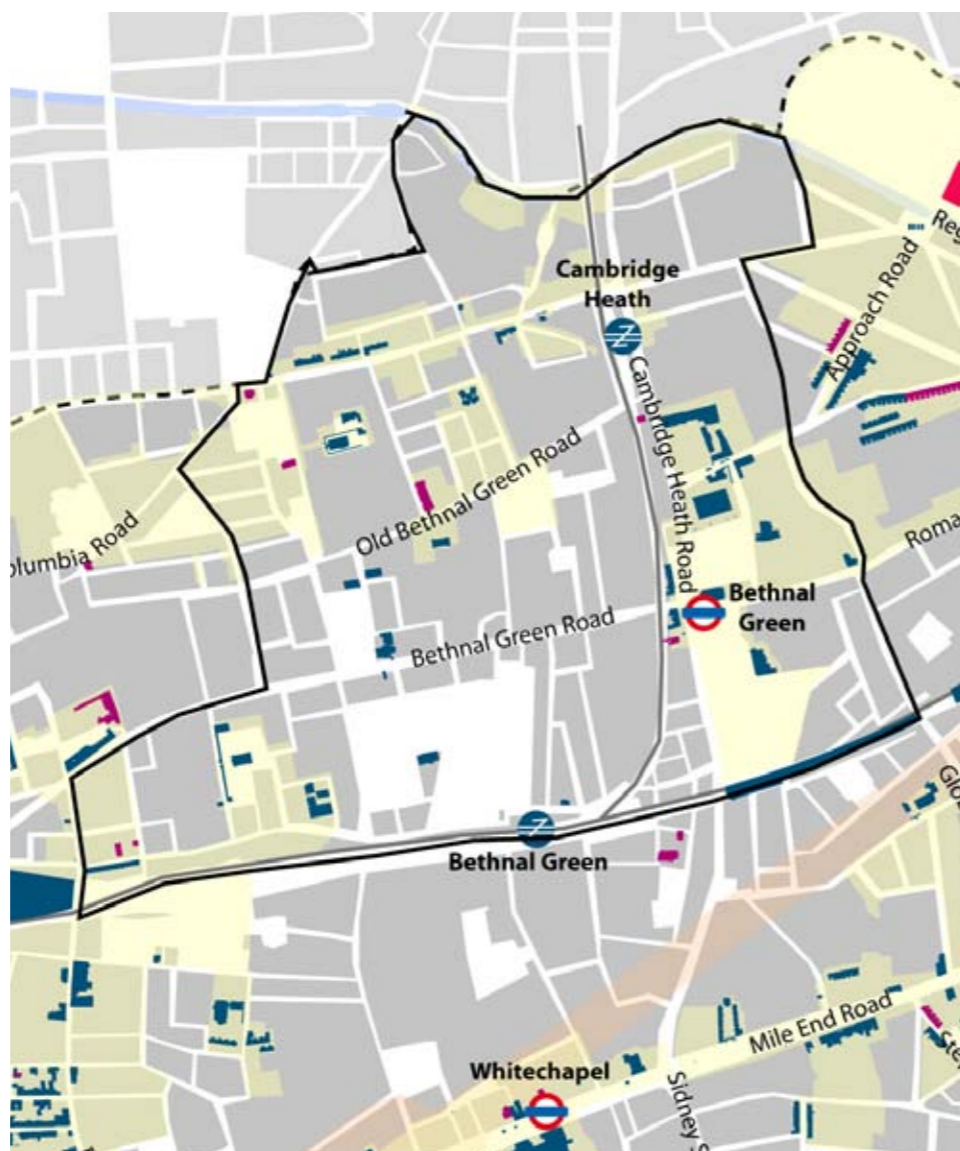- Waterways
- Railway lines

heritage & townscape

The town centre in Bethnal Green is lively, with a mix of shops, restaurants and bars along Bethnal Green Road, all located within close proximity to the busy Brick Lane area. Bethnal Green Road also has a street market that operates daily. The Cambridge Heath Road area consists of a small mix of shops, restaurants and bars close to the station. Bethnal Green is also known for its museums – including the V&A Museum of Childhood – and art galleries, with a collection of small independent galleries and studio space concentrated around the Vyner Street area. The side streets in and around Bethnal Green are predominantly quiet residential streets, of which the housing stock consists largely of medium- to low-rise post-war housing estates and Victorian terraced housing.

Bethnal Green is protected by a number of conservation areas, including Bethnal Green Gardens, Old Bethnal Green Road, Hackney Road, Regent's Canal and part of the Jesus Hospital Estate. The Bethnal Green Gardens Conservation Area contains a series of significant statutory listed civic buildings, including the V&A Museum of Childhood and the Town Hall, which, along with their gardens, are the highlights of the area – not forgetting St John's Church (which is Grade I listed).

Historic streets in Bethnal Green

Conservation Areas
Statutory Listed Buildings
Locally Listed Buildings
World Heritage Sites
Ancient Monuments
Archaeological Priority Area
Blocks
Waterways
Railway lines

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block pattern & movement

Bethnal Green suffers from traffic. This is primarily caused by the key east-west links of Hackney Road and Bethnal Green Road, and the key north-south link of Cambridge Heath Road. These three roads are classified as highways. Residents of Bethnal Green are, however, well connected by public transport, with two British Rail stations and one London Underground station.

The block pattern in Bethnal Green is a mix of medium and large sizes and hence suffers from permeability. In particular, north-south movement is hindered. Many of the larger post-war housing blocks also contain cul-de-sacs, in which ease of movement is often compromised for pedestrians and cyclists.

Regent's Canal lies to the north of Bethnal Green. The northern side of the canal (which is located in Islington) is accessible via the towpath, which is a key east-west link for cyclists and pedestrians.

Residential streets in Bethnal Green
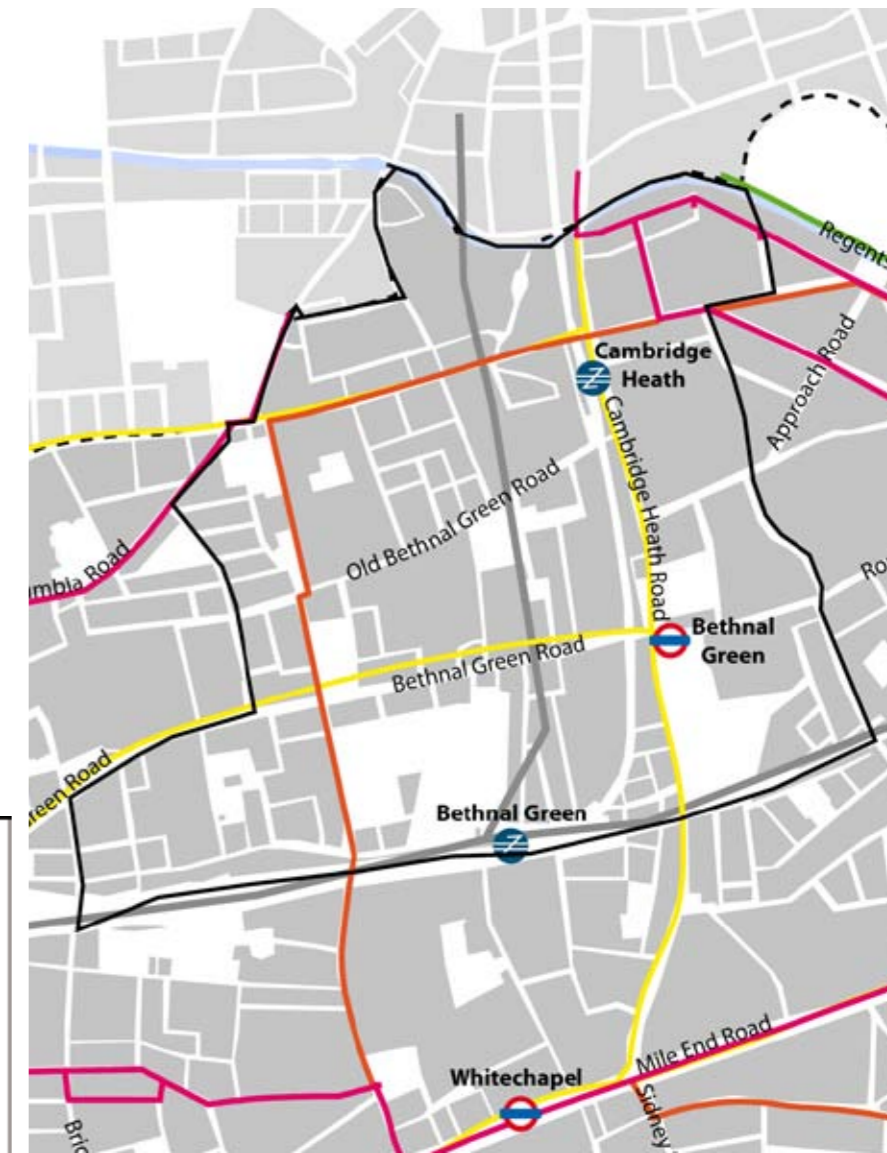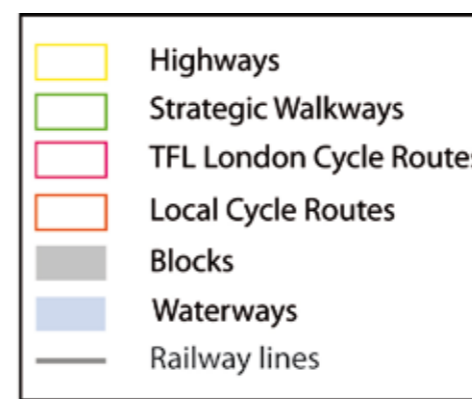
Highways
Strategic Walkways
TFL London Cycle Routes
Local Cycle Routes
Blocks
Waterways
Railway lines

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GLOBE TOWN

historical character & identity

To the east of Bethnal Green lies Globe Town. This area was established in 1800 to provide for the expanding population of weavers around Bethnal Green, who had been attracted by improving prospects in the silk trade. The population of Bethnal Green trebled between 1801 and 1831.

In this period, some 20,000 looms were in operation in resident's homes. But by 1824, with restrictions on the importation of French silks relaxed, up to half these looms became idle, and prices were driven down. With many importing warehouses already established in the district, the abundance of cheap labour was turned to furniture, clothing and shoe manufacture. Globe Town continued its expansion into the 1860s, long after the decline of the silk industry.

Designated as a conservation area, historical maps of 1819 show small houses built around Globe Road. When slum clearances increased towards 1900, initiatives to provide working-class housing schemes were explored. This was attempted by Samuel Barnett's East End Dwellings Company with the red brick tenements around Globe Road in the 1880s. The majority of the residential development was constructed by this company between 1900 and 1906.

landscape & open space

Meath Gardens is the largest park in Globe Town and is classified as Metropolitan Open Land (MOL). The facilities in Meath Gardens include a playing field and a small children's play space. Globe Town has few other parks within its borders, but is in close proximity to Victoria Park and Mile End Park (both MOL), which have a large range of recreational spaces and are known for their biodiversity. Globe Town has an even distribution of small children's play spaces spread throughout the area.

Approach Road is well known for it[1]s tree-lined vista to Victoria Park, and the surrounding streets are also known for their mature trees. The trees along Approach Road, St James's Avenue, Sewardstone Road and Old Ford Road are protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPO[1]s).

Globe Town includes a substantial proportion of waterspace frontage, as along the eastern edge lies the Regent's Canal.

Meath Gardens

1896

1968

2008

Legend:
- Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
- District park
- Neighbourhood park
- Playing fields and pitches
- Sports centres
- Children's play spaces
- Urban farm
- Allotments
- Churchyard cemetery
- Ecological areas
- MOL – groups of trees and shrubs
- MOL – grassed areas and footpaths
- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines

60
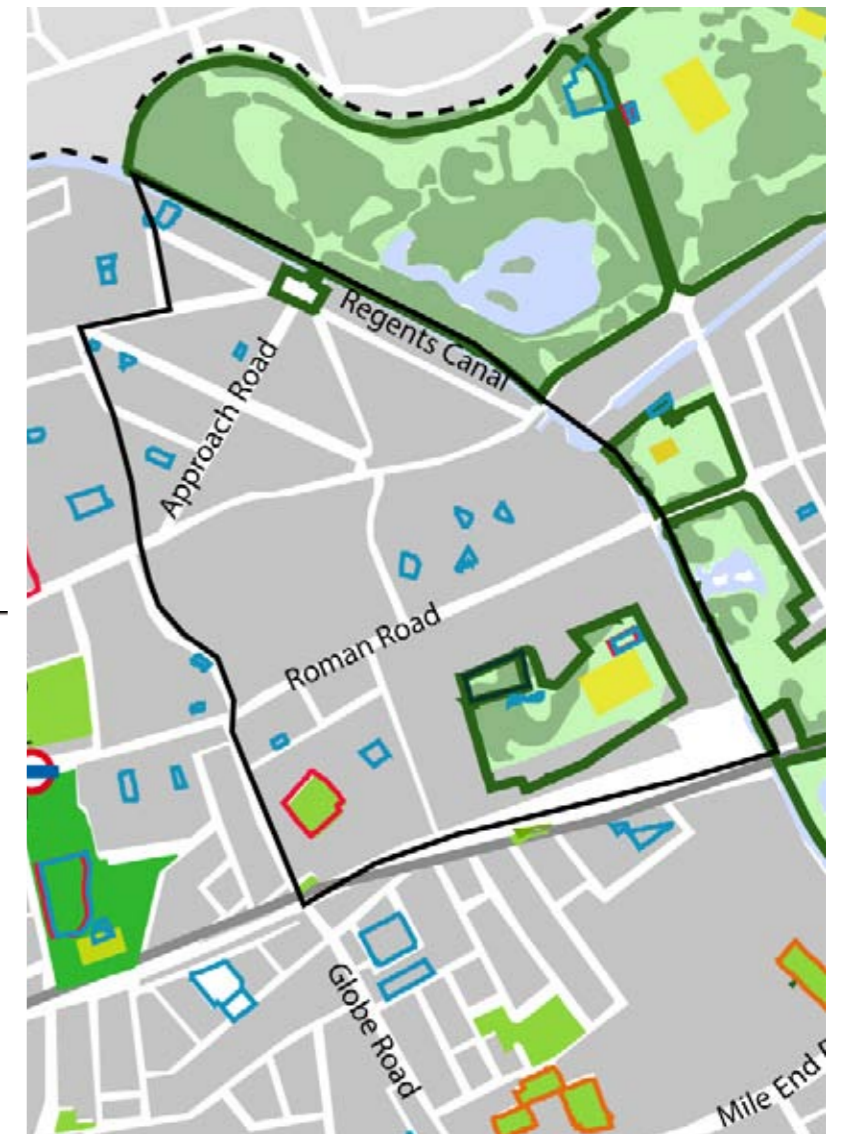
heritage & townscape

Globe Town is predominantly a residential area, with a small town centre located along Roman Road. Roman Road is lined with medium- to large-scale post-war housing developments, intermixed with smaller retail units within the town centre. Globe Town has a central square located on the corner of Roman Road and Morpeth Street, which currently contains a small number of market stalls.
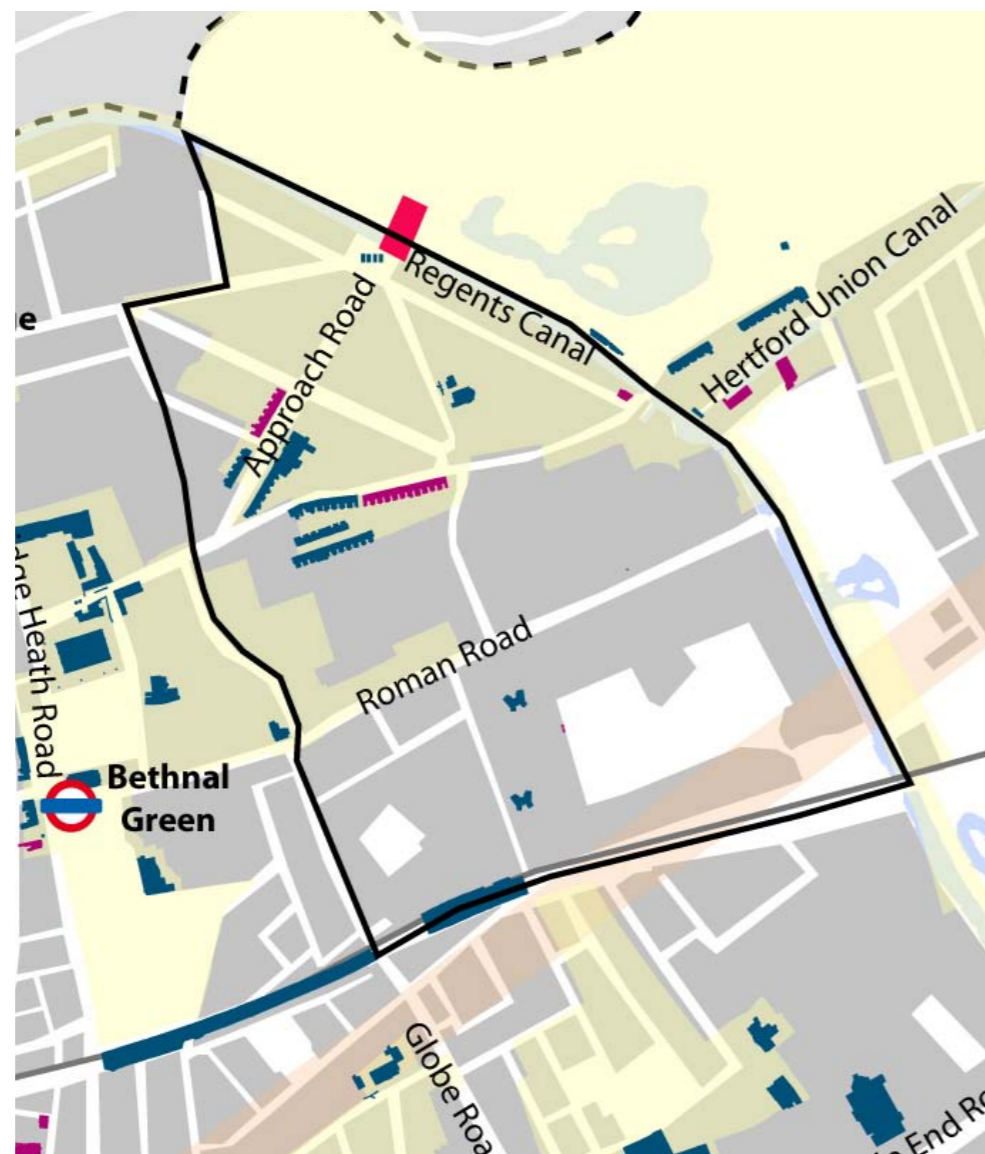
A large proportion of Globe Town's housing comprises post-war housing estates, which are intermixed with a smaller proportion of Victorian housing and modern residential flats, located along Regent's Canal. Approach Road is well known in the area for Victorian housing and important institutional buildings, such as the London Chest Hospital and Raines Foundation School. This area is situated within the Victoria Park Conservation Area, which encompasses much of the northern half of Globe Town, and is one of two conservation areas in Globe Town (the other being the Globe Road Conservation Area). Victoria Park Conservation Area also includes the Victorian cast iron bridge – a Scheduled Ancient Monument, like the majority of the listed buildings in Globe Town – that leads from Approach Road to Victoria Park.

Historic street in Globe Town

Roman Road

Legend:
- Conservation Areas
- Statutory Listed Buildings
- Locally Listed Buildings
- World Heritage Sites
- Ancient Monuments
- Archaeological Priority Area
- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines

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block pattern & movement

Due to the large proportion of post-war housing estates in Globe Town, permeability and movement is often compromised for pedestrians and cyclists. The block pattern in Globe Town is generally of a coarse grain with large blocks, however exceptions to this are found around Approach Road in the north of the area, where the block pattern is of a fine grain.

Globe Town suffers from traffic, as Roman Road is a key east-west link between Bethnal Green and Bow. However, Roman Road is not classified as a highway and does not act as a major physical barrier.

The Regent's Canal creates a significant contribution to the townscape and lies along the eastern edge of Globe Town. The eastern side of the canal is accessible via the towpath, which is widely used by cyclists and pedestrians. The Victorian cast iron bridge that leads from Approach Road to Victoria Park is a key access link into the park, as is the bridge on Old Ford Road. The road bridge that crosses the canal on Roman Road forms a key link from Globe Town into Mile End Park and beyond.

Suttons Wharf on the Regent's Canal

Legend:
- Highways
- Strategic Walkways
- TFL London Cycle Routes
- Local Cycle Routes
- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines
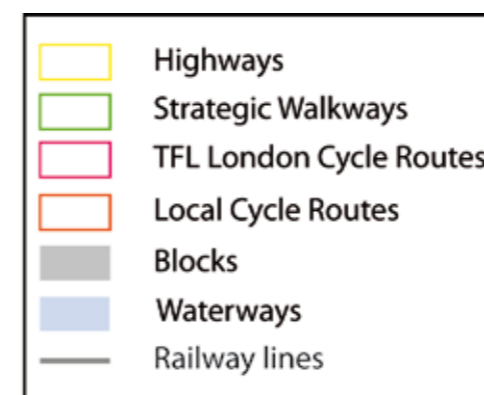
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WHITECHAPEL

historical character & identity

Whitechapel is a historic part of London. The chapel of ease was built on the road to Essex, on the site of St. Mary's Church, some time in the 1200s. It would have been whitewashed, typically for the middle ages, and is said to have lent it's name to Whitechapel. Maps from 1666 show settlement outside of the city walls at Aldgate, clustered particularly at the beginning of what was to become the A11 to Essex, through Whitechapel.

In 1738, development extended in ribbon form along the Whitechapel Road. Land use in the area was still predominantly agricultural, with evidence of larger houses, and public activity focused on the Whitechapel Road. The London Hospital was built in 1757, and has expanded incrementally.

The success of the docks to the south of Whitechapel led to large-scale urban expansion with the extensive building of middle-class terraces in the area. This resulted in the turning of all the surrounding agricultural land to housing, forming what is now known as the East End. The first Whitechapel Railway Station was opened below ground in 1876, followed by the Metropolitan District Railway in 1884 (with which came the station Whitechapel and Mile End).

In general Whitechapel has been a transient place for at least four hundred years, where families did not stay for more than a few generations. Whitechapel has been viewed as something of a trouble spot for sedition and dissent in the 17th century. And somewhere that was relatively calm and ordered in the 18th century, had become by the 19th century a place of pervasive poverty, murders and Jewish sweatshops.

New housing was built in the 1920's to replace the overcrowded slums of the East End. Further into the 20th century, post-war development and re-development saw radical changes in the urban fabric, with a shift from Victorian terraces towards 1960's housing estate block architecture.

landscape & open space

Whitechapel encompasses a limited number of parks, which are all classified as neighbourhood parks due to their small size. These neighbourhood parks include Vallance Road Gardens and St Bartholomews Gardens.

No larger district parks are found in Whitechapel, but the area is located close to district parks in neighbouring areas, such as Weavers Fields, Bethnal Green Gardens and Stepney Green. These urban parks give residents access to trees and grass, as well as encouraging wildlife. Within Whitechapel a number of children's play spaces are also found, largely in the north of the area.

Whitechapel Market on Whitechapel Road

1896

1968

2008

Legend:
- Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
- District park
- Neighbourhood park
- Playing fields and pitches
- Sports centres
- Children's play spaces
- Urban farm
- Allotments
- Churchyard cemetery
- Ecological areas
- MOL - groups of trees and shrubs
- MOL - grassed areas and footpaths
- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines

heritage & townscape

The vibrant and popular street market, the historical Royal London Hospital – an imposing modern structure – and the London Underground station form a focal point in the busy town centre of Whitechapel.

Many of the buildings fronting Whitechapel Road are of architectural and historical importance and form a stretch of fine-grain historic buildings, with a variety of architectural styles. Some 18th-century buildings survive – with examples such as the Grade II-listed Woods Buildings and the former brewery reflecting the commercial nature of the street in those times – as well as 19th-century Victorian buildings. Since its foundation in 1757, the London Hospital site has undergone incremental development and hence now has a wide range of architectural styles.

The housing stock in Whitechapel varies in age and architectural style and includes Victorian terraced housing and post-war housing estates. Conservation areas in Whitechapel include Whitechapel Market, Whitechapel Hospital and Stepney Green.

View of Whitechapel Road
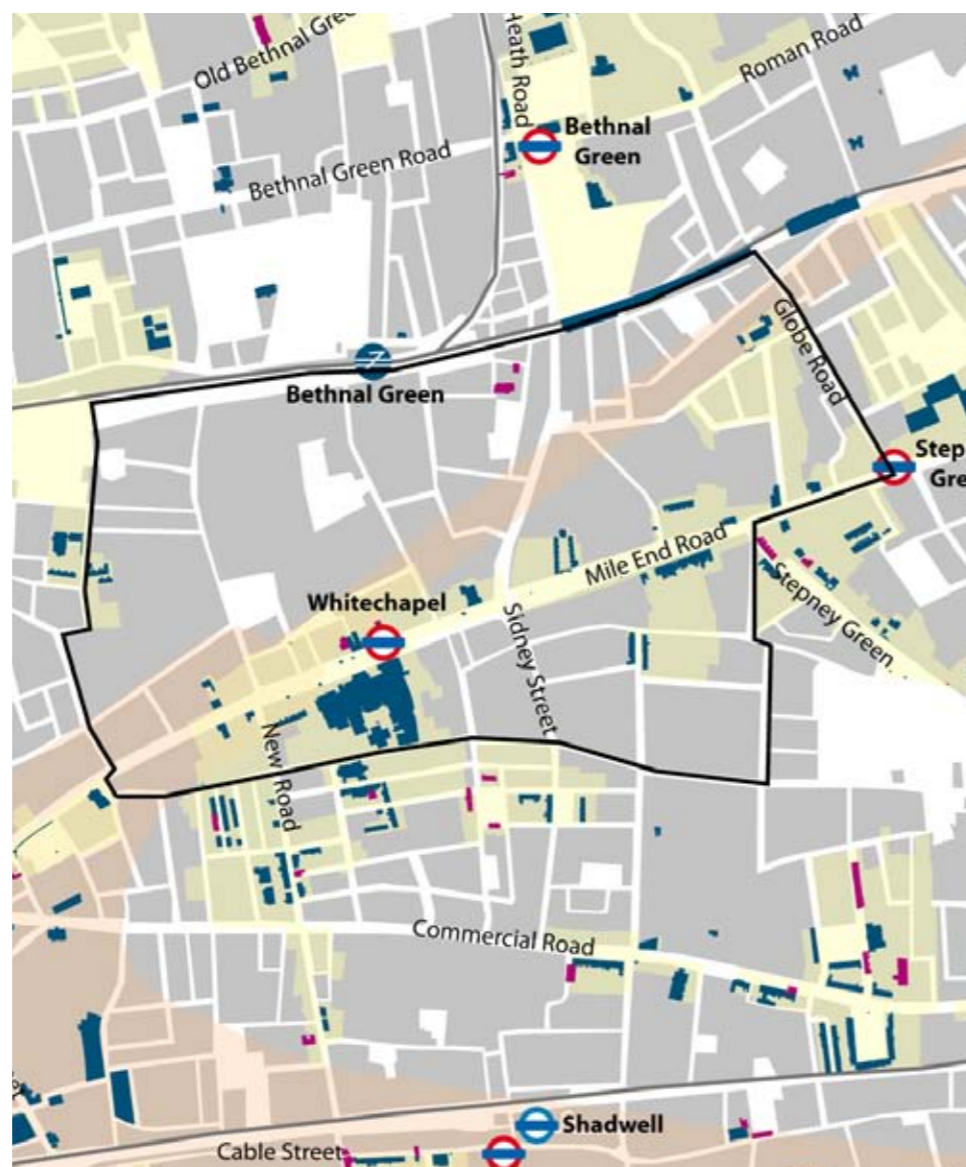
Legend:
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- World Heritage Sites
- Ancient Monuments
- Archaeological Priority Area
- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines

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View of Whitechapel

block pattern & movement

Whitechapel Road is an important and historically significant east-west movement route within east London. There is a high level of pedestrian activity along this road generated by the hospital, with medical staff, patients and visitors during the day. Whitechapel Market is also popular with residents and is a widely used street market. Both Whitechapel Road and Cambridge Heath Road are classified as highways due to their busy vehicular nature, and the roads serve as key east-west and north-south links.

Whitechapel was historically a fine-grained area, although today it contains a large proportion of large blocks. These large blocks include the Royal London Hospital, the East London Mosque, post-war housing estates, as well as large office blocks (largely towards Aldgate). The large blocks often compromise movement for pedestrians and cyclists, particularly to the north of Whitechapel London Underground station and around the hospital.

Whitechapel Road

Legend:
- Highways
- Strategic Walkways
- TFL London Cycle Routes
- Local Cycle Routes
- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines

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ALDGATE

historical character & identity

Aldgate has been an important gateway into and out of the City of London for centuries. In Saxon English, "Eldgate" means "old gate", a reference to the Roman gate which was the focus for the area. It was one of six gates in the Roman Wall and was demolished in the 18th century.

Aldgate was also home of the Aldgate Pump, built in the 16th century over a much older well that had been used since the 13th century. The water from the pump was said to have healing properties.

Unlike Stepney, which was originally a village, Aldgate, along with Whitechapel, grew up as a true London suburb. In common with Whitechapel it has traditionally been a place of coming and going and really had no central point.

Unfortunately, few remnants of the past still exist, only the street names such as The Minories and Houndsditch still remain. This was also where the herbalist Nicholas Culpeper lived in the 1640s and grew his plants, and again, this history survives in the names of streets such as Camomile Street and Wormwood Street.

Toynbee Hall was opened in Commercial Street in 1884 and played a pioneering role in addressing the high levels of deprivation in the Victorian East End. It established a residential community that attempted to address the pressing social problems in this part of London, while trying to answer fundamental questions about the facts and perceptions of poverty and the nature of community.

Today, Aldgate remains a thriving cultural melting pot, sitting side by side with other rich and colourful places, such as Shoreditch, Spitalfields, Wapping and the City of London. Its gateway function has been undermined in modern times, with poor-quality development and disconnected public spaces.

landscape & open space

Aldgate is a densely populated commercial area close to the City of London with few residents and, typical of this density and land use, has few parks. Only three small neighbourhood parks lie in the area, including Mallon Gardens and Altab Ali Park. Altab Ali Park is the largest of the neighbourhood parks and is also a cemetery. Aldgate also has a limited number of children's play spaces and all are located in the north of Aldgate. The largest of these play spaces is in Altab Ali Park.

Altab Ali Park
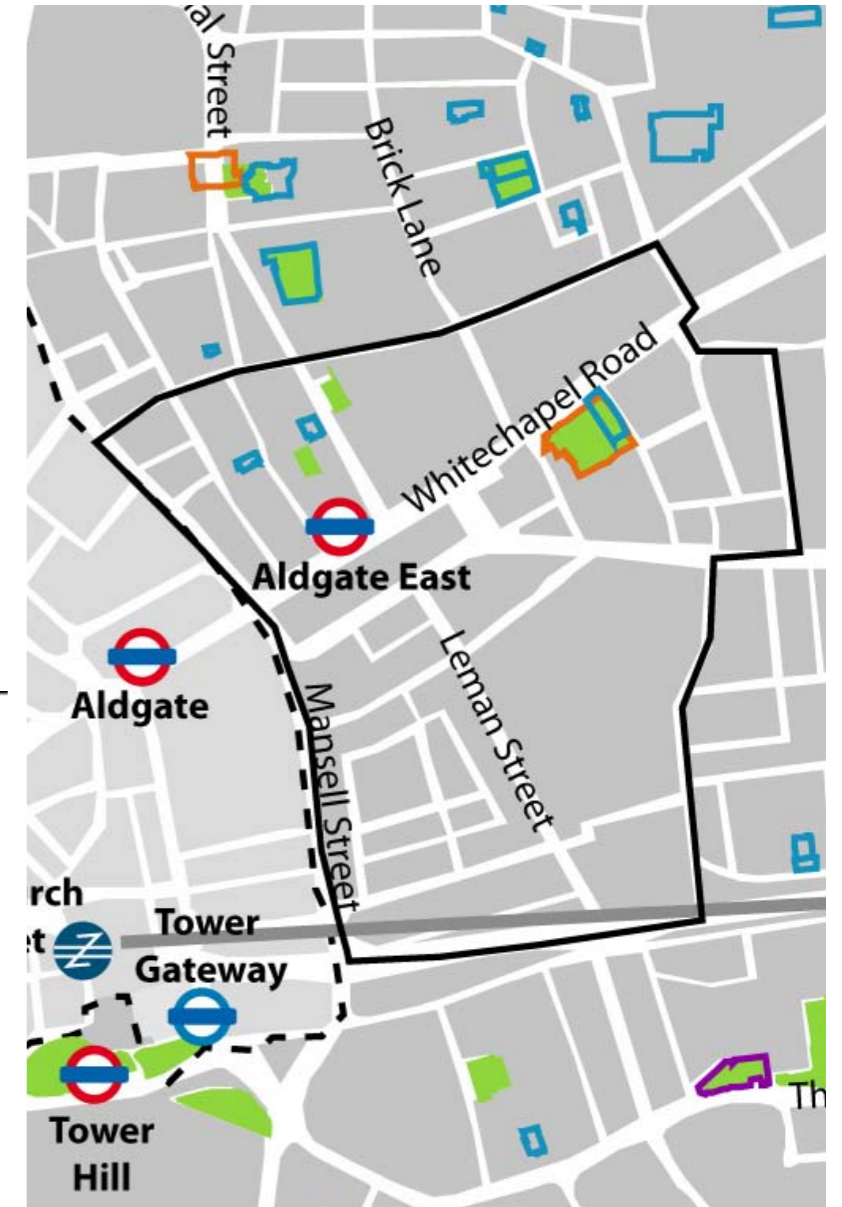
1896

1968

2008

64

Legend:
- Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
- District park
- Neighbourhood park
- Playing fields and pitches
- Sports centres
- Children's play spaces
- Urban farm
- Allotments
- Churchyard cemetery
- Ecological areas
- MOL - groups of trees and shrubs
- MOL - grassed areas and footpaths
- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines

heritage & townscape

The Aldgate area is identified by the prevalence of office buildings, of which many provide secondary accommodation. This type of development peaked in the late 1980s. While most of the office buildings in the area are of dated and relatively undistinguished aesthetic quality, there a few buildings of high quality, such as the RBS offices on Leman Street. London Metrolpolitan University is also has a couple of dominant buildings in the area.

A small portion of Aldgate is located within two conservation areas: Whitechapel High Street, in the north of Aldgate, and Wentworth Street, which is mainly in Spitalfields. Many of the listed buildings in the area lie in and around Prescot Street, Alie Street and Leman Street. The listed buildings on Prescot Street are fine examples of Victorian commercial buildings.

Commercial Street

London Metropolitan University

	Conservation Areas
	Statutory Listed Buildings
	Locally Listed Buildings
	World Heritage Sites
	Ancient Monuments
	Archaeological Priority Area
	Blocks
	Waterways
	Railway lines

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block pattern & movement

The character of Aldgate is dominated by heavy traffic. This is especially true of the area around the Aldgate Gyratory where the traffic arteries of Commercial Road, Whitechapel Road, Commercial Street and Aldgate High Street meet. As a result the street environment is unpleasant for pedestrians, which only is exacerbated by the uninviting subway system in and around Aldgate.

The street pattern in the area is dominated by large office blocks. Other more fine-grained blocks are spread around the area, but are generally less significant. This includes the area between Leman Street and Mansell Street.

Aldgate includes one London Underground station (Aldgate East), but is very close to several other stations, namely Aldgate, Tower Hill and Tower Gateway.

Aldgate East station
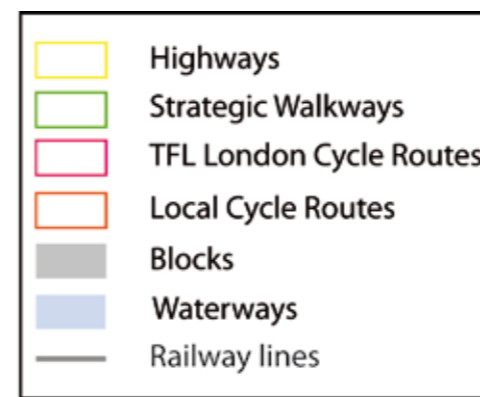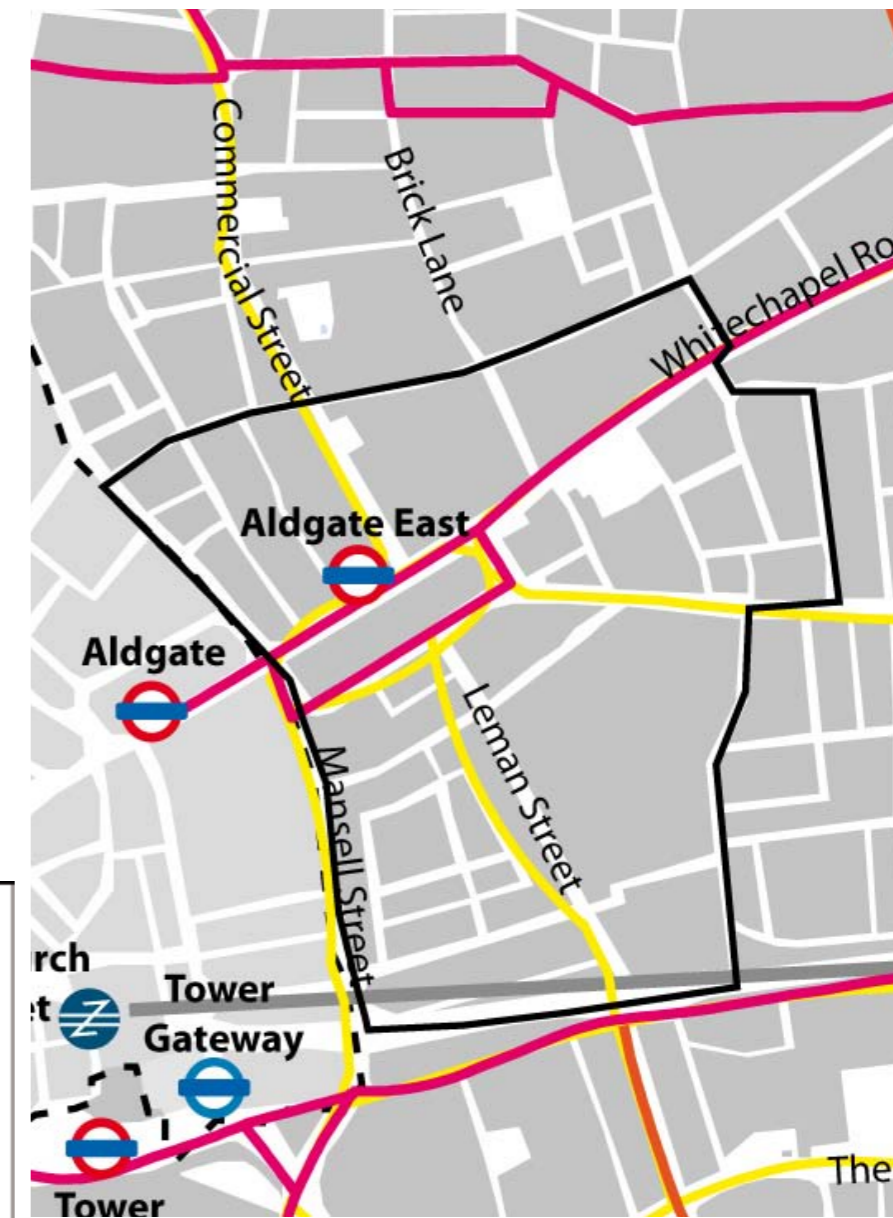
	Highways
	Strategic Walkways
	TFL London Cycle Routes
	Local Cycle Routes
	Blocks
	Waterways
	Railway lines

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TOWER OF LONDON & ST KATHARINE DOCKS

historical character & identity

The world famous Tower of London stands on the River Thames on the western boundary of the borough. It dates from the reign of William the Conqueror in the 11th century and, in the past 900 years, has been a fortress, royal palace, zoo and state prison. The iconic White Tower stands in the centre built by William the Conqueror in 1078. Although no longer a Royal residence, the Tower remains a royal palace and retains a permanent guard.

The Tower has always been an isolated place, to ensure the security and safety of the Royal Family. It remains isolated to this day, roads heavy with traffic wrapping around this World Heritage Site, sadly separating a wonderful asset from the rest of Tower Hamlets.

Nearby is St Katharine Docks, one of the first of London's docklands to be restored. It was established at the end of the 18th century with warehouses importing tea, rubber, marble, ivory and sugar. It is now home to restaurants, pubs, shops and an attractive marina.

landscape & open space

The Tower of London and St Katharine Docks is bounded by the River Thames, the City of London, Wapping and the railway viaduct to the north. Due to its inner-city location, the area has a limited number of small parks, located outside of Tower Hill and Tower Gateway stations, close to busy roads. These parks, such as Trinity Square Gardens, are characterised as neighbourhood parks due to their size. The Tower of London and St Katharine Docks only has two children's play spaces, both of which are located in the south-east corner of the area.

The Tower of London and St Katharine Docks lies on the Thames and includes St Katharine Docks. Hence it has substantial waterspace.

Trinity Square Gardens

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1896

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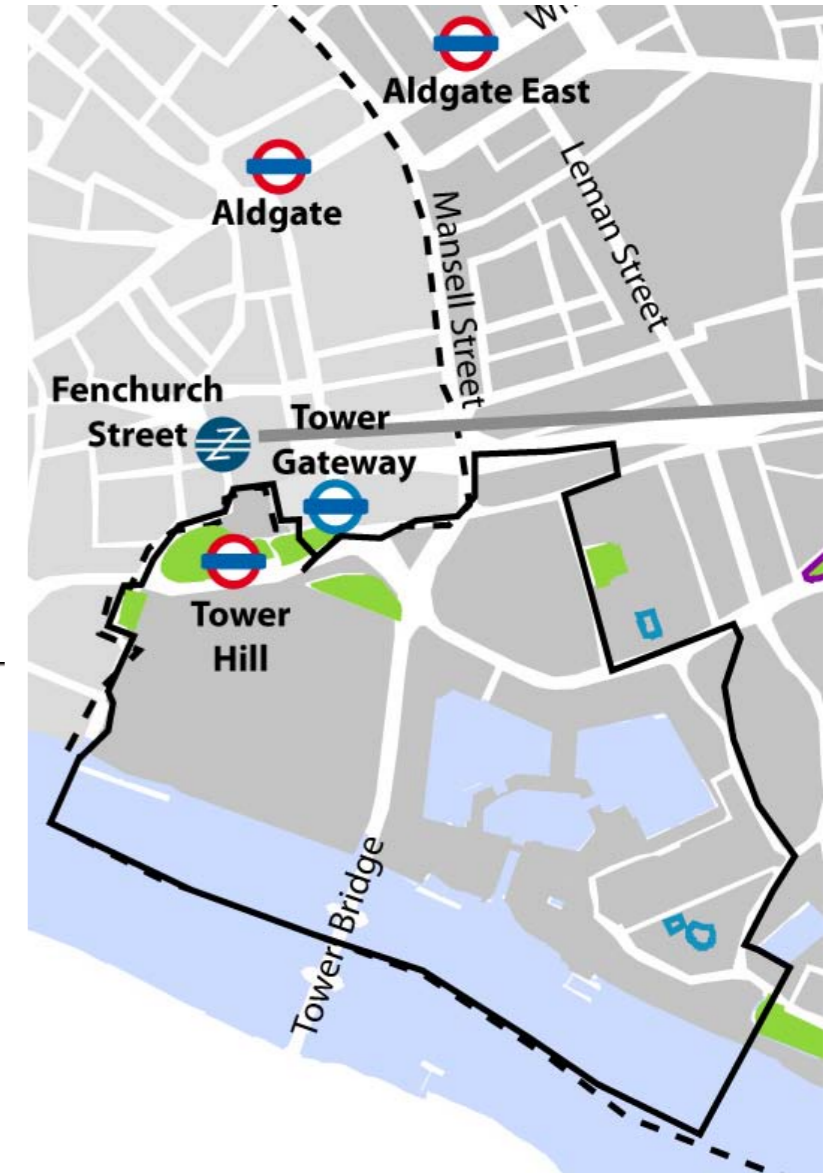
1968

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2008

Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
District park
Neighbourhood park
Playing fields and pitches
Sports centres
Children's play spaces
Urban farm
Allotments
Churchyard cemetery
Ecological areas
MOL - groups of trees and shrubs
MOL - grassed areas and footpaths
Blocks
Waterways
Railway lines

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heritage & townscape

Many landmarks of national and international importance are found in the Tower of London and St Katharine Docks area, which takes its name from two prominent landmarks. Along with the Tower of London, these sites are important points of destination and major tourist attractions, each drawing large volumes of people. Other landmarks in the area include Tower Bridge, Royal Mint Court office block and Merita House.

The St Katherine Docks area has undergone much development in the last 30 years, largely in the form of medium- to high-density housing, a large hotel, commercial office blocks as well as the addition of bars and restaurants. However the docks still retain their original sense of enclosure, and some historic buildings such as the Ivory House warehouse remain.

The Tower of London and St Katharine Docks is an area of exceptional architectural and historic interest, with a character and appearance worthy of protection and enhancement. Hence it sits within the Tower of London Conservation Area. The Tower of London is a listed building, along with St Katharine Docks, and the Tower of London is a World Heritage Site and an Ancient Monument.

Tower of London

St Katherine Docks
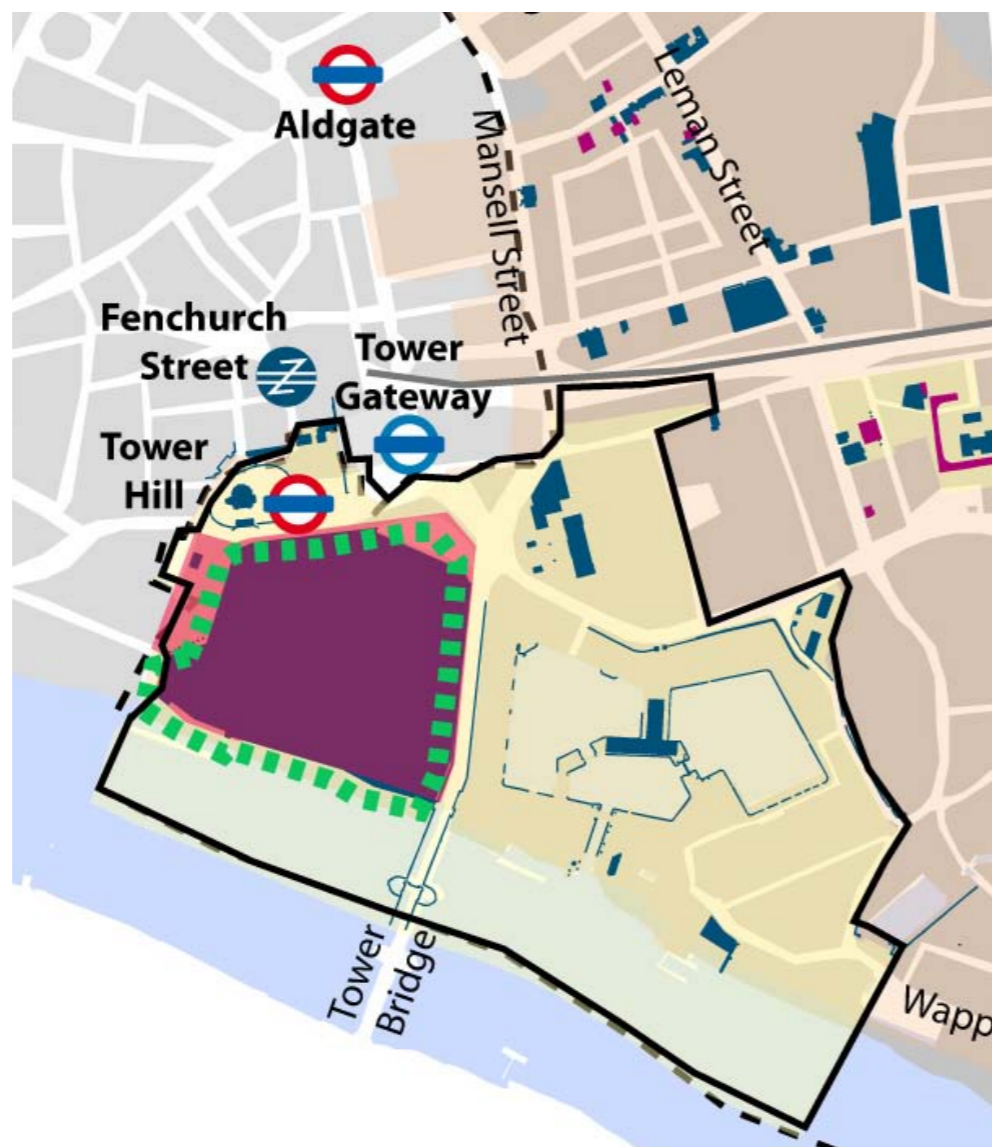
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- Railway lines

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block pattern & movement

The Tower of London and St Katharine Docks is characterised by a coarse grain. The medium to large blocks are often separated by major roads that carry heavy traffic. These large blocks include: the Tower of London; St Katharine Docks; the Royal Mint Court office block; and Merita House. The nature of the blocks and the heavy traffic leads to an environment that is both confusing and unfriendly to pedestrians. The area also tends to have relatively high buildings and street blocks that are inward looking and have blank walls, which creates an impression of poor linkages and permeability.

The major traffic arteries in the Tower of London and St Katharine Docks area are classified as highways and these roads are important north-south and east-west links. These roads include the Tower Bridge Approach and Mansell Street – which are significant roads as they lead to Tower Bridge – as well as East Smithfield, which later becomes the Highway.

The Tower of London and St Katharine Docks area generally has good transport links, with two stations: Tower Hill Underground station and Tower Gateway DLR.

Tower of London and Tower Bridge

Legend:
- Highways
- Strategic Walkways
- TFL London Cycle Routes
- Local Cycle Routes
- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines

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WAPPING

historical character & identity

The name Wapping comes from the original Saxon settlement of "Waeppa's people". Since its founding, this place has had a colourful history.

Located immediately east of the Tower of London, Wapping was largely marshland until drained in the 14th century. From the 16th century Wapping gained infamy as a place of execution and was one of the sights of Tudor London. Execution Dock, as it was called, was located on the site of Wapping station. This was where the famous pirate Captain Kydd was hanged in 1701. These executions carried on late into the 19th century.

Wapping's heyday was probably between the time of the Glorious Revolution and the early 19th century. In the 17th century its riverside community gained its own church and vestry. Sailor's cottages sat side by side with seafaring industries such as anchorsmiths, sail makers, distilleries and timber yards, while merchandise from abroad such as rum, ivory and gold trundled continuously up and down Wapping High Street. Wapping was also the setting for many of the Dickens novels.

When the docks were built at the beginning of the 19th century, in many respects the heart was torn out of Old Wapping. Houses and workshops were lost due to the arrival of the London Dock Company, and the area's population diminished. Wapping and St Katherine Docks, like West India Docks on the Isle of Dogs, were great walled enclosures. They severed much of Wapping from the surrounding neighbourhood, and forced the population into overcrowded housing around the fringes.

After the war nearly all the dock warehouses were demolished and the surviving walls now encircle new housing. Wapping has subsequently experienced different phases of housing development, from LDDC housing and social housing estates, to the converted warehouses of the 1980s-1990s, which still give some impression of the former density of trading activity in the area.

landscape & open space

A considerable proportion of parks are located in Wapping, of which the majority are neighbourhood parks due to their small size. These parks include Wapping Gardens, Wapping Rose Gardens, Wapping Green, Wapping Woods and Swedenborg Gardens. The larger district park (King Edward Memorial Park) is also located in Wapping and is characterised as such due to it's medium size. Wapping also has a number of children's play places spread throughout the area, two churchyard cemeteries and playing fields and pitches in King Edward Memorial Park. The small ecological area off the Highway, is classified as a semi-natural space, where the site's primary function is wildlife habitat.

Wapping lies on the Thames and hence has a substantial waterspace, featuring the sizeable Shadwell Basin, as well as the smaller Hermitage Basin and an ornamental canal.

Open space in Wapping
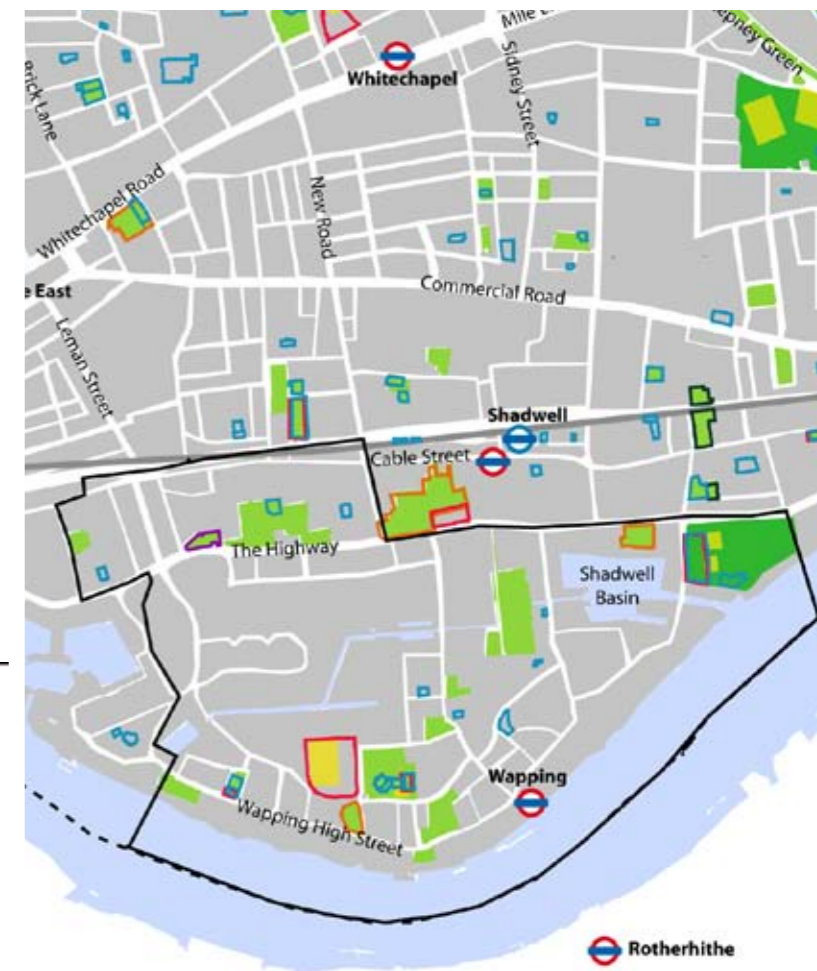
1896

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1968

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2008

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Legend:
- Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
- District park
- Neighbourhood park
- Playing fields and pitches
- Sports centres
- Children's play spaces
- Urban farm
- Allotments
- Churchyard cemetery
- Ecological areas
- MOL - groups of trees and shrubs
- MOL - grassed areas and footpaths
- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines

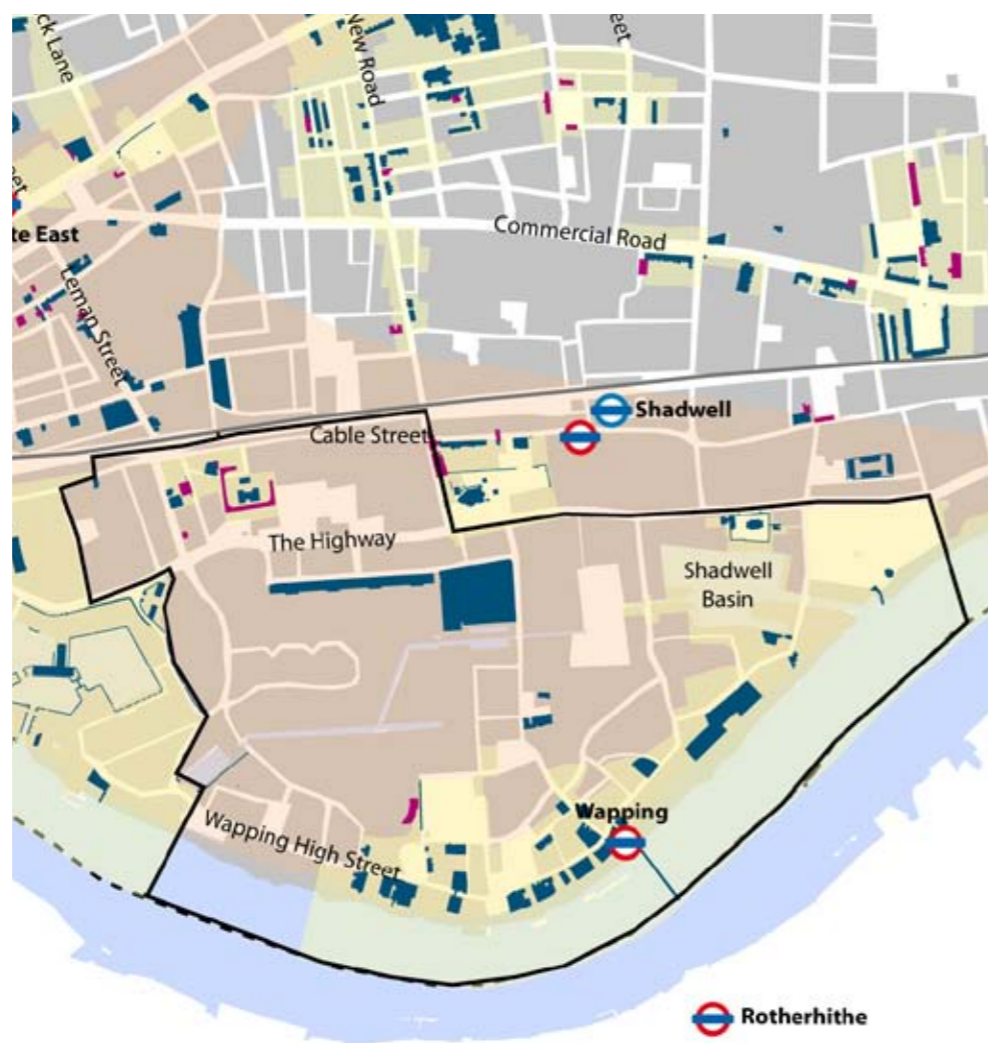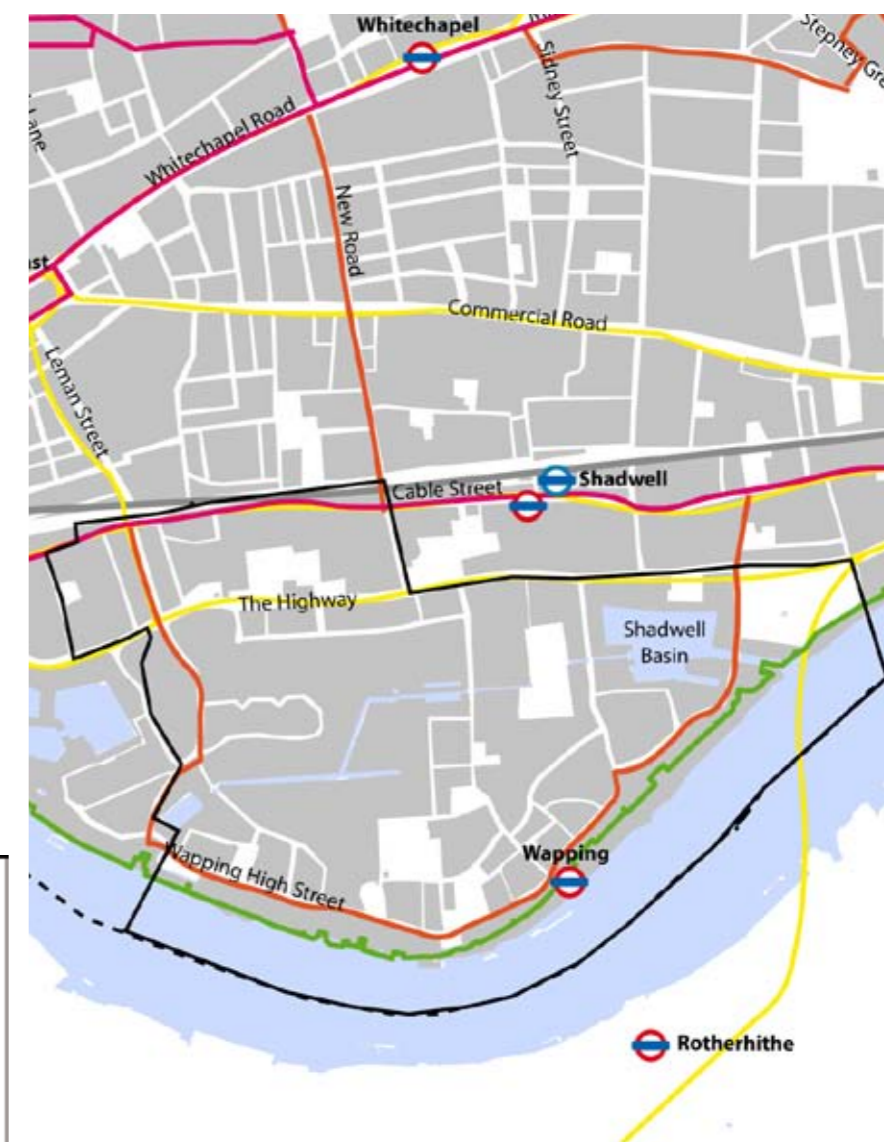Crown Copyright. All Rights reserved. London Borough of Tower Hamlets 100019288 2009

heritage & townscape

Wapping is characterised as being primarily a residential area, interspersed with open space, community facilities and schools. Much of the building stock in Wapping comprises developments from the 1970s and 1980s, which are not architecturally distinctive. There is greater townscape interest in the southern part of Wapping, where Wapping High Street has well preserved and often listed wharves of high density and scale. The listed News International building is a large, monolithic, enclosed block, surrounded by high blank walls on all sides. Tobacco Dock is a Grade I listed building that currently stands empty.

Wapping has four conservation areas, of which the largest – Wapping Pierhead and Wapping Wall – are located in the south. The two smaller conservation areas, Wilton's Music Hall and St Paul's Church, are in the north.

View of Wapping

Conservation Areas
Statutory Listed Buildings
Locally Listed Buildings
World Heritage Sites
Ancient Monuments
Archaeological Priority Area
Blocks
Waterways
Railway lines

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block pattern & movement

The Highway in Wapping is a busy artery and is an important east-west link from the City to Canary Wharf. The Highway however causes a considerable physical and psychological barrier in between Wapping and Shadwell.

The blocks in the area are generally variable in size, from fine-grained blocks along the river to the south, to larger coarse-grained blocks further north, including the News International site. These larger blocks are often difficult for pedestrians to navigate.

Wapping has its own London Underground station, as well as being close to the DLR and London Underground stations in Shadwell. However, these London Underground stations in Wapping and Shadwell are currently closed for construction, and will reopen in 2010 as part of the London Overground network.

Wapping High Street

Highways
Strategic Walkways
TFL London Cycle Routes
Local Cycle Routes
Blocks
Waterways
Railway lines

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SHADWELL

historical character & identity

The name Shadwell literally means "the well of shadows". It lies between Wapping and Ratcliffe and was a riverside settlement that developed rapidly in the 17th century, through the expansion of shipbuilding and maritime industries. It was largely destroyed in the 19th century by the creation of Shadwell Basin.

In the 19th century, with increasing demand for both dockworkers and sailors, the area lost its selective base of skilled artisans and professional families and became overcrowded. The Danish church in Wellclose Square was replaced by schools and mission rooms. Later, philanthropic enterprises helped the overcrowded Jewish immigrants living in the area further north around Commercial Road.

Radical post-war replanning after extensive bombing damage disrupted old patterns. New housing was designed away from the old routes, while the historic centre of Shadwell in Shadwell Docks, gravitated towards Watney Street Market in the north. Shadwell is more typical of the western side of Tower Hamlets, with its mix of social housing estates and 19th-century terraces.

landscape & open space

A moderate collection of small neighbourhood parks are distributed throughout Shadwell. These parks include Ropewalk Gardens, Gosling Gardens, Cavell Street Gardens and St George in the East. Many of Shadwell's neighbourhood parks are located within housing estates. The medium-sized district park King Edward Memorial Park is also within close proximity to Shadwell, located in nearby Wapping. Shadwell also contains a number of children's play spaces equally distributed throughout the area, of which many are small in size and located within housing estates.

Watney Market

1896

1968

2008

70

Legend:
- Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
- District park
- Neighbourhood park
- Playing fields and pitches
- Sports centres
- Children's play spaces
- Urban farm
- Allotments
- Churchyard cemetery
- Ecological areas
- MOL - groups of trees and shrubs
- MOL - grassed areas and footpaths
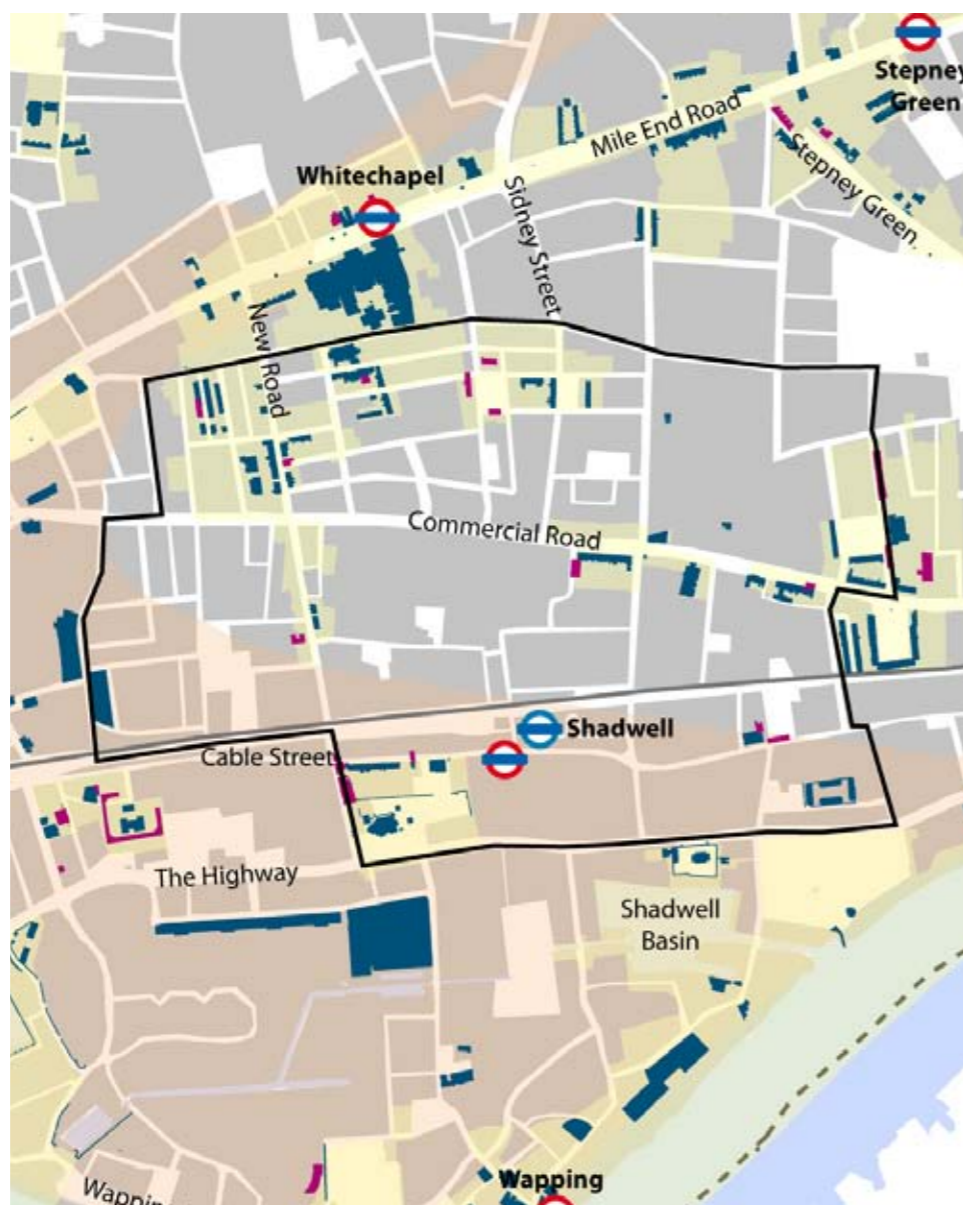- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines
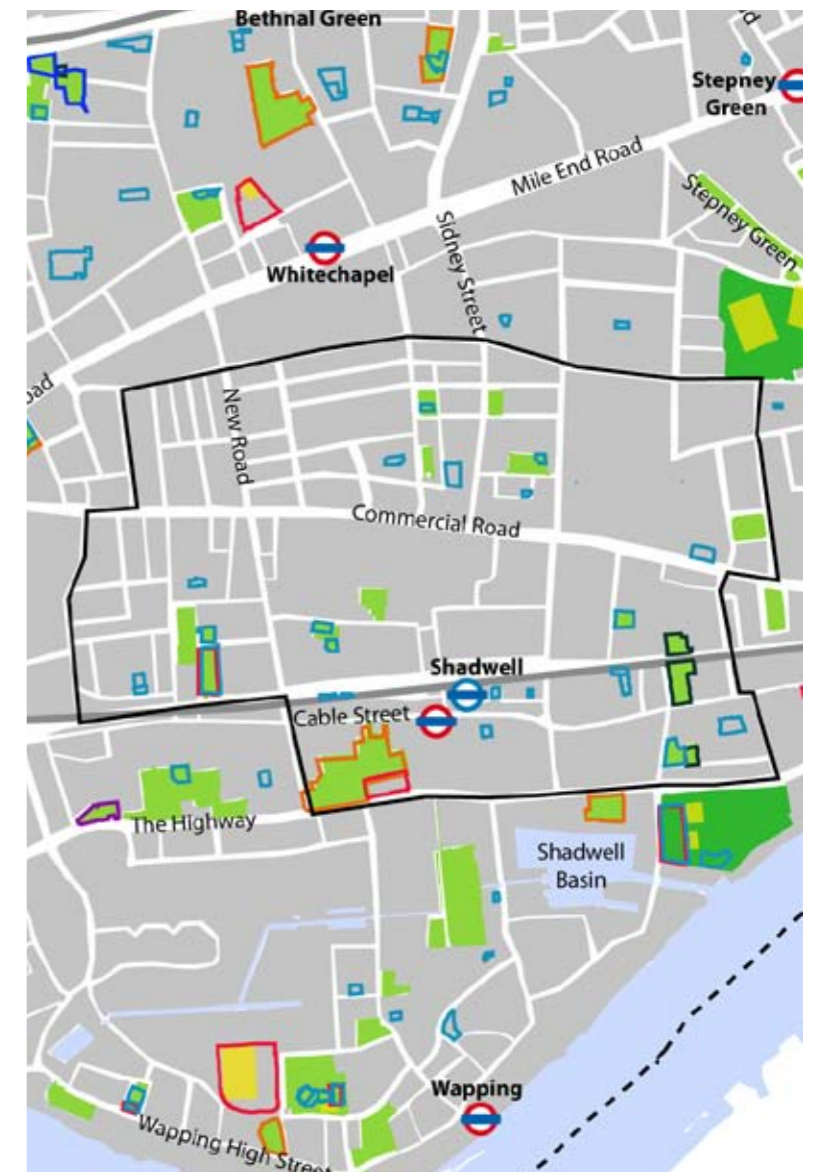
heritage & townscape

Shadwell is a lively area in which the focal point is Watney Market, off Commercial Road. Watney Market is a medium-sized open-air market, that is widely used by residents as a shopping destination, and is surrounded by a post-war housing estate. Public-realm improvements have recently been implemented in and around Watney Market and Shadwell DLR station.

Away from the hub of Commercial Road and Watney Market, Shadwell is predominantly a residential area. The area contains a mix of architectural styles, largely consisting of medium- to high-rise post-war housing estates, with pockets of low-rise Victorian terraced housing.

The conservation areas in Shadwell are primarily located on the north side of Commercial Road, including Myrdle Street, Ford Square, Commercial Road, St George in the East and part of London Hospital. Shadwell has a small number of listed buildings, of which the largest proportion are located in Myrdle Street, London Hospital and St George in the East.

Watney Market

Conservation Areas
Statutory Listed Buildings
Locally Listed Buildings
World Heritage Sites
Ancient Monuments
Archaeological Priority Area
Blocks
Waterways
Railway lines

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block pattern & movement

Shadwell is impacted by heavy traffic. The area has two primary traffic arteries: Commercial Road and the Highway (A1203). These roads, along with the railway arches, create barriers that hinder north-south pedestrian movement.

Shadwell is largely fine-grained to the north of Commercial Road, with areas of terraced housing. However, to the south of Commercial Road, the area is predominantly coarse grained, as much of the housing stock consists of post-war estates. South of Commercial Road, many of the housing estates suffer from poor permeability, with ill-defined routes through estates. This is particularly noticeable in the area between Cable Street and the Highway.

Shadwell is well connected by public transport with a DLR and East London Line station (which is currently closed and due to join the London Overground network in 2010). As well as being a shopping destination, Watney Market forms a key north-south link from Commercial Road to the station.

Commercial Road

Highways
Strategic Walkways
TFL London Cycle Routes
Local Cycle Routes
Blocks
Waterways
Railway lines
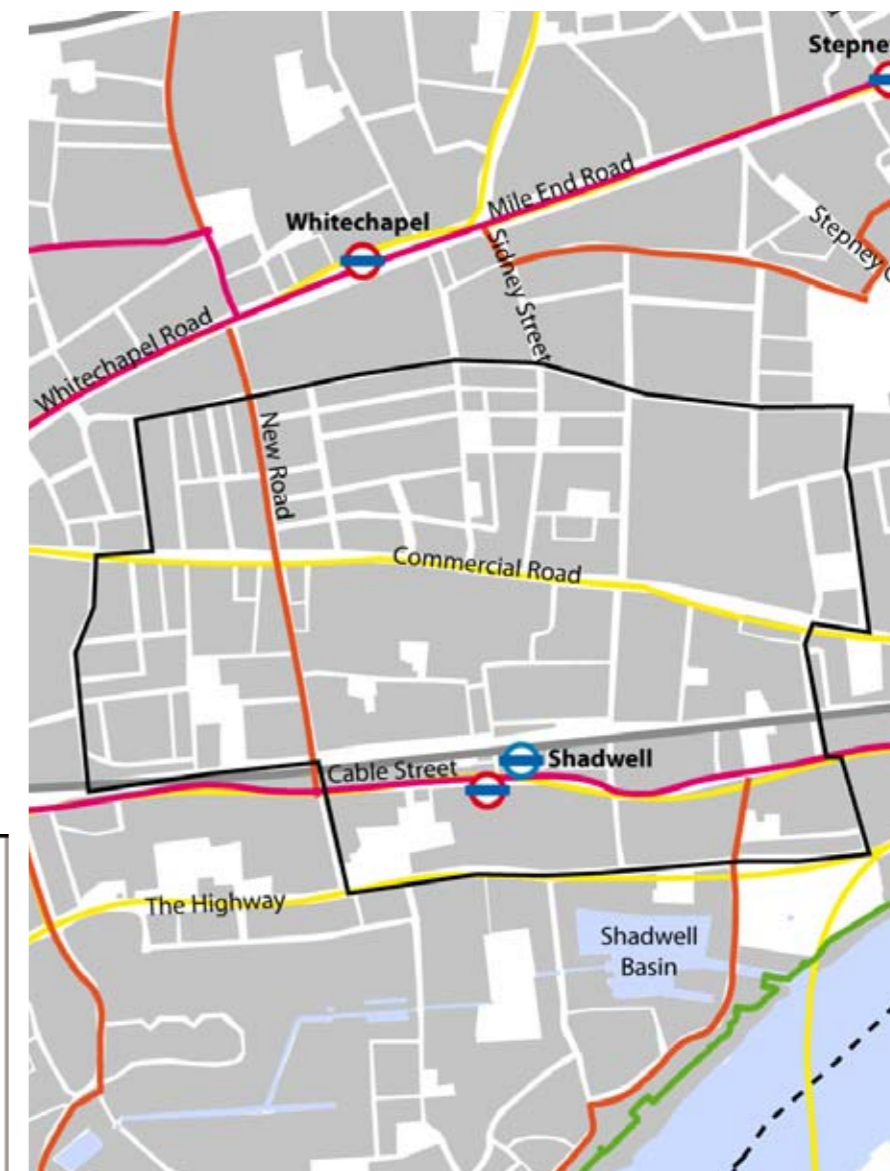
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STEPNEY

historical character & identity

In 1086 Stepney was listed in the Domesday Book. The ancient name of this place was Stibenhede, Stebenhythe, or Stebunhethe. The term is a well known Saxon word, signifying a haven or wharf. The medieval village grew up around the church of St Dunstan's, which was founded in 952 by the Archbishop of Canterbury and is the oldest church in east London.

From the 17th Century the village, then known as Mile End Old Town, was a genteel retreat away from the crowded Thames-side hamlets, favoured by those who had profited from maritime industry and trade.

The area today is a mix of post-war high-density housing, Victorian mansion blocks and the terraced housing that survived the slum clearances. Historic Stepney Green is regarded for its architecture, many of the surrounding streets including Arbour Square and Sidney Square, contain many Georgian and Victorian houses.

landscape & open space

A substantial proportion of open space is found in Stepney. Parks in the area include the medium-sized district parks of Stepney Green Park, Belgrave Open Space, St Dunstan's Churchyard and Whitehorse Road Park. Stepney also contains an urban farm, allotments, two churchyard cemeteries, sports centres and a number of children's play spaces. Smaller sized neighbourhood parks in the area include Shandy Park, Stepney Green Gardens, Trafalgar Gardens and Beaumont Square Gardens. Although not located in Stepney, Mile End Park is a large park that lies adjacent to Stepney. Mile End Park contains a range of spaces and sporting facilities including Mile End Stadium, playing fields and pitches, children's play spaces, an ecology park as well as open grass spaces.

Stepney has access to waterspace frontage, as it's located on Regent's Canal, which lies in-between Stepney and Mile End Park.
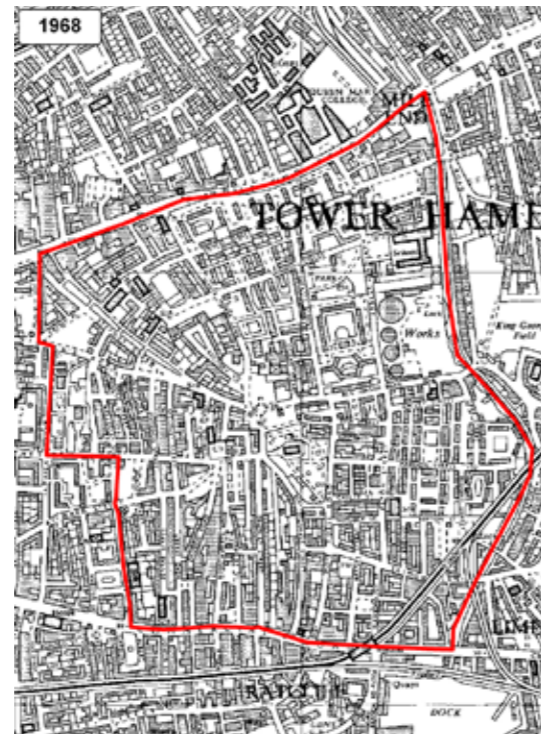
Open space in Stepney

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1896

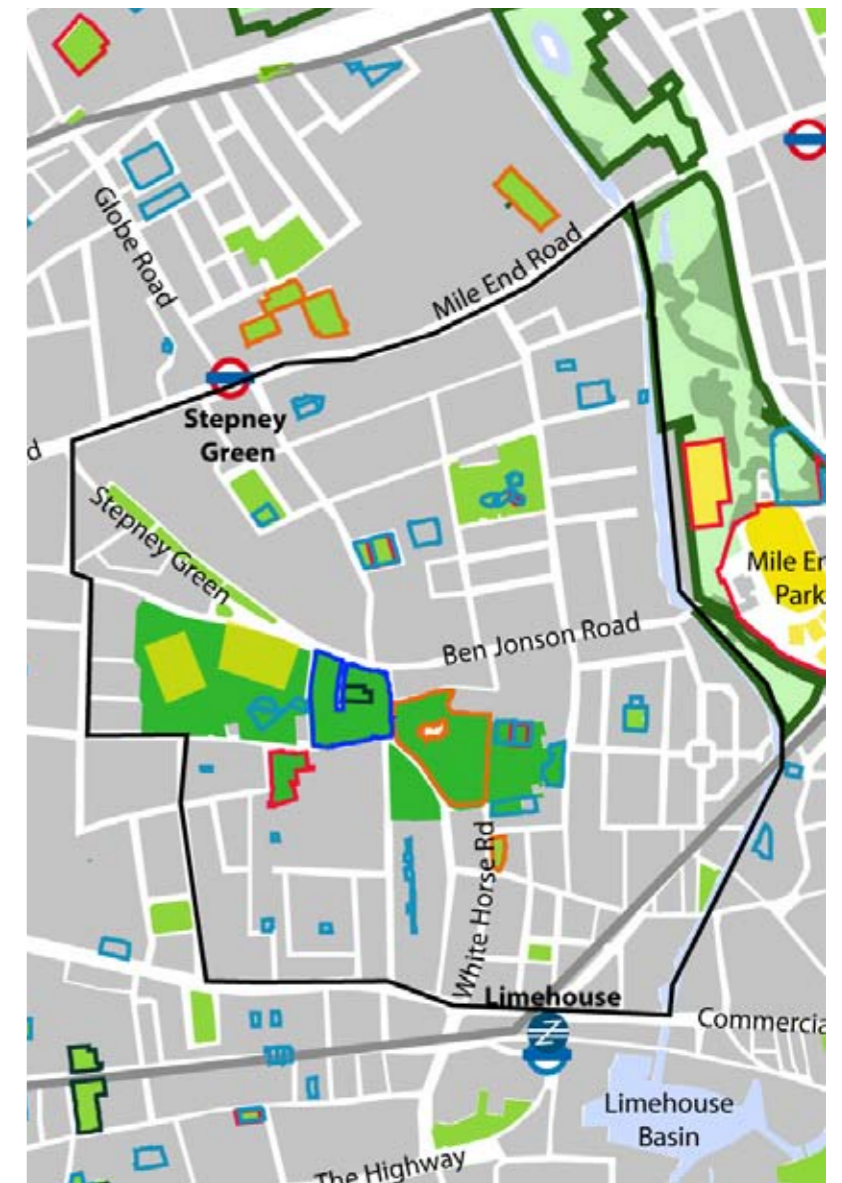Crown Copyright. All Rights reserved. London Borough of Tower Hamlets 100019288 2009

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2008

Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
District park
Neighbourhood park
Playing fields and pitches
Sports centres
Children's play spaces
Urban farm
Allotments
Churchyard cemetery
Ecological areas
MOL - groups of trees and shrubs
MOL - grassed areas and footpaths
Blocks
Waterways
Railway lines

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heritage & townscape

Stepney is largely a quiet residential neighbourhood off the busy main arteries of Mile End Road and Commercial Street. The architectural styles vary widely in the area, from terraced housing and mansion houses to pre- and post-war housing estates. A large proportion of Stepney is located within the Ocean Estate which is a mix of medium- to high-rise pre- and post-war housing.

Conservation areas in Stepney include Stepney Green, Albert Gardens, York Square and Regent's Canal. York Square Conservation Area in the south, consists of low-rise terraced housing of Regency design, many of which are listed, as well public open space and high-quality townscape around the Grade I listed Parish Church of St Dunstan and All Saints. Stepney Green Conservation Area is an area of exceptional architectural and historic interest, including the grand buildings along Mile End Road, the houses and mansion blocks (including Dunstan House) along Stepney Green and the picturesque aspect created by the mature trees of Stepney Green Gardens.

Historic street in Stepney

New housing along the Regent's Canal
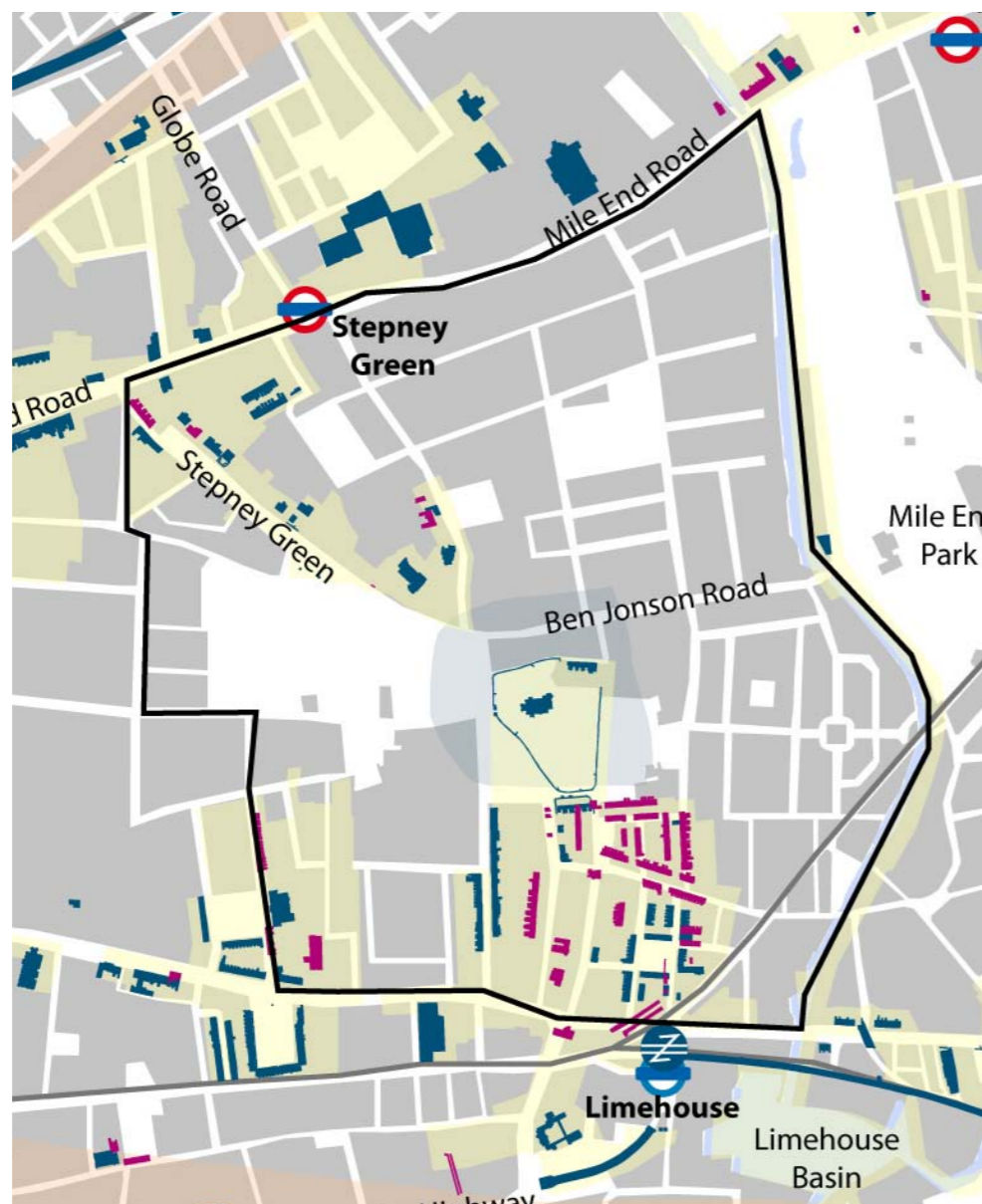
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block pattern & movement

Stepney experiences heavy traffic on it's edges along Mile End Road and Commercial Road, both of which create barriers to north-south movement. The railway line in the south of Stepney also creates a barrier that hinders north-south and east-west movement.

Stepney is predominantly fine-grained south of Ben Jonson Road and coarse-grained to the north where the Ocean Estate suffers from poor permeability, with ill-defined routes through the estate and many dead ends, making it confusing for pedestrians.

Stepney has good transport links, including Stepney Underground station to the north and Limehouse DLR and c2c services to the south.

Ben Jonson Road
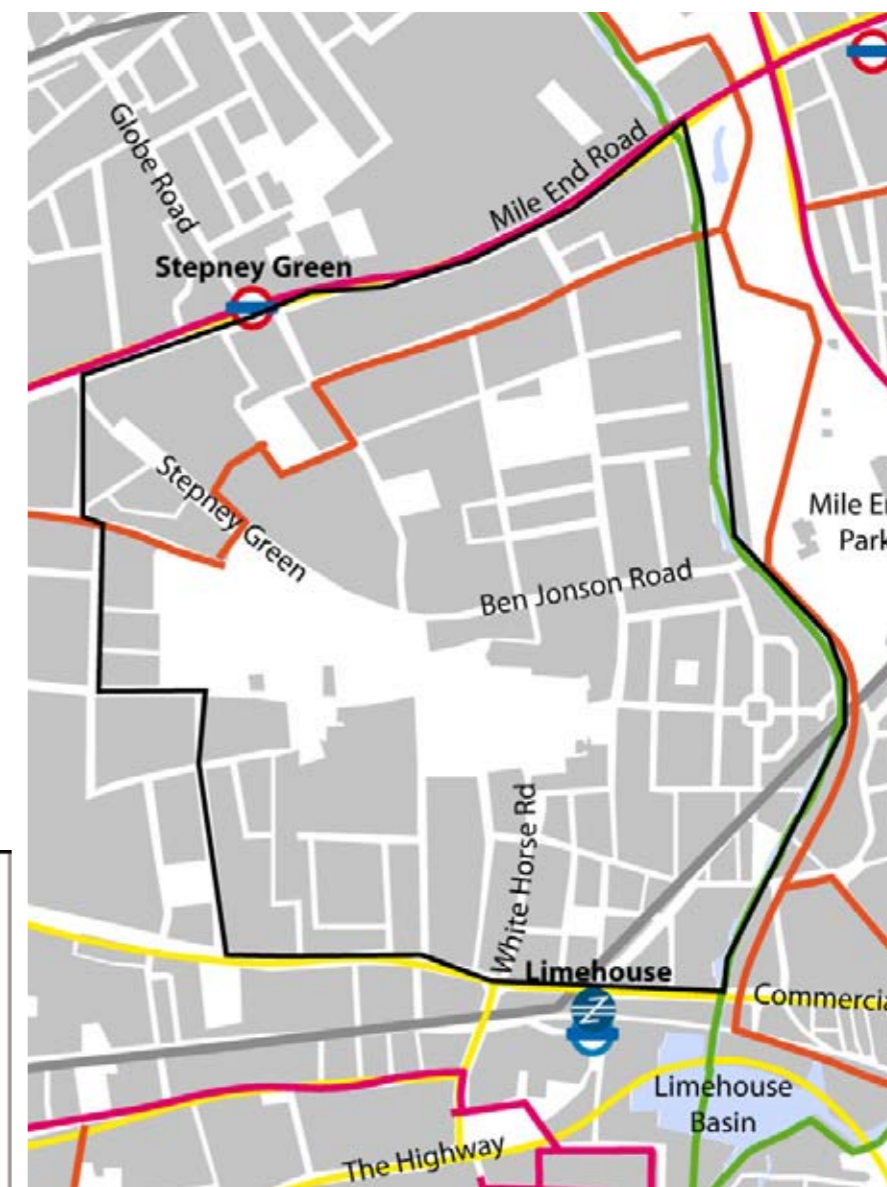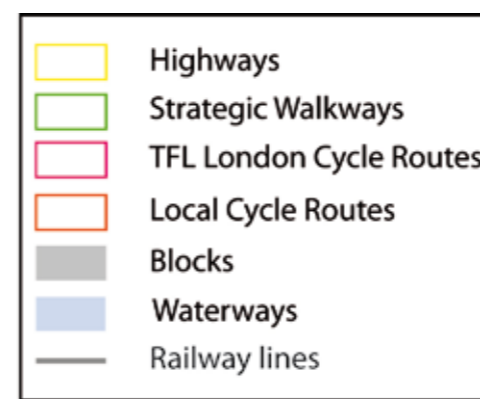
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LIMEHOUSE

historical character & identity

Limehouse is named for its historical connections. It comes from the lime coasts or kilns that were established there in the 14th century and used to produce quick lime for building mortar.

In the days of the docks, the area was associated with imports. This is in contrast to the preceding years when it was associated with two kinds of exports: beer and people. The beer, in the shape of India Pale Ale, went from the Limehouse Brewery in Fore Street to colonial servicemen in India; the people fell into two categories: voluntary emigrants to Australia, the first of whom went from Dunbar Wharf, and involuntary ones, who went from the nearby Wapping Old Stairs by the Town of Ramsgate pub.

Limehouse was also the setting of London's original Chinatown. Limehouse Causeway, Pennyfields and West India Dock Road made up the heart of Chinatown in the 1890s.

In the 19th century the canal system originating in Tower Hamlets was the entrance to the busy arterial route serving Britain's commercial life. The Limehouse Basin and Limehouse Cut were the main links from the Thames to the River Lea and onwards to the industrial north.

landscape & open space

Limehouse lies on the River Thames and has substantial waterspace. Limehouse Basin is situated in the centre of Limehouse from which runs two canals: Regent's Canal, which runs north-west and Limehouse Cut which runs north-east.

Limehouse encompasses a number of parks, including the southern portion of Mile End Park which is classified as MOL, although the majority of Mile End Park is located in Bow and Mile End. Limehouse also contains a number of smaller neighbourhood parks which include Ropemakers Fields, St James Gardens, Rectory Gardens and Albert Gardens. A number of small children's play spaces are also located in the area.

All these spaces fulfil a local function of providing local residents and workers with access to waterspace, open space, trees, wildlife and grass.

River Thames near Narrow Street

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Legend:
- Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
- District park
- Neighbourhood park
- Playing fields and pitches
- Sports centres
- Children's play spaces
- Urban farm
- Allotments
- Churchyard cemetery
- Ecological areas
- MOL - groups of trees and shrubs
- MOL - grassed areas and footpaths
- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines

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1896

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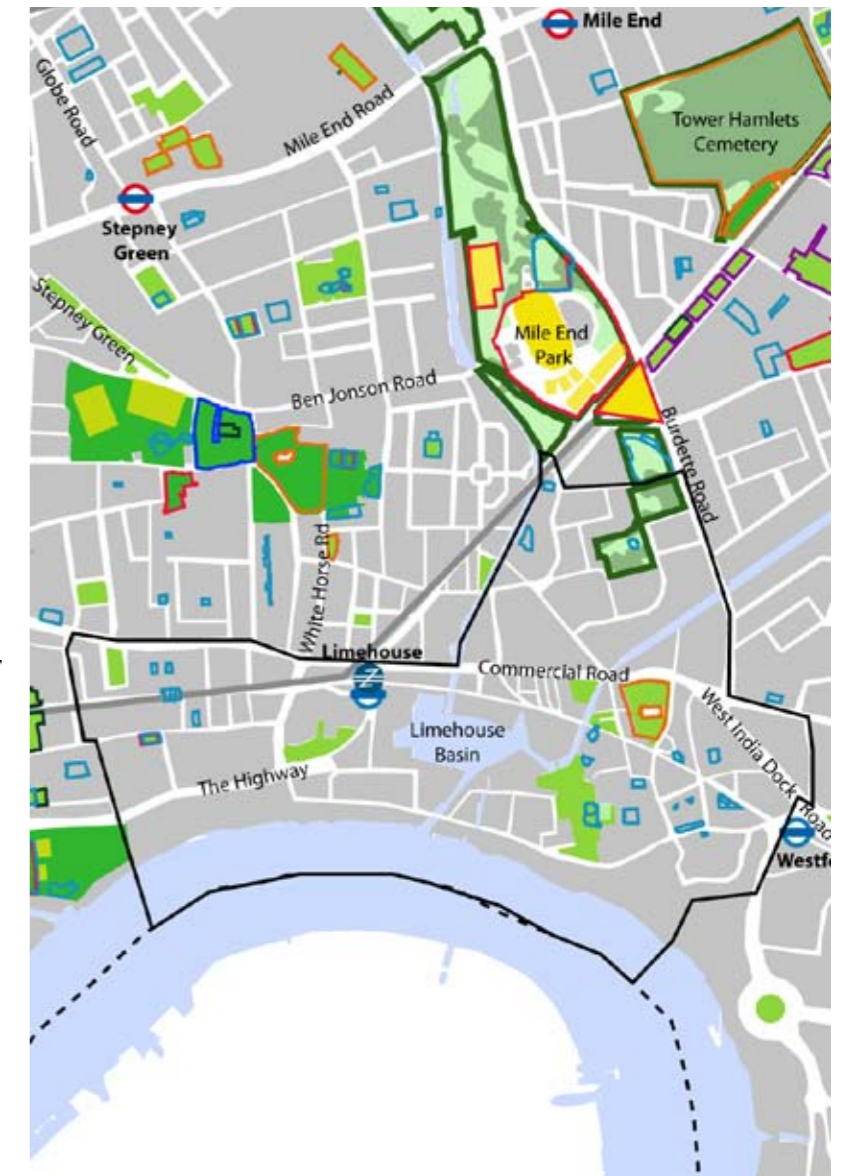
1968

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2008

heritage & townscape

Limehouse is largely residential in use and is primarily characterised by historic warehouse conversions, modern developments, as well as post-war council estates. The development immediately adjacent to the River Thames forms a continuous band of settlement, that joins the riverside development in Wapping to the Isle of Dogs. These residential buildings along the River largely consist of medium- to high-density historic warehouse conversions and modern developments.

Access to the river is currently blocked in many instances by a number of modern, gated developments. Development north of Commercial Road primarily consists of a number of low- to medium-rise housing estates, with some modern development along the Regent's Canal and Limehouse Cut Canal. Commercial Road contains a mix of low- to medium-rise commercial and residential uses.

Approximately half of Limehouse sits within conservations areas. The largest two conservation areas in Limehouse are Narrow Street and St Anne's Church. Other conservation areas that are partially located in Limehouse include Brickfield Gardens, York Square, Albert Gardens and Wapping Wall. Limehouse also has a number of listed buildings.

Limehouse Wharf

Limehouse Basin

Conservation Areas
Statutory Listed Buildings
Locally Listed Buildings
World Heritage Sites
Ancient Monuments
Archaeological Priority Area
Blocks
Waterways
Railway lines

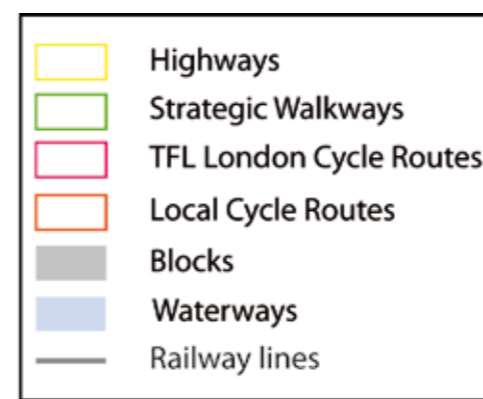Crown Copyright. All Rights reserved. London Borough of Tower Hamlets 100019288 2009

block pattern & movement

Limehouse contains a mixture of fine- and coarse-grained areas, which makes it an area that can be difficult to orientate and navigate for pedestrians and cyclists. A number of large blocks, combined with Limehouse Basin, can make it difficult to access the River Thames, which is often hidden behind development.

Limehouse has a number of congested roads, such as Commercial Road and the Limehouse Link, which is partially underground and leads to the Rotherhithe Tunnel or to the City. Both Commercial Road and the Limehouse Link are important connections from the City to Canary Wharf and are classified as highways. The DLR and the c2c service railway lines run through the area and, along with the busy roads, create a physical and psychological barrier to movement. Many of the more desirable properties are located to the south of the DLR railway line and Commercial Road; many of the housing estates are located to the north. Limehouse is however well connected by public transport, with the DLR and c2c services running through the area.

Commercial Road

Highways
Strategic Walkways
TFL London Cycle Routes
Local Cycle Routes
Blocks
Waterways
Railway lines

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VICTORIA PARK

historical character & identity

Victoria Park was created in the 19th century by an Act of Parliament, passed in 1841 in response to public outcry about the lack of parkland in the East End and fears of disease among the 400,000 slum population. The Government bought up poor-quality land that had been used for market gardens, grazing and gravel digging. An alternative site lay on the Thames but is was deemed too expensive at the time. James Pennethorne designed the park, which, even during construction, was instantly popular. It was extended 1872 on land originally set aside for residential development.

Over time the park has been managed by a number of organisations including: the Metropolitan Board of Works in 1887; the London County Council in 1889; the Greater London Council in 1965; Tower Hamlets in 1986 (with the London Borough of Hackney); then solely to Tower Hamlets in 1994.

Many of the original features of the park have been lost or have deteriorated over time. Parts of the site were bombed during the Second World War and have not been restored. Today the park is Grade II listed by English Heritage on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest.

The Council's vision is that Victoria Park should be restored and improved to reveal its rich heritage, and to make it a recreation and leisure experience for the local and wider community.

landscape & open space

Victoria Park is a grandiose urban park that is classified as MOL. It is one of the East End's greatest assets. The park is a tremendous open space resource for the borough and for surrounding residential areas, particularly Bow and Globe Town, which are located adjacent to the park. Victoria Park has an array of facilities including playing fields, cricket pitches, a running track, a sports centre and children's play spaces. The park also contains substantial areas of grass and trees as well as lakes – all of which encourages wildlife and allows residents and visitors access to open space, trees, wildlife and grass.

Victoria Park has a sizeable proportion of waterspace, with the park being bordered by the Hertford Union Canal to the south-and Regent's Canal on the eastern side. The park also contains three lakes.

Victoria Park

1896

1968

2008

Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
District park
Neighbourhood park
Playing fields and pitches
Sports centres
Children's play spaces
Urban farm
Allotments
Churchyard cemetery
Ecological areas
MOL - groups of trees and shrubs
MOL - grassed areas and footpaths
Blocks
Waterways
Railway lines

heritage & townscape

Victoria Park is a fine example of the English landscape park tradition, designed with sweeping lawns, informal tree plantings and irregular lakes. Roads in the area are broad and tree-lined, all reflecting the park setting. The park is well utilised by residents and visitors, and is full of activity, hosting events throughout the year.

Victoria Park contains little built form, but is surrounded by the buildings in Bow and Globe Town that front Regent's Canal and the Hertford Union Canal. This development varies from three-storey nineteenth-century terraces and historic industrial buildings to housing estates containing tower blocks.

Victoria Park is within the Victoria Park Conservation Area and is Grade II* listed. The three bridges leading into Victoria Park are Scheduled Ancient Monuments. These are Bonner Hall Bridge (over Regent's Canal), Three Colt Bridge and Parnell Road Bridge (both over the Hertford Union Canal).

Victoria Park

Victoria Park

Conservation Areas
Statutory Listed Buildings
Locally Listed Buildings
World Heritage Sites
Ancient Monuments
Archaeological Priority Area
Blocks
Waterways
Railway lines

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block pattern & movement

Victoria Park has limited entrances controlling access and directing movement through the park. The towpaths along Regent's Canal and the Hertford Union Canal, which border the southern edge of the park, are widely used by pedestrians and cyclists.

The park is bordered by the A12 on its western edge, and Grove Road runs through the park. Both these roads are highways. The A12 is a huge highway that causes much physical and psychological severance between Victoria Park and Fish Island, due to the limited crossing points for pedestrians.

The linear park known as the Greenway, in Fish Island, is accessible from Victoria Park. The Greenway provides further connections eastwards through Tower Hamlets into Newham.

Victoria Park has generally poor transport links, with no train stations in the area.

Victoria Park

Highways
Strategic Walkways
TFL London Cycle Routes
Local Cycle Routes
Blocks
Waterways
Railway lines

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FISH ISLAND

historical character & identity

Fish Island is bordered by the River Lea, the Hertford Union canal and the East Cross Route, and is so-called because of its street names, which include Roach Road and Bream Street. Old Ford Road used to continue through the marshes and across the river to one large house, later known as King John's Palace, which stood here until 1863.

In 1865 the Imperial Gas Light and Coke Company bought 30 acres of land as the site for a new gasworks, but instead decided to build these on the east bank of the Lea in Bromley-by-Bow. The company sold the site and so the present network of streets was duly laid out, and filled with small houses and multi-storey factories. Until recently, the island's largest employer was Percy Dalton's Famous Peanut Company, at the Old Ford Works on Dace Road.

landscape & open space

A small proportion of open space is located in Fish Island, the only park in the area being the Greenway. The Greenway is a linear park that is classified as MOL, and an ecological area – which is a semi-natural space where the site's primary function is wildlife habitat. Victoria Park (also MOL) is located adjacent to Fish Island, although they are separated by the A12 highway.

Fish Island contains an abundant proportion of waterspace, with the River Lea located to the east and the Hertford Union Canal and the Lea Navigation (Hackney Cut) running through the area.

Canal in Fish Island

1896

1968

2008

Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
District park
Neighbourhood park
Playing fields and pitches
Sports centres
Children's play spaces
Urban farm
Allotments
Churchyard cemetery
Ecological areas
MOL - groups of trees and shrubs
MOL - grassed areas and footpaths
Blocks
Waterways
Railway lines

heritage & townscape

Fish Island is largely a light-industrial area, as it has been since the post-war period. There is a mix of industrial buildings in the area, ranging from two- to three-storey brick warehouses dating from the 19th century, to more recent post-war factory and distribution units. Several of the brick warehouses located in Fish Island Central, close to the canals, are of townscape merit and help to reflect the industrial history of the area, adding to the townspace quality. The brick warehouses tend to be located close to the three canals that run through the area, with new industrial units located towards the A12 in the west.

The area is undergoing a period of change, with rising demand for residential development in the area. A number of live/work schemes, focused on canal-side locations, have started to replace industrial units, particularly along the frontage of the Lea Navigation (Hackney Cut).
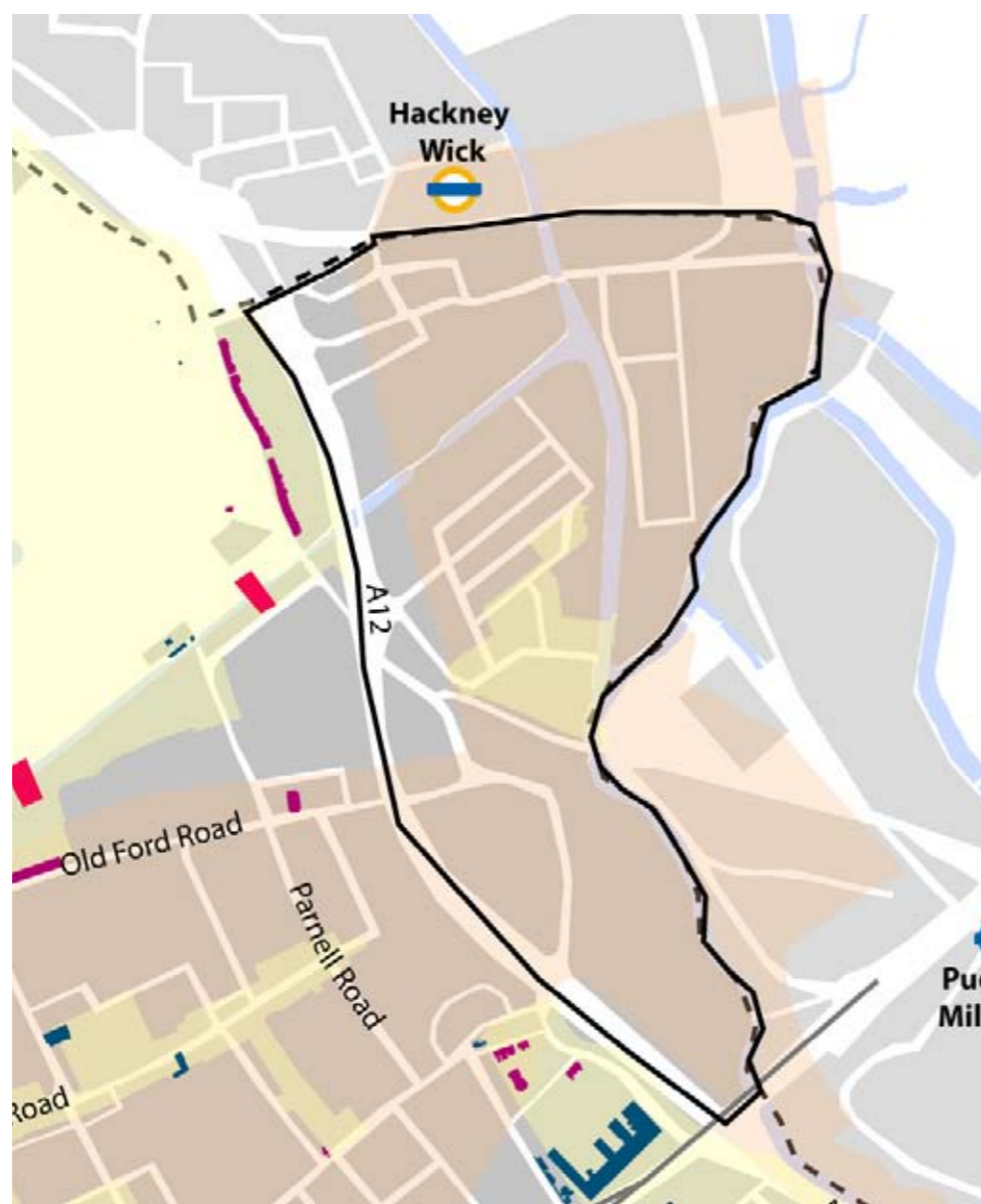
Fish Island contains one small conservation area known as Fish Island.

Historic warehouses in Fish Island

Live/work schemes in Fish Island

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block pattern & movement

Fish Island suffers from extreme severance and is cut off on all sides – by the canals on the eastern edge; the London Overground railway line on the northern edge; the A12 highway on the western edge and by the DLR railway on the southern edge. The A12, a vast road, is classified as a highway and is a significant north-south link. Rothbury Road/Queens Yard, which runs east-west through Fish Island, is also classified as a highway.

The canals that run through the centre of Fish Island also cause further severance, as few bridges are located across the canals, further reducing connectivity. At present Fish Island is only active during working hours, with traffic and movement limited to vehicles accessing and servicing the existing industries.

Hackney Wick, which forms part of the London Overground network, is the nearest train station to Fish Island.

The A12

Industrial use in Fish Island

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BOW

historical character & identity

The hamlet of Bow dates back almost a thousand years. Founded in 1110 by Queen Matilda, the wife of Henry I, its name is believed to have come from its arched bridge,

By Tudor times, Bow was a thriving village. According to the 1548 Chantry Certificate, "it stood on a great thoroughfare with much people there inhabiting".

Even up to the 1800s the small hamlet of Bow was surrounded by cornfields, pastures and meadows. The 19th century however brought a massive increase in its population (from about 2,000 in 1801 to 42,000 in 1901), and the construction of a number of significant factories producing rubber, soap and matches. The Bryant and May factory which produced matches, was the scene of the famous Match Girls Strike of 1888.

Social investment in the area seems to be a common theme running through Bow at this time. A few years, later it was also the centre of the early-20th-century women's suffrage movement, their printing works being situated on Old Ford Road. The famous Roman Road Market was also founded in 1843 as a general market for the poverty-stricken newcomers in the middle of last century. The market always thrived on its reputation for offering a huge variety of goods at keen prices. In its 1960s heyday, it was one of the most fashionable and popular markets in London, offering a slice of modern fashion and culture.

landscape & open space

Bow has a substantial proportion of open space, as it includes the northern part of Mile End Park, which, along with Victoria Park, is one of Tower Hamlets' greatest assets. The northern part of Mile End Park contains a number of active spaces, including the Adidas outdoor gym and the ecology park as well as grass open spaces and planted areas. The ecology park includes a lake, an ecology building, wind turbine and a climbing wall. Bow also contains one other neighbourhood park called Selwyn Green, as well as a number of children's play spaces. Bow also lies adjacent to Victoria Park, which is classified as MOL. Victoria Park is a fine example of English Landscape Park Tradition, with lawned areas, irregular lakes, informal planting and tree-lined roads.

Bow has a considerable amount of waterspace frontage, as Regent's Canal and the Hertford Union Canal run adjacent to Victoria Park and Mile End Park.

Bow is close to Victoria Park

1896

1968

2008

Legend:
- Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
- District park
- Neighbourhood park
- Playing fields and pitches
- Sports centres
- Children's play spaces
- Urban farm
- Allotments
- Churchyard cemetery
- Ecological areas
- MOL - groups of trees and shrubs
- MOL - grassed areas and footpaths
- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines
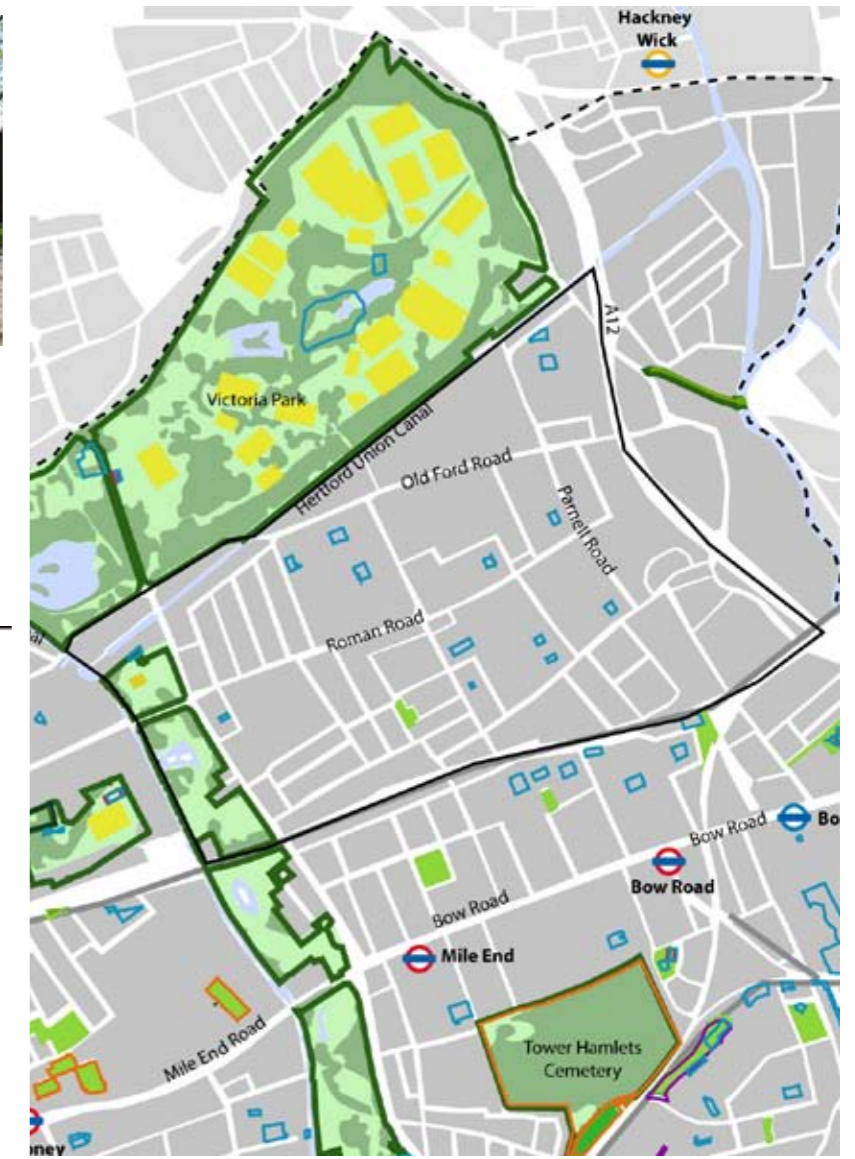
heritage & townscape

Roman Road runs east-west through Bow and is an important link to the City. Bow has a busy town centre which, along with the lively Roman Road Market, forms the heart of Bow. The partly pedestrianised market on the east end of Roman Road sells a variety of food, clothing, crafts, books and antiques. The buildings along much of Roman Road consist of low-rise two- to three-storey mixed-use buildings, with small shops on the ground floor. Notable buildings in the area include the Grade II listed Passmore Edwards Public Library and the St Paul and St Stephens Church (Listed Ecclesiastical Grade C). Roman Road lies within the Roman Road, Medway and Driffield Road conservation areas. Other conservation areas include Regent's Canal, Fairfield Road and Victoria Park conservation areas.

The architectural styles in the neighbouring residential side streets off Roman Road are varied and include Victorian terraced housing, post-war housing estates, historic warehouses and modern developments. Generally much of the Victorian terrace housing is located in the west of Bow, while most of the housing estates are located in the east.

The three bridges leading into Victoria Park – Bonner Hall Bridge (over Regent's Canal), Three Colt Bridge and Parnell Road Bridge (both over the Hertford Union Canal) – are Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

Roman Road Market

Conservation Areas
Statutory Listed Buildings
Locally Listed Buildings
World Heritage Sites
Ancient Monuments
Archaeological Priority Area
Blocks
Waterways
Railway lines

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block pattern & movement

Roman Road narrows as it moves through Bow. The western end of Roman Road is wider than the eastern end, where the road narrows and becomes a pedestrianised street market. This market attracts a high level of pedestrian activity, which is intensified by the Idea Store.

The variation in architectural styles is seen in the block pattern structure in Bow, which generally has a fine grain to the west and a coarse grain to the east.

The area is bordered on its eastern edge by the A12 highway, which creates severance between Bow and Fish Island due to its limited crossing points.

Bow generally has poor transport links, with no train stations located in the area.

The A12

Modern housing along the Hertford Union Canal

Highways
Strategic Walkways
TFL London Cycle Routes
Local Cycle Routes
Blocks
Waterways
Railway lines

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MILE END

historical character & identity

Dating back to the 13th century, Mile End has a long and rich history. The hamlet was originally named because of its distance along the road from London: one mile east of the boundary of the City of London at Aldgate which, to this day, is connected via the continuous Whitechapel High Street, Mile End Road and Bow Road. Wat Tyler, who led the peasant's revolt of 1381 assembled his followers around the manorial common land of Mile End Green.

Urbanisation began along this important trade route during the Georgian era, through speculative development. The area's development continued to progress rapidly in the 18th century when it became attractive for a wealthy new class of merchants and mariners. The elements of trade and shipping shaped Mile End dramatically during this period and made it a thriving centre of activity.

Much of Mile End's historical image belongs to the intense development that took place in the 19th century. This development took place due to significant increases in London's population and Britain's economy. Nearly all of the houses in the area were built on ground belonging to two estates – Coborn and Morgan – and the housing development corresponds with economically strong periods of the 19th century. Mile End's expansion and growing importance during this period was reflected in a number of civic building projects. This was exemplified with the construction of the Queen's Hall in 1887. Known as the People's Palace, it provided a library, swimming pool, gymnasium and winter garden providing popular civic attractions and entertainment and a real local landmark. This building closed down in 1954.

Between the 1940s and the 1990s in the area around Grove Road at the junction with Mile End Road, slum clearance and war damage resulted in mutually reliant residents, and industries and shopping facilities disappearing on the western side of Grove Road.

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1896

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1968

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**2008**

82

landscape & open space

A significant proportion of open space is located in Mile End, with the majority of Mile End Park being located within the area. Tower Hamlets Cemetery is also a substantial open space in Mile End and, like Mile End Park, it is characterised as MOL. As well as being a large open space, Tower Hamlets Cemetery contains a considerable proportion of trees, essential for wildlife. Mile End also includes a number of smaller neighbourhood parks, as well as a number of children's play spaces.

Mile End Park contains an array of facilities for locals and visitors, including an arts pavilion, Mile End Park stadium, playing fields and pitches, a large and popular children's play space, as well as grassed and planted areas. The land bridge over Mile End Road allows for a continuous open space, which is not severed by Mile End road.

A substantial proportion of waterspace frontage is located in Mile End, as Regent's Canal runs adjacent to Mile End Park.

The land bridge in Mile End Park
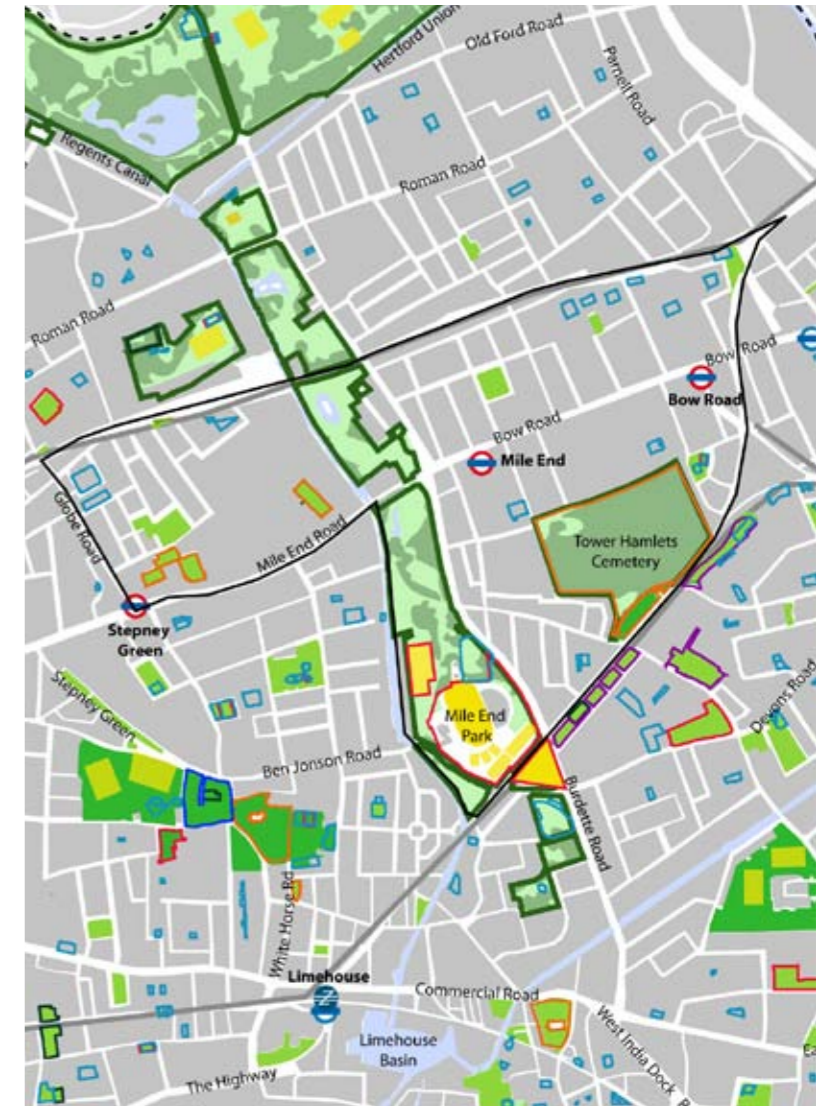
Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
District park
Neighbourhood park
Playing fields and pitches
Sports centres
Children's play spaces
Urban farm
Allotments
Churchyard cemetery
Ecological areas
MOL - groups of trees and shrubs
MOL - grassed areas and footpaths
Blocks
Waterways
Railway lines

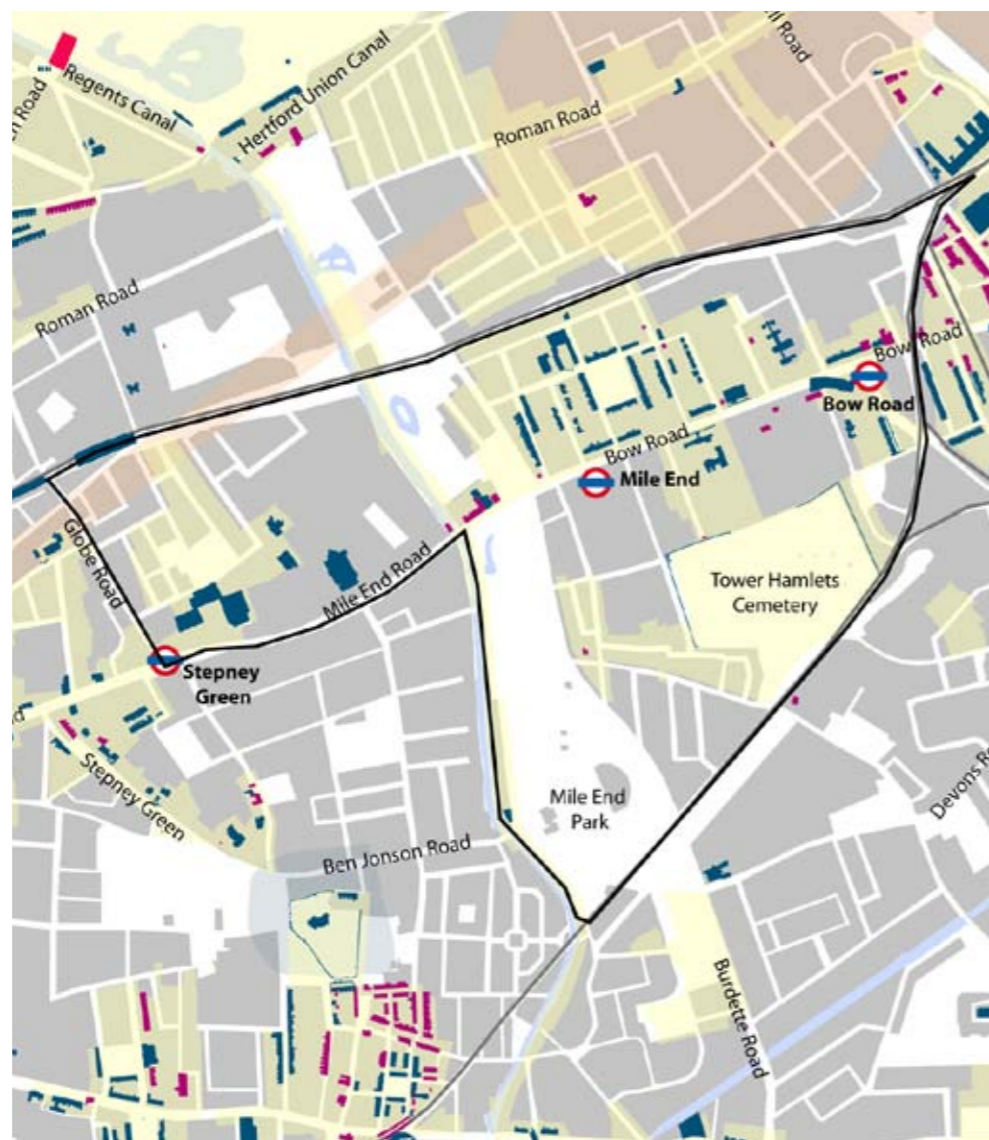Crown Copyright. All Rights reserved. London Borough of Tower Hamlets 100019288 2009

heritage & townscape

Mile End is essentially a residential area, with the exception of the mixed uses along Mile End/Bow Road and Queen Mary, University of London. The mixed use along Mile End/Bow Road primarily consists of small-scale shops intermixed with housing, with the shop uses intensifying near Mile End Underground station. The area under Mile End land bridge is well used, with a number of restaurants and cafés, creating a hub of activity in the area. The university also creates a busy hub, between Stepney Green and Mile End Underground stations. Off the main thoroughfare of Mile End Road/Bow Road the area is largely residential. The housing varies in age and density, from low-rise Victorian terraced housing and low- and medium-rise Georgian townhouses, to medium- and high-rise post-war housing estates.

Approximately half of Mile End sits within conservation areas, of which the largest are Tredegar Square and Tower Hamlets Cemetery. Other conservation areas include Carlton Square, Ropery Street and part of Regent's Canal. The majority of the listed buildings in the area are located in the Tredegar Square Conservation Area.
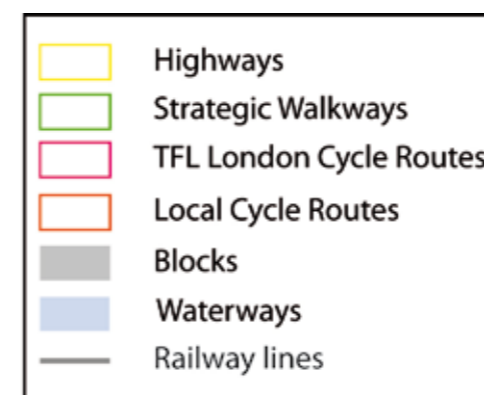
block pattern & movement

Mile End Road/Bow Road runs east-west through Mile End and is primarily a through route for traffic from London to Essex, though it also carries local traffic. The road forms a significant barrier to north-south pedestrian movement, along with Burdett Road which forms a barrier between residential areas and Mile End Park. Both Mile End Road and Burdett Road are classified as highways due to their busy nature.

The block pattern is varied from a fine to coarse grain throughout the area. A number of large blocks found in and around the centre of Mile End – particularly post-war housing estates and university buildings – cause limited permeability. However some areas contain small blocks and a historic grid pattern – as seen around Tredegar Square – which eases movement.

Mile End has excellent transport links with both Mile End Underground station and Bow Road DLR station, both being located on Mile End Road/Bow Road. Stepney Green Underground station is also located on the edge of Mile End.

Historic and modern housing in Mile End

Legend:
- Conservation Areas
- Statutory Listed Buildings
- Locally Listed Buildings
- World Heritage Sites
- Ancient Monuments
- Archaeological Priority Area
- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines

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Mile End Road

Legend:
- Highways
- Strategic Walkways
- TFL London Cycle Routes
- Local Cycle Routes
- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines

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BROMLEY-BY-BOW

historical character & identity

In early records, this area is known as Brambele due to its meadow being full of brambles. Once a hamlet consisting of a few cottages settled around a village green and pond, the area was strongly connected to its landscape of meadows and the River Lea. In the middle ages it prospered around St Leonard's nunnery and church.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the area rapidly industrialised due to its proximity to the River Lea.

As London spread, Bow and Bromley ceased to be separated by fields. The present name of Bromley-by-Bow was introduced to distinguish it from Bromley in south London. Factories sprang up along the river banks, together with housing, to accommodate the workers. By the mid 1800s the area was covered by linear terraces of yellow brick houses, interspersed with factories and institutions as well as a continuous ribbon of industry along the riverfront.

During the Second World War, Bromley-by-Bow was extensively bombed due to its strategic industrial role. This prompted a dramatic change to the structure and fabric of the area in the post-war period, resulting in the building of housing estates in the format seen today.

landscape & open space

Bromley-by-Bow comprises a number of neighbourhood parks, which are characterised as such by their small size. These parks include Bromley Recreation Ground, Grove Hall Park and Prospect Park. The area also includes two cemeteries, an allotment and a number of children's play spaces, of which the majority are located on housing estates. All these spaces fulfil a local function of providing local residents and workers with access to open space, trees, wildlife and grass.

Bromley-by-Bow contains a substantial quantity of waterspace frontage, being located on the Limehouse Cut Canal to the south and the River Lea to the east, which are two important historic trading routes in the area.

Stroudley Walk

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1896

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1968

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2008

Legend:
- Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
- District park
- Neighbourhood park
- Playing fields and pitches
- Sports centres
- Children's play spaces
- Urban farm
- Allotments
- Churchyard cemetery
- Ecological areas
- MOL - groups of trees and shrubs
- MOL - grassed areas and footpaths
- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines
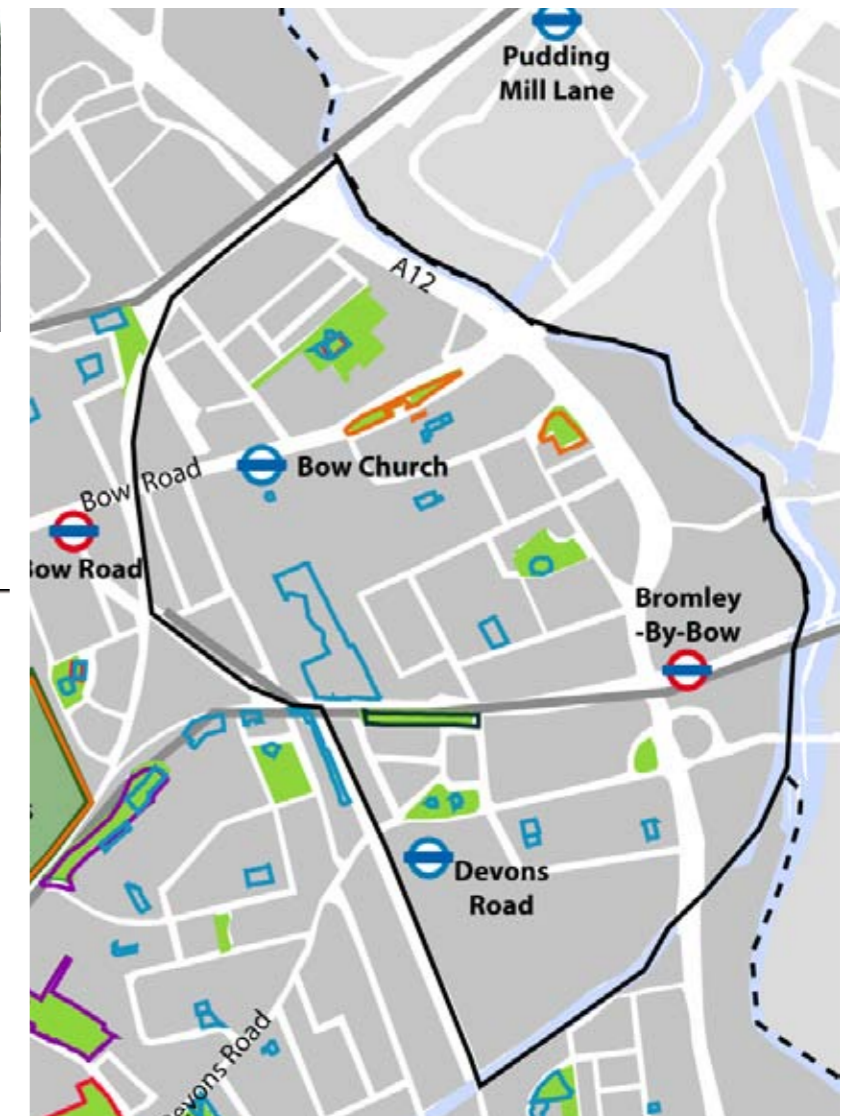
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heritage & townscape

Bromley-by-Bow is largely a residential and industrial area, bound by the River Lea on its eastern edge. The A12 divides the area in two and creates a large degree of psychological and physical severance. Bromley-by-Bow has a small town centre with small-scale shops located along Bow Road and Stroudley Walk, of which the latter suffers from poor public realm. The industrial areas of Bromley-by-Bow are primarily low-rise and are located in the south along Limehouse Cut and east of the A12, towards the River Lea.
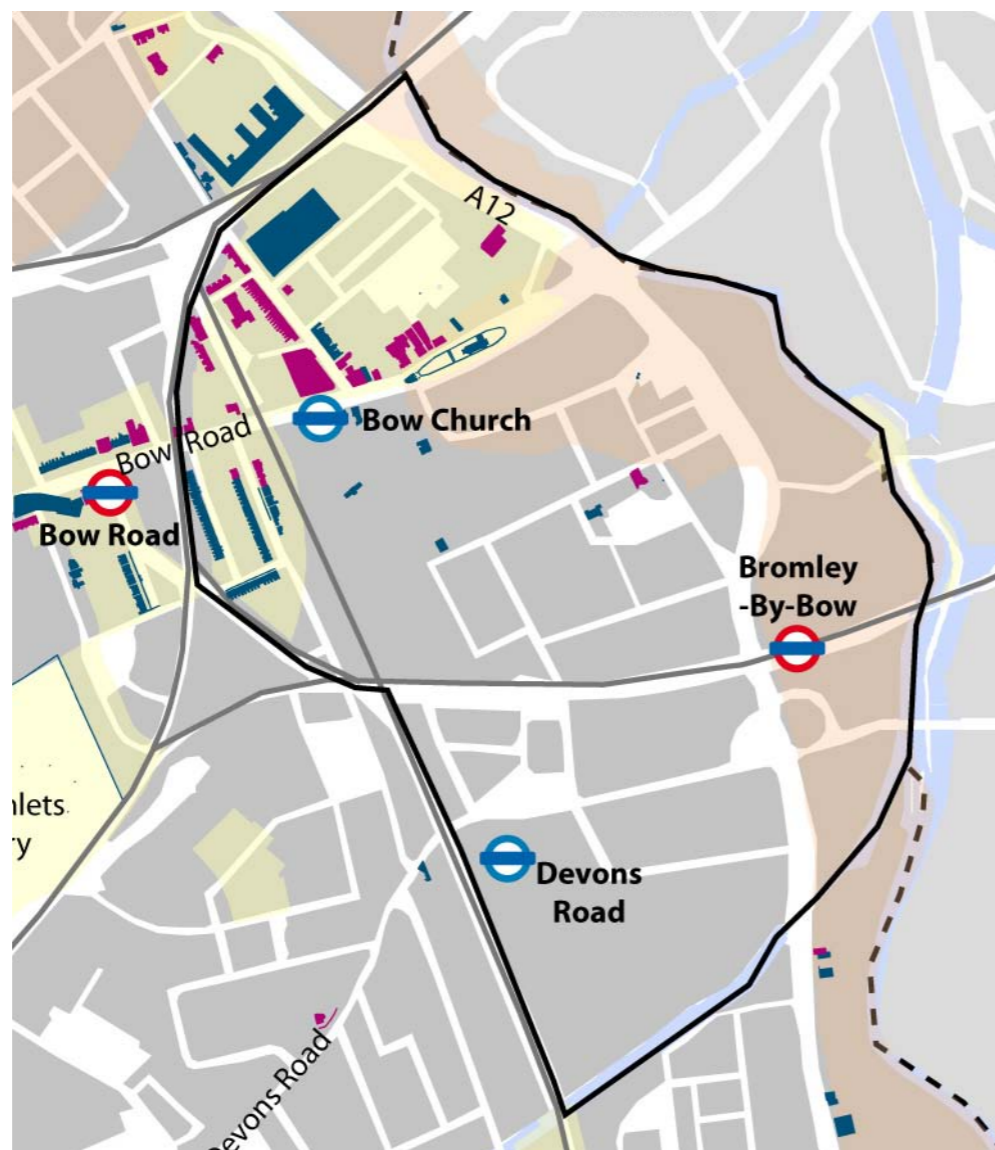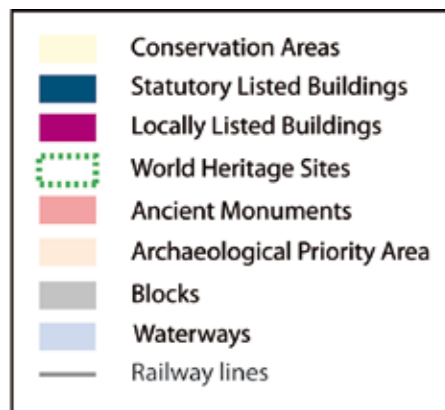
The residential housing stock in Bromley-by-Bow consists largely of low-, medium- or high-density post-war housing estates, which often suffer from poor public realm. However, to the north of Bow Road, some fine examples of Edwardian and Georgian houses are located within two conservation areas: Fairfield Road and Tomlins Grove. Fairfield Road Conservation Area includes locally listed terraces; the historic Grade II listed Bryant and May complex and Bow Garage; half the historic centre of Bromley-by-Bow and the parish church, St Mary Bow. Tomlins Grove Conservation Area includes a series of Grade II listed terraces. The majority of the listed buildings in the area are located within these two conservation areas.

Tomlins Grove

Modern housing

Conservation Areas
Statutory Listed Buildings
Locally Listed Buildings
World Heritage Sites
Ancient Monuments
Archaeological Priority Area
Blocks
Waterways
Railway lines

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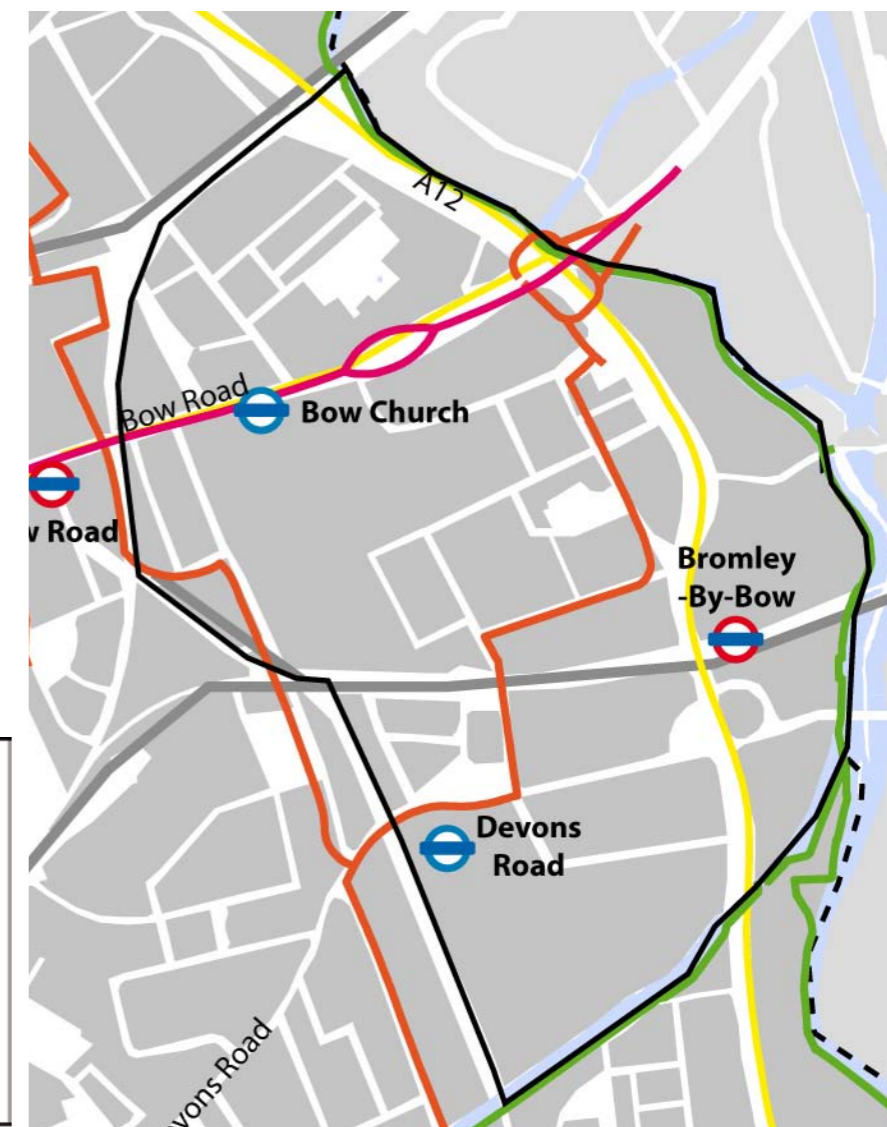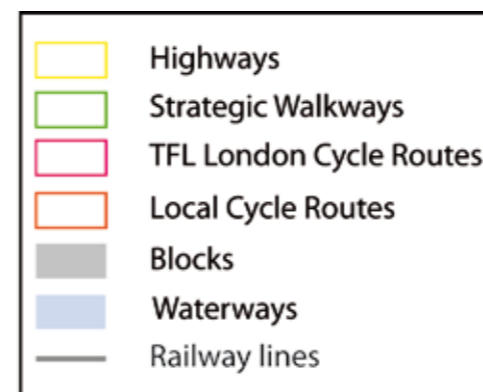
block pattern & movement

Bromley-by-Bow experiences a significant degree of severance, caused by roads, railways lines and waterways. The A12 is a large and fast-moving road, with few pedestrian crossing points. It cuts north-south through the eastern side of Bromley-by-Bow. Bow Road also runs east-west through the area and causes some severance for pedestrians, although it does not nearly divide Bromley-by-Bow to the same extent as the A12. Both the A12 and Bow Road are classified as highways due to their busy nature. A number of railway lines, the River Lea and Limehouse Cut also cause severance in the area.

The block pattern in Bromley-by-Bow is generally of a coarse grain, due to the numerous housing estates in the area. To the north-west of Bromley-by-Bow, the grain is finer within the conservation areas of Fairfield Road and Tomlins Grove, reflecting the historic housing in this area.

Bromley-by Bow is reasonably well connected by public transport, with two DLR stations (Bow Church and Devons Road), as well as one London Underground station (Bromley-by-Bow). However, access to the stations can be difficult due to poor local connectivity.

Bromley-by-Bow London Underground station

Highways
Strategic Walkways
TFL London Cycle Routes
Local Cycle Routes
Blocks
Waterways
Railway lines

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BOW COMMON

historical character & identity

Bow Common was, for much of its history, a large area of marshland and meadows, which separated the hamlets of Poplar, Bromley and Bow. Lanes ran through connecting up these Hamlets and a number of small cottages and houses sprang up along these trade routes. These routes still exist today as Bow Common Lane and Devons Road/St Paul's Way.

In these fields and meadows, the famous peasant's revolt of 1381 was led by Wat Tyler, where people from Essex and Kent gathered to complain about the poll tax. Richard II appeared to agree to their demands. But at a second meeting Tyler was killed by the Mayor of London and the revolt collapsed.

The industrial revolution bought change to Bow Common, and with Limehouse Cut running through its southern edge, industries began to settle during the 19th century. The growth and spread of Poplar and Bromley during this period led to the area becoming urbanised and swallowed up by its neighbours, hungry for space to expand.

landscape & open space

Bow Common encompasses a number of neighbourhood parks, which are characterised by their small size. The parks include the open spaces at Furze Green, Ackroyd Drive, Fern Street, and Rounton Road. The area also has a number of children's play spaces. The extension sites at the Old Railway at Fairfoot Road and Ackroyd Drive are also ecological areas, – semi-natural spaces, where the site's primary function is wildlife habitat. Bow Common is also located in close proximity to Mile End Park and Tower Hamlets Cemetery. Mile End Park contains an array of facilities, including a leisure centre, Mile End Stadium, the Ecology Centre, playing fields and pitches as well as open grass and planted areas.

Bow Common has access to waterspace frontage, as Limehouse Cut runs along the southern border of the area.

Mile End Park is in close proximity to Bow Common

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1896

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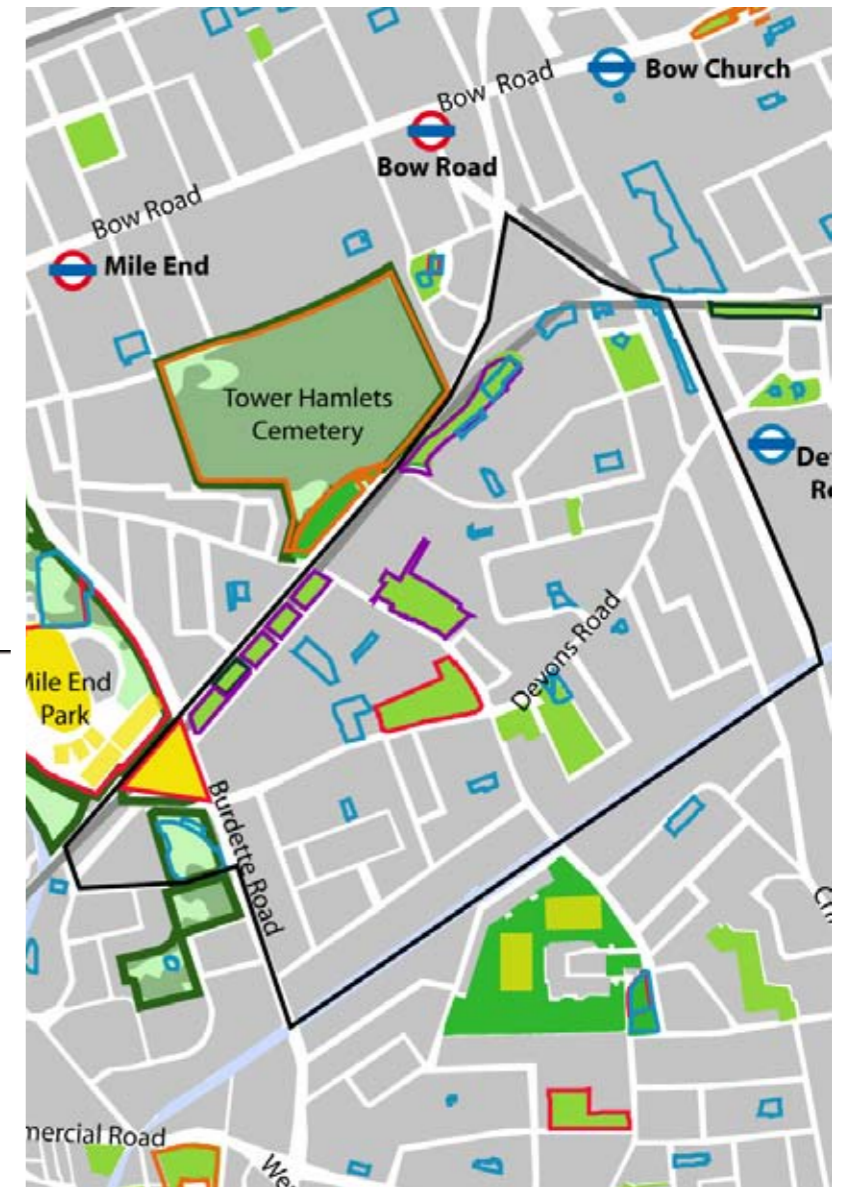
1968

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2008

Legend:
- Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
- District park
- Neighbourhood park
- Playing fields and pitches
- Sports centres
- Children's play spaces
- Urban farm
- Allotments
- Churchyard cemetery
- Ecological areas
- MOL - groups of trees and shrubs
- MOL - grassed areas and footpaths
- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines

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heritage & townscape

Bow Common's land use is largely residential and industrial. The housing stock in the area predominantly consists of low-, medium- and high-rise post-war housing estates, while much of the land running along the north side of Limehouse Cut consists of low-rise industrial units.

A small proportion of Bow Common is located within conservation areas, including Swaton Road and part of the Brickfield Gardens Conservation Area. Swaton Road Conservation Area includes four roads: Swaton Road; Spanby Road; Fairfoot Road; and Knapp Road. This conservation area covers a small fragment of low-rise, working-class, Victorian family terraces, which once covered this area. Brickfield Gardens Conservation Area comprises two fragments of the former mid-Victorian streetscape and open space which was created from cleared land after the war. Bow Common has a very small proportion of listed buildings.

Bow Common Lane
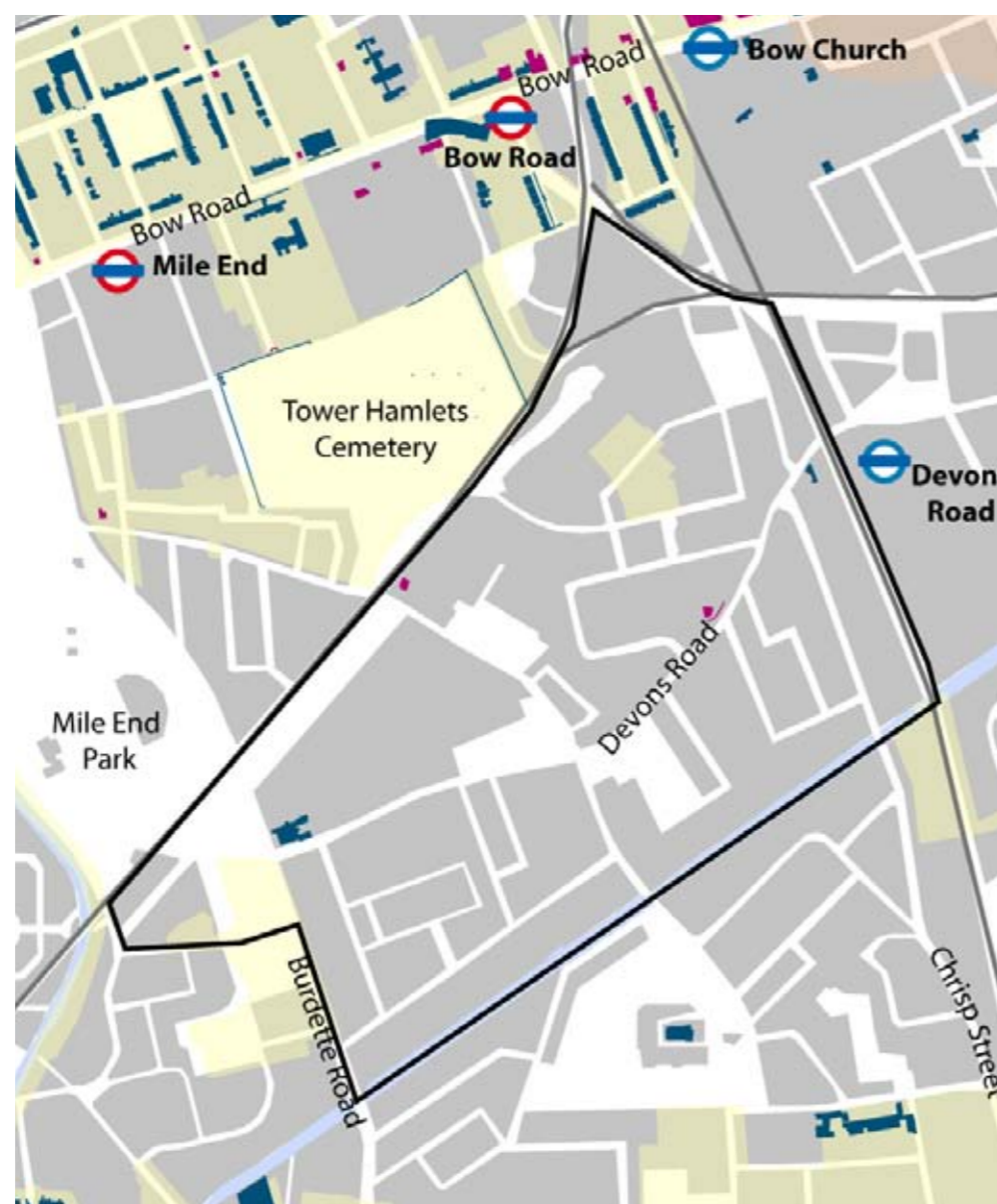
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block pattern & movement

There is a degree of severance in Bow Common. This is caused by Limehouse Cut to the south, the railway lines to the east and north, and Burdett Road to the east. Burdett Road is classified as a highway and is a key north-south link in Tower Hamlets. Movement is further affected in the area by Bow Common's coarse grain. The large blocks reflect the industry, and high number of post-war housing estates, in the area.

Limehouse Cut runs to the south of Bow Common. The towpath on the south side of the canal is used by pedestrians and cyclists as a key east-west link towards Limehouse. Limehouse Cut however does have a limited number of crossing points.

Bow Common has no train stations, though it does lie in close proximity to Devons Road DLR station.

St Paul's Way

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POPLAR RIVERSIDE

historical character & identity

Low and relatively marshy, this area of Poplar was never considered particularly suitable for settlement. It remained as marshland hugging the River Lea for centuries and was used as a countryside retreat by the Crown. The marshlands were then owned by the East India Company, but it was not until the turn of the 20th century that things began to change for marshland. When the industrial revolution took a hold, industry began to settle in the area, as the River Lea offered great transport links.

Bromley Hall was built in around 1485 as one of two manors in the area. Henry VIII used it regularly as his escape from the City. It is the oldest brick-built dwelling in London. It suffered many years of neglect and was placed on the Buildings at Risk register. It has now been resurrected as a local business centre by Leaside Regeneration.

Poplar Riverside hugs the River Lea on the eastern edge of Tower Hamlets; the DLR forms the western edge and Limehouse Cut forms its north-eastern edge.

landscape & open space

Poplar Riverside is composed of a number of neighbourhood parks including Langdon Park, Jolly's Green, Wyvis Street Open Space and Leven Road Open Space. The largest of these is Langdon Park, although it is still characterised as a neighbourhood park due to its relatively small size. All these spaces help to fulfil the local function of providing residents and workers with access to open space, trees, wildlife and grass.

Poplar Riverside has a substantial proportion of waterspace frontage, being located on Limehouse Cut to the north and the River Lea to the east.

Open space and gas works

1896

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2008

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Legend:
- Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
- District park
- Neighbourhood park
- Playing fields and pitches
- Sports centres
- Children's play spaces
- Urban farm
- Allotments
- Churchyard cemetery
- Ecological areas
- MOL - groups of trees and shrubs
- MOL - grassed areas and footpaths
- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines

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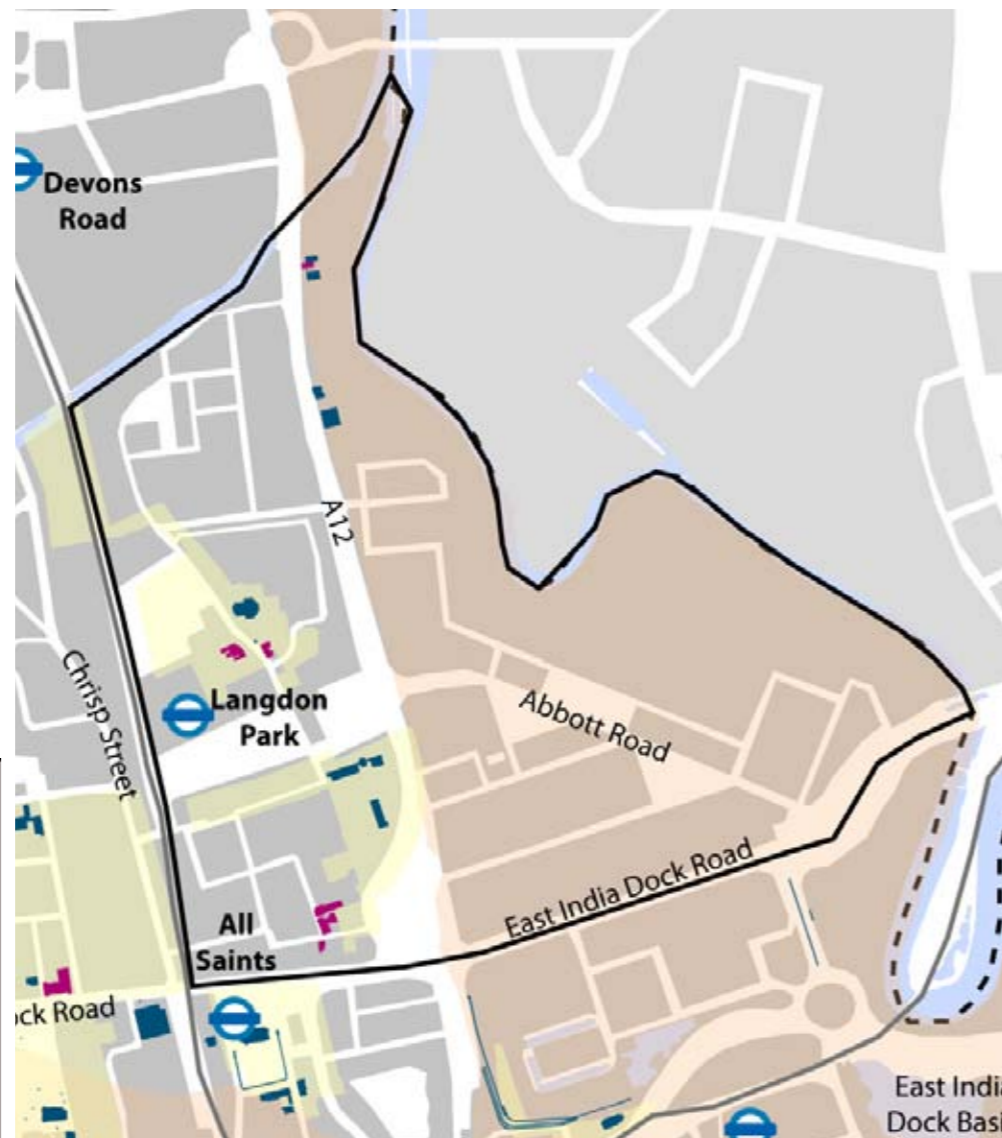
heritage & townscape

Poplar Riverside is an industrial and residential area. The industrial use is predominantly located to the east of the A12, while the residential use is to the east. The area also contains some vacant development sites. The industrial use comprised light-industrial and storage uses, while the residential buildings largely consist of post-war housing estates. These estates are predominantly low- to medium-rise. However a small number of dense residential buildings also sit within the area, such as the well known 27-storey Balfron Tower.

A small proportion of Poplar Riverside falls within two conservation areas: Balfron Tower and Langdon Park. The Balfron Tower Conservation Area protects the listed Balfron Tower, as well as Carradale House and other buildings in the estate of low- and high-rise scale, of which many of the buildings were designed by the architect Erno Goldfinger. The Langdon Park Conservation Area includes Langdon Park itself, its primary school, and a series of locally listed Georgian terraces to the south. The focal point of the area is the Grade II listed St Michael's Church, and the war memorial in its court grounds. Poplar Riverside contains a very small amount of listed buildings, most of which are located within these two conservation areas.

Open space and gas works

Legend:
- Conservation Areas
- Statutory Listed Buildings
- Locally Listed Buildings
- World Heritage Sites
- Ancient Monuments
- Archaeological Priority Area
- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines

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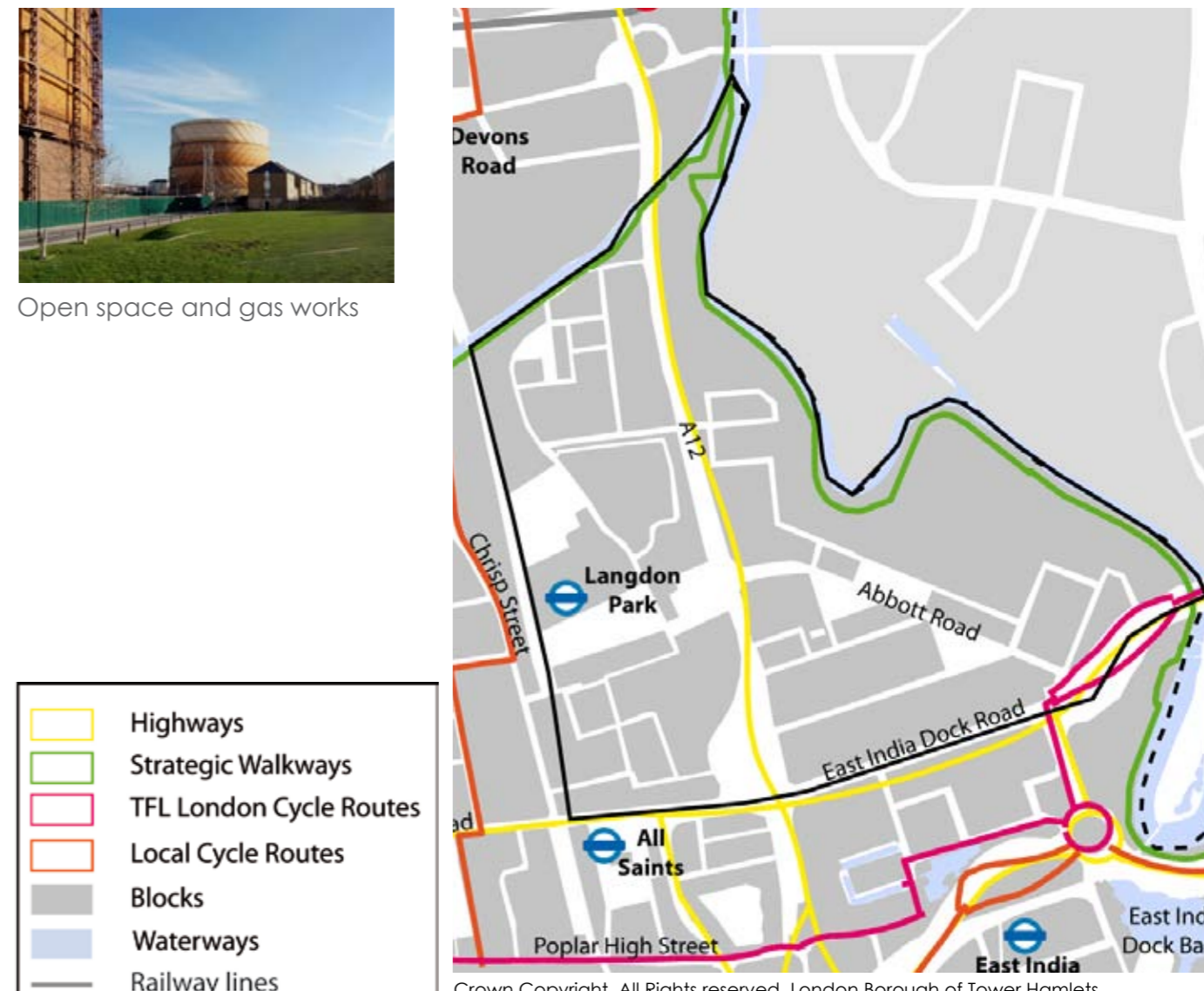
block pattern & movement

Poplar Riverside suffers from a substantial degree of severance. This is due to the area being surrounded by Limehouse Cut to the north, the River Lea to the east, the DLR to the west and East India Dock Road to the south. Poplar Riverside is divided to a further extent by the large and busy road that is the A12, which along with East India Dock Road is a highway. The industrial areas to the east of the A12 comprise predominantly daytime activities, which only adds to the feeling of isolation.

The grain is of a coarse nature in this area, with many of the industrial uses enclosing medium- to large-size blocks, including the large gas-holder site on Leven Road. The considerable number of post-war housing estates in the area also exacerbates this.

Poplar Riverside has one DLR station called Langdon Park. But access to this station can be difficult due to the poor local connectivity. Limehouse Cut is accessible to pedestrians and cyclists, via the towpath on the southern side. However, access to the towpath can be difficult to navigate.

Open space and gas works

Legend:
- Highways
- Strategic Walkways
- TFL London Cycle Routes
- Local Cycle Routes
- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines

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POPLAR

historical character & identity

The original hamlet of Poplar, and the historic docks at Blackwall, lay to the south of what is now Poplar High Street. Taking its name from the Poplar trees that once grew in the district, it is the site of the oldest surviving building in London Docklands, St Matthias Old Church, built in 1654 as the chapel for the East India Company. The church, which sat on Poplar Recreation Ground, was closed in 1976 and is now used as a community centre. As the population began to grow rapidly after the construction of the East India Docks at the start of the 19th century, the East India Dock Road was constructed, between 1806 and 1812, to improve communication between the area's maritime industry and the City.

Poplar had been part of the medieval parish of Stepney. In 1813, the Improvement Act of Parliament reformed the civil administration of Poplar and Blackwall and prompted an initiative to create a separate parish of Poplar, with its own parish church. Subsequently, in 1821 construction began on All Saints Church and later the associated Montague Street and Newby Street. This area now forms the All Saints Church Conservation Area.

The area originally consisted of several civic buildings – the town hall, the institute, the school and the fire station. These uses gave the buildings extra significance and meaning, in addition to their architectural merit. Although some of these buildings have been lost, there is a still an important cluster of public buildings in the area – the church, the health centre, the Idea Store and the (now disused) Poplar Baths. To the front of Poplar Recreation Ground is a monument to 18 primary school children from a nearby school who died in a First World War air raid. The attack was the first time a fixed wing aircraft was used in the daytime bombing of a civilian target.

The dominance of public housing in Poplar is a relatively recent phenomenon. Most of it was built between 1950 and 1980, and by 1981, the changes made to the urban form were clear, as can be seen in the maps below. These changes have resulted in a fragmented network of streets and, in general, poor connectivity.
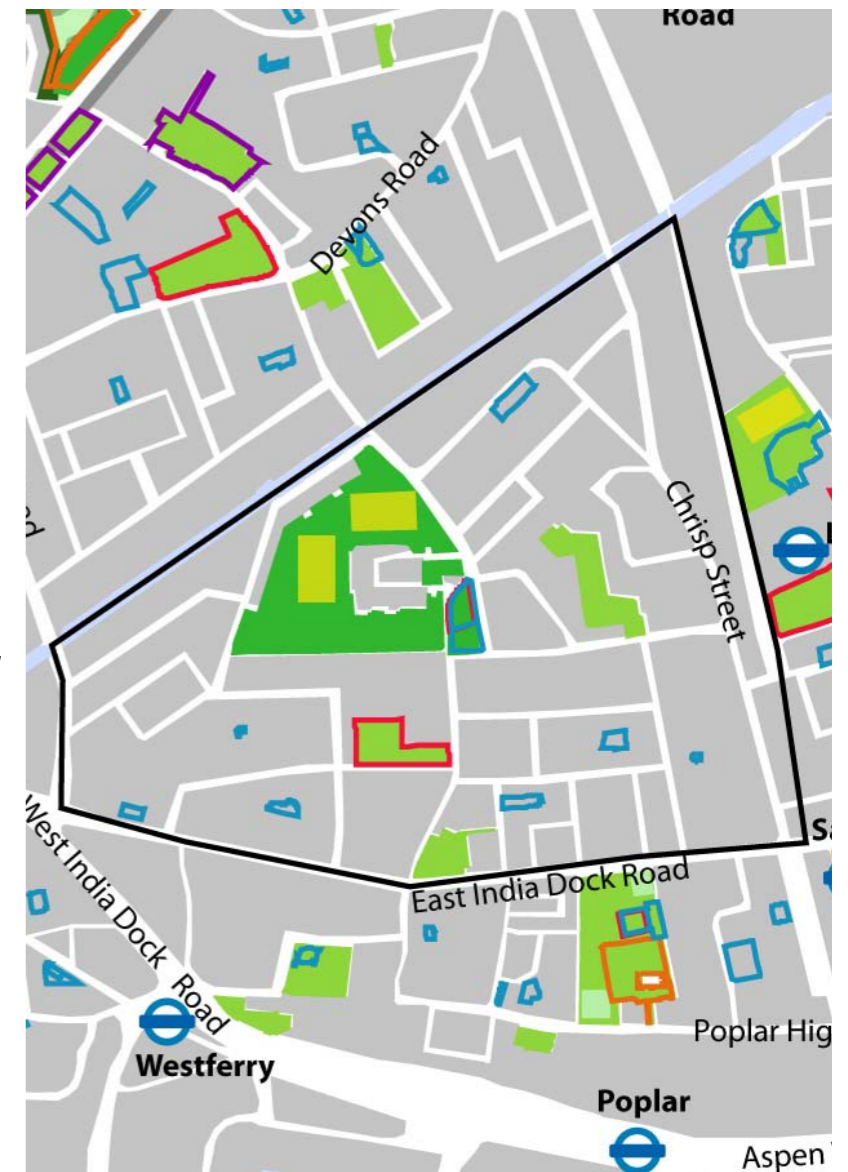
landscape & open space

Poplar has a considerable proportion of open space and the parks in the area are all classified as neighbourhood parks and district parks, due to their small and medium sizes. The neighbourhood parks in Poplar include Alton Street Open Space and Trinity Gardens, while the district park is called Bartlett Park. This surrounds a group of houses and the Celestial Church of Christ. The park includes two playing fields and pitches, as well as a children's play space and sports centre. There are also a number of other children's play spaces spread throughout Poplar.

Poplar has access to waterspace frontage, as the northern edge of Poplar fronts on to Limehouse Cut.

Limehouse Cut

Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
District park
Neighbourhood park
Playing fields and pitches
Sports centres
Children's play spaces
Urban farm
Allotments
Churchyard cemetery
Ecological areas
MOL - groups of trees and shrubs
MOL - grassed areas and footpaths
Blocks
Waterways
Railway lines

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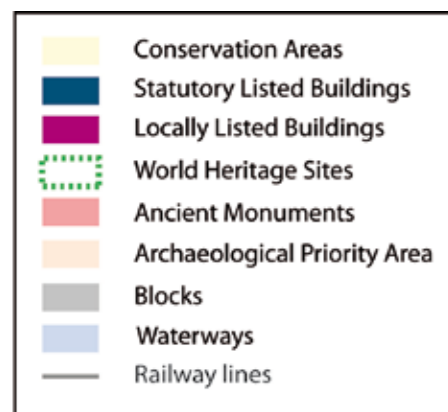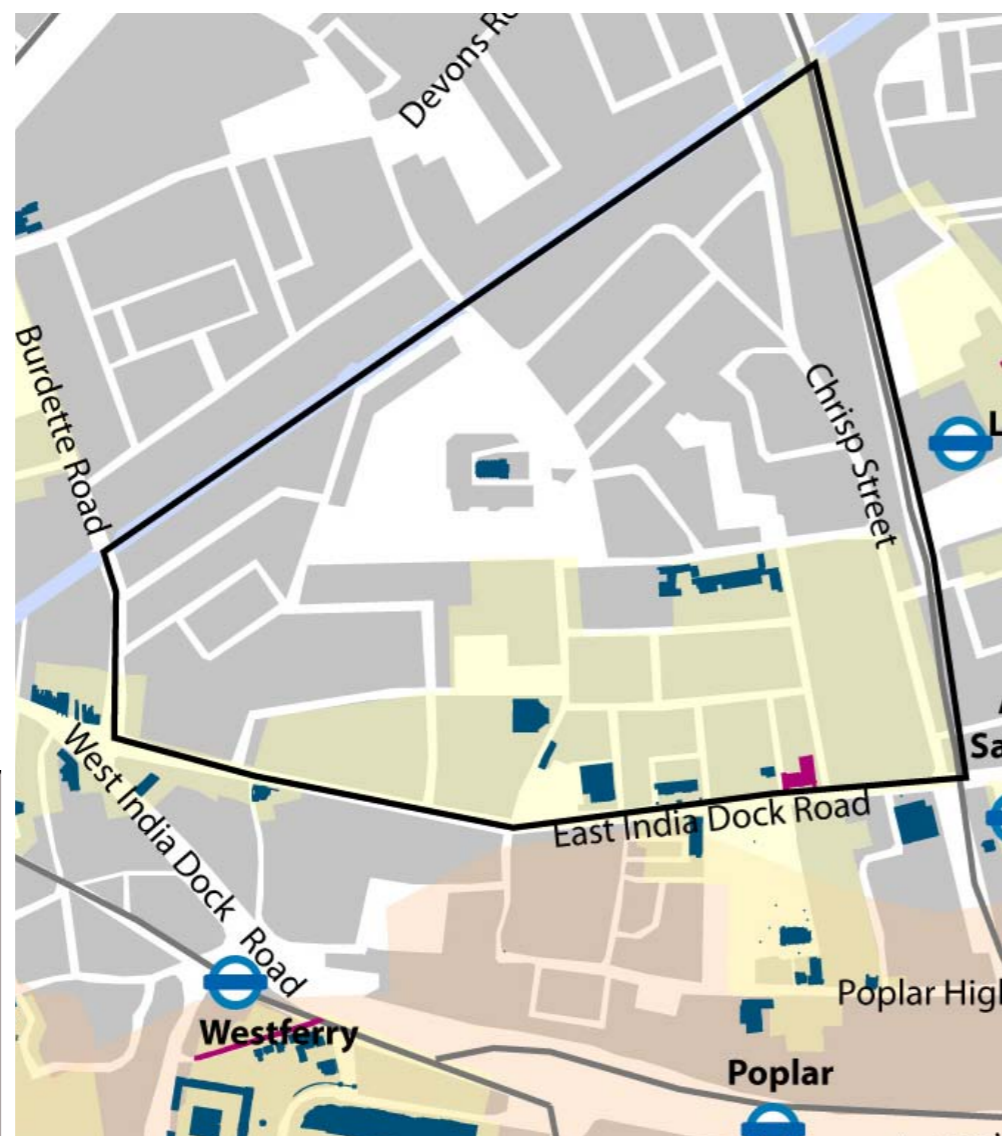
heritage & townscape

Poplar is primarily a residential area, with a town centre that includes Chrisp Street and part of East India Dock Road. The daily market off Chrisp Street is a popular shopping destination for locals and, along with the Idea Store and other shops, creates a vibrant heart to the area. The market does suffer however from poor public realm. Chrisp Street Market is set off Chrisp Street and East India Dock Road, though is largely unseen from either road. East India Dock Road contains a number of small shops with mixed uses above them.

The residential buildings found in Poplar consist of largely low- and medium-rise post-war housing estates, interspersed with high-rise housing estates. The majority of the industrial buildings along Limehouse Cut have been redeveloped into modern housing in recent years.

Just under half of Poplar is located within two conservation areas. Lansbury is the largest conservation area in Poplar, and a small proportion of Poplar also falls within the Langdon Park Conservation Area. The Lansbury Conservation Area includes low-rise post-war redevelopment, north of East India Dock Road, including the permanent buildings of the 1951 Festival of Britain.

Idea Store on East India Dock Road

Legend:
- Conservation Areas
- Statutory Listed Buildings
- Locally Listed Buildings
- World Heritage Sites
- Ancient Monuments
- Archaeological Priority Area
- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines

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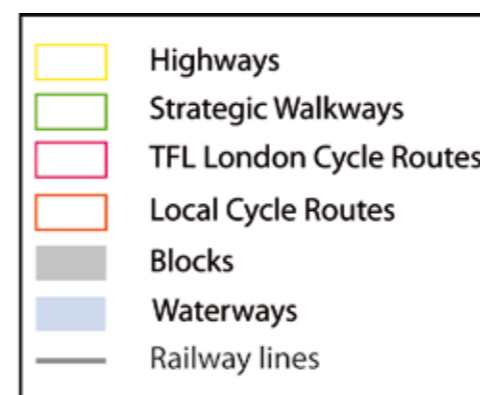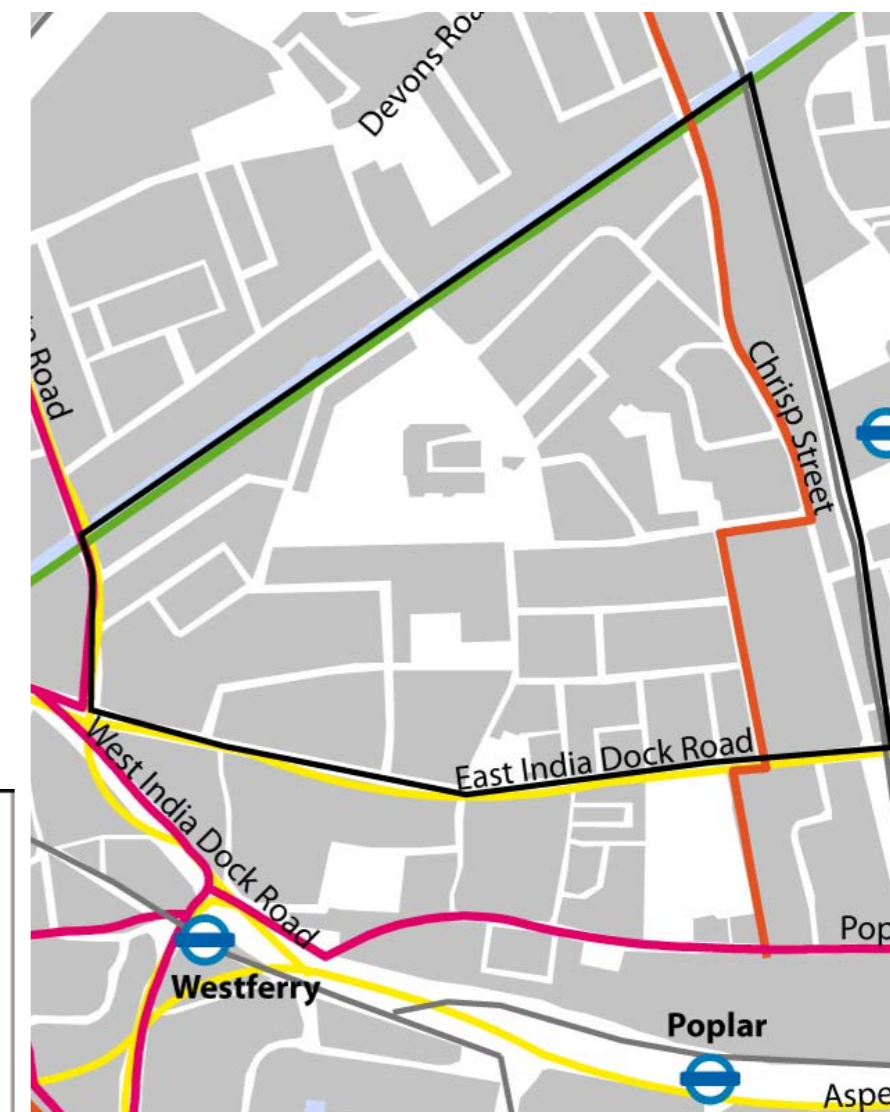
block pattern & movement

Poplar experiences some severance. The area is bounded by Burdett Road to the west, Limehouse Cut to the north, the DLR to the east, and East India Dock Road to the south. Both Burdett Road and East India Dock Road are busy highways, and therefore create a barrier to Mile End Park, and Blackwall and Canary Wharf in the south. However, East India Dock Road is an important east-west link across Tower Hamlets from the City of London to Newham, while Burdett Road is an important north-south link from the south of Tower Hamlets and Canary Wharf to Hackney.

Chrisp Street Market and the area around the Idea Store is a well-used, pedestrianised area. East India Dock Road however is a major traffic through route, that acts as a barrier to pedestrian movement.

Poplar has no DLR or London Undergound stations, although it is located in close proximity to Langdon Park, Westferry DLR stations, as well as Poplar DLR – which is located in Blackwall.

View of Poplar

Legend:
- Highways
- Strategic Walkways
- TFL London Cycle Routes
- Local Cycle Routes
- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines

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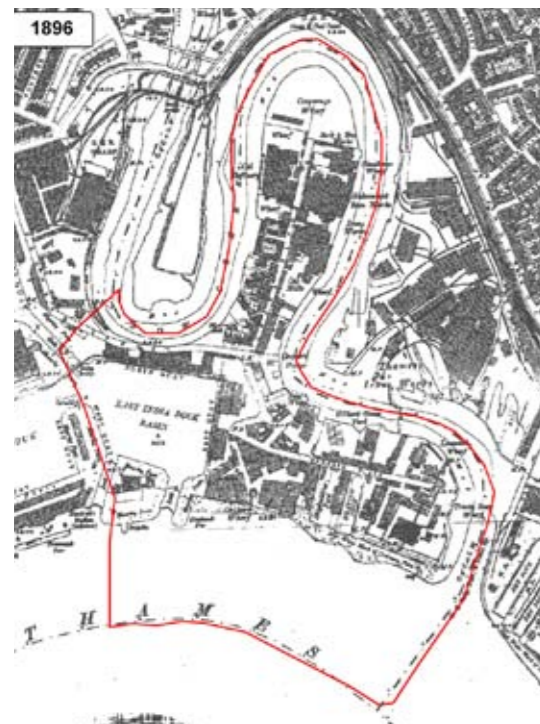
LEAMOUTH

historical character & identity

Trinity House had its headquarters in a fine building in the City designed by the great James Wyatt in 1798, and established Trinity Buoy Wharf as its Thames-side workshop in 1803. At first, wooden buoys and sea marks were made and stored here, and a mooring was provided for the Trinity House yacht, which was used to lay the buoys and collect them for maintenance and repair. The river wall along the Lea was rebuilt in brick in 1822, making this the oldest surviving structure on the site.

Many new buildings were constructed during the Victorian period and a number still survive, of which the earliest, the Electrician's Building, was built in 1836. It was designed, originally for the storage of oil, by the then chief engineer of Trinity House, James Walker. He rebuilt the remainder of the river wall in 1852, and the first of two lighthouses here in 1854. On his death in 1862 he was succeeded by James Douglass, who designed many of Britain's famous lighthouses.

landscape & open space

Leamouth contains only one open space, which is known as East India Dock Basin (MOL). East India Dock Basin is the surviving entrance to the once grand East India Docks, which were famous for transporting spices from the Far East in Victorian times. The East India Docks, however, now only partially remain. Surrounding the Basin is a nature reserve, which is classified as a ecological area. An ecological area is a semi-natural space, where the site's primary function is wildlife habitat. The basin habitat includes a section of salt marsh and attracts a large variety of birds.

Leamouth has an immense amount of waterspace frontage, with the eastern edges facing the River Lea and the southern edges facing the River Thames. East India Dock Basin also provides waterspace frontage.

Warehouse in Leamouth

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1896

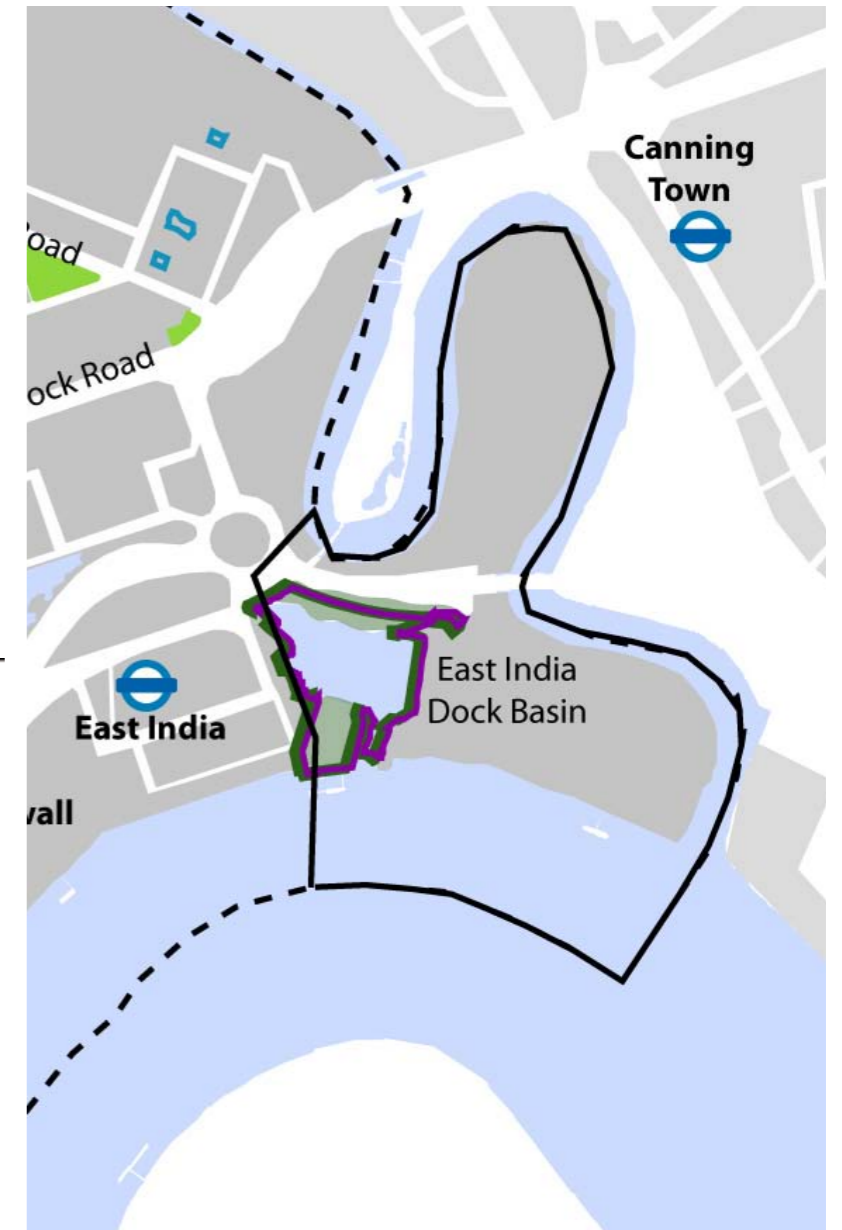Crown Copyright. All Rights reserved. London Borough of Tower Hamlets 100019288 2009

1968

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2008

Legend:
- Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
- District park
- Neighbourhood park
- Playing fields and pitches
- Sports centres
- Children's play spaces
- Urban farm
- Allotments
- Churchyard cemetery
- Ecological areas
- MOL - groups of trees and shrubs
- MOL - grassed areas and footpaths
- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines

Canning Town

East India Dock Basin

East India

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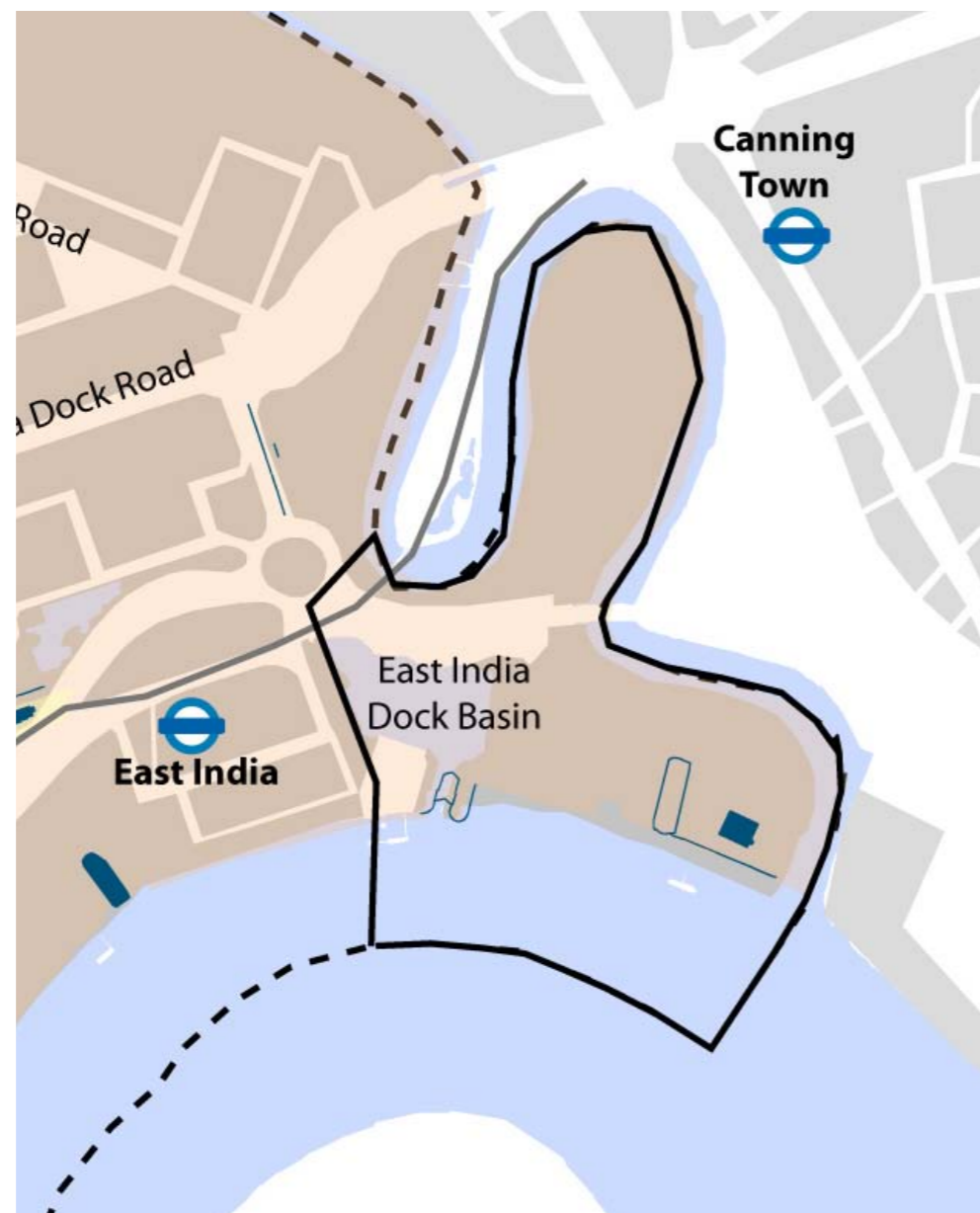
heritage & townscape

Leamouth is comprises a series of low- to medium-rise industrial units along the Thames and cleared vacant land to the north on Leamouth Peninsula – for which large scale mixed-use development is planned. The area lies adjacent to the River Lea and the River Thames and is surrounded by water. Trinity Buoy Wharf ,which sits on the Thames, is an area for the arts and creative industries. The unique Container City, set among historic buildings such as the Lighthouse, Boiler Maker's Shop and Chainstore, attracts artists, photographers and small businesses alike, and often hosts exhibitions.

Leamouth does not lie within any conservation areas and contains only a very small proportion of listed buildings.

Streetscene in Leamouth

Conservation Areas
Statutory Listed Buildings
Locally Listed Buildings
World Heritage Sites
Ancient Monuments
Archaeological Priority Area
Blocks
Waterways
Railway lines

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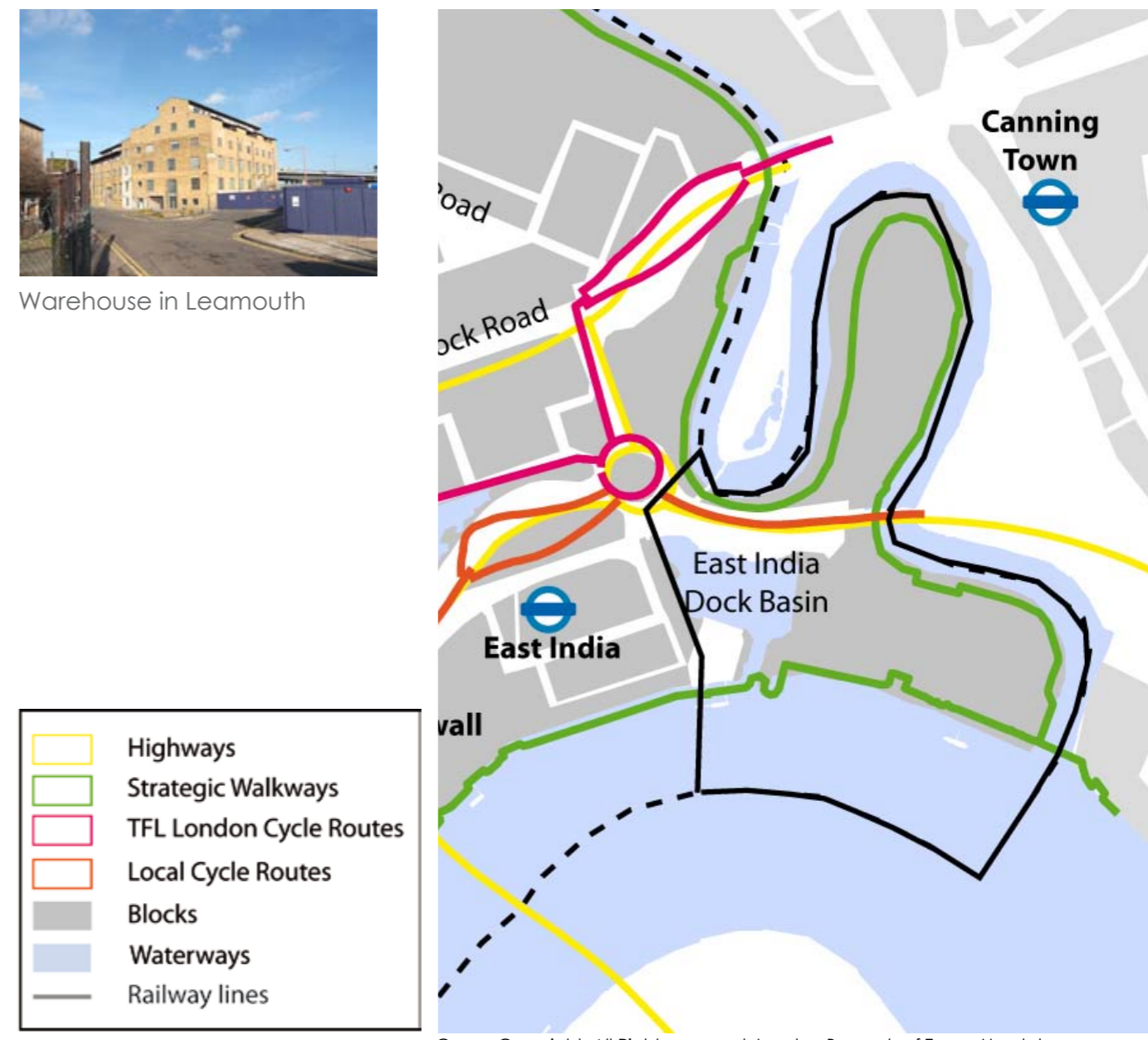
block pattern & movement

Leamouth suffers from a large degree of physical severance. One of the contributors is the busy Lower Lea Crossing, which divides Leamouth in two. Orchard Place is the sole road connection that runs under the raised Lower Lea Crossing to the northern Leamouth Peninsula. The River Lea, the River Thames and East India Dock Basin also contribute to severance. The industrial buildings in this area also consist of predominantly daytime activities, with a lack of evening uses that contributes to a feeling of isolation.

Leamouth has no train stations and is cut off from Canning Town DLR and London Underground stations by the River Lea. East India DLR station is within close proximity to Leamouth, though it is cut off by East India Dock Basin and the Lower Lea Crossing.

Warehouse in Leamouth

Highways
Strategic Walkways
TFL London Cycle Routes
Local Cycle Routes
Blocks
Waterways
Railway lines

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BLACKWALL

historical character & identity

In December 1606, three ships carrying the first permanent British settlers to America sailed from Blackwall, signalling this area's future connection to the maritime and shipping industry.

The development of the inland docks in the 18th and 19th centuries, particularly in the Isle of Dogs and East India Docks, brought prosperity to this part of east London. Blackwall became the site of the East India Docks.

The post-war decline of the upriver docks as they gave way to the downstream container terminals resulted in an enormous loss of jobs and widespread depopulation. By the 1970s the Blackwall area had become isolated both physically and economically.

Following the eventual closure of the docks in 1979 and several plans for regeneration, the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) was formed to bring investment to London's Docklands. The Docklands Light Railway (DLR) was conceived in 1982 and opened in 1987, with branches to the Isle of Dogs, Stratford and Tower Gateway. Plans to construct an A13 bypass also emerged. This eventually became Aspen Way.

New businesses were attracted into the Isle of Dogs and the infilled East India Dock, and employment prospects improved. The Docklands Highways were completed in 1993, providing an alternative to the A13, but at the same time creating a barrier to north-south movement.

landscape & open space

A moderate number of small parks are located in Blackwall, all characterised as neighbourhood parks due to their small size. These parks include Pennyfields Open Space, Poplar Recreation Ground, Poplar Parkway and Stoneyard Lane Open space. Two churchyard cemeteries are also located in the area, including St Matthais Church Gardens and All Saints Churchyard. The open spaces and children's play spaces in the area are distributed solely throughout the western side of Blackwall, an imbalance that means the eastern side of Blackwall contains inadequate provision.

Blackwall includes a large proportion of waterspace as the southern edge of Blackwall lies on the River Thames. The partial remains of the historic East India Dock also lie within the area.

All Saints Churchyard

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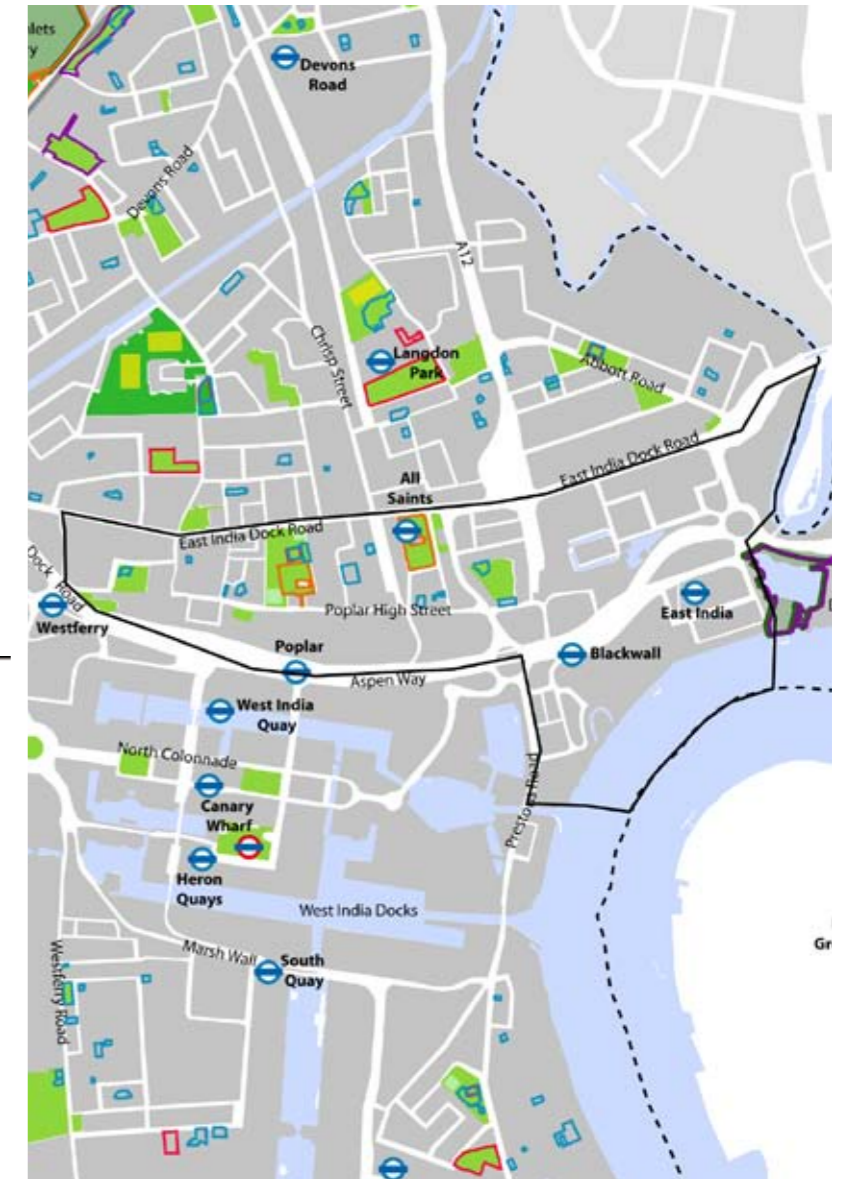
1968

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2008

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Legend:
- Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
- District park
- Neighbourhood park
- Playing fields and pitches
- Sports centres
- Children's play spaces
- Urban farm
- Allotments
- Churchyard cemetery
- Ecological areas
- MOL - groups of trees and shrubs
- MOL - grassed areas and footpaths
- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines

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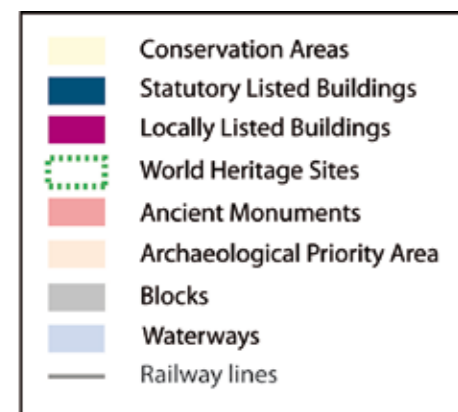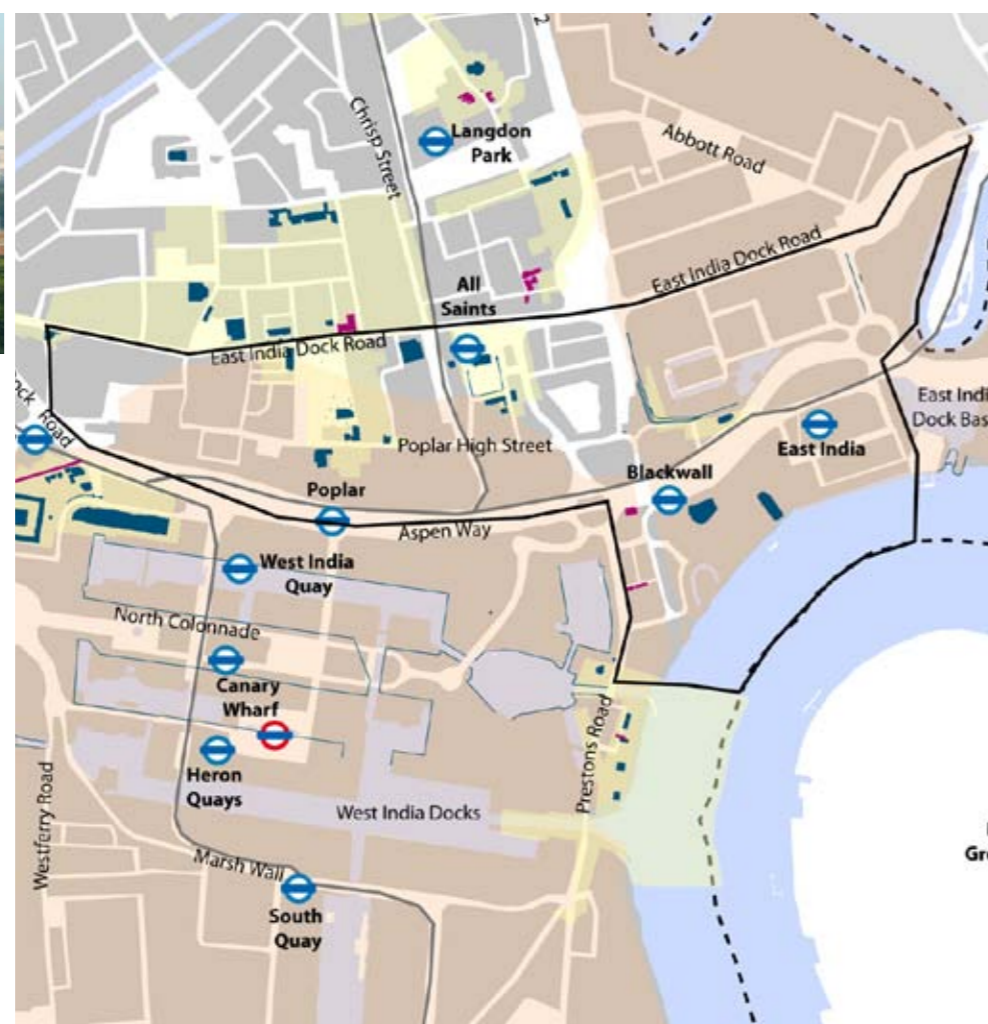
heritage & townscape

Blackwall is a predominantly residential area that is undergoing substantial change. The housing stock is greatly varied in height and age, with low-rise Victorian terraced housing, low- to medium-rise post-war housing estates and medium- to high-rise modern housing developments. These modern housing developments are largely located along the River Thames and close to Blackwall and East India DLR stations. Some retail activity lies along the north side of East India Dock Road and along Poplar High Street, and medium- to high-rise civic and commercial office buildings lie adjacent to East India and Blackwall DLR stations.

Approximately a quarter of Blackwall is covered by three conservation areas: St Matthias Church, All Saints Church and Naval Row. The St Matthias Church Conservation Area contains the historic Grade II* listed St Matthias Church and churchyard, which form a centre piece to the conservation area. The conservation area also protects other Grade II statutorily listed institutional public buildings, and a small number of Victorian working-class family dwellings, which once covered Blackwall. The All Saints Church conservation area includes a Grade II* listed church, grounds and rectory, as well as early-19th-century residential streets and listed buildings. The Naval Row Conservation Area protects the surviving structures associated with the historic port and shipbuilding activities of the 19th century, including the listed perimeter wall of the former East India Docks and the listed hydraulic pumping station, now converted to residential use.

View over Blackwall

Conservation Areas
Statutory Listed Buildings
Locally Listed Buildings
World Heritage Sites
Ancient Monuments
Archaeological Priority Area
Blocks
Waterways
Railway lines

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block pattern & movement

Blackwall is affected by physical severance. Much of this severance is due to the considerable amount of highways in the area. Blackwall is particularly disconnected from Canary Wharf in the south by Aspen Way, which is a large, fast-moving highway, for which there are few pedestrian crossing points. The A12/Blackwall Tunnel Approach highway also further divides the area and, much like Aspen Way, is unpleasant for pedestrians. East India Dock Road and Leamouth Road are also highways in the area, which again are uninviting for pedestrians. Poplar Street is a secondary route in the area, but, like the raised DLR, this does not divide the area to the same extent.
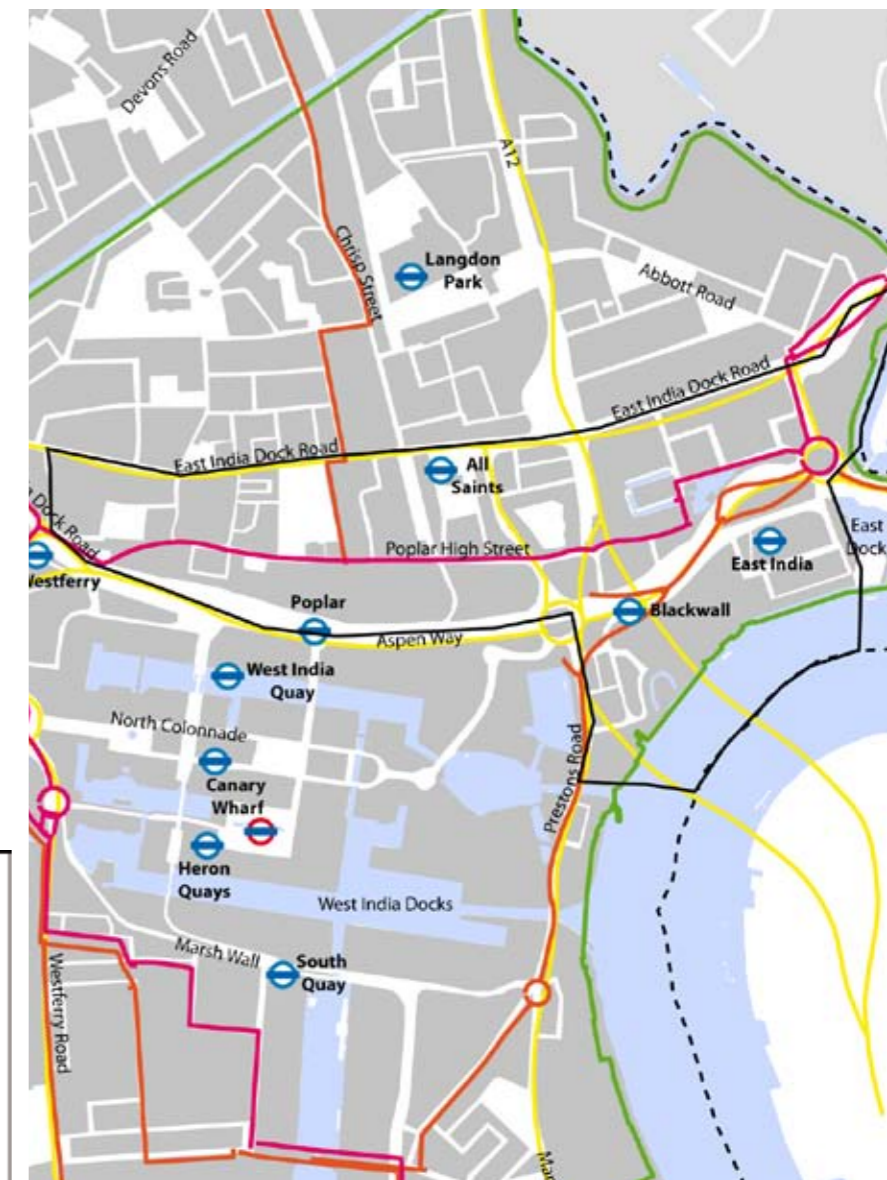
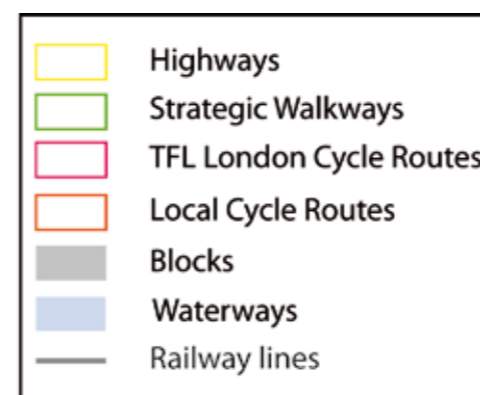Blackwall is well connected by public transport and includes four DLR stations: Poplar, All Saints, Blackwall and East India.

New housing near East India station and Aspen Way

New housing and commercial office buildings

Highways
Strategic Walkways
TFL London Cycle Routes
Local Cycle Routes
Blocks
Waterways
Railway lines

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CANARY WHARF

historical character & identity

Along with the rest of the Isle of Dogs, shipbuilding and maritime industry defined this area in the 19th century. Although economically thriving at the beginning of the last century, the area became increasingly poor, until in 1920 local residents declared independence by closing the two entrance roads to the Isle of Dogs. During the war years, Canary Wharf residents demonstrated their resilience when it became the target of heavy bombing. The docks were closed in 1969 following the arrival of containerisation.

Following the closure of the docks and the general decline of the Isle of Dogs in 1981, the London Dockland Development Corporation was created with a clear remit to regenerate the area.

The plan that followed in 1982 was unlike a normal planning document as it showed development opportunities, and was not based on precise land-use proposals. This encapsulated the LDDC's approach which was based on flexibility and the belief that conventional land-use planning inhibited entrepreneurial flair.

Out of this process emerged present-day Canary Wharf. The evolution of the area into a global business hub has helped to make banking and finance the most robust economic sector in Tower Hamlets.

landscape & open space

Canary Wharf has an immense amount of waterspace, with a number of docks and also frontage on to the River Thames, on it's eastern and western edges.

The large office buildings in Canary Wharf are surrounded by high-quality public realm and a small number of parks, in the centre of the site. All of these spaces are largely used by office workers during the week. As all the parks are of a small size, they are known as neighbourhood parks. These include Jubilee Park and Canada Square Park. Jubilee Park has a serpentine water channel, as well as grassed and planted areas. While Canada Square Park consists of an open green and a sculpture, Ron Arad's "Big Blue". It also hosts the Canary Wharf Ice Rink each winter.

Canary Riverside
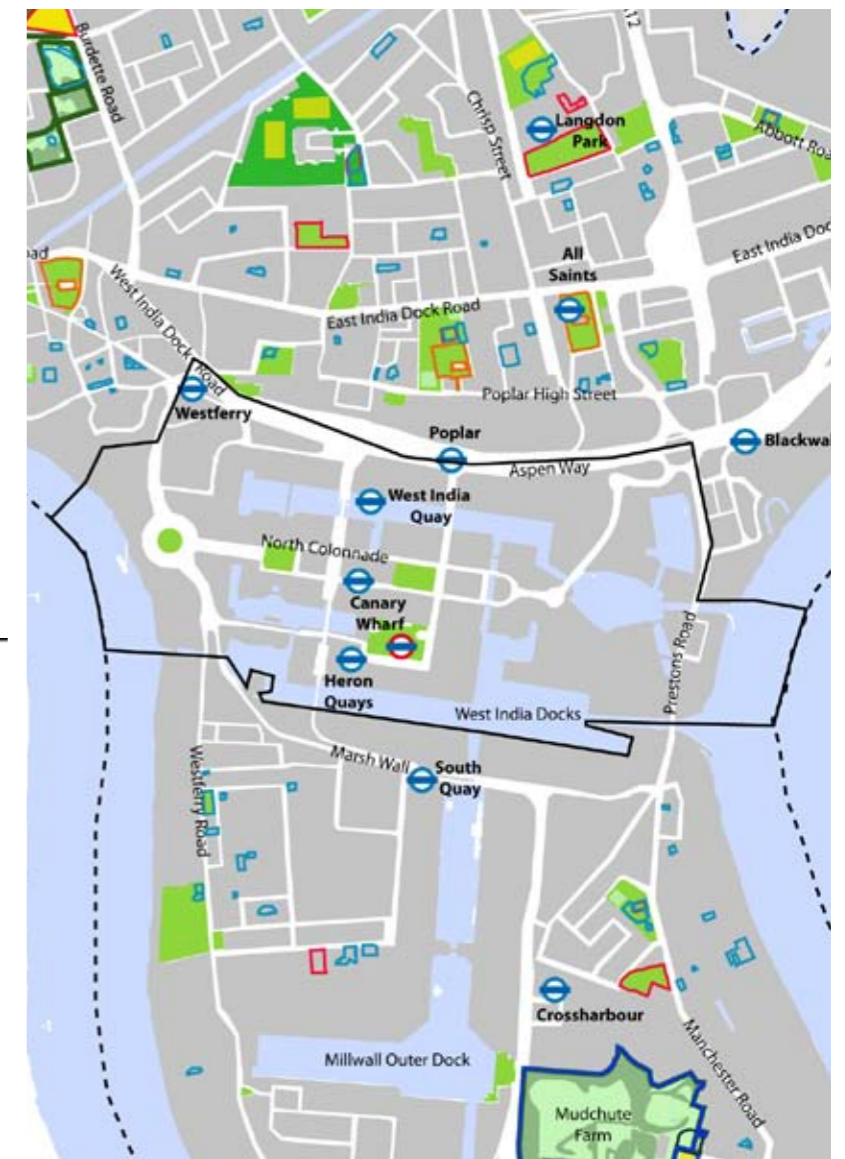
1896

1968

2008

Legend:
- Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
- District park
- Neighbourhood park
- Playing fields and pitches
- Sports centres
- Children's play spaces
- Urban farm
- Allotments
- Churchyard cemetery
- Ecological areas
- MOL - groups of trees and shrubs
- MOL - grassed areas and footpaths
- Blocks
- Waterways
- Railway lines

heritage & townscape

Canary Wharf is an extremely dense business area that has the look and feel of a Manhattan style development. The area is one of the most significant commercial centres in Europe and provides a clear landmark for the Isle of Dogs and the wider Docklands area. Canary Wharf consists of large-scale, high-rise office blocks – of 50 floors at One Canada Square – built around the listed docks. The area also has a significant amount of retailing in the Jubilee Shopping and Canada Square centres.

A small proportion of Canary Wharf lies with conservation areas. In the north-east of the area is the West India Dock Conservation Area, which includes the Docklands Museum (Grade I listed) and Premier Place (Grade II listed). While to the east of Canary Wharf lies the Coldharbour Conservation Area, which survives as one of the last remaining examples of the narrow streets which once characterised the river's perimeter. This conservation area includes the two entrances into the Millwall and Blackwall Dock Basins, the river entrances to the historic dry docks (now filled-in) and a number of late-18th- to early-19th-century listed buildings.

Canary Wharf skyline

Historic warehouses in West India Quay

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block pattern & movement

Canary Wharf is bordered to the north by the large highway Aspen Way (A13), to the east by Trafalgar Way and the eastern edge of West India and Millwall Docks, to the south by Marsh Wall and to the west by Westferry Road. In light of this, and the contrast in massing and scale, Canary Wharf suffers from a degree of physical severance from Blackwall and the rest of the Isle of Dogs, which accentuates its isolated, "island" feel.

The grid pattern of streets in Canary Wharf is usually straightforward for pedestrians to navigate. However, the linear docks and small number of bridges hamper north-south pedestrian movement, particularly from Canary Wharf to Blackwall, Millwall and Cubitt Town.
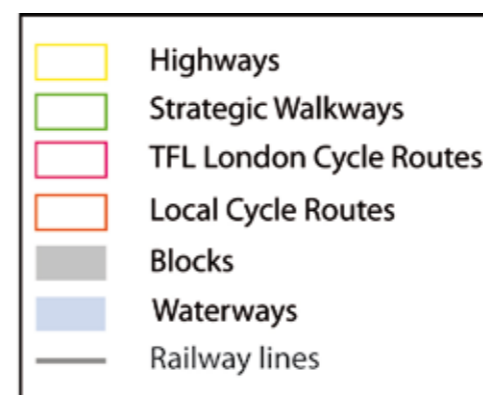
Canary Wharf contains a number of train stations, including the eponymous DLR and Underground stations, and the DLR stations of Westferry, Poplar, West India Quay-and Heron Quays.

Pedestrian movement in Canary Wharf

Canary Wharf London Underground station

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MILLWALL

historical character & identity

Millwall took its name from the wall that bordered the River Thames and guarded against flood damage. In the 18th century there were at least seven windmills along this stretch. On the other side of the Isle of Dogs, the wall was black, giving rise to the name Blackwall.

Early development on the Isle of Dogs was most dense in the north of Millwall, close to the West India Docks and the old established centre of shipbuilding and maritime crafts at Limehouse. By the 1860s, the south of Millwall had also been industrialised. Across Millwall, house building came second to industry, and much of the available ground for houses remained vacant throughout the 19th century.

Millwall has had a distinct residential pattern of settlement which, along with the perceived separation of the Isle of Dogs, created a strong sense of identity. Due to the decline of the docks, poverty and the need for post-war reconstruction, a number of public housing projects were undertaken. One of the most notable projects was the 1960s Barkantine Estate. Consisting of 634 dwellings, this was occupied by a mostly white working-class population. This settlement pattern mirrored earlier development at St John's Estate in Cubitt Town. In the 1980s the Bangladeshi community settled to the south of the St John's and Barkantine Estates.

landscape & open space

Millwall contains a limited proportion of open space, encompassing only a small number of neighbourhood parks. Sir John McDougal Gardens is the largest of these neighbourhood parks and is located adjacent to the River Thames. Other Neighbourhood parks in the area include the modestly sized Lenanton Steps, Mellish Street, Great Eastern Slipway, Masthouse Terrace Play Area and Dockers Tanner Road. However, Millwall is located within close proximity to Mudchute Farm, Millwall Park and Island Gardens (all MOL), which together form a considerably large open space resource for the Isle of Dogs.

Millwall includes an immense amount of waterspace, including frontage on to Millwall Outer Dock and a considerable proportion of waterspace frontage on to the Thames, on it's western and southern edges.

Millwall Park and Mudchute-Farm is within close proximity to Millwall

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2008

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Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
District park
Neighbourhood park
Playing fields and pitches
Sports centres
Children's play spaces
Urban farm
Allotments
Churchyard cemetery
Ecological areas
MOL - groups of trees and shrubs
MOL - grassed areas and footpaths
Blocks
Waterways
Railway lines

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heritage & townscape

Millwall is largely a quiet residential neighbourhood lying to the south of Canary Wharf on the Isle of Dogs, surrounded by the docks and the River Thames.

The housing stock is largely mixed in age, architectural style and density, from low- to high-rise and including: pre- and post-war housing estates predominantly located in the centre of Millwall; a small proportion of Victorian terrace housing; and modern housing developments, predominantly situated along the docks and the River Thames. The Barkantine Estate was built in the 1960s. It is the largest housing estate in Millwall and includes four high-rise towers, though the estate suffers from poor public realm. The Millennium Quarter area is currently undergoing regeneration, including mixed-use medium- to high-rise commercial, residential and retail.
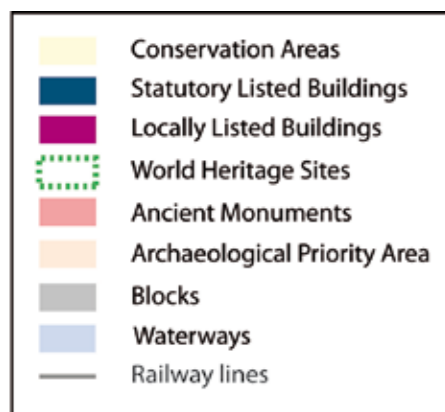
Millwall is protected by only one conservation area, Chapel House, which is also partially located in Cubitt Town. Chapel House Conservation Area encompasses three Garden City Estates, some older traditional terraces and some fine landmark buildings.

Modern developments along the docks

Traditional terraced housing

Conservation Areas
Statutory Listed Buildings
Locally Listed Buildings
World Heritage Sites
Ancient Monuments
Archaeological Priority Area
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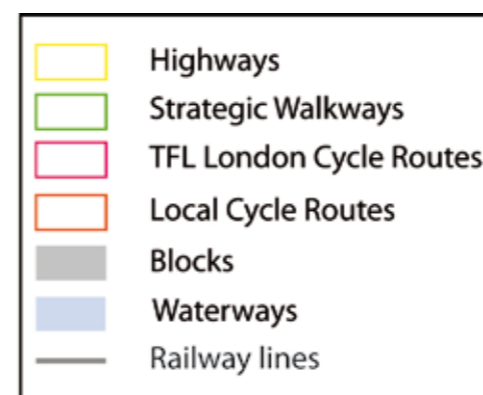
block pattern & movement

Like the rest of the Isle of Dogs, a strong sense of isolation exists in Millwall. The dense commercial district of Canary Wharf, the River Thames and the docks restrict connectivity in the area. Millwall is further disconnected by having only two entrance points from Canary Wharf, via Westferry Road and Marsh Wall.

Westferry Road/Manchester Road is the sole highway in Millwall and is also the key periphery road around the Isle of Dogs. The block pattern in the area is generally of a coarse grain, which is reflected by the substantial proportion of post-war housing estates. However, some exceptions to this rule lie around the Chapel House Conservation Area, where the grain is of a finer nature.

The riverside walkway along the River Thames is well used and popular with pedestrians and cyclists. However, in many instances the waterfront is not accessible, blocked by modern gated housing developments. The Greenwich Foot Tunnel in Cubitt Town lies in close proximity to Millwall and is a well-used key access route from Greenwich to the Isle of Dogs.

Modern developments along the Thames

Highways
Strategic Walkways
TFL London Cycle Routes
Local Cycle Routes
Blocks
Waterways
Railway lines

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CUBITT TOWN

historical character & identity

The south-eastern part of the Isle of Dogs, known as Cubitt Town, was not developed until the mid-19th century. It takes its name from William Cubitt, its developer, who embanked the riverfront and laid out the principal streets during the 1840s and 1850s.

The extent of the wartime damage necessitated large-scale clearance of the pre-war buildings in Cubitt Town, which were largely replaced by public housing projects such as St John's Estate and Rugless House, which were built in piecemeal fashion.

At Mudchute – named for the chutes used to clear out mud from the digging of Millwall Dock there now exists Europe's largest urban farm. This 40-acre site is one of three urban farms in the borough. Mudchute Farm boasts many farm animals, as well as an approved riding school, regular summer play schemes, festivals and agricultural shows.

landscape & open space

Cubitt Town contains Mudchute Farm, Millwall Park and Island Gardens (all MOL), which together form a considerably large open-space resource for the Isle of Dogs. Mudchute Farm is characterised as an urban farm and includes allotments and areas of planting around its periphery. Millwall Park is primarily a large open grassed space that contains playing fields and pitches and children's play spaces. Island Gardens lies on the River Thames and includes impressive views across the river to Greenwich and its historical buildings. The entrance to the Greenwich Foot Tunnel also lies within the park.

A number of neighbourhood parks also sit within Cubitt Town, including St John's Park, which offers a children's play space and a small sports centre. A number of other children's play spaces are also distributed throughout Cubitt Town.

Cubitt Town includes an immense amount of waterspace, including frontage on to Millwall Outer Dock, West India Docks as well as a considerable proportion of waterspace frontage on to the Thames, on the area's eastern and southern edges.

Millwall Park and Mudchute Farm in Cubitt Town

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2008

- Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
- District park
- Neighbourhood park
- Playing fields and pitches
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- Urban farm
- Allotments
- Churchyard cemetery
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- MOL - groups of trees and shrubs
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- Railway lines

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heritage & townscape

Cubitt Town is predominantly a quiet residential neighbourhood lying to the south of Canary Wharf on the Isle of Dogs. The area includes a town centre (close to Crossharbour DLR station), consisting of the Asda site and car park, as well as a large proportion of open space – including Mudchute Farm, Millwall Park and Island Gardens (all MOL).

The housing stock is largely low- to medium-rise post-war estates, with a small proportion of Victorian terraces and modern developments, predominantly located along the docks and the River Thames.

Cubitt Town is protected by just two conservation areas: Chapel House (partially located in Millwall) and Coldharbour (partially located in Canary Wharf). Chapel House Conservation Area encompasses three low-rise Garden City Estates, some older traditional terraces and some fine landmark buildings. Coldharbour Conservation Area includes the two entrances into the Millwall and Blackwall Dock Basins, the river entrances to the historic dry docks (now filled-in) and a number of late-18th- to early-19th-century listed buildings. The Greenwich Foot Tunnel, opened in 1902, is also a World Heritage Site.

The Asda site

Quays
West India Docks
Marsh Wall
South Quay
Crossharbour
Millwall Outer Dock
Manchester Road
Mudchute Farm
Mudchute
Millwall Park
Ferry Road
Island Gardens

Conservation Areas
Statutory Listed Buildings
Locally Listed Buildings
World Heritage Sites
Ancient Monuments
Archaeological Priority Area
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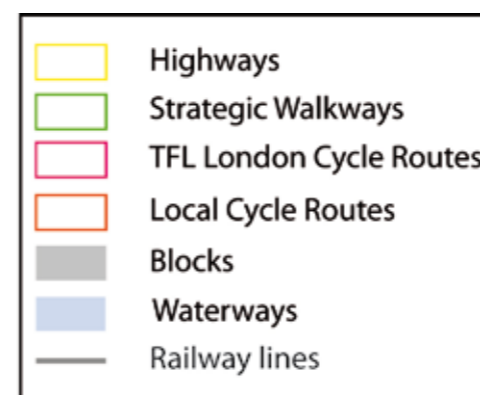
block pattern & movement

A strong sense of isolation exists in Cubitt Town and the rest of the Isle of Dogs. The dense commercial district of Canary Wharf, the River Thames and the docks restrict connectivity in the area. Cubitt Town is further disconnected by having only one entrance point from Canary Wharf, via Westferry Road and Marsh Wall.

Manchester Road/Preston's Road is the sole highway in Cubitt Town and is the key periphery road around the Isle of Dogs. The block pattern is generally of a coarse grain the area, which is reflected in the large proportion of post-war housing estates. In many instances cul-de-sacs have been built, which limit permeability.

The riverside walkway along the Thames is well used and popular with pedestrians and cyclists. However, in many instances the waterfront is not accessible, blocked by modern gated housing developments. The historic Greenwich Foot Tunnel is a well-used key access route from Greenwich to the Isle of Dogs.

The Thames close to the Greenwich Foot Tunnel

Quays
West India Docks
Marsh Wall
South Quay
Millwall Outer Dock
Crossharbour
Manchester Road
Mudchute Farm
Mudchute
Millwall Park
Westferry Road
Island Gardens

Highways
Strategic Walkways
TFL London Cycle Routes
Local Cycle Routes
Blocks
Waterways
Railway lines

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6 RECOMMENDATIONS

THE FUTURE SPATIAL DIRECTIONS

Urban Structure as a Strategic Tool

This section presents a number of strategic options based upon the analysis of urban structure and morphology undertaken so far.

It is not meant to provide all the answers, or indeed offer a comprehensive spatial vision, but merely present a number of potential spatial directions – directions which could shape and inform a long-term spatial vision for the borough, based upon the foundations of urban structure and urban design.

There are three spatial directions presented, each one displaying an alternative urban-structure approach and linking in to development outcomes such as land uses.

Spatial Strategy A is the direction which has proved most appropriate based on the current evidence, and is therefore at present the preferred option. Further testing needs to be undertaken to see if this direction is viable.

There are also a number of over-arching, generic spatial structure recommendations which [...?]. Many of these flow out of the urban structure analysis and follow the general principle of needing to once more put the pedestrian at the heart of the city. Only by achieving this are we going to tackle the bigger issues: social exclusion, unviable town centres, inactive life-styles, car dependency, and so on.

103
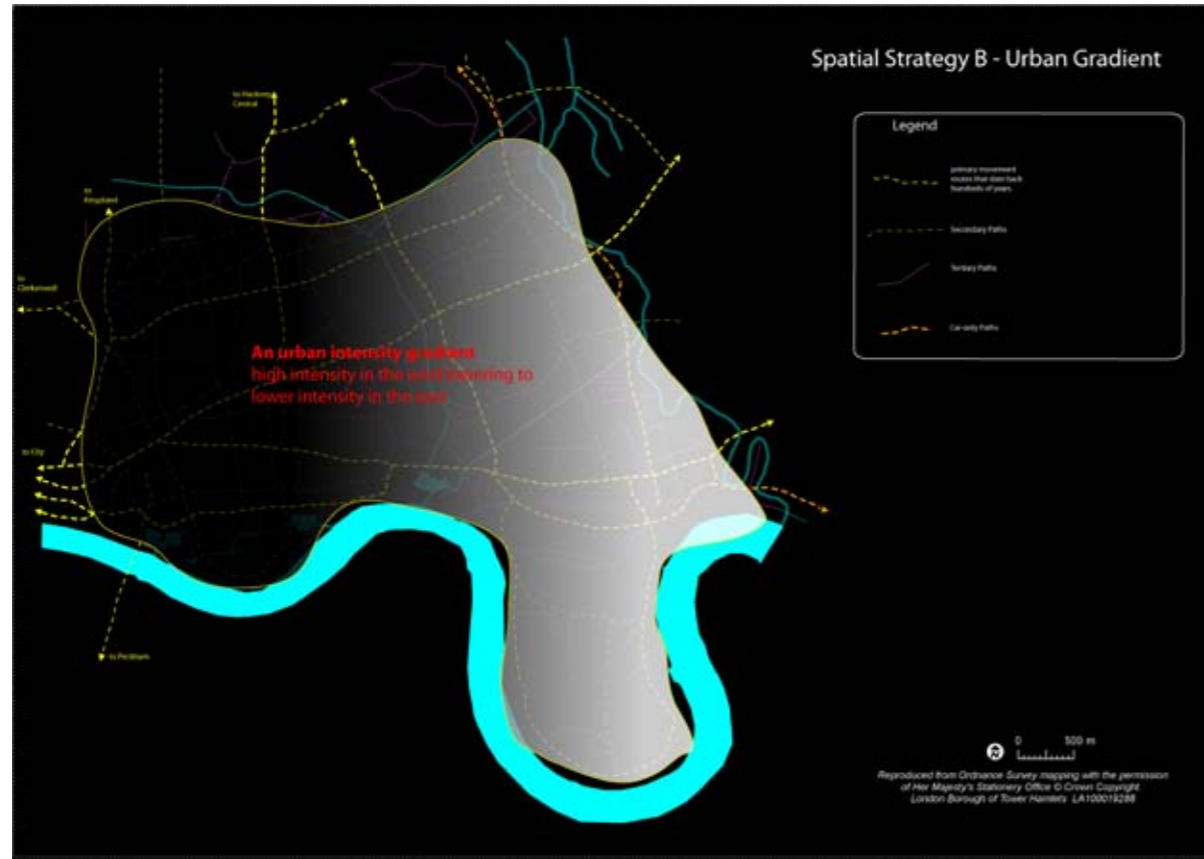
▲ This option would broadly identify the existing pattern of the western part of the borough as being more urbanised than the east, and promote this approach as a future spatial direction.

Such an approach would result in a type of gradient with higher densities, more activity, uses and intensity in the more accessible, connected places in the western half of the borough, such as Spitalfields, Whitechapel, Bethnal Green.

Eastern parts of the borough would be developed at a lower intensity, to achieve a lower density, perhaps promoting lower-rise built form, with a focus on providing terraced house types with back gardens suitable for families, in preference to large numbers of flats.

▶

Mixed-use intensity everywhere could be viable option, given the level of growth and change that will occur across the borough. Hence, this option explores the possibility of allowing high- to medium-intensity development across the borough, utilising the path network and its hierarchy as a means to organise the structure of the urban fabric. Places in the east would become as dense, intense and urban as the places in the historically more urbanised west.

It might culminate in high-intensity mixed-use urban quarters across the borough, with shops and services – wherever they are needed and demanded, and where development can provide them – linked to movement routes. This direction would lead to key services and social infrastructure being located on a development opportunity basis, rather than focusing such key services within centres.
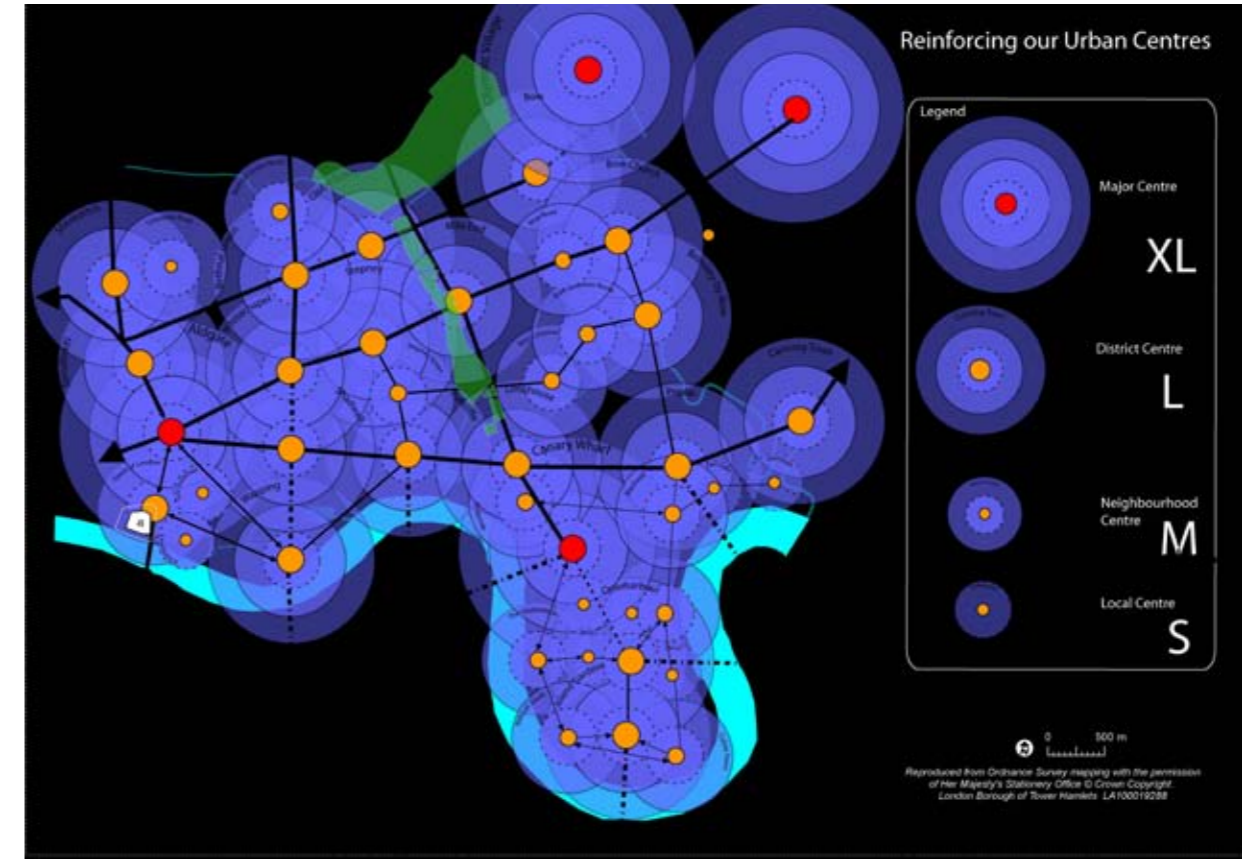
▲ A spatial strategy based on refocusing on the network of centres across the borough. *For more detail please see opposite page.*
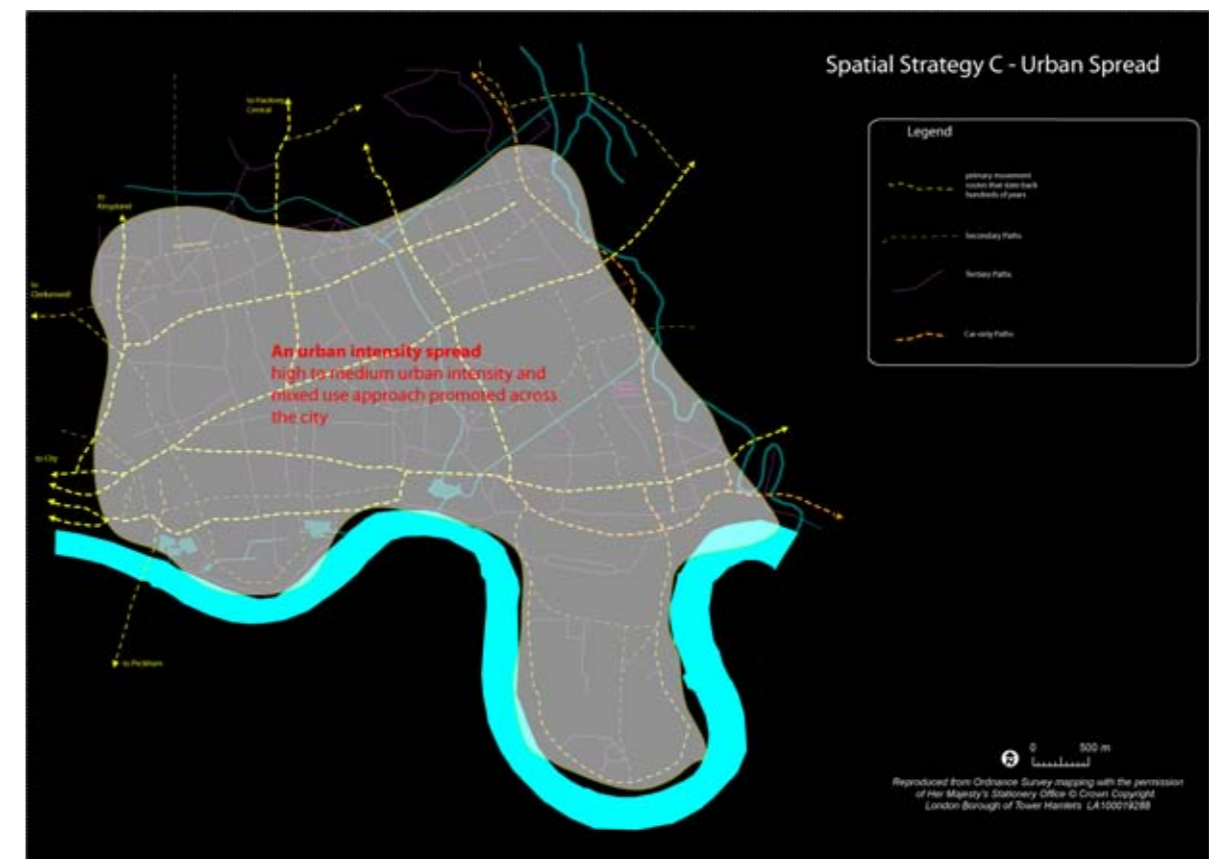
RECOMMENDED SPATIAL STRATEGY

Refocusing on our urban centres

This approach focuses on discovering and recovering the lost centres and places of Tower Hamlets by utilising proactive planning tools.

To generate and foster a "sense of place", to begin the process of placemaking, requires an understanding of the people that make places. Without people, activity, energy, movement, trade, and so on, there would be no place, only space: empty, soulless, dead, inhospitable space.

As discussed previously, post-war planning methodology set about moving people out of places, de-intensifying the activities that made these places unique, and gave them a sense of place. This process needs to be reversed, and above all, the qualities that made them good places need to be reinstated.

We need to begin shaping the form and spatiality of Tower Hamlets. This is not an end-state but a continuous succession of phases (from individual buildings, to wider regeneration projects). These small parts need to come together to make a greater city form, a visual order that reinforces the places that make up Tower Hamlets.

The Core Strategy needs to set down new urban connections between existing centres, and where new activity nodes are formed, set about creating some new centres. For example, at the junction of St Paul's Way and Bow Common Lane, a new centre can be developed, creating a focus on Bow Common.

We need to reinstate the things that bring a city to life: a mix of uses, people, and activities. These urban qualities are valued: people go to places that have these qualities and desert places that do not.

What should be in our centres, and what form should they take?

A whole range of uses should be promoted within an urban centre. It should be the primary location for social and community infrastructure, such as libraries, museums, cultural buildings, and health centres, as well as a range of commercial and retail uses, all in close proximity to one another, so as to create multiple connections and support for each other. Key Civic buildings should be placed to frame key public spaces, helping to build civic pride.

What would happen outside of the urban centres?

As you move further away from the centre, the character of an area becomes more and more residential. The intensity of activity diminishes and the density decreases.

There needs to be a network of local urban centres, which are overlapped by neighbourhood urban centres and district urban centres, supported by a number of major centres. These centres will offer a variety of shops and services related to their position in the hierarchy.

The larger scale centres will be linked and connected by a number of linear, mixed-use streets that focus activity and key civic uses, developing and reinforcing the traditional English high street.

OVER-ARCHING SPATIAL RECCOMENDATIONS

Delivering spatial planning

Through this study of the urban structure and form of Tower Hamlets, a series of factors have been bought to light.

The following 36 recommendations begin to act as pointers for future spatial planning in Tower Hamlets. They are not exhaustive in scope, but attempt to ensure that future planning tools within the Local Development Framework understand and embed local distinctiveness, spatiality, good urban design, and support place identity.

1   Turn orange (vehicle only) routes into multifunctional main streets in a similar way to Commercial Street, Bow Road, etc. Integrate and prioritise the pedestrian on these movement routes; make them mixed-use urban streets, without hindering their role as vehicle routes.

2   Focus and prioritise pedestrian and cyclist movement along key routes, connecting our urban centres to one another via human-focused streets. (Link in with the "legible London" programme and cycling and walking transformation programme led by the Mayor and TfL.)

3   Promote a compact urban form which responds to the urban hierarchy

4   Promote an integrated, flexible, mixed-use approach – with the levels of mix responding to access and location to centres, with the ability for the mix to change over time – giving an area the freedom to evolve and change, and create suitable circumstances without undue planning intervention.

5   Promote access to the rest of the city via strategic routes: principally by public transport, bike and foot, and to promote local connectivity based on the pedestrian and the cyclist.

6   Promote a highly walkable, people-friendly, memorable and enjoyable public realm that offers a multitude of urban pleasures and experiences.

7   Insist on, and promote, a high-quality of design in buildings and the public realm.

8   Promote a mixed-tenure approach to urban living to ensure the creation of socially balanced places.

9   Revise and raise residential space standards in order to ensure that high-density living is seen as an attractive option for all.

10   Acknowledge boundary blurring, and reject outdated zoning practices.

11   Focus civic, social and community buildings on to major routes and spaces to improve access, create a civic setting and bring activity to public spaces.

12   Promote active frontages along major routes and spaces.

13   Promote an integrated, coherent approach to building heights and density, responding to proximity of centres.

14   Parks should be integrated with the neighbourhood and the movement network that operates across the neighbourhood. Through movement should be encouraged and made clear, safe and direct.

15   Create a network of large and small public spaces across the borough to offer places for local people to meet and interact. These spaces should be located where pedestrian activity is substantial to ensure they are lively, not dead, public spaces. The clustering of shops, cafés and other uses around these spaces can help enliven activity.

16   Ensure that buildings frame and address the public-realm network, rather than turning their backs on it, as has happened in the past.

17   The public front of buildings needs to face the street and, as much as possible, have active edges. This can be achieved by front doors, windows, balconies and terraces, and ensures the public realm remains active and overlooked.

18   Connect the key public spaces in the borough to high-quality streets that enable people to move around on foot quickly, easily and with enjoyment. Some of these key connections could be pedestrianised, as long as they have enough activity along them to keep them safe.

19   Use and locate strategic landmarks in urban centres, major nodes and/or along primary paths to reinforce the perception of centre and edge. Strategic landmarks should complement each other and not fight for visual dominance.

20   New small nodes need to be created, which will only occur when parts of the local level path network are repaired and reinstated as recommended in R1. These smaller nodes can act as local focal points, maybe with a few local shops.

21   Ensure most green spaces are edged by buildings that offer active edges and overlooking, to assist in creating lively, well-used and safe parks.

22   To reinstate paths that have been cut due to post-war redevelopment. This can be done by:
• returning to the traditional street pattern of joined-up paths
• promoting the qualities of a permeable area which offers a choice of routes for people

23   To reinforce paths based on the role in the movement hierarchy so they can be easily distinguished and understood by citizens. This can be done by:
• adjusting the width and enclosure of the path
• use of active frontages and edges
• developing a sense of character for each path
• limiting large set backs and empty spaces along the path.

24 Parks should offer space for biodiversity and nature and link into the water network where possible. Green connections between green spaces should be created in a joined-up network.

25 Where possible, attempt to integrate users not segregate them, putting pedestrians – the most vulnerable users – as top priority. Integrating users ensures each path has enough activity to feel safe and overlooked.

26 Utilise the canal network as a multipurpose route. This can be done by:
• promoting it as a movement route for pedestrians and cyclists
• enhancing biodiversity on the network and along its edge, promoting it as a place for nature
• focusing activities, such as restaurants, cafés, and shops, along its edge, where appropriate
• ensuring buildings along its edge address the canal and promote overlooking of the space to improve safety.

27 Reconnect a mix of uses between the public transport nodes and the main movement routes, which hold most pedestrian activity. This can be done by focusing mixed-use, higher-density activity around the public transport node and the area between where the existing mix of uses occur.

28 Focus new centres around good access to public transport, this could mean for a large centre located around a tube or DLR station and for a smaller centre located along a busy secondary route which has a bus service along it. This will make sure that centres are easily accessible both by foot, bike and public transport allowing people a multitude of ways to access them

29 Reinforce nodes to improve their role as meeting places. This can be done by:
• using built form to highlight these nodes
• concentrating activities at these nodes
• ensuring a high level of public relevance of buildings and activities that frame the nodes

30 Break up some of the big blocks into smaller blocks helping to improve permeability by reinstating the traditional street network. This will help to make places more walkable and remove the large barriers to movement that many of the housing estates create.

31 Assist in developing vibrant, mixed-use centres and promote smaller block sizes in the centre of places. This will create more development edge and will encourage more shops and services to operate and take advantage of the higher concentrations of pedestrian activity.

32 Use markers (local landmarks) at appropriate locations along paths to reinforce their legibility and enable the user to know where they are along a path, and where they are going.

33 Direct building heights to increase gradually from the edge to the centre of a neighbourhood. The scale of the increase will differ from place to place. It might mean three storeys increasing to seven in one centre, and be higher or lower than this in another.

34 Reconnect to the River Thames, making use of the edge it offers. This can be done by:
• improving physical and visual access to the river
• focusing activities and uses along its edge so as to encourage people to go and enjoy the space
• Look into the feasibility of new pedestrian footbridges across the Thames to connect north-east and south-east London

35 Make use of the railway lines and arches. This can be done by:
• overcoming them as barriers by creating new connections over and under them
• using the arches as spaces for business and other uses
• promoting their role as places of rich biodiversity thereby leaving some parts of them for nature, and restricting human access.

36 Better define the public-realm network by using buildings to frame the space instead of large swathes of under-used open space. Put such space in the internal private area of blocks and locate buildings along the edge of blocks with their public fronts addressing the street.

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