LONDON BOROUGH
OF TOWER HAMLETS

TALL BUILDINGS STUDY

FEBRUARY 2018

TOWER HAMLETS

4155

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View towards Canary Wharf from Narrow Street in Limehouse

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View across Millwall Inner Dock towards Millharbour and Marsh Wall

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

In recent years London has seen a surge of taller buildings being planned and built across the capital. Many are located in places that previously were not characterised by taller buildings, often within low to medium rise development contexts. Historically London's tallest buildings were offices but in recent years these tall buildings have increasingly been for residential use.

In less than ten years new towers have altered London's skyline beyond recognition. Towers have had a profound impact on the character and amenity within their immediate areas, as well as the legibility of the urban fabric and the city image. Permitted or completed towers have set a precedent for exceptional height in many locations, increased land values and have been the genesis for tall building clusters.

Tower Hamlets has become a focus for tall buildings applications with the existing clusters at Aldgate and Canary Wharf expanding and other clusters emerging along the Thames waterfront. The existing policy framework has proved inadequate as a means to resist applications that are too large or proposed in inappropriate locations.

Tower Hamlets is the fastest growing borough in the UK. The population grew by 30% in the period 2001 to 2011 (census data). Population growth is expected to continue with a 23% increase from 2016 - 2026 (304,900 to 374,000 people) predicted. The borough has the highest London Plan housing target: 39,314 new homes over ten year period 2015 – 2025.

It is also experiencing high economic growth with an increase in jobs in the borough from 160,000 to 302,000 in the period from 2000 – 2015.

There are a number of drivers for change including Tech City in the west of the borough, Canary Wharf, the Poplar Riverside Housing Zone, Olympic Legacy and the Elizabeth Line which will deliver improved accessibility at Canary Wharf and Whitechapel.

There is however a need to balance the delivery of housing numbers with the need to create quality living environments both now, and for future generations, and careful consideration must be given to the role and appropriateness of tall buildings across the borough.

POLICY BACKGROUND

THE LONDON PLAN

The London Plan (March 2016) advocates a 'plan led' approach to tall and large buildings and indicates that plans should identify appropriate, sensitive, and inappropriate locations for large and tall buildings. It also indicates that tall buildings should 'only be considered in areas whose character would not be affected adversely by the scale, mass or bulk of a tall or large building'. The Historic England Tall Buildings advice note 4 (December 2015) recommends the use of characterisation / building height studies to assist formulation of local plan policy.

The London Plan defines tall buildings as structures that:

- Are substantially taller than their surroundings;
- Cause a significant change to the skyline; and
- Are larger than the threshold sizes set for the referral of planning applications to the Mayor (currently above 30m in height).

Policy 7.7 'Location and Design of Tall and Large Buildings,' states that tall buildings should:

- Generally, be limited to sites in the Central Activities Zone, opportunity areas, areas of intensification or town centres that have good access to public transport;
- Only be considered in areas whose character would not be affected adversely by the scale, mass or bulk of a tall or large building;
- Relate well to the form, proportion, composition, scale and character of surrounding buildings, urban grain and public realm (including landscape features), particularly at street level;
- Individually or as a group, improve the legibility of an area, by emphasising a point of civic or visual significance where appropriate, and enhance the skyline and image of London;
- Incorporate the highest standards of architecture and materials including sustainable design and construction practices;
- Have ground floor activities that provide a positive relationship to the surrounding streets;
- Contribute to improving the permeability of the site and wider area, where possible;
- Incorporate publicly accessible areas on the upper floors and where appropriate make a significant contribution to local regeneration;
- Not affect their surroundings adversely in terms of microclimate, wind turbulence, overshadowing, noise, reflected glare, aviation, navigation and telecommunication interference; and
- Not interfere with strategic and local views.

At a more general level the London Plan also emphasises the important of high quality design. **Policy 7.6 'Architecture'** states that buildings should make a positive contribution to a coherent city/streetscape and incorporate the highest quality of materials and design. This policy states that buildings should not cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of surrounding land and buildings in relation to privacy, overshadowing wind and micro-climate – especially with tall buildings.

The London Plan allocates three opportunity areas in the borough: City Fringe, Isle of Dogs and South Poplar and Lower Lea Valley. The Greater London Authority (GLA) has identified these areas as a focus for future growth to help meet London's housing and employment needs. These opportunity areas cover more than 50% of the borough.

THE LOCAL PLAN

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) is in the process of preparing a new Local Plan to guide development in the borough to 2031.

The new Local Plan includes a policy to guide the location of tall buildings to the most appropriate and sustainable areas in the borough (Policy D.DH6: Tall buildings).

This study helps to strengthen and support Policy D.DH6 and should be read alongside the policy. Together they:

- Identify appropriate, inappropriate and sensitive locations for tall buildings and make recommendations on potential sites / tall building zones; and
- Provide guidance on the height and form of potential tall buildings.

IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL LOCATIONS FOR TALL BUILDINGS

The study is informed by a spatial analysis of the borough and a review and assessment of the current development pressure / development pipeline for tall buildings across the borough. The identification of appropriate, inappropriate and sensitive areas for tall buildings is, in response to London Plan and Historic England recommendations, supported by a detailed characterisation study.

London Plan Policy 7.7 generally limits tall buildings to sites in the Central Activities Zone (CAZ), opportunity areas, areas of intensification or town centres that have good access to public transport. An overlay of the borough's three opportunity areas, its major centre and eight district centres and PTAL indicates that the initial area of search for parts of the borough appropriate for tall buildings is limited to the opportunity areas together with Roman Road West district centre. All parts of the CAZ are within opportunity areas.

The characterisation work has been undertaken for the areas of search. This adds to the LBTH Urban Structure and Characterisation Study (2009) and its Addendum (2016) and strengthens the understanding of character in respect of building form, scale and typology in order to help to identify sensitivities and the appropriateness of areas for tall buildings.

The LBTH Urban Structure and Characterisation Study sub-divided the borough into 24 Places reflecting the series of historic hamlets that have evolved and grown to form the borough we see today. The characterisation work carried out for this Tall Buildings Study uses the same sub-divisions.

The characterisation work includes:

- An assessment of the character and townscape – including identification of character areas and typologies and the locations of existing tall buildings and local landmarks;
- Identification of existing building heights;
- Public transport accessibility;
- Sensitivities to change including the location of conservation areas and listed buildings and public open space;
- Potential areas of change including site allocations, current tall building proposals and other potential areas of change; and
- A summary of whether the 'Place', or parts of it, are appropriate, inappropriate or sensitive to tall buildings.

TALL BUILDING STRATEGY

A 'tall building' is a relative term. A ten-storey building might be a (very) tall building in a predominantly two-storey suburban area, yet would be considered only as a local highpoint in an urban five to six storey context. Thus, tall buildings must be considered in relation to their local context.

This study categorises tall buildings into different height groups by reference to their context height ratio. This allows a simple expression of the 'tallness' and impact of a tall building within their context as well as on the skyline.

Four height classifications are identified:

- Large/higher building;
- Local Landmark;
- District Landmark; and
- Metropolitan Landmark.

The study includes a Tall Building Strategy for the borough and this identifies twelve tall building principles that are promoted within Tower Hamlets. These are detailed overleaf.

TOWER HAMLET'S TALL BUILDINGS PRINCIPLES

The following tall buildings principles are identified for Tower Hamlets:

1) TO PROMOTE OUTSTANDING DESIGN

The quality of design and the right siting of tall buildings is critical for making a positive and lasting contribution to their locality. More than any other development type they require design excellence to maximise their contribution to the skyline and local environment and mitigate their negative impacts, particularly at street level. Every tall building should be of the highest architectural and urban design quality and in the case of residential tall buildings must deliver a high quality living environment.

2) TO ENHANCE IMAGE AND STRENGTHEN SENSE OF PLACE

Tall buildings can play an important role in shaping perceptions of an area, creating memorable associations and enhancing sense of place within Tower Hamlets 24 Places. However, they can create negative image if poorly designed or insensitively located.

3) TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE EXISTING HERITAGE AND TOWNSCAPE

The important aim that guides the planning for tall buildings is to protect and enhance the unique quality of the heritage and townscape that characterises Tower Hamlets. Tall buildings can be especially harmful to the setting of listed buildings, conservation areas, historic parks and significant views. Tall buildings can affect the setting of listed buildings and views of historic skylines even some distance away. They often appear out of place disrupting the urban pattern, character, scale, roofscape and building line of historic quarters. Tall buildings should only be promoted where they help to enhance the character and distinctiveness of an area without adversely affecting established valued townscapes or landscapes, or intruding into important views.

4) TO STRENGTHEN LEGIBILITY

Tall buildings should perform a positive landmark role within the townscape. They need to be of exceptional design and offer distinctiveness to a locality. A tall building should respect and respond to townscape, enhance the legibility of an area and contribute positively to its character and sense of place.

5) TO CONTROL THE LOCATION OF TALL BUILDINGS

Tall buildings should generally be limited to mixed-use areas with high levels of activity, excellent public transport accessibility and an appropriate character that can accommodate a taller building in terms of its townscape as well as increased activity levels and transport.

6) TO BE PROPORTIONATE TO THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF A PLACE

The principle of proportionality should apply, whereby the height of tall buildings corresponds to the role and relative importance of the location in the local, wider borough or metropolitan context:

a) Local landmarks should help to mark special locations in the townscape, such as a strategic street corner, a public space or a particular function, such as a station;

b) District landmarks should only be located central to locations that are of district or borough wide importance, such as strategic infrastructure nodes or public institutions; and

c) Metropolitan landmarks should be confined only to areas in the Central Activites Zone that have a London wide strategic importance and form part of a high intensity employment cluster.

7) TO FORM CLUSTERS WHERE APPROPRIATE

District and metropolitan landmarks should not be scattered around but confined to discrete and identifiable clusters to control the form and impact on the skyline. The height of tall buildings in a cluster should drop away from the centre to the periphery to support its central emphasis and not all buildings within a cluster should be tall to avoid creating a wall of development. The layout and form of other development in clusters should provide a context of larger scale buildings, and sufficiently scaled streets that can integrate and support tall buildings. A number of tall building zones are promoted within Tower Hamlets.

8) TO SAFEGUARD CANARY WHARF'S ICONIC IMAGE

The Canary Wharf cluster forms an essential part of the city image an internationally recognisable feature on the skyline that represents one London's financial centres and the successful regeneration of the docklands. Canary Wharf is identified as a Skyline of Strategic Importance with One Canada Square a globally recognised silhouette. This cluster must be carefully managed to retain its iconic character and image.

9) TO DELIVER ECONOMIC GROWTH AND REGENERATION

In the right location and deploying the highest design standards tall buildings can help to signal change, raise profile, generate confidence and support regeneration. They can deliver intensity, high density and transformational change providing jobs and strengthening the local and national economy.

10) TO DELIVER COMPREHENSIVENESS

All too often tall buildings are promoted on small sites where they compromise potential development opportunities on neighbouring sites and where it is difficult to address the challenges of servicing and the provision of a mix of uses to provide activity at ground floor level. Tall building proposals should be part of a more comprehensive development so that these issues can be adequately addressed.

11) TO PROMOTE COMPACT DEVELOPMENT

High density development of the type and mix of uses that is needed in Tower Hamlets can be delivered through well-designed compact development without the need for taller buildings. Compact buildings below the tall buildings threshold offer ample flexibility for increased density and additional height in accordance with Tower Hamlet's place specific and design policies.

However, it is recognised that taller buildings can contribute to efficient use of land for living and working particularly where there is good public transport accessibility.

12) TO DELIVER ADDED VALUE

Tall buildings bring significant and permanent change to a locality and its community. Therefore they are expected to deliver wider regeneration and social benefits for their locality. Benefits should be well beyond the normal development contributions or tokenistic gestures, but could include significant environmental improvements, comprehensive change or delivery of important infrastucture.

These twelve principles form the basis for the tall building guidance set out in the tall buildings study.

TALL BUILDING ZONES

The strategy identifies five tall building zones across the borough:

1 Aldgate Cluster

2 Canary Wharf Cluster

3 Millwall Inner Dock Cluster

4 Blackwall Cluster

5 Leamouth Cluster

The location of these clusters is derived through the characterisation work.

Each tall building zone is different and tall buildings within the zones will need to respect the existing character and respond to sensitivities. Building height principles for each zone are identified in detail within the study.

Whilst a number of tall building zones have been identified there may also be opportunities for individual tall buildings across the borough where they serve to act as landmarks. The height of these buildings should relate to their role as a local, district or metropolitan landmark and the context height.

The Characterisation work identified potential, but sensitive locations, in Shoreditch, Bethnal Green, Whitechapel, Shadwell and Poplar Riverside.

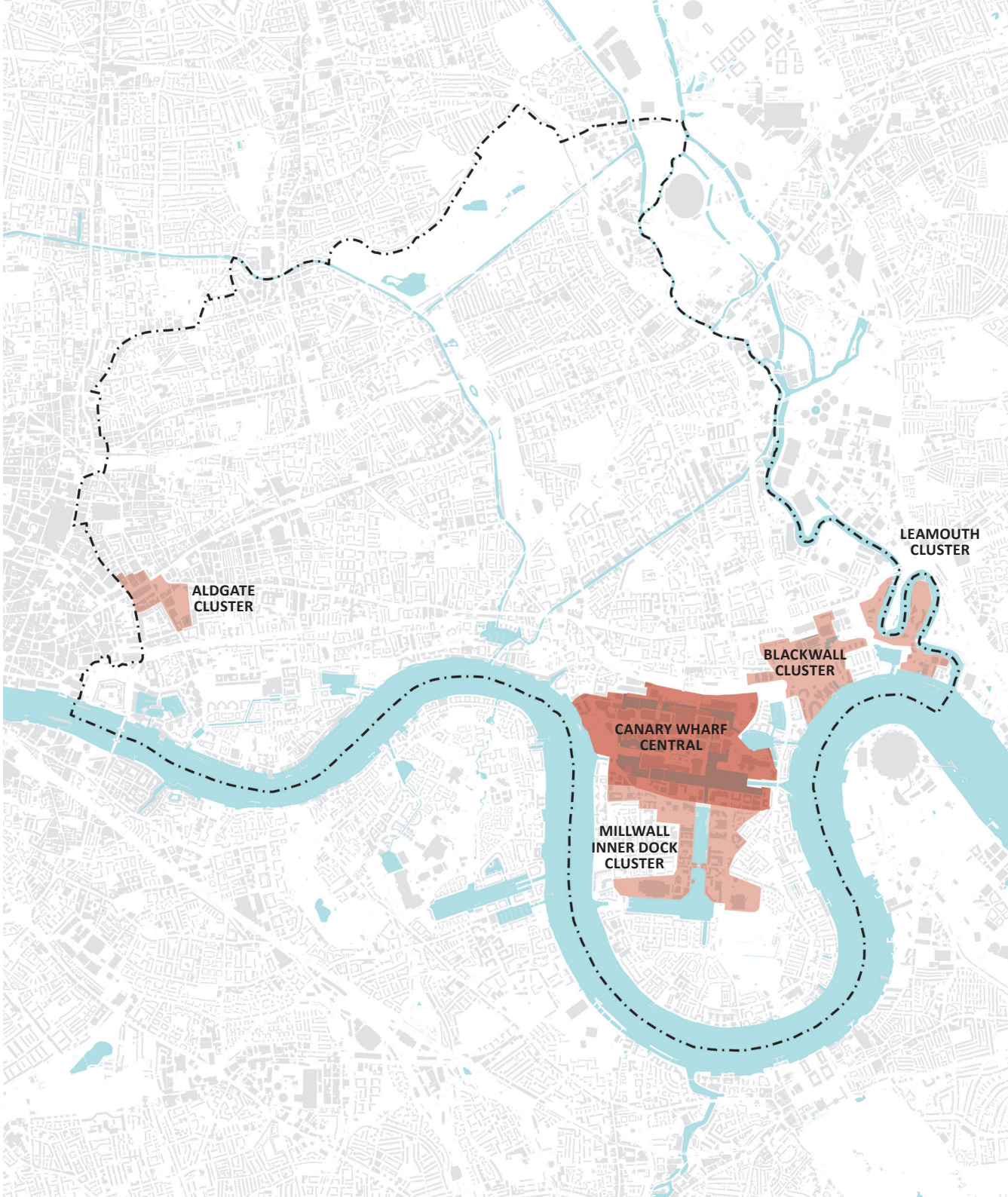


Figure A: Tall building zones

TALL BUILDING DESIGN

Through the characterisation work a number of tall building zones and other potential locations for tall buildings have been identified, however height of a tall building, is only one aspect of a tall building.

There are a number of other design aspects that are equally or even more important, in determining how well a building integrates with its context, the impact it has on its immediate environment, how it is perceived on the skyline and ultimately how successful a building is in adding to its locality.

Tall buildings are exceptional developments that in many cases have a transformative impact on their surrounding area. By virtue of their size and widespread visibility, the impact of a tall building will be significantly greater than that of a building of ordinary scale and height. It is therefore critical that the utmost attention and scrutiny goes into the design of a tall building to ensure the best possible design solution for a place is delivered.

A tall building proposal will need to consider and appropriately respond to the following contextual attributes:

- The height, scale and massing of buildings, its coherence or variation;
- The urban grain (sub-division of blocks and plots) and townscape;
- The streetscape, including the scale of streets, the alignment of buildings and the building interface and the street level experience;
- The building composition, silhouette and skyline characteristics;
- Aspects of built form and articulation of building elements, such as the base, body and roofscape;
- Architectural language, materials and detailing; and
- The spatial response to special morphological situations such as open spaces, waterways and railway lines.

Tall buildings must be carefully sited so as not to have an excessive intrusive impact on the historic environment and to damage historic settings. Recognised local views, vistas or panoramas that show a heritage asset in its setting are particularly vulnerable to damaging intrusion by insensitive tall, or massive-scale development.

As with any other development, the London Plan and the borough's design policies apply in guiding an appropriate and high quality design response.

However, tall building developments should bring forward an exceptionally well considered urban design response and due to its wider visibility and prominence the architectural quality of a tall building needs specific attention. This must consider in particular:

- The design of the base, shaft and top of the building to both deliver activity and animation at the ground floor level and both local, mid and long distance views;
- The appreciation of the building from all sides and viewpoints;
- The materiality, detail and texture of façade, colour in relation to its back-drop and the surounding context and its night time impression;
- Its relationship and interface with the street space and the size of entrances and lobbies which should be clearly recognisable, and be proportionate to the size and use of the building;
- The private and public amenity provided, both within and adjacent to the building which should serve to foster social cohesion and increase liveability;
- The servicing, cycle parking, storage and plant which should be integrated in the building, located away from primary pedestrian areas and be appropriately screened from public view; and
- The design to minimise impacts on microclimate including wind, overshadowing and daylighting, solar glare and light pollution.

View from back Church Lane towards Wapping

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) is in the process of preparing a new Local Plan to guide development in the borough to 2031. The current Tower Hamlets Local Plan is comprised of the Core Strategy (2010) and the Managing Development Document (2013). However since 2010, the borough has undergone significant change, and experienced a high level of growth and development.

In particular, since the 2010 Core Strategy was adopted, there have been an increasing number of proposals for tall buildings in the borough. Whilst these can have positive impacts as symbols of regeneration and help to deliver growth in the local economy or much needed new homes they also have significant impacts on local character and identity, either as individual developments or cumulatively.

The London Plan (March 2016) advocates a 'plan led' approach to tall and large buildings and indicates that plans should identify appropriate, sensitive, and inappropriate locations for large and tall buildings. It also indicates that tall buildings should 'only be considered in areas whose character would not be affected adversely by the scale, mass or bulk of a tall or large building'. The Historic England Tall Buildings advice note 4 (December 2015) recommends the use of characterisation / building height studies to assist formulation of local plan policy.

The new Local Plan will will guide the location of tall buildings to the most appropriate and sustainable areas in the borough.

This study helps to strengthen and support the tall buildings policy in the Local Plan (Policy D.DH6) and should be read alongside the policy. Together they:

- Identify appropriate, inappropriate and sensitive locations for tall buildings and make recommendations on potential sites / tall building zones; and
- Provide guidance on the height and form of potential tall buildings.

The study is informed by a spatial analysis of the borough and a review and assessment of the current development pressure / development pipeline for tall buildings across the borough. The identification of appropriate, inappropriate and sensitive areas for tall buildings is supported by a detailed characterisation study.

It is also intended that the study will be reviewed and updated through the plan period if required.

1.2 CONTEXT

A changing borough

Tower Hamlets is an inner London borough and sits in an important strategic location between London and the south east.

It is an extremely diverse borough, economically, socially and physically. It borders on the City of London to the west and includes the strategically important employment location, Canary Wharf, towards the east. It is the fourth largest employment location in London and has one of the most dynamic economies in the country, with a strong enterprise community. It includes some of the most, and the least deprived wards in the country and it has one of London's most diverse communities with 69% of the borough's population minority ethnic.

Tower Hamlets is the second most densely populated borough in London, and the townscape of the borough is evolving with many areas having undergone significant change and regeneration. In recent years there has been an increase in the number of tall buildings, particularly residential ones, causing notable changes to the borough's skyline, with positive and negative implications.

Tower Hamlets has recorded the fastest growing population in the country in recent years, growing almost 30% between the 2001 and 2011 Census. This growth is expected to continue and is projected to increase from 304,900 in 2016 to 374,000 in 2026, a 23% increase. This has

resulted in a huge growth in demand for transport infrastructure, local services and pressure on the local environment.

The London Plan 2016 sets out a new housing target for the borough of a minimum of 3,931 new homes each year. This requires the London Borough of Tower Hamlets to deliver a minimum of 39,314 additional new homes over a ten year period from 2015 to 2025.

The London Plan also allocates three opportunity areas in the borough: City Fringe, Isle of Dogs and South Poplar and Lower Lea Valley. The Greater London Authority (GLA) has identified these areas as a focus for future growth to help meet London's housing and employment needs. These opportunity areas cover more than 50% of the borough.

This growth will put huge pressure on the borough and could have a significant impact on its character and identity. Tower Hamlets has a rich history and evolved from a series of historic hamlets into a densely populated part of inner East London. Whilst parts of the borough, and notably Aldgate and Canary Wharf, include dense clusters of tall buildings much of the borough is a modest two to three storeys in scale.

Increasing pressure to build tall

In recent years London has seen a surge of taller buildings being planned and built across the capital. Many are located in places that previously were not characterised by taller buildings, often within low to medium rise development contexts. In less than ten years new towers have altered London's skyline beyond recognition. Towers have had a profound impact on the character and amenity within their immediate areas, as well as the legibility of the urban fabric and the city image. Permitted or completed towers have set a precedent for exceptional height in many locations, increased land values and have been the genesis for tall building clusters.

The New London Architecture report (2017) indicates that there are 455 tall buildings of twenty storeys and above in the pipeline in London. Historically London's tallest buildings were offices but 92% of these proposed tall buildings are residential and the proposed towers are becoming increasingly high, with the tallest, Landmark Pinnacle at 75 storeys and 239m AOD (above ordnance datum), and Spire London at 69 storeys and 241.5m AOD (both within Canary Wharf) close to the height of One Canada Square (245.8m AOD).

Tower Hamlets has become a focus for tall buildings applications with the existing clusters at Aldgate and Canary Wharf expanding and other clusters emerging along the Thames waterfront. The existing policy framework has proved inadequate as a means to resist applications that are too large or proposed in inappropriate locations. There are currently 77 buildings of 20 storeys and above in the pipeline in Tower Hamlets representing 17% of all proposed tall buildings in London and more than in any other borough.

Tower Hamlets is not resistant to change or growth and indeed the vision in the consultation draft Local Plan states that:

'As the centre of London expands east, Tower Hamlets will embrace its role as the focus for London's growth, making best use of the economic benefits from Canary Wharf, the City of London and Stratford. The connections between the borough and surrounding areas will be improved whilst maintaining our own distinct East-End identity. This growth will be primarily delivered in the City Fringe, the Lower Lea Valley, and the Isle of Dogs and South Poplar and at key locations along transport corridors. The benefits of the transformation of our borough will be shared throughout Tower Hamlets including all our residents, ensuring no one is left behind.'

However the growth must be carefully managed and must respond to the character and setting of the area and be of an appropriate scale, height, mass, bulk and form. Tall and large buildings have a particular impact on character and identity and this study will identify and recommend the locations across the borough that are appropriate, sensitive and inappropriate for tall buildings and make recommendations on appropriate heights.

1.3 APPROACH TO THIS STUDY

The methodology for the preparation of the Tall Building Study is reflected in the structure of this report, which is summarised below:

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

SECTION 2: PLANNING CONTEXT

The study is based on a robust policy review. This covers the national, regional and local planning policy context, including Historic England's Advice Note on tall buildings and a review of the policy and evidence base underlying the current tall building policy.

SECTION 3: TOWER HAMLETS SPATIAL OVERVIEW

This section provides a spatial overview of the borough, identifying it's spatial structure, distribution of land uses, and public transport accessibility. A detailed mapping of existing building heights across the borough has been undertaken and this illustrates the typical height and scale of development in the borough, as well as where exceptional height is concentrated. This section also identifies areas that are potentially sensitive to tall buildings through mapping of listed buildings, conservation area designations, protected vistas and local views, local landmarks and topography.

SECTION 4: TOWER HAMLETS DEVELOPMENT PRESSURE AND CHANGE

This section sets out the development pressure that the borough is facing. It identifies the drivers for change, identifies the opportunity areas and provides a summary of consented tall building proposals and their locations.

SECTION 5: TOWER HAMLETS TALL BUILDING APPROACH

This section sets out the theoretical baseline for the tall buildings study. It includes a definition of what constitutes a tall building, provides an overview on the current tall building debate in London, discusses the potential role of tall buildings in Tower Hamlets, summarises potential negative impacts of tall buildings, and outlines the scope of tall buildings to enhance legibility, to contribute to the skyline and the city image, and to form clusters.

SECTION 6: IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL LOCATIONS FOR TALL BUILDINGS

This section provides a characterisation of those parts of the borough that might be appropriate for tall buildings – 15 of the boroughs 24 'Places' are explored - these being the places that are identified within opportunity areas. For each a brief description is provided followed by an assessment of the existing character, building heights, public transport accessibility, sensitivities to change and the potential areas of change. A summary is then provided indicating whether the area, or parts of it, are appropriate, inappropriate or sensitive to tall buildings.

SECTION 7: TALL BUILDINGS STRATEGY

This final section sets out the Tall Building Strategy for Tower Hamlets. It identifies twelve tall building principles to guide considerations in relation to tall buildings, indicates the location of tall building zones and their characteristics and provides a detailed commentary on design criteria for tall buildings in the borough.

New development on City Island, Leamouth

2 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (March 2012) sets out the government's objectives for new development. The NPPF does not have any specific policies on tall buildings, however, it sets out a number of more general design and planning principles which are relevant to the development of tall buildings.

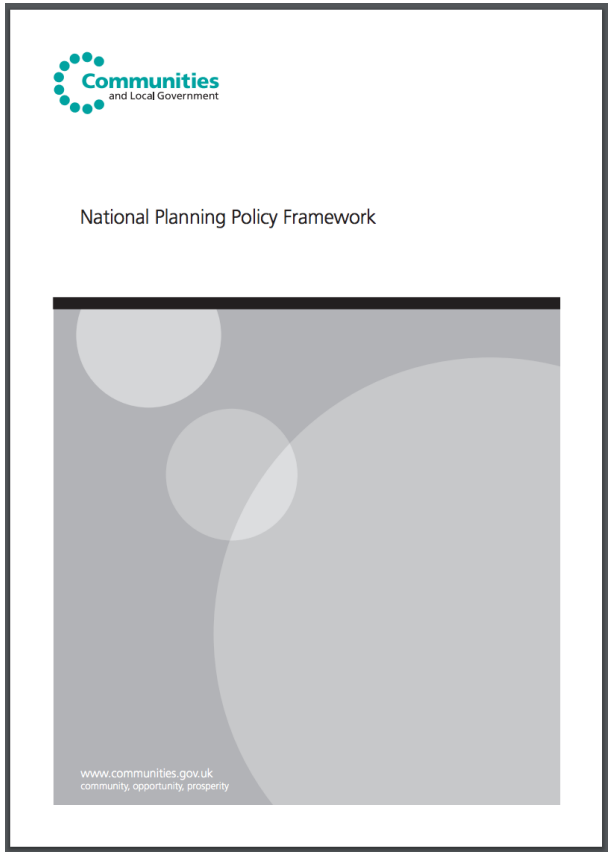
Good design is a key requirement of the NPPF. The NPPF states that it is important to plan positively to achieve high quality and inclusive design and that local authorities should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected in their area. These should be based on a clear vision for the future of the area and upon a detailed evaluation of the characteristics that define it.

The NPPF promotes an urban design led approach to planning that requires buildings to respond to the location in which they are located rather than prescribe specific architectural styles.

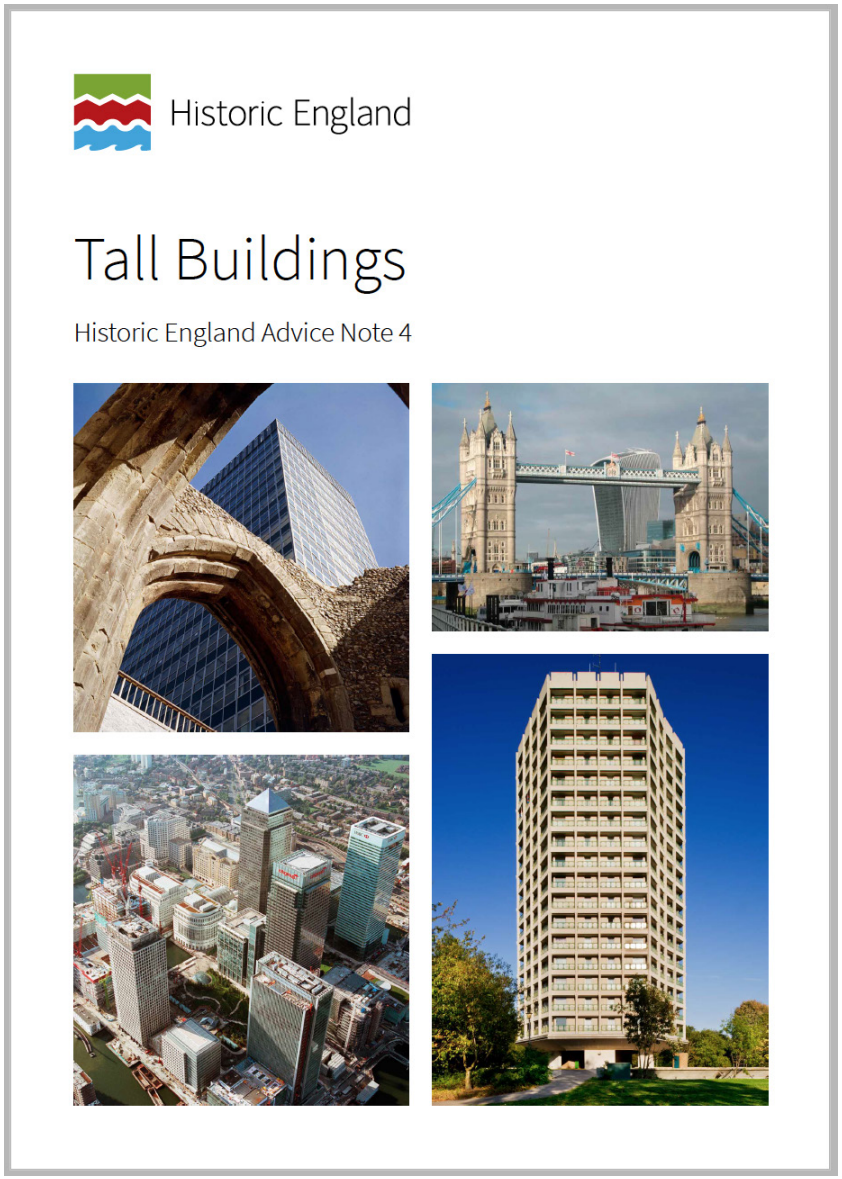
Planning polices are required to ensure that new development will:

- Function well and add to the quality of the area;
- Establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive places to live;
- Make the most of the potential of the site;
- Respond to local character, history and identity;
- Create safe and accessible environments;
- Are visually attractive;
- Respond well to heritage assets and their setting; and
- Respond to the views of local people.

The NPPF makes a presumption in favour of sustainable development and states that buildings that generate significant movement should be located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes maximised. The NPPF states that planning authorities should not turn down applications that promote high levels of sustainability because of concerns with the compatibility of development with the existing townscape. This is an important consideration for tall building applications that may generally be conceived as inappropriate in townscape terms.



National Planning Policy Framework



Historic England Tall Buildings Advice Note (December 2015)

2.2 HISTORIC ENGLAND - TALL BUILDINGS ADVICE NOTE

Historic England published a Tall Buildings Advice Note in December 2015. It is intended to support all of those involved in dealing with proposals for tall buildings from designers to local authorities. It supersedes the earlier 2007 CABE/English Heritage 'Guidance on Tall Buildings'. Although its primary focus is the impact of tall buildings on heritage assets, it also provides a number of general guidelines surrounding the design and location of tall buildings.

The document does not take a negative stance against tall buildings. It states that tall buildings can be excellent works of architecture and make a positive contribution to towns and cities. However, the Advice Note states that for tall buildings to be successful measures to control the location and design of such structures must be embedded in local planning documents.

The Advice Note promotes a plan led and positive approach to the location and design of tall buildings. It states that this should be specific to area and include a local definition for tall buildings that is appropriate to its specific context (rather than being guided by a defined number of storeys/ metres).

Local Plans will be expected to:

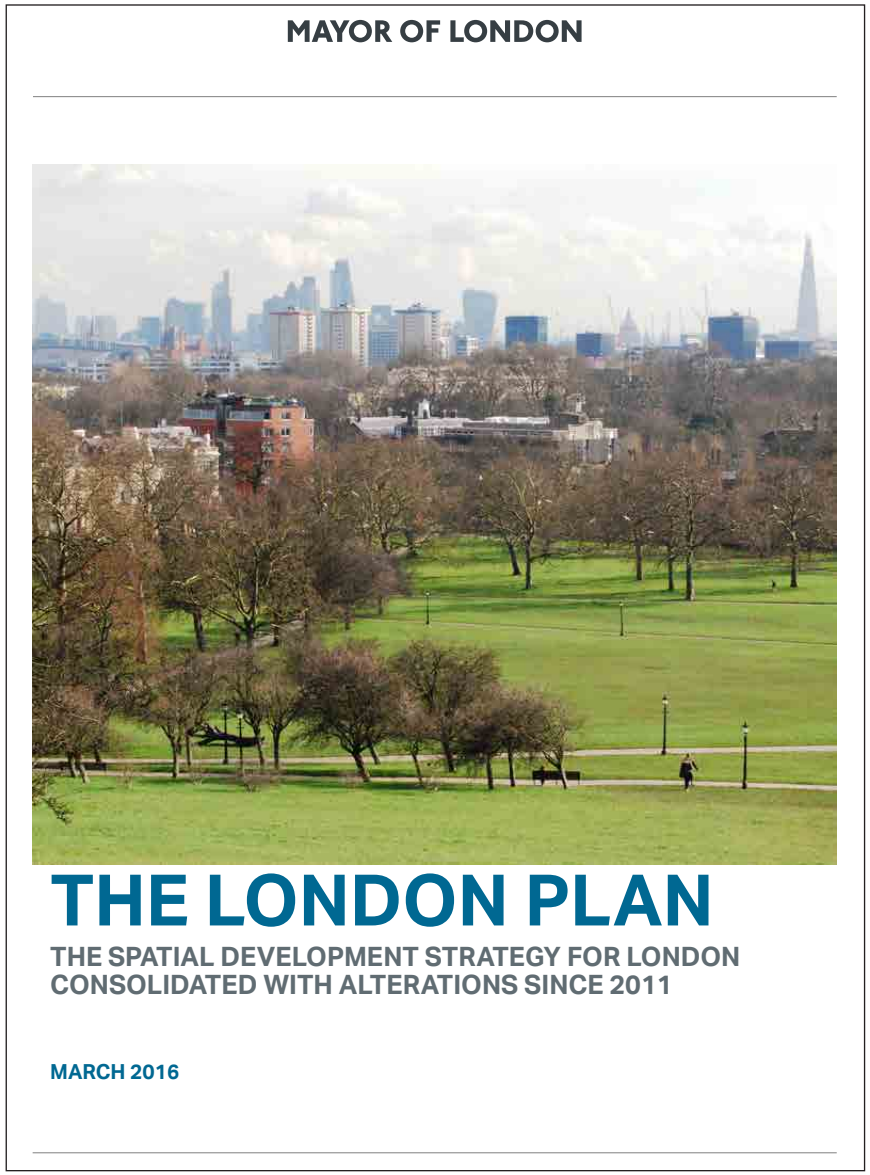
- Identify the role and contribution of tall buildings as part of an overall vision for a place;
- Ensure that the setting of heritage assets are protected from any potential negative impact from tall buildings;
- Identify areas that are appropriate for tall buildings;
- Express design requirements for tall buildings;
- Encourage a mix of uses within tall buildings that are required in the local area;
- Ensure early public consultation is undertaken;
- Reduce inappropriate applications for tall buildings in the wrong places;
- Ensure that tall building applications fully consider the impacts on local people.
- Identify sites where removal of existing tall buildings may enhance the environment; and
- Identify whether tall buildings are the most appropriate way to deliver high densities or whether another solution is more appropriate.

The Advice Note states that the scale and form of development should be assessed as part of the formulation of the local plan. It suggests the use of characterisation/building height studies as well as heritage and urban design assessments to designate appropriate locations and polices for tall buildings. The document very clearly states that the existence of a tall building on a site is not a justification for a replacement building of the same scale or on an adjoining site.

The Advice Note makes a general requirement for tall buildings to set exemplary standards of design and states that a high quality tall building will have a positive relationship with:

- Topography;
- Character;
- Heritage assets;
- Height and scale of surrounding development;
- Urban grain and streetscape;
- Open spaces;
- Rivers;
- Important views and panoramas; and
- The skyline.

The Advice Note promotes an urban design led approach with less attention on architectural style or detailing. The specific guidance on the form and shape of tall buildings included in the 2007 Guidance is not included.



The London Plan (March 2016)

2.3 LONDON PLAN (POLICY 7.7)

The London Plan is the statutory spatial development strategy for greater London. All of London's boroughs local development plans should be in general conformity with the policies included within this document.

The London Plan defines tall buildings as structures that:

- Are substantially taller than their surroundings;
- Cause a significant change to the skyline; and
- Are larger than the threshold sizes set for the referral of planning applications to the Mayor (currently above 30m in height).

Policy 7.7 'Location and Design of Tall and Large Buildings,' is the primary policy related to this type of building. It states that tall and large buildings should be part of a plan-led approach to changing or developing an area. As part of this, local plans should identify appropriate, sensitive and inappropriate locations for large and tall buildings.

It states that tall buildings should:

- Generally, be limited to sites in the Central Activities Zone, opportunity areas, areas of intensification or town centres that have good access to public transport;
- Only be considered in areas whose character would not be affected adversely by the scale, mass or bulk of a tall or large building;

- Relate well to the form, proportion, composition, scale and character of surrounding buildings, urban grain and public realm (including landscape features), particularly at street level;
- Individually or as a group, improve the legibility of an area, by emphasising a point of civic or visual significance where appropriate, and enhance the skyline and image of London;
- Incorporate the highest standards of architecture and materials including sustainable design and construction practices;
- Have ground floor activities that provide a positive relationship to the surrounding streets;
- Contribute to improving the permeability of the site and wider area, where possible;
- Incorporate publicly accessible areas on the upper floors and where appropriate make a significant contribution to local regeneration;
- Not affect their surroundings adversely in terms of microclimate, wind turbulence, overshadowing, noise, reflected glare, aviation, navigation and telecommunication interference; and
- Not interfere with strategic and local views.

In addition consideration should be given to the impact a tall building may have on sensitive locations such as listed buildings parks, scheduled ancient monuments and conservation areas.

At a more general level the London Plan also emphasises the important of high quality design. **Policy 7.6 'Architecture'** states that buildings should make a positive contribution to a coherent city/streetscape and incorporate the highest quality of materials and design. This policy states that buildings should not cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of surrounding land and buildings in relation to privacy, overshadowing wind and micro-climate – especially with tall buildings.

Urban Design and the roles that buildings play in the wider cityscape is prioritised in the the London Plan's Design policies. Policy 7.4 requires buildings to provide high quality design responses that:

- Have regard to the pattern and grain of existing spaces and streets in orientation, scale, proportion and mass;
- Contribute to a positive relationship between the urban structure and natural landscape features, including the underlying landform and topography of an area;
- Are human in scale, ensuring buildings create a positive relationship with street level activity and people feel comfortable with their surroundings;
- Allow existing buildings and structures that make a positive contribution to the character of a place to influence the future character of the area; and
- Are informed by the surrounding historic environment.

Policy 7.5 requires development to make the public realm comprehensible at the human scale, using 'gateways, focal points and landmarks as appropriate to help people find their way'.

The London Plan does not focus on particular styles of architecture or types of buildings, rather it promotes a place led approach to planning and design.

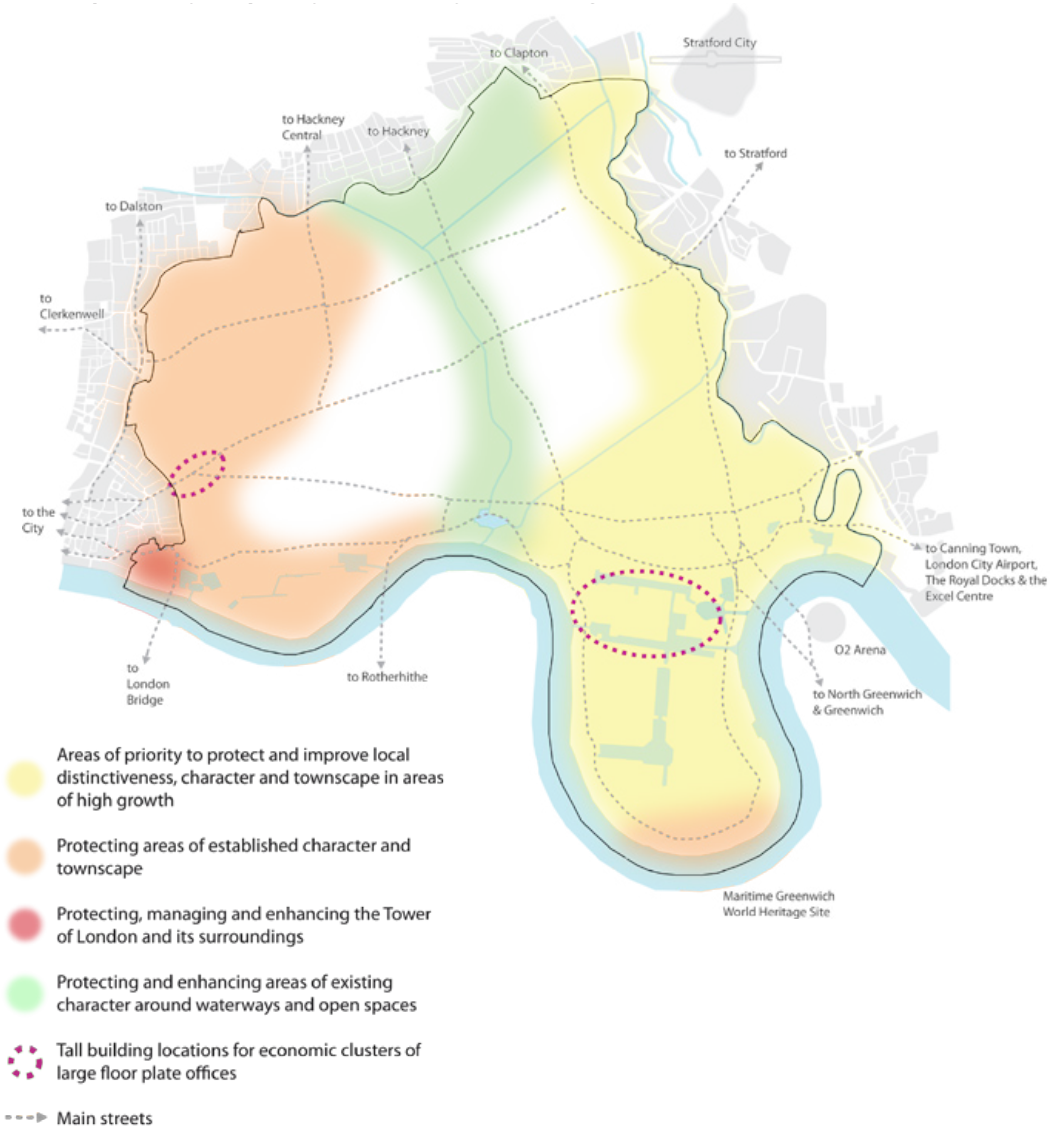


Figure 2.1: Core Strategy (2010) Figure 37: Creating distinct and durable places

2.4 TOWER HAMLETS DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2.4.1 CORE STRATEGY (2010) AND MANAGING DEVELOPMENT DOCUMENT (2013)

The current Tower Hamlets Local Plan is comprised of the Core Strategy (2010) and the Managing Development Document (2013). However since 2010, the borough has undergone significant change and experienced a high level of growth and development.

The Core Strategy 2010 proposed a spatial strategy that included the following policies:

- To have a hierarchy of interconnected, vibrant and inclusive town centres that are mixed use hubs for retail, commercial, leisure, civic and residential. The purpose of each town centre will differ according to its role and function (Policy SO4);
- Protect, celebrate and improve access to our historical and heritage assets by placing these at the heart of reinventing the hamlets to enhance local distinctiveness, character and townscape views' (Policy SO22); and
- To support the thriving and accessible global economic centres of Canary Wharf and the City Fringe which benefit the regional and local economies' (Policy SO15).

Two tall building zones are identified as 'economic clusters of large floor plate offices' at Canary Wharf and Aldgate / City Fringe (Core Strategy Figure 37: Creating distinct and durable places).

POLICY DM26: BUILDING HEIGHTS

Building heights are managed through Policy DM 26 in the Managing Development Document (April 2013):

1 Building heights will be considered in accordance with the town centre hierarchy (as illustrated in Figure 9) and the criteria stated in part 2.

2 Proposals for tall buildings will be required to satisfy the criteria listed below:

- a. Be of a height and scale that is proportionate to its location within the town centre hierarchy and sensitive to the context of its surroundings;

- b. Within the Tower Hamlets Activity Area, development will be required to demonstrate how it responds to the difference in scale of buildings between the CAZ/Canary Wharf major centre and the surrounding residential areas.

- c. Achieve high architectural quality and innovation in the design of the building, including a demonstrated consideration of its scale, form, massing, footprint, proportion and silhouette, facing materials, relationship to other buildings and structures, the street network, public and private open spaces, watercourses and waterbodies, or other townscape elements;

- d. Provide a positive contribution to the skyline, when perceived from all angles during both the day and night, assisting to consolidate clusters within the skyline;

Figure 2.2: Policy DM26: Illustration showing building heights for the preferred office locations and the town centre hierarchy (Managing Development Document 2013)

- e. Not adversely impact on heritage assets or strategic and local views, including their settings and backdrops;

- f. Present a human scale of development at the street level;

- g. Where residential uses are proposed, include high quality and useable private and communal amenity space and ensure an innovative approach to the provision of open space;

- h. Not adversely impact on the microclimate of the surrounding area, including the proposal site and public spaces;

- i. Not adversely impact on biodiversity or open spaces, including watercourses and waterbodies and their hydrology, as well as their settings and views to and from them;

- j. Provide positive social and economic benefits and contribute to socially balanced and inclusive communities;

- k. Comply with Civil Aviation requirements and not interfere, to an unacceptable degree, with telecommunication, television and radio transmission networks; and

- l. Demonstrate consideration of public safety requirements as part of the overall design, including the provision of evacuation routes.

3 Proposals to replace existing tall buildings will need to be in accordance with part (1).

Assessing Policy DM26

Policy DM26 is relatively simplistic and implies that the appropriateness and height of tall buildings will be directly related to the centre within which they are located and its designation in the settlement hierarchy.

However the character, setting and accessibility of each of Tower Hamlets centres varies enormously dependant on its historic development, the prevailing building typologies and relationship to open spaces and road and rail infrastructure. Policy DM26 provides a somewhat blunt tool for assessing the appropriateness of tall buildings applications across the borough and provides an approach that is neither plan led nor responsive to public transport accessibility or local character.

Over the plan period a considerable number of tall buildings have been approved in areas where there was no support from the local plan and in many cases it was hard for the authority to refuse inappropriate tall buildings using the current policy.

Policy DM26 has not proved to be robust in resisting tall buildings in inappropriate areas for a number of reasons:

- Policy areas where tall buildings are acceptable (i.e. City Fringe and Canary Wharf) are not exhaustive and exceptions can therefore be argued for and permitted;
- Where tall buildings are seen as harmful they were often permitted by allowing provision of public benefits (required infrastructure) to compensate for their harmful impacts;
- Where tall buildings may be acceptable the height limit was not clear;
- Where tall buildings are present nearby, this was often argued to be part of the local character and used to justify why the proposed building was not harmful; and
- The impact of tall buildings on future development was not identified (applicants were not requited to consider cumulative impacts or deliver comprehensive development).

2.4.2 URBAN STRUCTURE AND CHARACTERISATION STUDY (2009) AND ADDENDUM (2016)

The Urban Structure and Characterisation Study analyses the historical growth of the borough and its impact on the image, shape and identity of Tower Hamlets. It presents a borough-wide analysis from a series of urban design perspectives, including movement routes and block pattern. This borough-wide analysis, sub-divides the borough into 24 places reflecting the series of historic hamlets that have evolved and grown to form the borough we see today.

For each of these 24 places the historical character and identity, landscape and open space, heritage and townscape and block pattern and movement is considered and evaluated.

An addendum to this characterisation study was prepared in 2016 to support the emerging plan. The addendum identifies the change in character of the places since the 2009 study. It also sets out the main spatial and place-making issues that each area faces and the redevelopment and regeneration potential including intervention areas and improvement to the public realm and linkages.

The study does not however including a detailed assessment of character areas within each place and this Tall Buildings Study includes further analysis to strengthen the understanding of character in respect of building form, scale and typology which can help to identify sensitivities and the appropriateness of areas for tall buildings.

2.4.3 AREA BASED STRATEGIES

London Borough of Tower Hamlets has prepared and adopted Supplementary Planning Documents for Whitechapel (2013) and South Quay (2015).

WHITECHAPEL SPD (ADOPTED 2013)

The Whitechapel SPD considers the potential for tall buildings to assist local regeneration but recognises the need for sensitivity in response to heritage assets. The following statement is included in respect of tall (landmark) buildings:

'Landmark buildings are an important visual representation of regeneration and provide an opportunity to provide high quality architecture within the existing built environment. In some areas, where redevelopment can provide significant regeneration benefits for Whitechapel, a new landmark building may be expressed as a high quality taller building. Existing taller buildings include the new RLH building, which currently marks the skyline and views into and out of Whitechapel. In this context, taller buildings designed with high quality architecture provide an opportunity to positively contribute to the new built form and character of Whitechapel.

Any taller buildings should be sensitive to existing heritage assets, not just in terms of immediate or neighbouring visual impact, but also in a London wide impact, in line with the London View Management Framework. They should also be carefully considered in terms of their environmental impact on the amenity of adjacent residential areas and open spaces, particularly the ground floor plane to ensure successful integration with the existing built environment.'

SOUTH QUAY SPD (ADOPTED 2015)

The SPD for South Quay provides further guidance to help steer the future development of South Quay so that development comes forward in a coordinated and planned way. The SPD includes a number of place making principles including:

Urban structure & frontages

Development should deliver a well-defined urban block pattern fronted by active frontages throughout, with a focus on non-residential uses facing onto Marsh Wall, open spaces and docksides with clear distinctions between public, communal and private spaces.

Massing

Development should deliver massing in a varied but coherent urban environment that delivers defined and engaging streets and spaces while maximising levels of natural light and providing a transition in scale from surrounding areas.

Skyline

Development should contribute to a visually engaging and balanced skyline while acknowledging the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site.

An illustrative Masterplan depicts how the massing of developments should be provided. The SPD states that 'massing of new developments should complement and provide a transition from the Canary Wharf major centre to the adjacent residential areas, particularly along the southern boundary. It should ensure that build step down from dockside and open spaces'.

The policy promotes Hybrid urban blocks that consist of a podium, plinth and taller element. The podium and plinth deliver active frontages clearly define entrances and conceal entrances to parking and servicing. The taller elements step down from Canary Wharf major centre and accord with the latest Civil Aviation Authority heights guidance for London City Airport.

The SPD also requires that development should

- Provide visual layering; and
- Demonstrate how it:
  - achieves an aesthetically balanced skyline;
  - fits within the Canary Wharf cluster;
  - delivers variation in the skyline;
  - steps down from the Canary Wharf cluster; and
  - enables views of the open sky between buildings.

LONDON LEGACY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (LLDC)

The LLDC was established in 2012 as one of the Mayoral Development Corporation. It has a Local Plan (2015) that provides planning policies for all development within its area including Hackney Wick/Fish Island and Bromley-by-Bow. Area Based strategies have been prepared for Bromley by Bow (SPD adopted in 2012), and Fish Island (AAP adopted in 2012). These areas are not considered in detail in this study.

NEW LOCAL PLAN TALL BUILDINGS POLICY

The new local plan will include a policy on tall buildings (Policy D.DH6). This study provides supporting evidence to amplify this policy.

Fine grain fabric on Whitechapel Road

3 TOWER HAMLETS SPATIAL OVERVIEW

3.1 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

ORIGINS AND GROWTH

"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

Figure 3.1: Historic development - Tower Hamlets 1808

Figure 3.2: Historic development - Tower Hamlets 1832

By the early 19th Century the main routes through the area, Mile End Road, Bethnal Green Road and Commercial Road, were becoming increasingly important as thoroughfares, and trade routes. The connection with the river was also important and this became a place for trade and for shipbuilding and repair. The construction of West India Dock (1802) and East India Dock (1806) created a new focus for the borough. At this time many people were still living off the land with the majority of the eastern part of the borough still agricultural and much of it cultivated as market gardens.

Through the 19th Century industry expanded through the area. The Regents Canal opened in 1820 to allow movement of coal and building materials and streets of Georgian houses laid out in terraces were built along Mile End and Commercial Road and in Stepney and Whitechapel.

In the 1840's urbanisation continued eastwards and rail lines were constructed to access London from the east. Shoreditch station opened in 1840 (became Bishopgate in 1846) and Fenchurch Street station in 1841. St Katherine Dock opened in 1827 following slum clearance and Millwall Dock followed in 1868.

Figure 3.3: Historic development - Tower Hamlets 1843

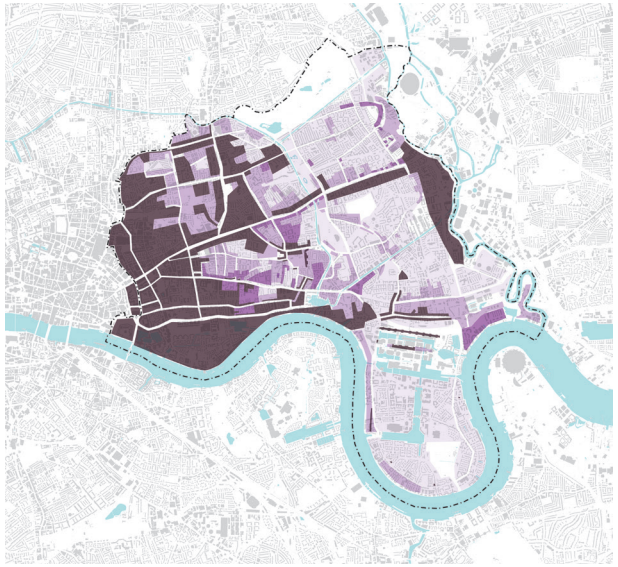


Figure 3.4: Historic development - Tower Hamlets 1894

Figure 3.5: Historic development - Tower Hamlets 1947 (WWII damage)

By the latter part of the 19th Century almost the whole of the borough had been developed, mostly as tightly knit streets of terraced housing. Victoria Park, opened in 1845, on the northern edge of the borough, became increasingly important and by the latter part of the 19th Century it became an essential amenity for the area.

Through the 19th Century the area drew an increasing number of people to it, attracted by the possibility of employment. This led to extreme overcrowding throughout the area and a concentration of poor people and immigrants often living in poor housing in the areas districts. The area started to be known as the 'East End' at this time.

Attempts to address overcrowding began in the early 20th Century with new housing delivered by the London County Council (LCC) and the distinctive, usually five storey, robust blocks from that period are still apparent across the borough. World War II led to more significant change.

The industry, docks and railways in Tower Hamlets made it a target for bombing. 46,000 homes across the borough were destroyed and a similar number were damaged.

POST WAR CHANGE

In the post-war years historic buildings were replaced by estates, often with experimental development forms that contrasted with the historic context and in some cases including tall buildings.

By the 1960's London's Docklands were in decline as shipping companies adopted larger container ships and industry moved to deep water ports. By 1980 all the docks had closed. In 1981 the London Docklands Development Corporation was created to stimulate development. This saw a huge area of the Docklands converted into a mixture of residential, commercial and light industrial space. Canary Wharf became a second major financial district and the UK's tallest building, One Canada Square, completed in 1991, sat at its heart.

New public transport was extended through the area including the Docklands Light railway opened in 1987 and the Jubilee line extension in 1999.

Canary Wharf delivered a new form of development for London not seen beyond the City of London. A cluster of tall office buildings, with One Canada Square forming the centrepiece. This created a new London landmark and icon that is instantly recognisable and that is strongly representative of its function as a financial district of international significance.

Canary Wharf stood on its own and at a significantly higher scale than anything nearby however in recent years further clusters of tall buildings have been developed on City Island in Leamouth and within Blackwall. The Canary Wharf cluster has extended southward to include sites at South Quay and along Mill Harbour and Marsh Wall. Beyond Canary Wharf major centre new tall buildings are predominantly residential.

Canary Wharf - a new London landmark and iconic cluster of international significance

In the last few decades former employment sites across the borough have been replaced with new development often of considerable scale and new clusters of tall buildings have emerged at Aldgate and Wapping.

3.2 STRATEGIC LOCATION

Tower Hamlets is located to the east of the city with the River Thames forming its southern edge and with the London Boroughs of Southwark and Lewisham and Royal Borough of Greenwich sharing the river frontage to the south. The London Borough of Newham is to the east and the London Borough of Hackney to the north. The western portion of the borough is within the Central Activity Zone and borders on the City of London.

The western portion of the borough is strongly influenced by the city and its expansion eastwards at Aldgate and Spitalfields and the effects are also felt in Shoreditch.

Tall building clusters have established in neighbouring boroughs and are visible from vantage points within Tower Hamlets. These include Dalston in LB Hackney, Stratford and Canning Town in LB Newham, the Greenwich Peninsula in the Royal Borough of Greenwich, Canada Water in LB Southwark and Lewisham town centre in LB Lewisham.

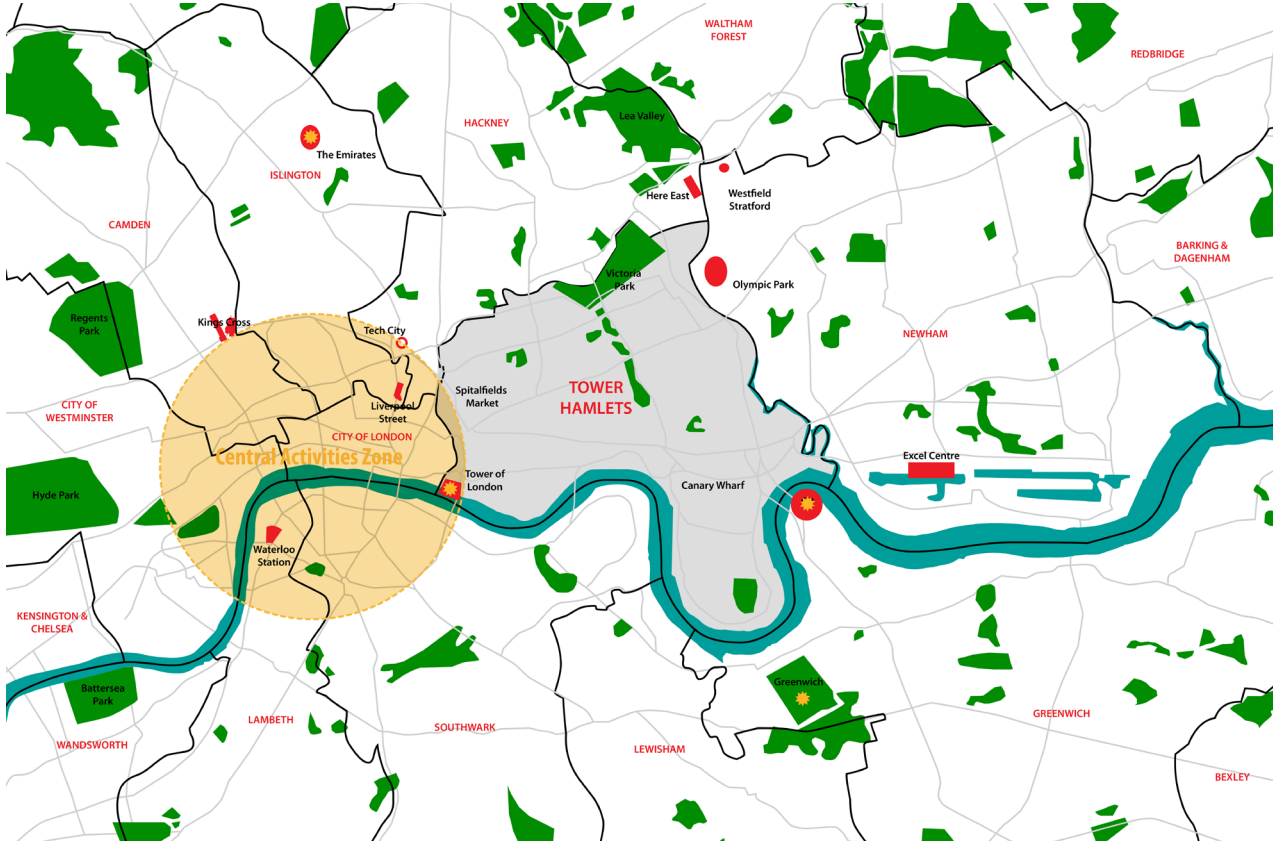


Figure 3.6: Strategic location and relationships

3.3 SPATIAL STRUCTURE

3.3.1 CENTRES

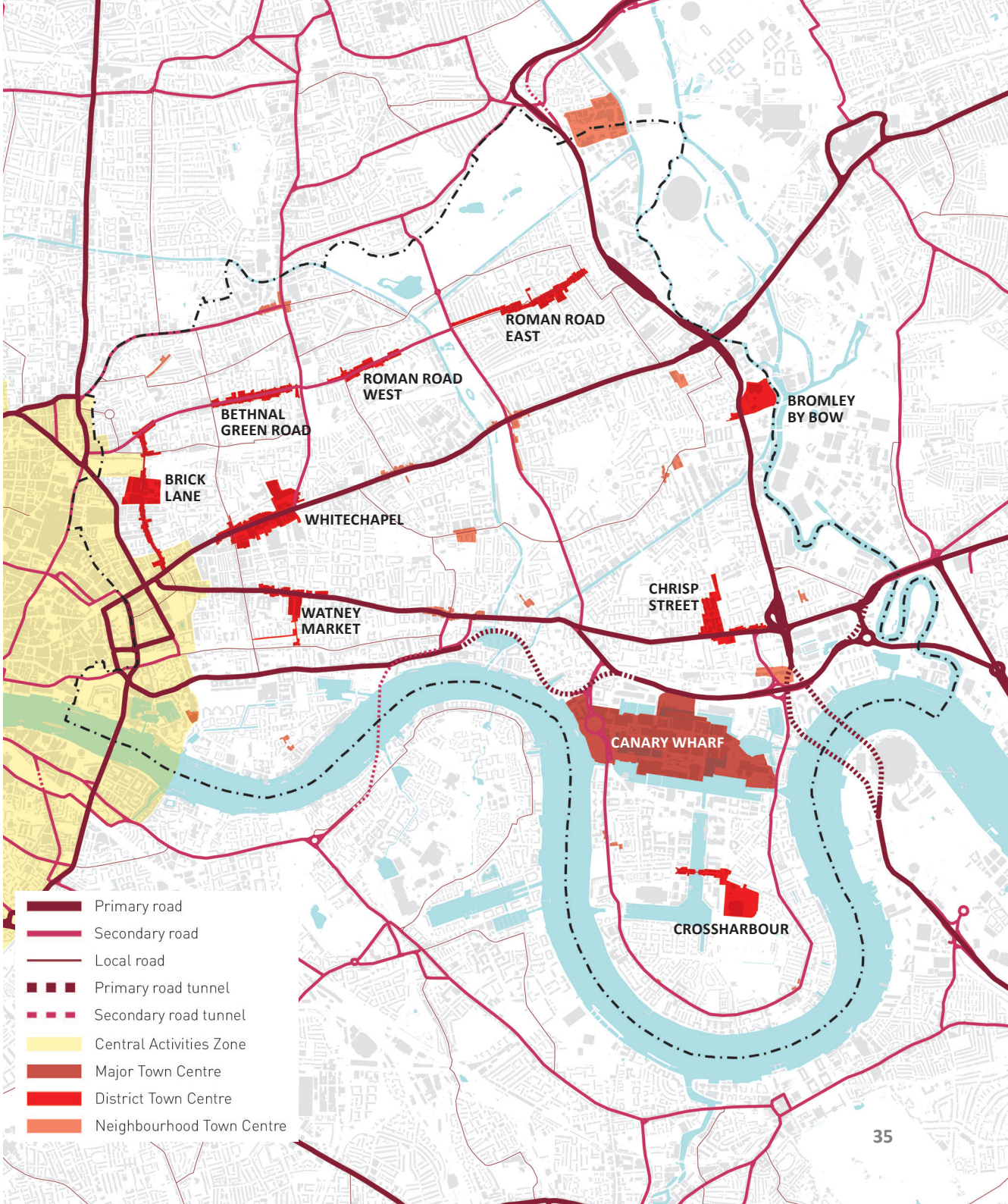
The borough has a major centre at Canary Wharf and eight district town centres. These are:

- Bethnal Green Road;
- Brick Lane;
- Chrisp Street;
- Crossharbour;
- Roman Road West;
- Roman Road East;
- Watney Market; and
- Whitechapel.

Bromley by Bow is also designated as a district town centre but is administered by the London Legacy Development Corporation.

The majority of these district town centres are linear in form and provide a mix of services strung along the main routes through the area. Many including Brick Lane, Whitechapel and Bethnal Green include attractive historic parades of shops. Chrisp Street and Crossharbour are more modern with Crossharbour in particular focused on a large foodstore. Historic street markets are also a strong feature of the district town centres.

Figure 3.7: The borough's centres and movement corridors



In addition to the district centres the borough also has 19 neighbourhood centres and 12 neighbourhood parades.

The western edge of the borough together with Canary Wharf are located within the Central Activities Zone (CAZ) as defined in the London Plan. This is described as:

"a unique cluster of vitally important activities including central government offices, headquarters and embassies, the largest concentration of London's financial and business services sector and the offices of trade, professional bodies, institutions, associations, communications, publishing, advertising and the media".

The CAZ is likely to be under considerable development pressure. The London Plan has a dedicated Supplementary Planning Document related to the CAZ. This includes guidance on elements such as striking the balance between new residential development and offices and protecting commercial uses.

The presence of the CAZ emphasises Tower Hamlets important strategic position and how development in the borough must also relate to wider policies that effect the whole of London. Significantly, the CAZ is also one of the locations where the London Plan is supportive of new tall buildings.

3.3.2 CORRIDORS

The primary routes through the borough are the north-south A12 which forms the approach to the Blackwall Tunnel and the east west A11 Mile End Road / Whitechapel Road, A13 Commercial Road, A1203 The Highway and A1261 Aspen Way.

The A11 and A13 are historic routes and are fronted by buildings along their length however the A12, A1203 and A1261 create inhospitable vehicle dominated environments that cause severance between the neighbourhoods to either side.

3.3.3 OPEN SPACES

Tower Hamlets has a number of green spaces and waterways. The largest green spaces being Victoria Park and Mile End Park towards the centre and north of the borough, and Mudchute Park on the Isle of Dogs. The borough also benefits from a unique network of water spaces including the River Thames, streams, canals, docks and other open water.

The overall provision of publicly accessible open space in the borough remains low with some parts of the borough being acutely deficient. As the population increases so will the publicly accessible open space deficit.

Other significant open spaces are located nearby in LB Newham (Olympic Park and Lea Valley Regional Park) and Royal Borough of Greenwich (Greenwich Park).

Delivering new open spaces in the borough will be a challenge and so the Council aims to vigorously protect the borough's existing open space and optimise the quality, value and usability of publicly accessible open spaces. New development is expected to contribute to the delivery of an improved network of open spaces and green corridors.

Figure 3.8: The borough's open spaces

3.3.4 USES

Employment
Employment sites are designated in the borough as Preferred Office Locations (POL), Local employment location (LEL), Strategic Industrial Location (SIL) and Local Industrial Location (LIL). Employment uses are also promoted in the boroughs activity zones and development in these areas should be mixed use.

There are five Preferred Office Locations in the borough at:

- Aldgate;
- Bishopsgate Road Corridor;
- Canary Wharf;
- Around Tower Gateway South; and
- Around Tower Gateway West.

These are all located within the CAZ and are considered unsuitable for residential uses.

There are four Local Employment Locations at;

- Blackwall;
- Cambridge Heath;
- Tower Gateway East; and
- Whitechapel.

Residential
The majority of the borough is residential with a variety of building typologies and scales reflecting the location and period in which development was built.

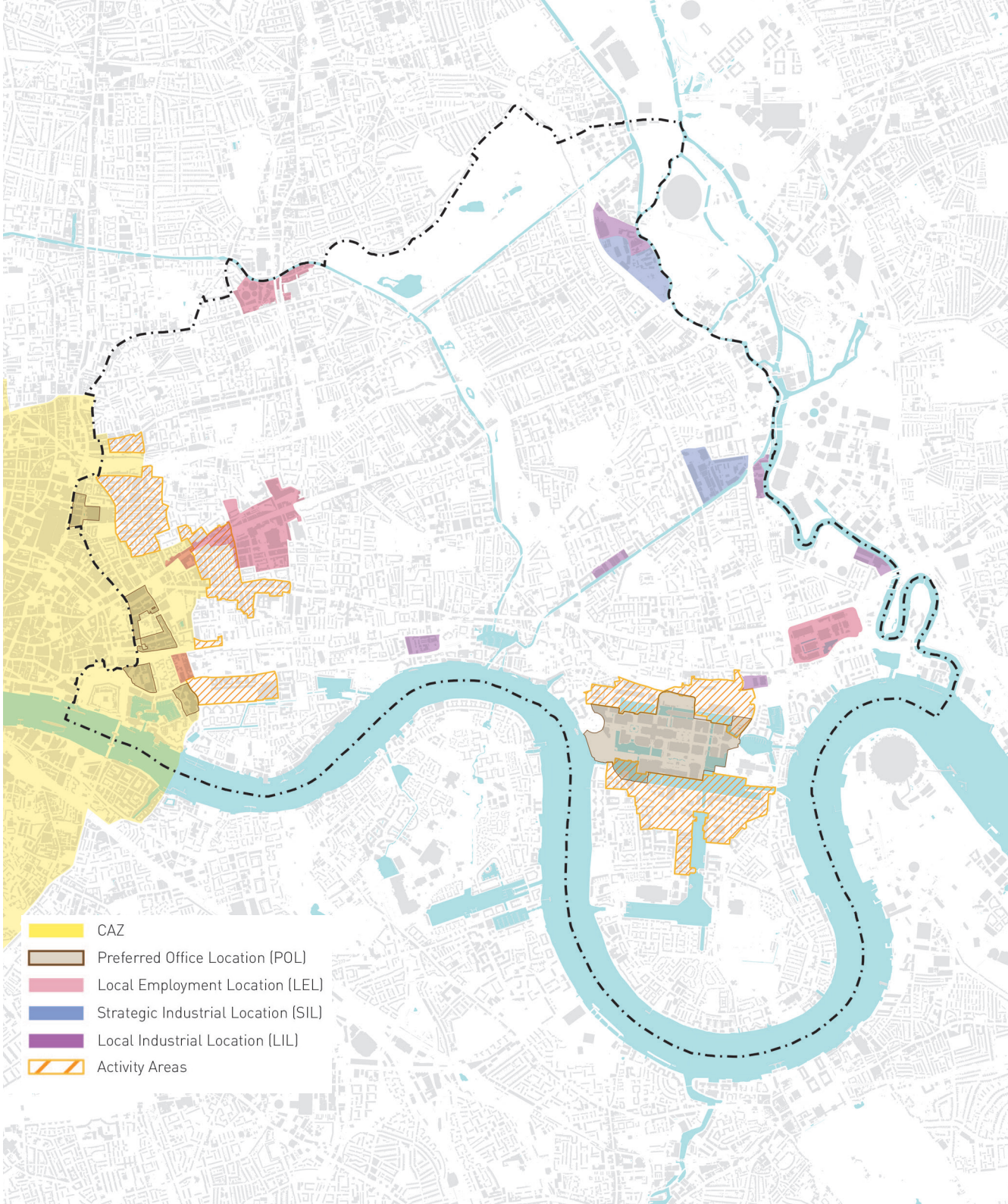


Figure 3.9: Employment uses

3.3.5 PUBLIC TRANSPORT NETWORK / PTAL

Rail Services

Rail services from Liverpool Street and Fenchurch Street mainline stations pass through the borough with services from the latter also stopping at Limehouse.

The northern part of the borough is served by the Central, District, and Hammersmith and City London Underground lines and Canary Wharf is on the Jubilee line.

London Overground serves stations in the west of the borough and the east is served by the Docklands Light Railway.

Crossrail / Elizabeth line stations are being constructed at Whitechapel and Canary Wharf and these will increase accessibility to the wider network in these locations.

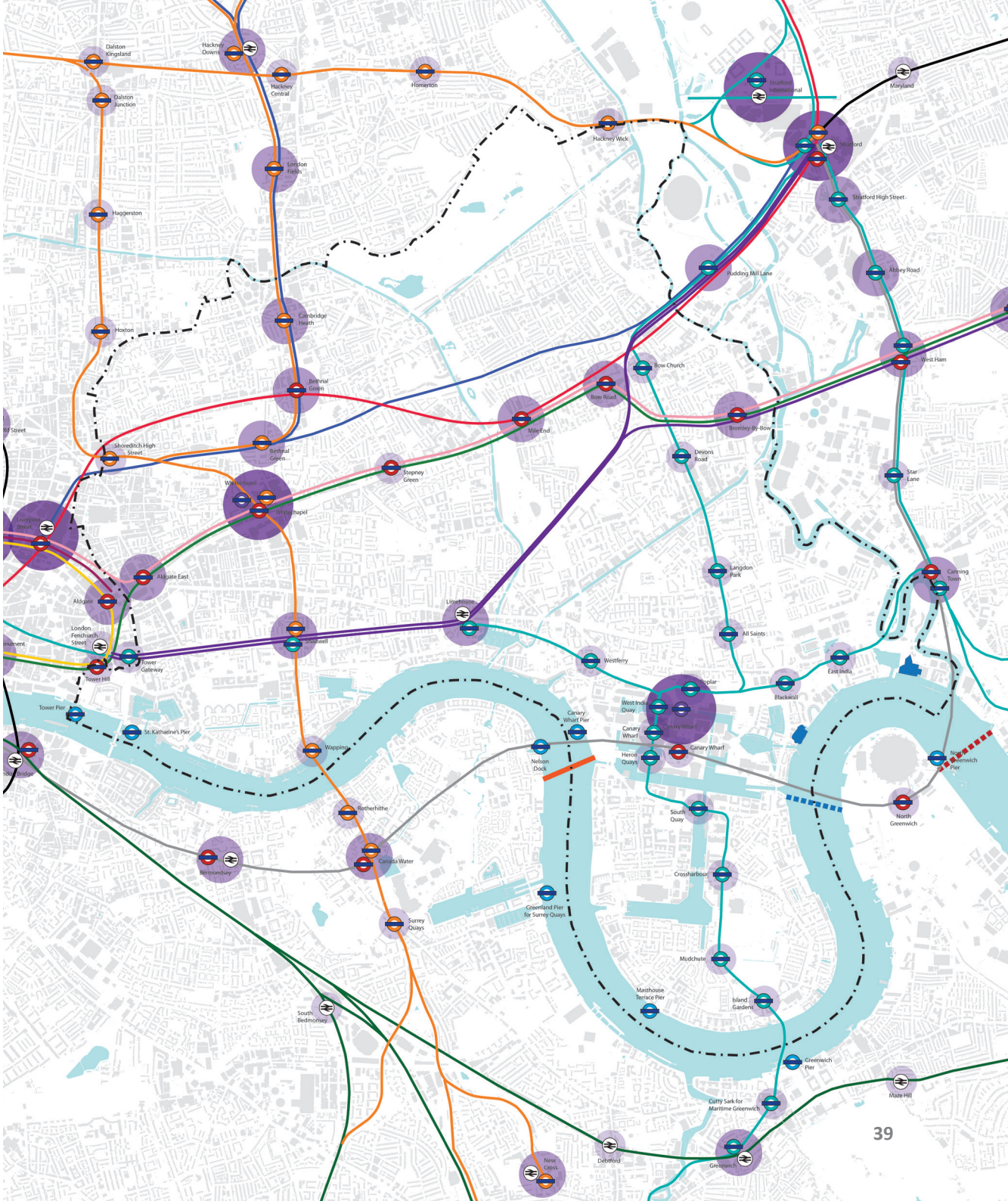


Figure 3.10: Rail services and access

River Transport

Water buses stop at four piers along the river Thames providing services into Central London.

Bus network

Buses follow the main routes through the borough with less frequent services providing connections between these routes.

Public Transport improvements

The following public transport improvements are proposed:

- Crossrail / Elizabeth Line stations at Whitechapel and Canary Wharf (opening 2018);
- Enhancements to Central and Jubilee lines;
- Increased capacity on DLR Wharf; and
- Three new river crossings are proposed
  - Rotherhithe Bridge – a new pedestrian bridge linking Canary Wharf with Rotherhithe;
  - North Greenwich Ferry - linking Canary Wharf with the Greenwich peninsula; and
  - Silvertown tunnel – linking the Greenwich peninsula with Canning Town (this is outside of the borough.

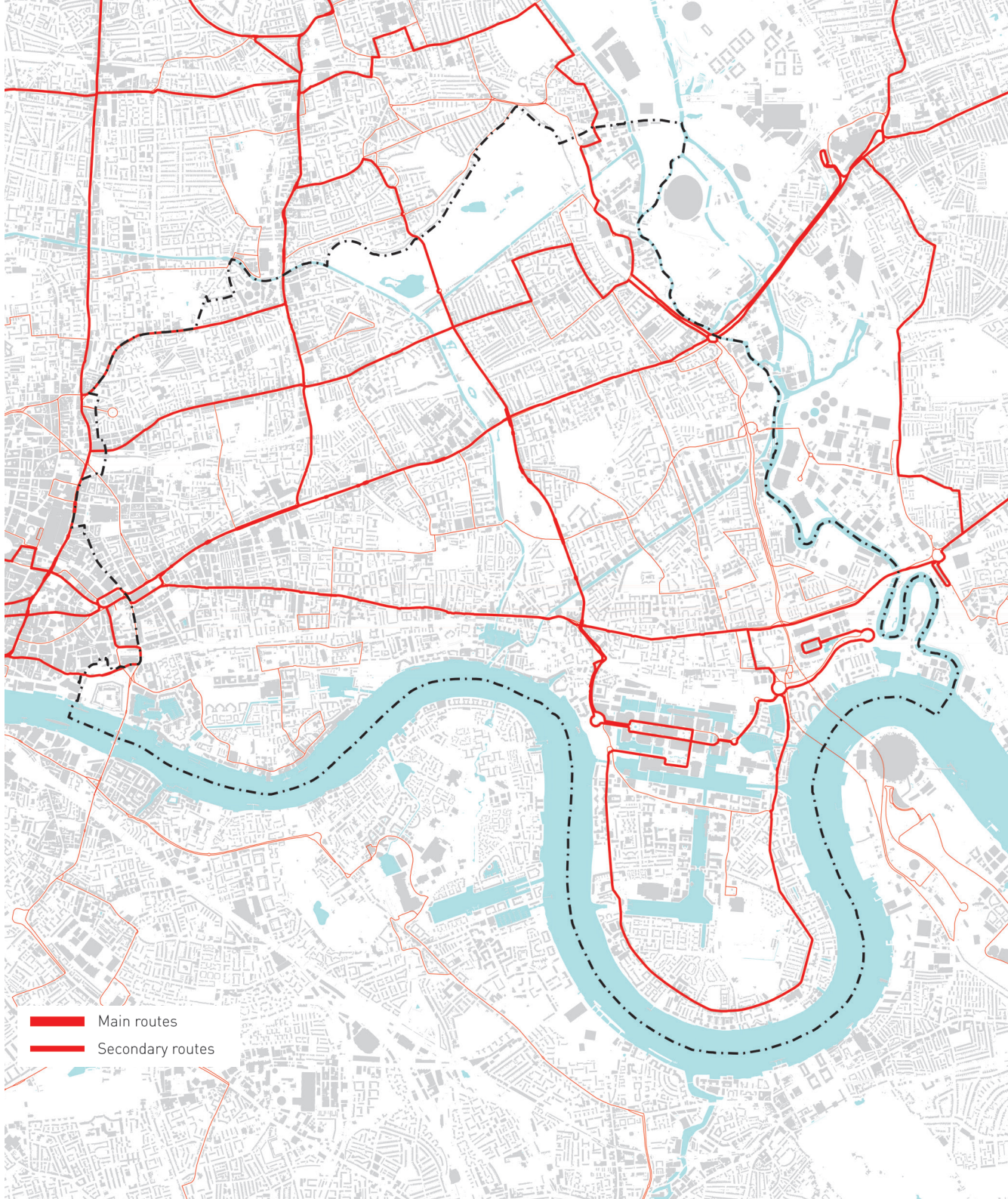


Figure 3.11: Bus services and access

PTAL

Public Transport Accessibility Levels vary markedly across the borough with the majority of the western part within the City Fringe, Canary Wharf and Mile End Road and Commercial Road corridors Level 5 or 6a whilst other more peripheral areas at Roman Road East and also within Poplar, Bow and the southern part of the Isle of Dogs are as low as Level 1a, 1b or 2.

This consideration will be important in determining whether an area is appropriate for tall buildings.

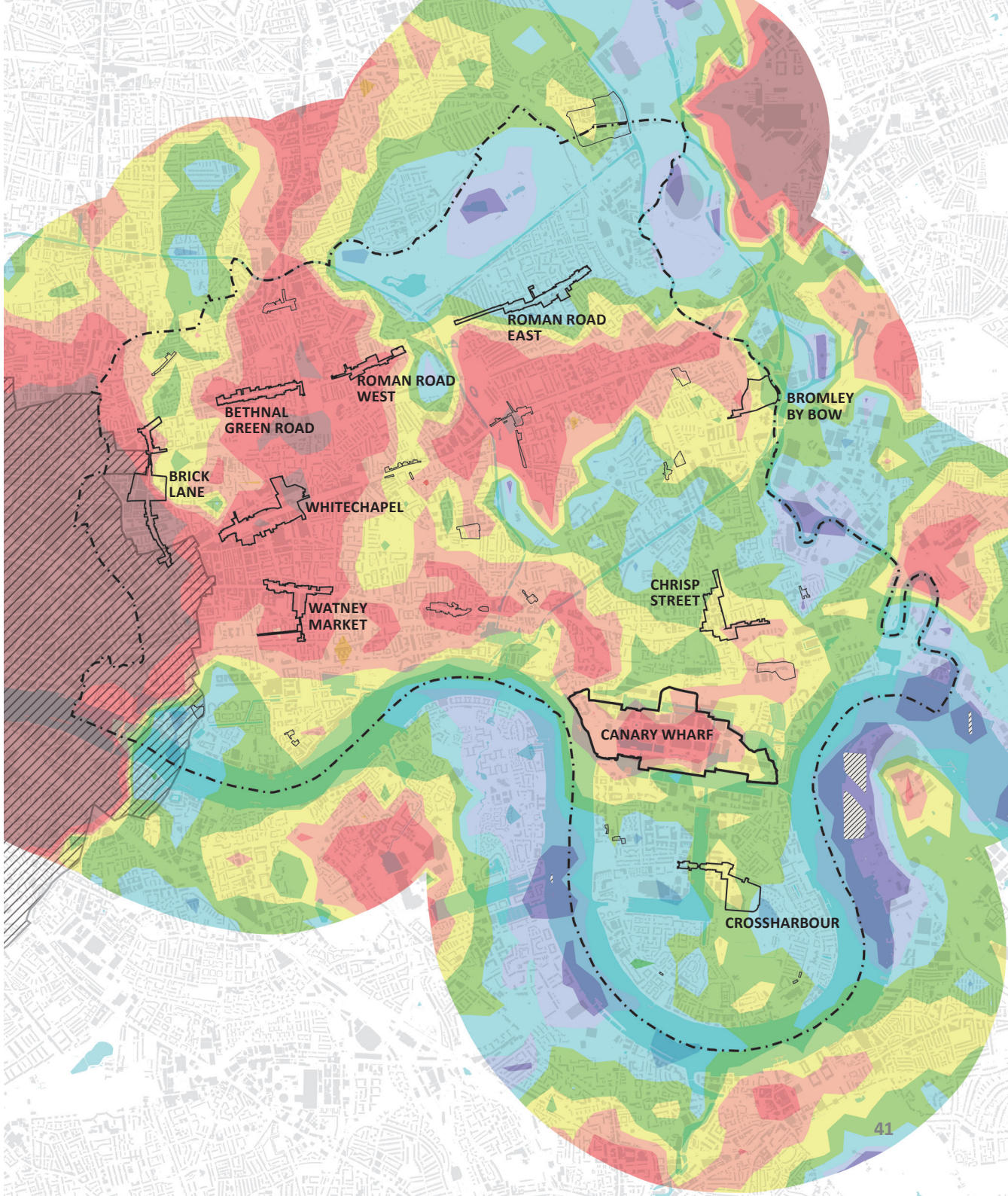


Figure 3.12: Public transport accessibility (current accessibility and not reflecting Crossrail)

Figure 3.13: Existing low-rise developments (up to 14.99m / typically up to 4 storeys)

Figure 3.14: Existing mid-rise development (15 - 29.99m / typically 5 - 9 storeys)

Figure 3.15: Existing tall buildings (30m and above / typically 10 storeys and above)

3.4 EXISTING HEIGHTS

Tower Hamlets is a borough of contrasts. It includes some of the tallest buildings in London (and Europe) located in a significant cluster at Canary Wharf and within the Central Activities Zone adjacent to the City, at Aldgate, however development in much of the borough is of a very modest scale with large areas to the north and east of the borough, and at the southern end of the Isle of Dogs peninsula, composed of buildings typically between two and four storeys.

In recent years Tower Hamlets has seen construction of a significant number of tall buildings, and clusters have emerged in Blackwall and at City Island in Leamouth. The existing Canary Wharf cluster has expanded in all directions but particularly to the south along Marsh Wall, and to either side of Millwall Inner Dock. At 245.8m AOD, One Canada Square is still the tallest building at Canary Wharf however two new residential towers, currently under construction, will come close to this height (239 and 240.5m AOD) and the cluster includes numerous buildings exceeding 150m in height.

The Aldgate cluster is significant, but less tall, with the taller buildings in the 65 to 80m height range.

Whilst these clusters mark the borough's financial centres there is a scattering of tall buildings across the borough that appear to be placed randomly and that neither respond to their immediate context nor aid legibility. The majority of these are post-war residential towers.

Further tall buildings are located alongside the river at St Katherine Dock and the Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel is also a significant tall building that is prominent from further afield due to its massing.

Figure 3.16: Existing mid rise and tall buildings (15m and above)

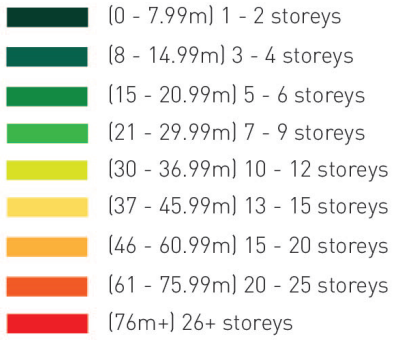
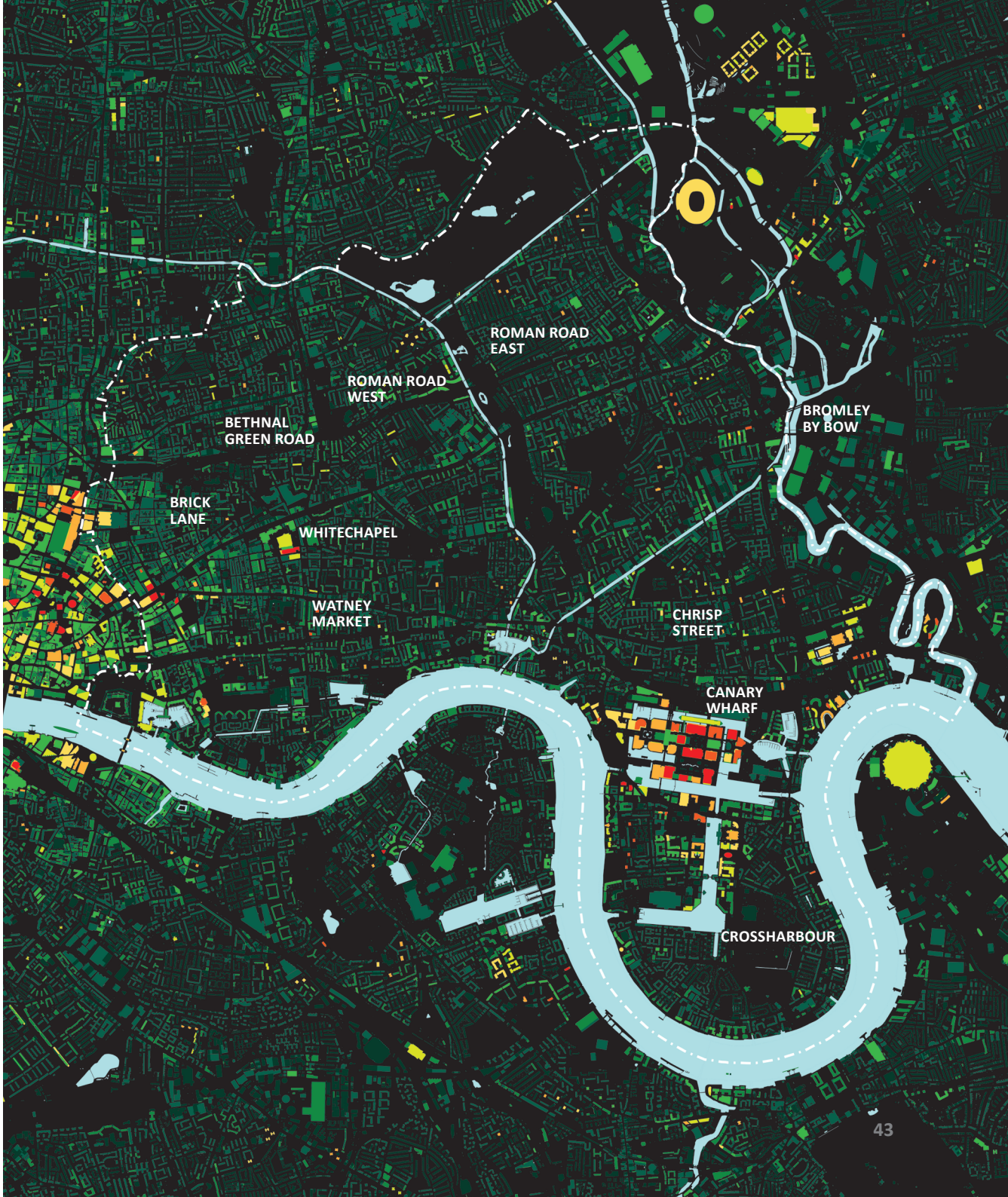


Figure 3.17: Existing building heights



3.5 SENSITIVITIES

There are a number of aspects of the borough that are particularly sensitive to taller buildings. These are:

- World Heritage Sites;
- Listed buildings and conservation areas; and
- Protected views and landmarks.

Topography can also lead to sensitivities but the relatively flat terrain in the borough makes this a less important consideration.

3.5.1 WORLD HERITAGE SITES

There are two World Heritage sites the setting of which could be harmed by tall buildings in the borough. The Tower of London World Heritage Site is located at the south-western edge of the borough and the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site is located within the Royal Borough of Greenwich on the borough's southern boundary. The buffer zone for the Maritime Greenwich WHS extends into the borough at the southern tip of the Isle of Dogs.

The Tower of London World Heritage Site Management Plan (2007) identifies that:

'Sustaining the Tower's OUV... involves not only conserving its fabric and maintaining its traditions, but also preserving (in the sense of not further harming) and enhancing its setting.' **(Paragraph 6.3.2)**

The London View Management Framework designates a number of strategically important views in respect of the WHS.

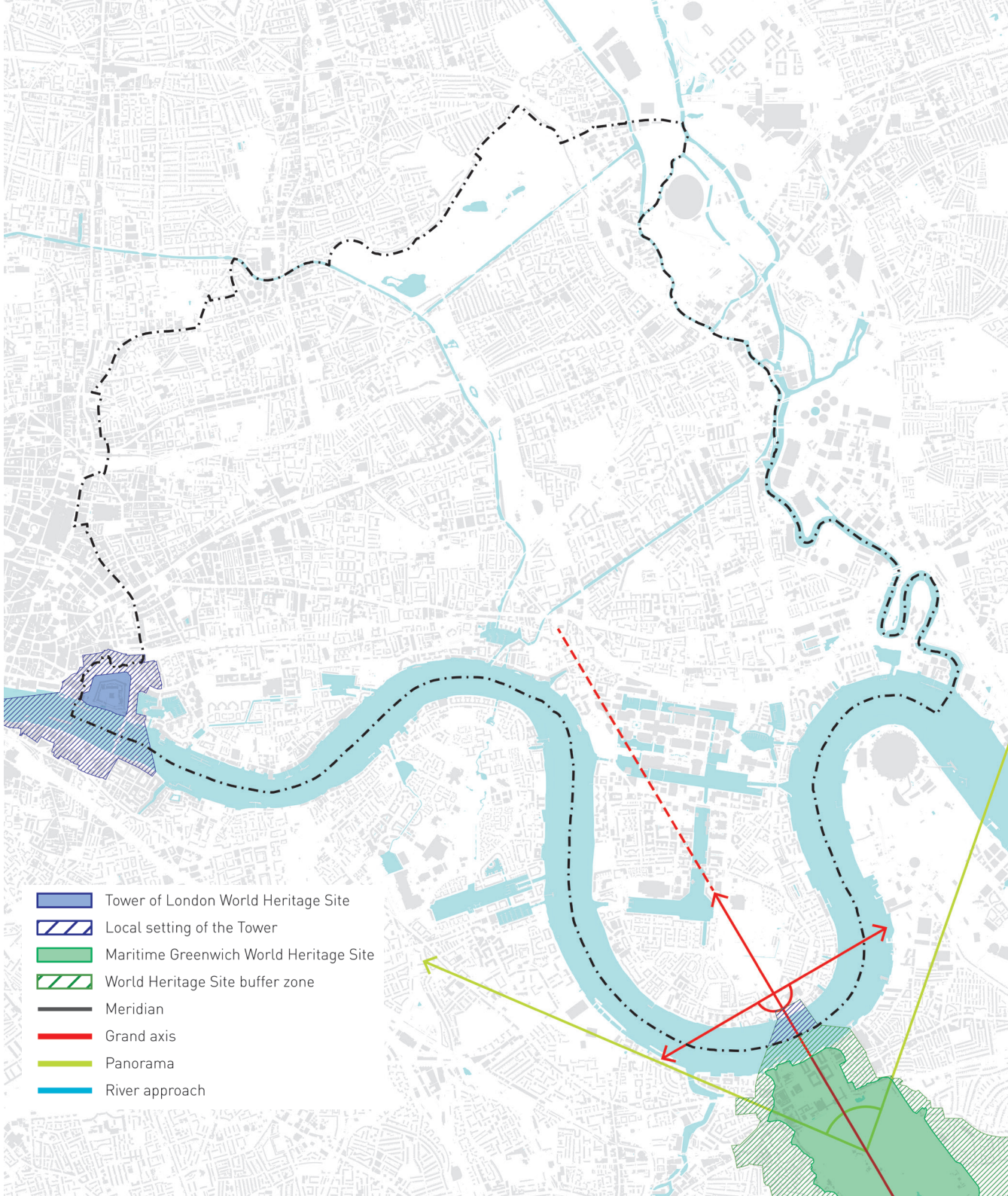


Figure 3.18: World Heritage Sites

The Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site Management Plan (2014) identifies a range of attributes which convey Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). Attribute 3 - The Grand Axis is particularly relevant in the context of considering tall buildings on the Isle of Dogs. The Management plan states:

'The success of the composition at Greenwich was extended by Hawksmoor across the River Thames to the north as far as the tower of his church of St Anne at Limehouse. Unfortunately, visibility of this monumental piece of civic design has been lost. Despite the early buildings of Canary Wharf being located 'off-axis', later buildings obscure the vista of St Anne's and no specific landmark has been introduced to take its place'. **(Paragraph 2.4.7.1)**

There are opportunities with further development on Canary Wharf to resurrect the relationship of the new buildings there with the Grand Axis. The vistas (north and south) from the scarp at the Wolfe statue are as significant as the view to it from Island Gardens. **(Paragraph 2.4.7.4)**

In relation to tall buildings the Management Plan states that:

The OUV of Maritime Greenwich relates not only to its built form and designed landscapes but also to the long views that its topography provides it making it vulnerable to the visual impact of tall buildings. **(Paragraph 5.8.1.2)**

Over the ensuing years, the commercial success of Canary Wharf has resulted in the development of a number of towers around the original tower. Whilst these are visible in a wide range of views across London, and in particular from Greenwich Park, they form part of a coherent tall building cluster and as such are not considered to pose a significant threat to the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site. However, there are concerns that, unchecked and not sensibly managed, the continuing expansion of this tall building cluster westwards on the Isle of Dogs, and in particular in the South Quay development area, could result in a 'table top' effect due to the blocking impact of height, mass and density, destroying an important part of London's skyscape and undermining the significance of the Wren's Grand Axis itself and the setting of the World Heritage Site. **(Paragraph 5.8.3.7)**

Canary Wharf and the Isle of Dogs viewed from the Wolfe statue in Greenwich Park

3.5.2 PROTECTED VIEWS AND LOCAL LANDMARKS

The London View Management Framework (LVMF) (March 2012) designates and protects a number of views that run through the borough.

These are:

- London Panorama 4A from Primrose Hill;
- London Panorama 5A from Greenwich Park;
- Linear View 8A from Westminster Pier to St Paul's Cathedral;
- Linear View 9A from King Henry VIII's Mound Richmond to St Paul's Cathedral; and
- Townscape View 25A Queens Walk to Tower of London.

The London Panorama 5A from the General Wolfe Statue in Greenwich Park views directly towards the Isle of Dogs and the tall building cluster there. Canary Wharf is also visible in several River Prospect Views and is prominent in View 11B from London Bridge, 12B from Southwark Bridge and View 15B from Waterloo Bridge and London Panorama 6A from Blackheath Point.

Views 8A, 9A and 25A preserve the setting of St Pauls Cathedral and the Tower of London respectively and will restrict the height of buildings within the view.

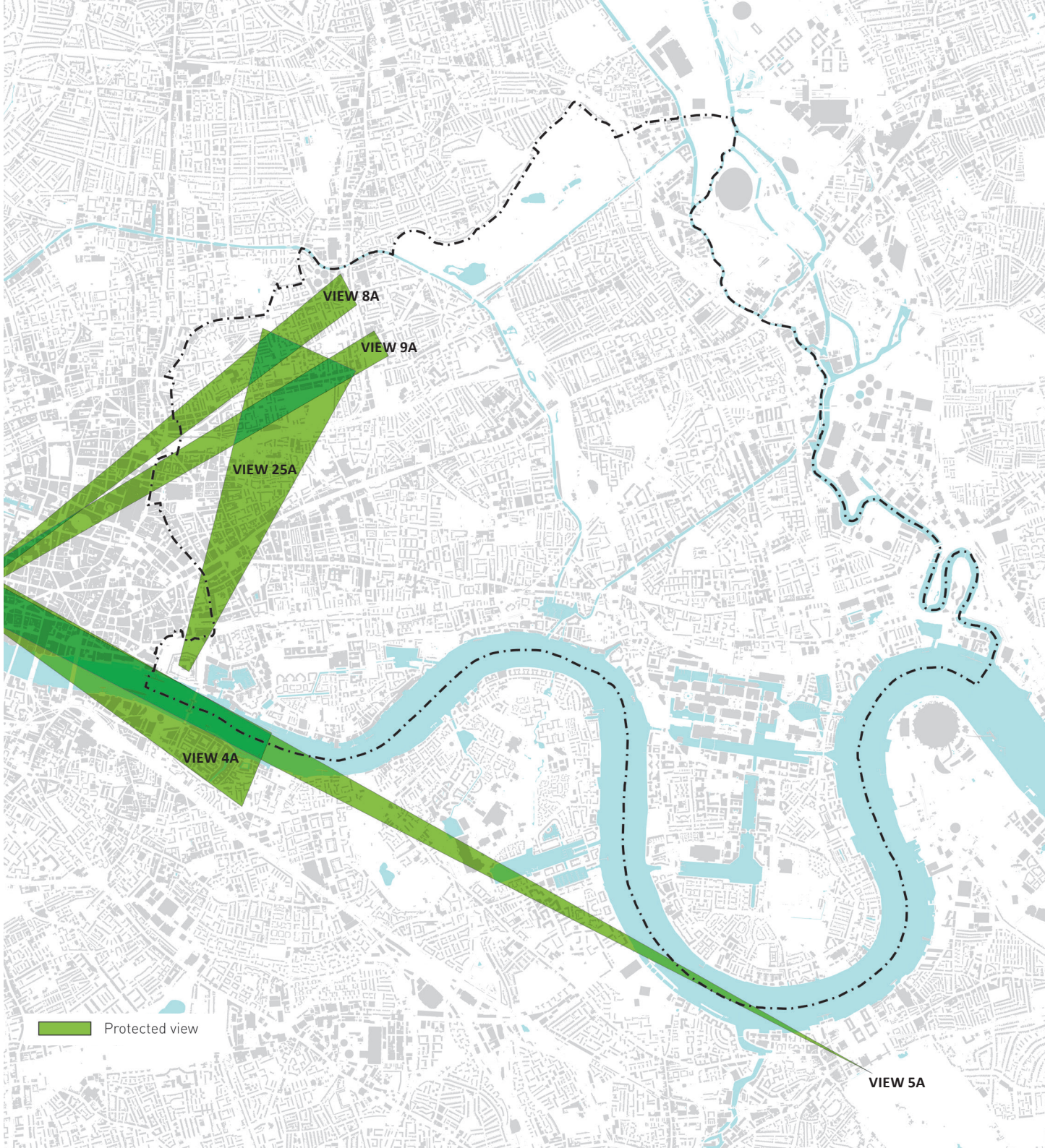


Figure 3.20: LVMF Protected Views

Skyline of Strategic Importance
The skyline of Canary Wharf is of strategic importance reflecting its globally recognised silhouette and its importance in respect of the setting of the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site, and visibility from strategic views in London including designated LVMF views including:

- London Panorama 4A from Primrose Hill;
- London Panorama 5A from Greenwich Park;
- London Panorama 6A from Blackheath Point;
- River Prospect View 12B from Southwark Bridge;
- River Prospect View 15B from Waterloo Bridge; and
- Townscape View 25A from Queen's Walk.

The designation seeks to ensure that the distinctive skyline and prominence of the major centre is retained in both Locally Designated Views and London Strategic Views

The Canary Wharf 'Skyline of strategic importance is highly visible from across the city - here its iconic form is appreciated in the view from Waterloo Bridge (LVMF River Prospect View 15B)

Landmarks and Local Views

The Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Guidelines and the The Tower Hamlets Conservation Strategy 2016 identify a number of local landmarks, and locally important views in the borough.

Borough Designated Landmarks include:

1. Christ Church Spitalfields;
2. Balfron Tower;
3. St Paul's Church, Shadwell; and
4. St Anne's Church. Limehouse.

Local Views

The following local views are also identified:

A. View towards Christ Church Spitalfields from Brushfield Street;

B. Views toward Balfron Tower from Langdon Park and East India Dock Road;

C. View towards St Paul's Church, Shadwell and St George in the East from Wapping Wall;

D. View towards St Anne's Church, Limehouse from Salmon Lane;

E. Panoramic view towards Canary Wharf from Regents Canal Basin / Ben Jonson Road; and

F. Panoramic view and river prospect of Greenwich Maritime from Island Gardens.

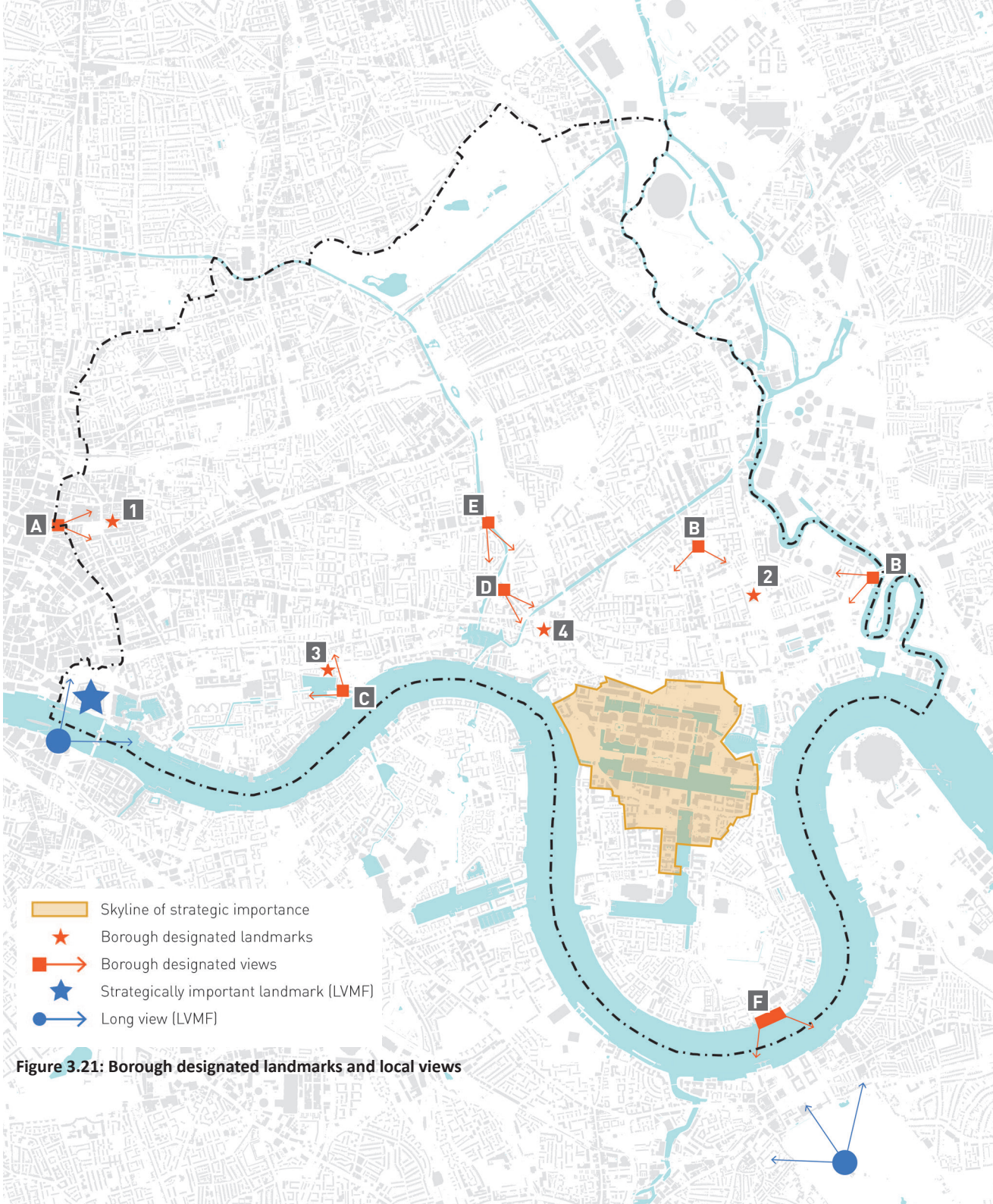


Figure 3.21: Borough designated landmarks and local views

Local Landmarks

Local landmarks that contribute to the local scene and whose setting, and the views to which should be protected, include:

1 St Leonard C of E Church, Shoreditch (outside of borough);

2 Columbia Road;

3 Keeling House, Claredale Street, Bethnal Green;

4 Former Town Hall, Bethnal Green;

5 Our Lady of the Assumption, RC Church, Bethnal Green;

6 York Hall, Old Ford Road;

7 Museum of Childhood, Bethnal Green;

8 Truman Brewery, Brick Lane;

9 Tower House, 81 Fieldgate Street;

10 Royal London Hospital, Whitechapel Road;

11 69-70 and 83-89, Mile End Road;

12 St Peters Church, Cephas Street;

13 St George in the East;

14 The George Tavern, Commercial Road;

15 St Mary and St Michael Church, Commercial Road;

16 St Paul's Church, Dock Street;

17 'Troxy' 490 Commercial Road;

18 Stepney Methodist Church, 585-593, Commercial Road;

19 Guardian Angels RC Church, Mile End Road;

20 Former Bryant and May factory, Fairfield Road;

21 Bow Bus Garage, Fairfield Road;

22 Spratt's Factory Complex, Morris Road;

23 St Mary and St Joseph RC Church;

24 St Michael's Church, Spey Street;

25 St Matthias Church, Woodstock Terrace, Poplar;

26 All Saints Church, Poplar;

27 Former Hydraulic Pumping Station, Naval Row;

28 Christ Church, Manchester Road, Isle of Dogs; and

29 George Green's School, Manchester Road.

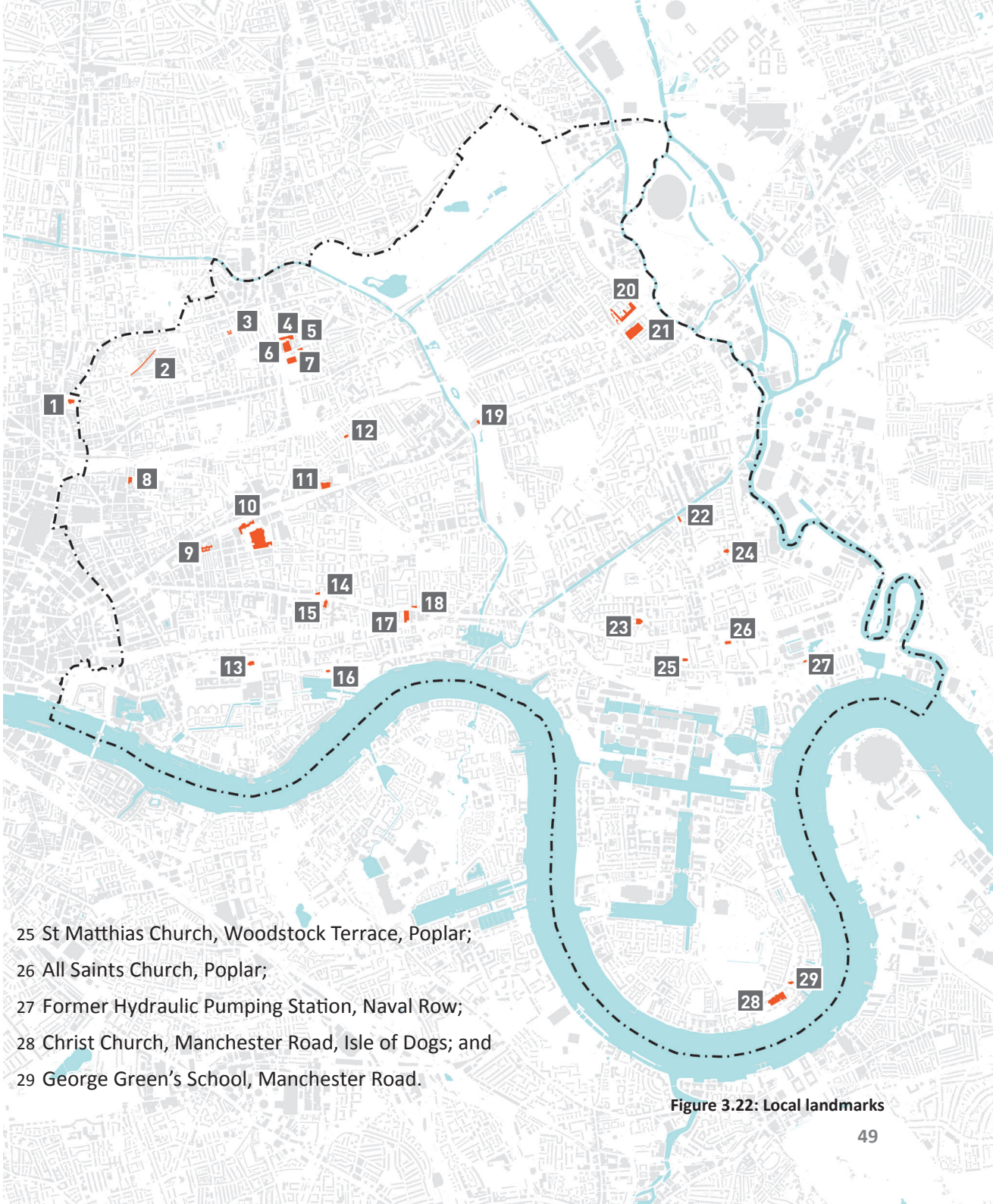


Figure 3.22: Local landmarks

3.5.3 LISTED BUILDING AND CONSERVATION AREAS

Approximately 30% of the borough is covered by conservation area designations of which there are 58. There are over 2,000 listed buildings within the borough most of which are located within these conservation areas. Four parks within the borough are included on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Historic Interest in England and Wales.

The conservation areas and listed buildings are distributed across the borough with a concentration close to the city in the west, along the historic routes Mile End Road / Whitechapel Road and Commercial Road and alongside the river. These areas represent the borough's early development as London expanded eastwards.

Conservation areas, listed buildings and parks and gardens are particularly sensitive to tall buildings. Tall buildings with their massing and height can be out of character within historic areas and significantly undermine the setting of designated heritages assets.

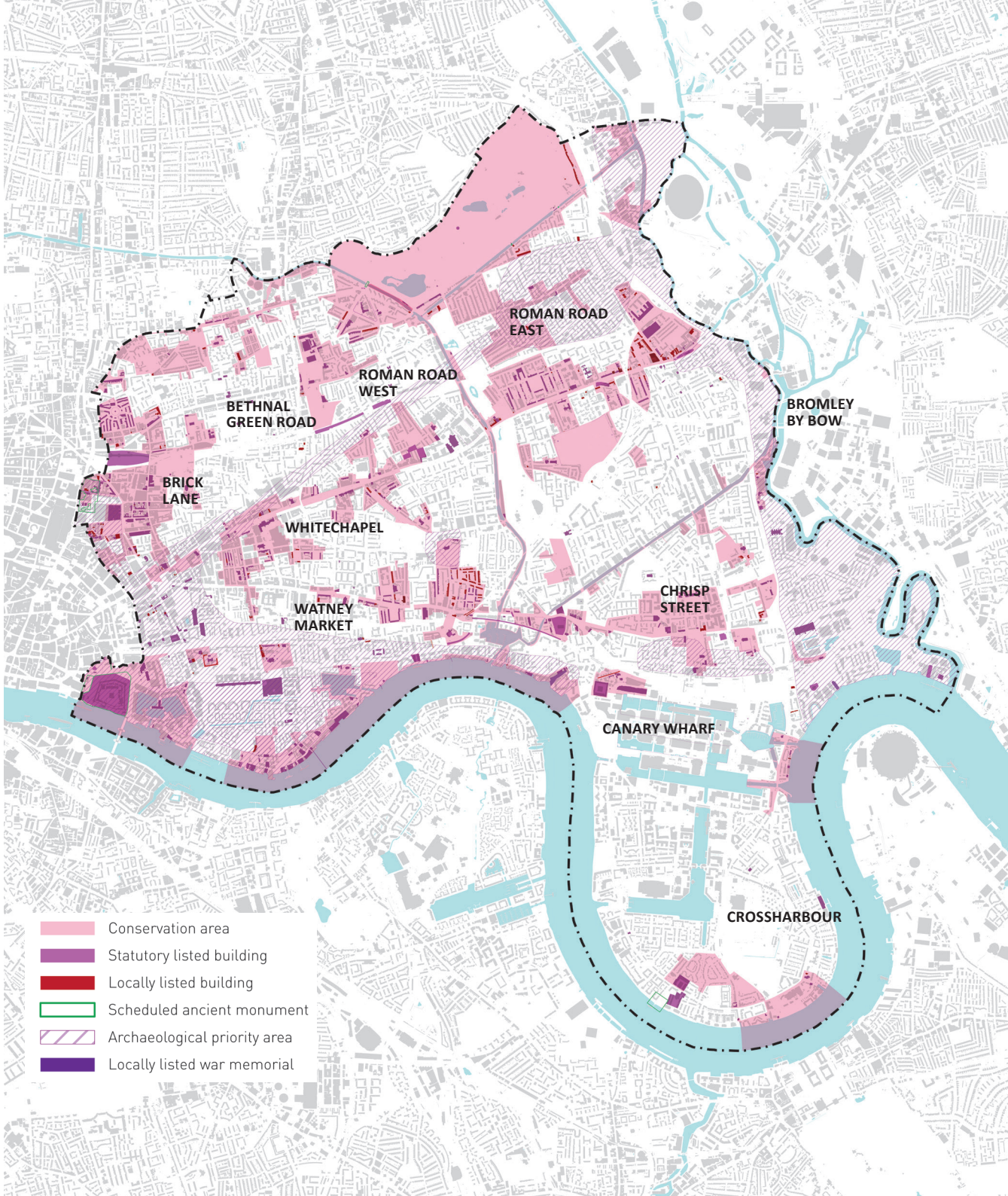


Figure 3.23: Listed buildings and conservation areas

3.5.4 TOPOGRAPHY

Topography can impact on the prominence of tall buildings when they are sited on higher ground or impact on ridgelines. Unlike neighbouring boroughs to the north and south Tower Hamlets is relatively flat. However there are vantage points across the borough notably at Greenwich Park and Primrose Hill where it is possible to view across the borough and where tall buildings can help to aid orientation.

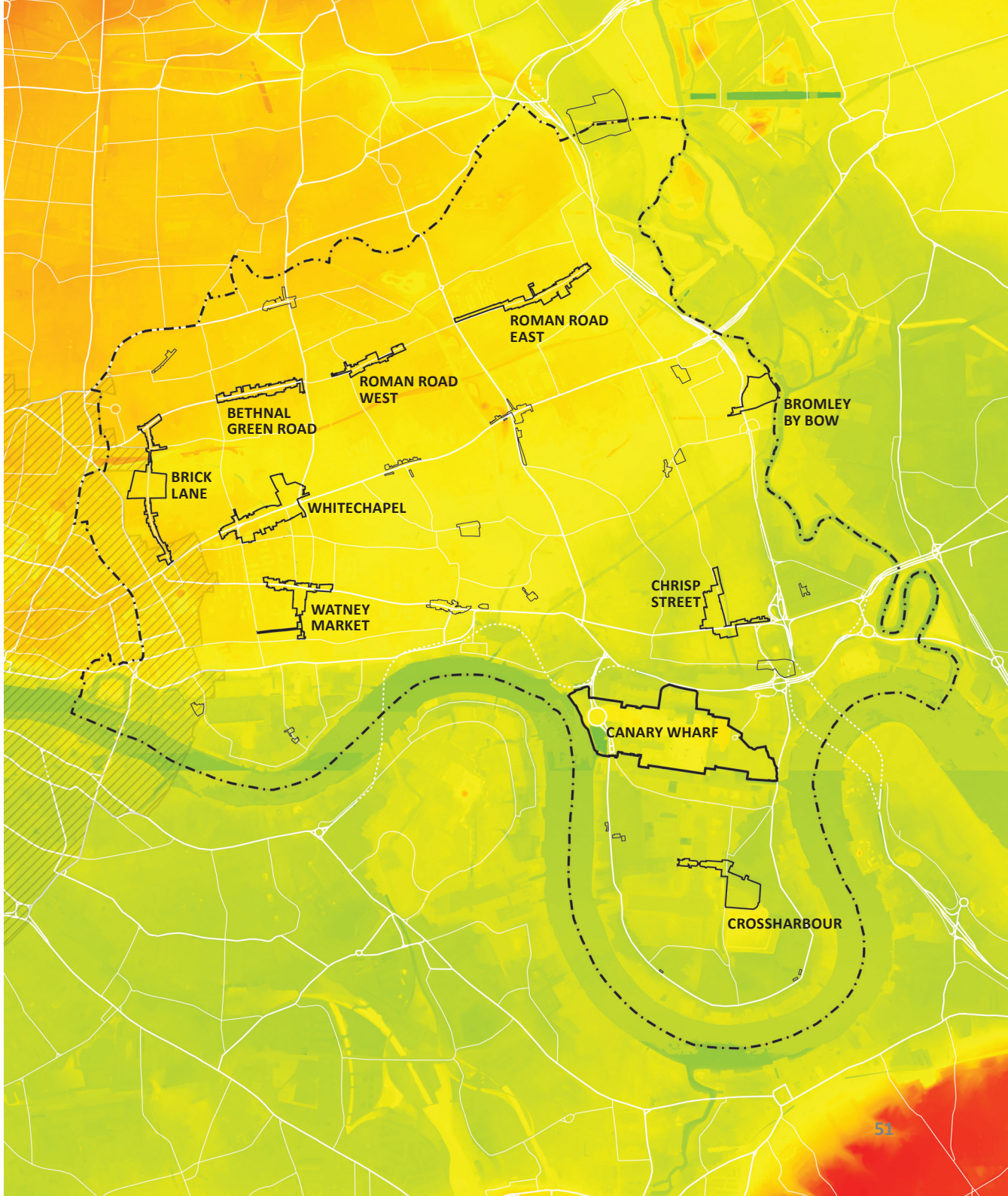


Figure 3.24: Topography

City Island in Leamouth

4 TOWER HAMLETS DEVELOPMENT PRESSURE AND CHANGE

4.1 CONTEXT + OPPORTUNITY AREAS

Tower Hamlets is the fastest growing borough in UK. The population grew by 30% in the period 2001 to 2011 (census data). Population growth is expected to continue with a 263% increase from 2016 - 2026 (304,900 to 374,000 people) predicted. The borough has the highest London Plan housing target: 39,314 new homes over ten year period 2015 – 2025.

It is also experiencing high economic growth with an increase in jobs in the borough from 160,000 to 302,000 in the period from 2000 – 2015.

There are a number of drivers for change including Tech City in the west of the borough, Canary Wharf, the Poplar Riverside Housing Zone, Olympic Legacy and the Elizabeth Line which will deliver improved accessibility at Canary Wharf and Whitechapel.

There is however a need to balance the delivery of housing numbers with the need to create quality living environments both now, and for future generations, and careful consideration must be given to the role and appropriateness of tall buildings across the borough.

OPPORTUNITY AREAS

The focus of growth is within three OPPORTUNITY AREAS designated by the GLA: City Fringe, Isle of Dogs and South Poplar and Lower Lea Valley. Together these cover approximately 50% of the borough. The majority of the borough's site allocations are located within these areas.

The City Fringe opportunity area is shared with LB Hackney and LB Islington. The Lower Lea Valley opportunity area is shared by LB Newham, LB Hackney and LB Waltham Forest with the northern section, including Fish Island and Bromley by Bow, located within the LLDC area.

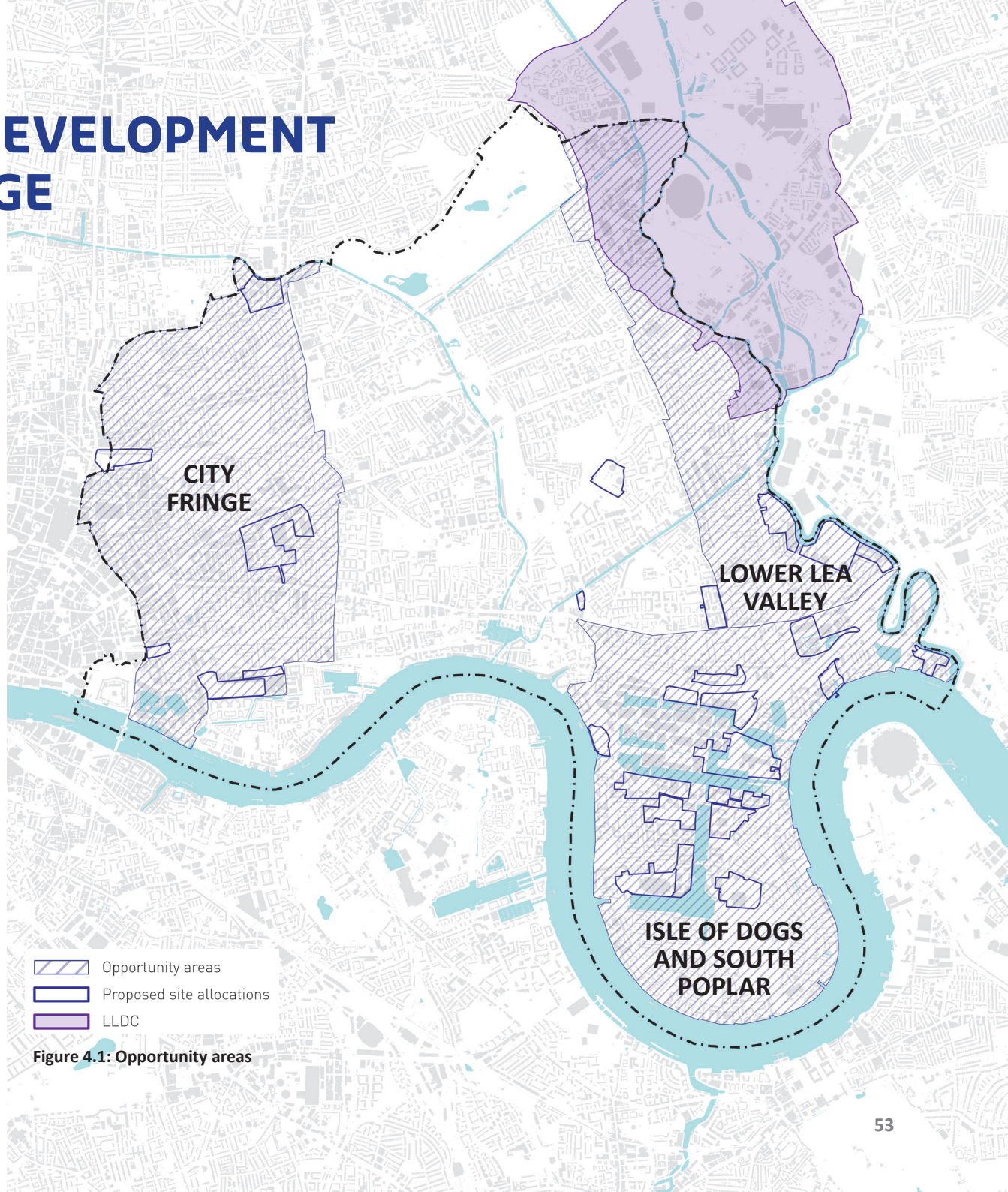


Figure 4.1: Opportunity areas

THE POPLAR RIVERSIDE HOUSING ZONE

The Housing Zone was designated in 2016 and aims to deliver approximately 13,000 new homes through redevelopment of post-war estates and former industrial sites at the eastern edge of the borough with approximately 6,000 of these within Poplar Riverside. The vision is for the Poplar Riverside Housing Zone to be London's new affordable place to both live and work. Much of the housing zone focuses on land that is suffers from poor accessibility and isolation with the Blackwall Tunnel approach (A12), East India Dock Road (A13) and River Lea creating barriers to movement.

Improved connections across the Blackwall Tunnel Approach, A13 and River Lea towards Canning Town are critical and change must focus on creating quality living environments with good access to amenities including green spaces, schools and shops and also accessibility to employment opportunities.

The potential for improved crossings over the River Lea and A13 to enhance access to Canning Town station are being explored with LB Newham.

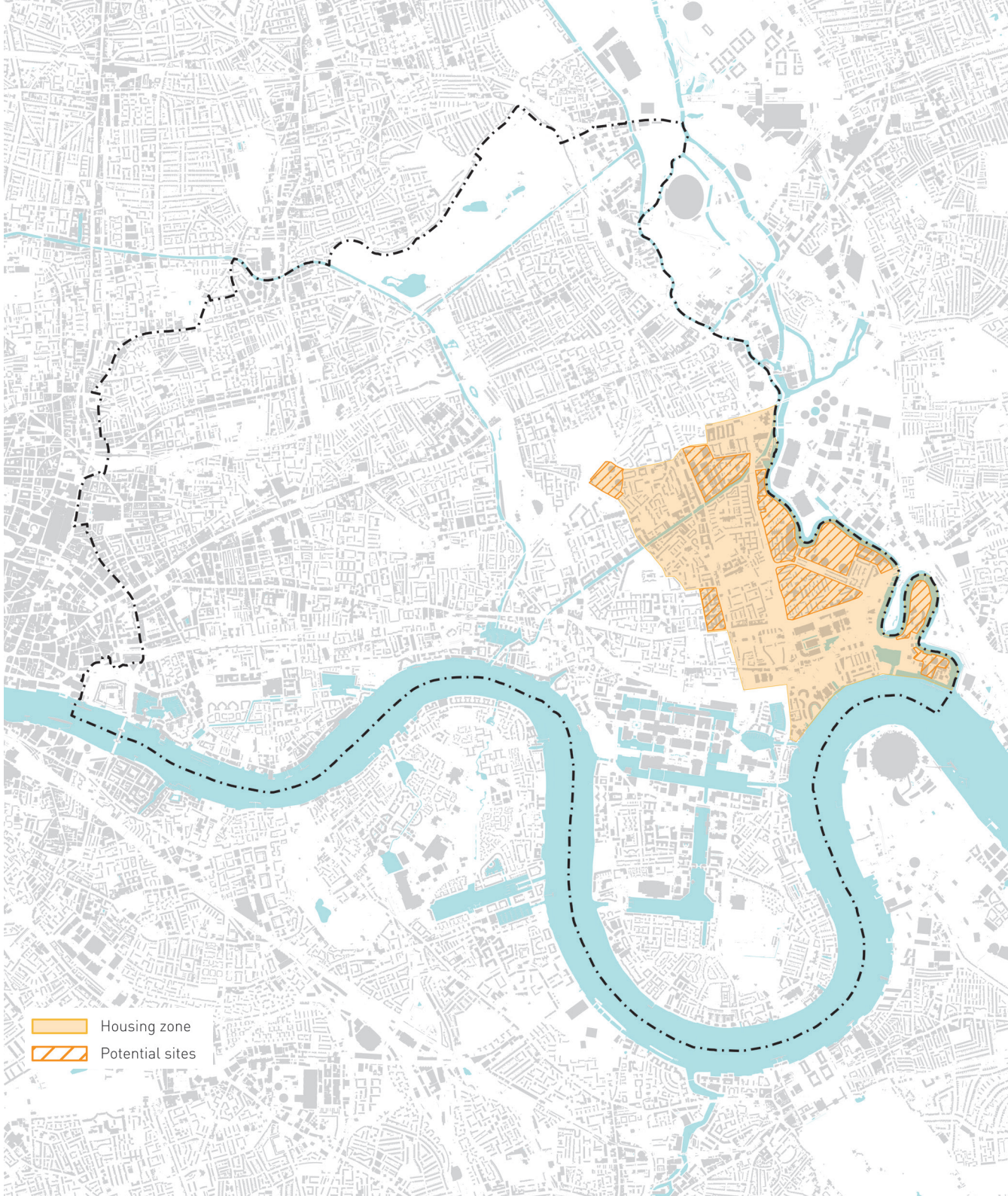


Figure 4.2: Poplar Riverside Housing Zone

4.2 TALL BUILDING PIPELINE

The New London Architecture report (2017) indicates that there are 455 tall buildings of twenty storeys and above in the pipeline in London. Historically London's tallest buildings were offices but 92% of these proposed tall buildings are residential and the proposed towers are becoming increasingly high, with the tallest, Landmark Pinnacle at 75 storeys and 239m AOD, and Spire London at 69 storeys and 241.5m AOD (both within Canary Wharf) close to the height of One Canada Square (245.8m AOD).

Tower Hamlets has become a focus for tall buildings applications with the existing clusters at Aldgate and Canary Wharf expanding and other clusters emerging along the Thames waterfront. There are currently 77 buildings of 20 storeys and above in the pipeline in Tower Hamlets representing 17% of all proposed tall buildings in London and more than in any other borough.

The majority of the proposed tall buildings are within the three opportunity areas. These are identified on the pages that follow.

Approved		Under construction	
	(30 - 36.99m) 10 - 12 storeys		(30 - 36.99m) 10 - 12 storeys
	(37 - 45.99m) 13 - 15 storeys		(37 - 45.99m) 13 - 15 storeys
	(46 - 60.99m) 15 - 20 storeys		(46 - 60.99m) 15 - 20 storeys
	(61 - 75.99m) 20 - 25 storeys		(61 - 75.99m) 20 - 25 storeys
	(76 - 104.99m) 26 - 34 storeys		(76 - 104.99m) 26 - 34 storeys
	(105m+) 35+ storeys		(105m+) 35+ storeys

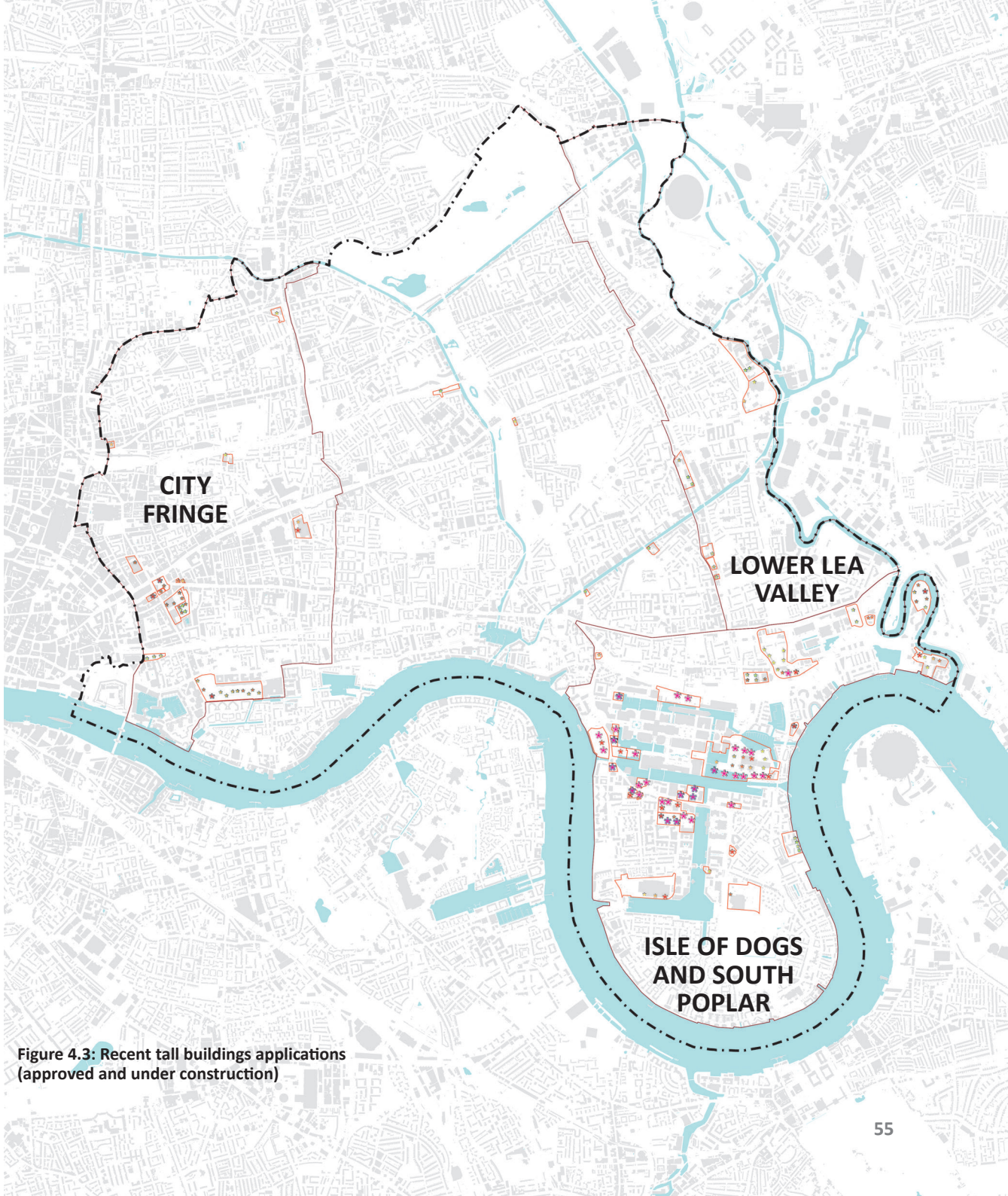


Figure 4.3: Recent tall buildings applications (approved and under construction)

CITY FRINGE OPPORTUNITY AREA

A Cluster of tall buildings has emerged at Aldgate with three tall buildings completed in 2016 including:

- Two residential towers at Aldgate Place (22 and 26 storey; 70 and 82 metres); and
- A 23 storey hotel at 15-17 Leman, Street (72metres).

Further tall building approvals at Aldgate include:

- A further 25 storey residential tower at Aldgate Place (79 metres; 93 metres AOD*);
- An 18 storey office building at Braham Street, Beagle House (70 metres);
- A 17 storey residential tower at 34-40 Church Lane (62 metres; 75.5 metres AOD);
- Six residential towers at Goodmans Field ranging from 10 to 23 storeys (30-75 metres; up to 88 metres AOD); and
- A 22 storey hotel at 27 Commercial Road (70 metres AOD).

There have been a number of applications for tall buildings within Whitechapel. Several of these have been refused planning permission however two residential towers of 18 and 23 storeys have been consented at Central Square (62 and 83 metres; 73 and 93 metres AOD).

Eleven tall residential buildings (up to 25 storeys) have been approved at the former News International Site in Wapping. Three have detailed consent and are under construction on site; eight are approved in outline. The detailed consent is for 15, 20 and 25 storey buildings (57, 69 and 91 metres high; 62, 72 and 96m AOD).

Other tall buildings consented in the City Fringe area include:

- A ten storey residential building at 120 Vallance Road;
- Three residential towers of 13, 14 and 15 storeys at Royal Mint Street (under construction);
- A 16 storey residential tower (71 metres AOD) at the Huntingdon Industrial Estate at 2-10 Bethnal Green Road (western end); and
- A ten storey residential tower (36m; 49 metres AOD), at the Peterley Business Centre at 472, Hackney Road in Bethnal Green (under construction).

NOTE: AOD*- Above Ordnance Datum

Figure 4.4: Recent tall buildings applications (approved and under construction) in the City Fringe opportunity area

ISLE OF DOGS AND POPLAR OPPORTUNITY AREA

This area has seen a huge amount of development in the last few years with numerous buildings under construction and several completed in 2016. The focus has been around Canary Wharf, Marsh Wall and Millharbour but tall buildings have also been developed on the riverfront to the east at Providence Wharf.

Tall buildings completed in 2016 include:

- Baltimore Tower a 46 storey residential tower on Millwall Inner Dock (149 metres AOD*);
- Dollar Bay Tower a 38 storey residential tower at the eastern end of South Dock (109 metres AOD);
- Two residential towers at Lincoln Plaza, 20 Millharbour, the tallest at 31 storeys (99 metres AOD);
- The 38 storey Novotel Hotel on Marsh Wall (124 metres AOD); and
- Horizons, a 26 storey residential tower on Prestons Road. (81 metres AOD)

NOTE: AOD*- Above Ordnance Datum

The following tall buildings are currently under construction:

- Newfoundland a 59 storey residential tower on Westferry Road (226 metres AOD);
- Spire London (formerly known as Hertsmere House) a 69 storey residential tower at the western end of North Dock (240.5 metres AOD);
- Landmark Pinnacle (formerly known as City Pride) a 75 storey residential tower at the western end of South Dock (239 metres AOD);
- The Madison (formerly known as Meridian Gate) a 54 storey residential tower on Marsh Wall (182 metres AOD);
- Wardian London at Arrowhead Quay, Marsh Wall – two residential towers of 50 and 55 storeys (172 and 187 metres AOD);
- Two residential towers of 36 and 68 storeys at South Quay Plaza (121 and 220 metres AOD);
- A 28 storey office at Heron Quay West, 1 Bank Street (145 metres AOD);
- Four residential towers at 2 Millharbour ranging from 25 – 42 storeys (89 - 144 metres AOD); and
- Several tall buildings as part of Canary Wharf's New District (formerly known as Wood Wharf) including 35, 43 and 58 storey residential towers (129, 150 and 211 metres AOD);
- Six residential buildings as part of the northern second phase of development at City Island, Leamouth, ranging from 37 to 80 (43 to 86 metres AOD); and
- Five residential buildings at Poplar Business Park of 10, 14, 16 21 an 22 storeys (39 to 77 metres AOD).

Consented proposals include:

- Twenty tall buildings from 10 to 58 storeys in Canary Wharf's New District (formerly known as Wood Wharf). Approved in Outline with detailed consent for ten buildings and some of these are under construction (see above);
- Two office towers of 43 and 37 storeys (221 and 209 metres respectively) at North Quay;
- Three office buildings at Riverside South (south of Westferry Circus) of 9, 32 and 44 storeys (80, 191 and 241 metres AOD);
- Outline consent for an office building of 191 metres AOD at Heron Quays West;
- A 56 storey residential tower at South Quay (197 metres AOD);
- Three residential towers at Alpha Square, 163 Marsh Wall of 20, 34 and 65 storeys (80, 124, 217 metres AOD);
- Six residential towers at South Quay Square ranging from 32 to 45 storeys (106 to 146 metres AOD);
- A 16 storey hotel on 82 West India Dock Road (57 metres);
- Three residential towers at the former Westferry Printworks on Millwall Dock of 13, 17 and 30 storeys (56, 69 and 111 metres AOD);
- Five tall residential buildings at Hercules Wharf, Leamouth of 10, 12, 16, 21 and 30 storeys (the taller three at 57, 73 and 100 metres);
- Two residential towers at Castle Wharf, Leamouth Road of 20 and 24 storeys (66 and 78m; 71 and 83 metres AOD); and

- Outline consent for nine tall buildings at Blackwall Reach. Six at 10-12 storey the remaining three (close to Blackwall DLR) at 25, 31 and 37 storeys.

A 21 storey residential tower is also approved as part of an outline consent on the ASDA store at Crossharbour although it is understood that this is unlikely to be implemented as an alternative proposal is being developed for the area.

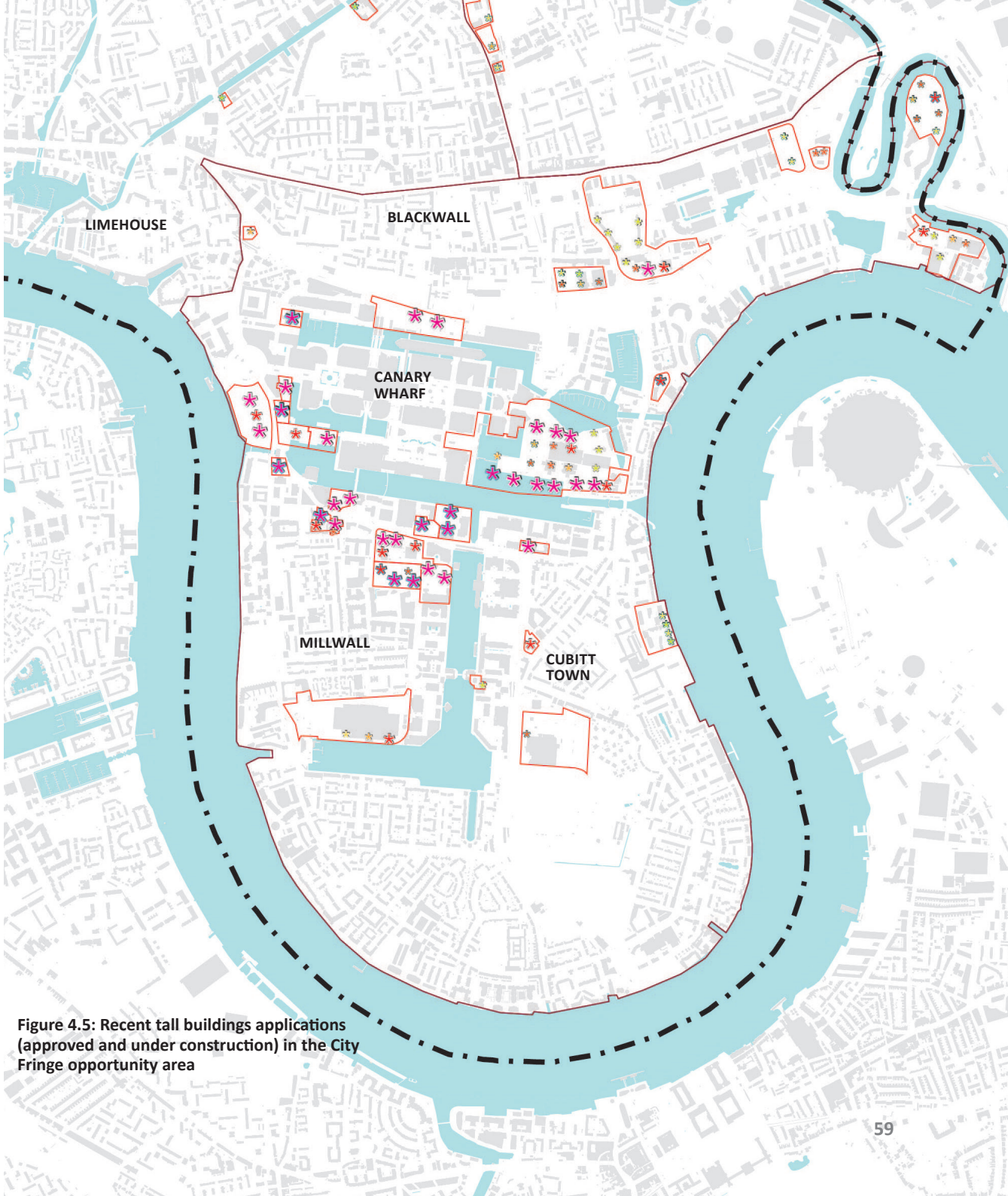


Figure 4.5: Recent tall buildings applications (approved and under construction) in the City Fringe opportunity area

LOWER LEA VALLEY OPPORTUNITY AREA

The focus for tall buildings in the Lower Lea Valley (within Tower Hamlets) has been primarily at the western edge of the opportunity area alongside the DLR line and in Bromley by Bow.

A 22 storey residential tower at 134-156, Chrisp Street, Poplar (next to Langdon Park station) is currently under construction.

Consented proposals include:

- A 13 storey residential building at 116-118, Chrisp Street, Poplar;
- A 13 storey residential building at 160-166, Chrisp Street, Poplar;
- A 12 storey residential building at Phoenix Works, on Upper North Street, Poplar;
- Three residential buildings at Bow Enterprise Park, adjacent Devons Road DLR, two at 10 storeys and one at 18 storeys;
- A 10 storey and 19 storey building south of Three Mills Lane in Bromley by Bow as part of a redevelopment of the superstore to deliver a new centre; and
- Two 10 storey towers at Hancock Road.

New development at Langdon Park station

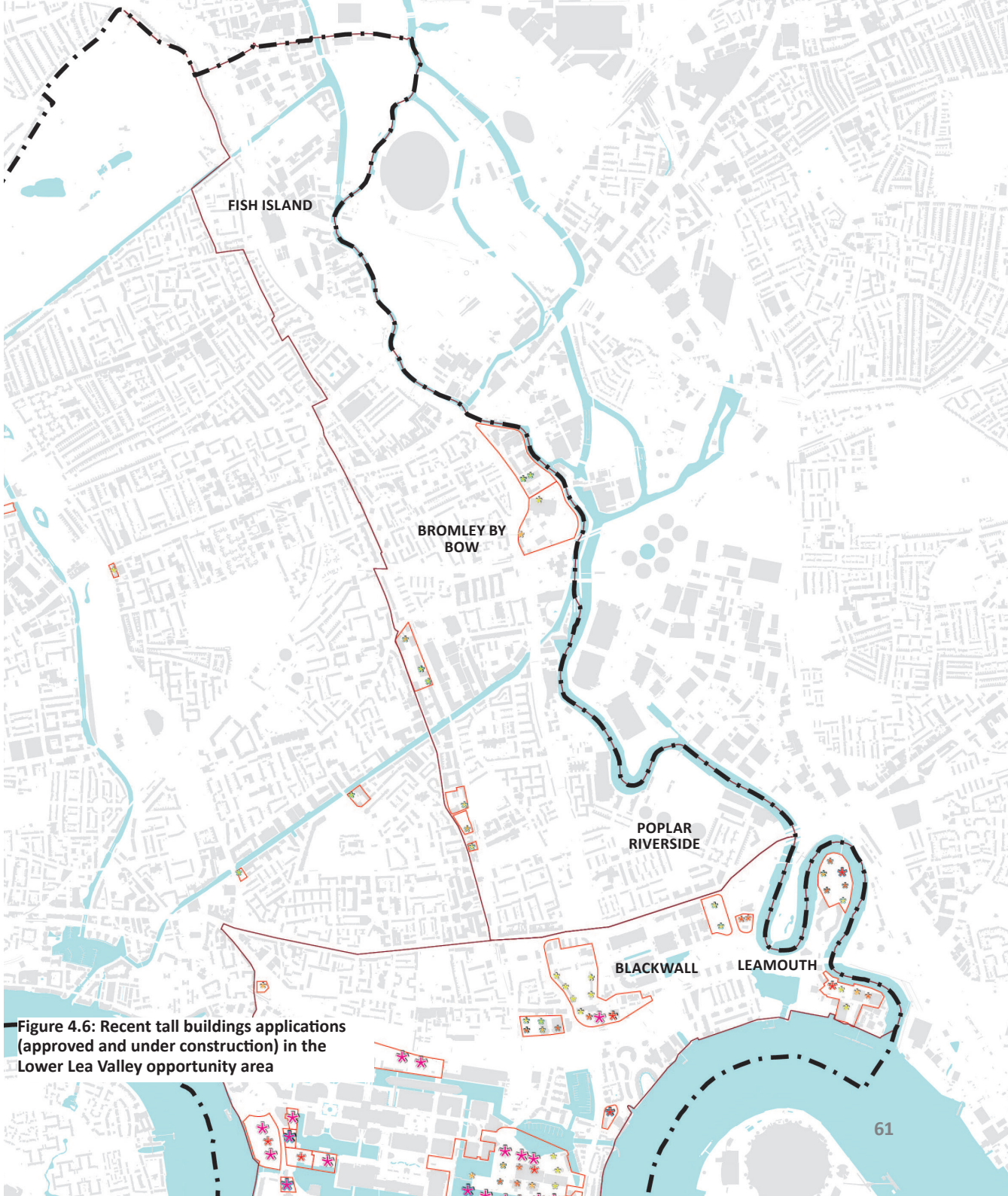


Figure 4.6: Recent tall buildings applications (approved and under construction) in the Lower Lea Valley opportunity area

Balfron Tower in Poplar Riverside viewed from the west

5 TOWER HAMLET'S TALL BUILDING APPROACH

5.1 DEFINITION OF BUILDING HEIGHT

Building height can be expressed in a number of ways. Most commonly it is defined by the number of floors, either the total usable number of floors, or the number of floors up to the parapet, roof structure or ridge line.

Alternatively the height of buildings can be indicated in metric height. This could refer to the total height of a building (usually including roof plant) or the sheer height of a building at its façade subject to what aspect of form the guidance is concerned about. Metric height can be relative to the ground, which is useful when comparing heights or when defining the scale of a building or street. Relative height depends on the place it is measured from as the topography might vary around a building, or differ from the front to the back.

Building height can also be established as an absolute measurement that refers to AOD (Above Ordnance Datum). The absolute height of a building is, for example, required to understand encroachment into air traffic corridors or sight lines of protected views.

This study adopts a definition of building height that is based on relative measurement above ground, both in numbers of storeys as well as metres. Storeys directly relate to the organisation and use of a building, and height in storeys is easier to measure than absolute metric height. As such it is a straightforward concept that allows the simple understanding of building height. However, storey heights may vary between different developments, within a building itself and also between different uses.

To establish a common and unambiguous basis this study translates the proposed number of storeys into metric height that define the physical envelop height of a building. Given the prevailing residential character of the borough, this is based on a typical residential floor-to-floor height of 3 metres multiplied by the number of floors, and adds a discretionary additional metre to allow for a slightly higher, or elevated ground floor or roof structure.

Both figures are normally provided. For clarity and in case of doubt, the metric height of a building as indicated takes precedence over the storey height. This is particularly important when considering commercial buildings where the floor-to-floor height is greater (often in the range of 4 to 4.5 metre per storey), as the resultant height of a commercial building and a residential building of the same number of storeys would be significantly different. Where relevant the applicable height in commercial storeys are indicated.

‘Horizons’ a new residential tower on Prestons Road reflected in Blackwall Basin

5.2 DEFINITION AND CLASSIFICATION OF TALL BUILDINGS

A ‘tall building’ is a relative term. A ten-storey building might be a (very) tall building in a predominantly two-storey suburban area, yet would be considered only as a local highpoint in an urban five to six storey context. Thus, tall buildings must be considered in relation to their local context. (see Figure 5.1)

The taller a building the greater is its presence and impact, both locally as well as on the skyline. The ratio of the height of a tall building to the prevailing contextual height is a useful indicator of the extent of ‘tallness’ of a building within its specific context.

The prevailing height in an area, as well as the degree of variation or coherence in building height, are important physical attributes that shape the experiential quality of an area and define its character. These attributes are the contextual references against which the height of a tall building is recognised and appreciated from the urban environment.

This study categorises tall buildings into different height groups by reference to their context height ratio (Figure 5.2 and 5.3). This allows a simple expression of the ‘tallness’ and impact of a tall building within their context as well as on the skyline.

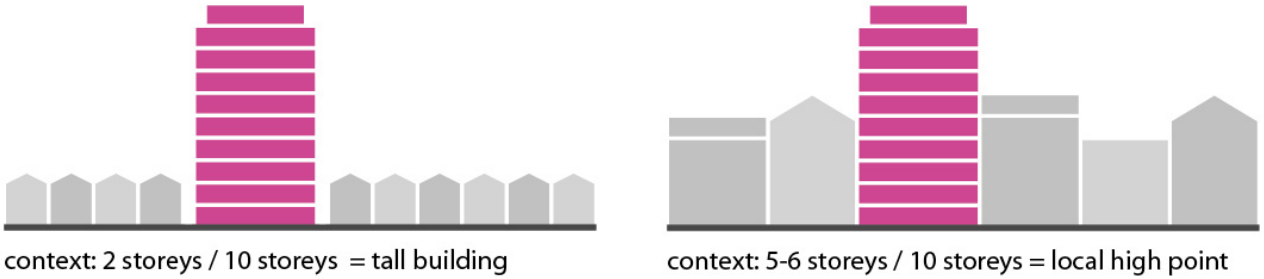


Figure 5.1: The impact of a tall building is related to its context

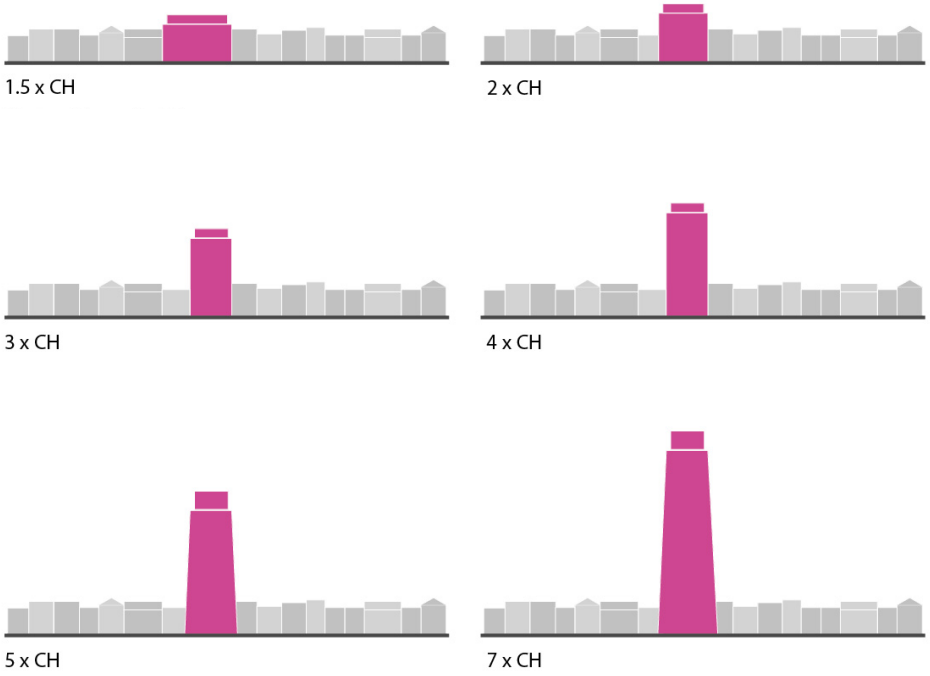


Figure 5.2: The height of buildings can be expressed as 'context height ratio'

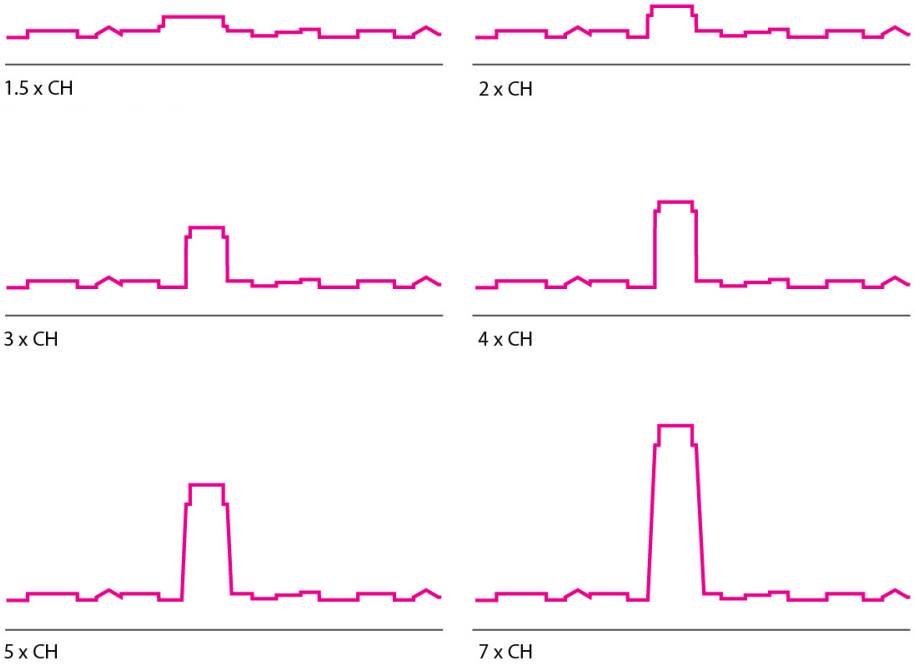


Figure 5.3: The context height expressed as an impact on the skyline

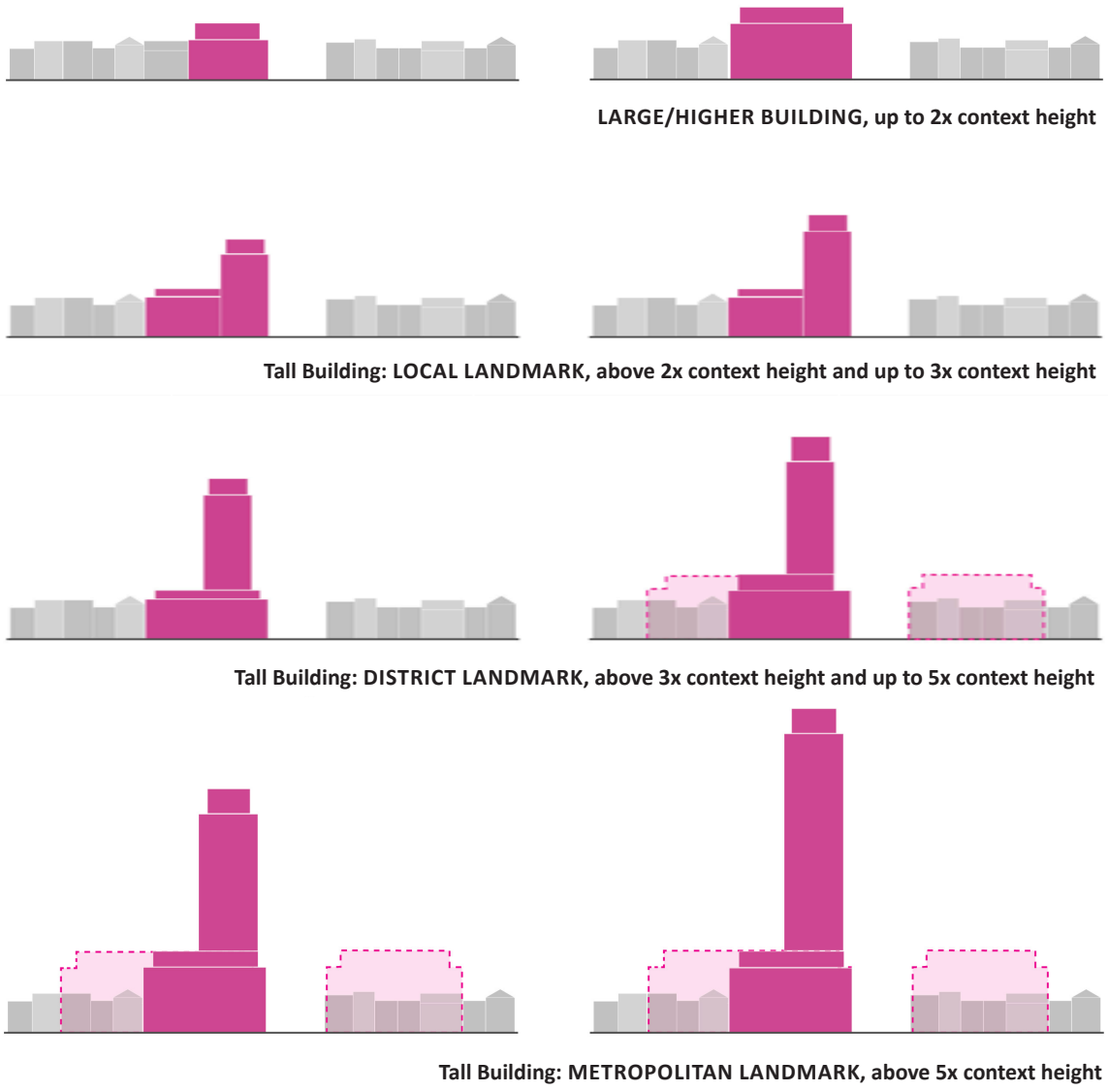


Figure 5.4: Diagram indicating the principles of height relativity and tall building classification

Figure 5.4 diagrammaticaly depicts a large or tall building within its context. It illustrates how the relationship between the taller element and its surrounding context changes as its height increases. In reference to the context height ratio it identifies four height classifications:

- Large/higher building;
- Local Landmark;
- District Landmark; and
- Metropolitan Landmark.

In reference to the building height classification Table 5.1 set out the principal perception of a tall building in relation to its context, and its principal impact on the slyline.

It is recognised that other contextual factors may also influence how the relationship of a taller building with its context is perceived. These include for example the local topography, the variation in the context height, the form, scale and roofscape of surrounding buildings, other tall buildings in the vicinity, the location of the tall element within the street block, the structure of the area and from where the tall building can be seen. For simplicity these factors are not included in the concept.

Generally the relationship of a tall building with its surrounding will gradually change as its height increases. It is recognised that there may be an overlap at the classification thresholds where buildings can be perceived as part of both adjoing classifications (for example as a Local Landmark as well as a District Landmark). In many cases however, it will be clearly possible to define a proposed building in one particular classification only.

Ratio to Context Height (CH)	Building height classification	Perception in relation to its context	Visual impact on the skyline	Potential location
Up to 2 x CH	**Large/higher building**	Large/Higher building establishes a localised high point. Building is more notable within a setting of consistent height, and less notable where there is a greater variation in the context height for example allong corridors	Higher building is of limited visibility and its significance is local.	To mark a locally important location or use for instance a street corner or local node or a building of civic, institutional or leisure use.
Above 2x CH and up to 3x CH	**Local Landmark** Tall building of local significance	Tall building establishes a prominent exception within its context, yet may be perceived as constituent part of the context.	Tall building is outstanding, yet its impact on the skyline is mainly local.	To mark special locations in the townscape, such as a strategic street corner, a public space or a particular function, such as a station.
Above 3x CH up to 5x CH	**District Landmark** Tall building of district wide significance	Tall building is markedly outstanding and establishes a pronounced contrast with its context.	Tall building is highly visible and notably affects the skyline on a district wide scale.	Limited to locations that are of district or borough wide importance, such as strategic infrastructure nodes or public institutions.
Above 5x CH	**Metropolitan Landmark** Tall building of metropolitan significance	Tall building establishes a jarring contrast with its context, unless a locally increased building height and/ or a cluster of other tall buildings help to mediate and visually build up to and integrate its height.	Tall building is highly visible and significantly affects the skyline on a London wide scale.	Confined only to areas in the Central Activity Zone that have a London wide strategic importance and form part of a high intensity employment. cluster.

Table 5.1: Table indicating principles of height relativity and tall building classification

5.3 TYPES OF TALL BUILDING

A tall building has three compositional elements: the base, the shaft and the top. The base of a tall building is where it meets the ground, and determines how it is experienced from the street and how well it integrates with, and responds to the townscape. The top is normally seen in views from further away and its shape and impact on the skyline is important in defining image and perception.

In relation to their base two principal types of tall buildings can be distinguished, the stand-alone tower, and the tower that sits on top of a podium or develops out of an urban block.

Stand-alone towers can be more iconic sculptural features. However, due to the concentration of functions at the bottom of the tower and limited footprint, they often establish a poor relationship with the public realm around the base. Many of the post-war towers built across the borough are stand alone structures often sitting within an undefined public realm and providing limited animation of the surrounding environment.

Stand-alone towers are also promoted where the site area is limited. Examples are apparent across the borough with several recently promoted along Marsh Wall in Canary Wharf where developers and their architects compete to deliver taller, more iconic and slender structures, on a series of sites along South Quay.

Stand-alone towers at Millharbour

Towers that develop out of an urban block or podium can usually better internalise their servicing requirements and establish an active relationship to the street space all around the block. The more the tower element sits back from the building line of the street block the lesser will its impact be on the scale and enclosure of the street space and the character of an area. Towers delivered as part of coherent blocks are being delivered within Millharbour and these have delivered a more successful ground floor environment.

Setting back the tower can also improve the micro climatic condition in the street space around the building. Towers developing out of urban blocks relate better to the human scale perception of the street space, and are generally the preferable type of tall buildings in an urban context.

Tall buildings as part of urban blocks at Millharbour

Free standing 'Dollar Bay' tower at the eastern end of South Dock, Canary Wharf

5.4 TALL BUILDINGS CLUSTERS

A cluster of tall buildings is formed when more several tall buildings are co-located in a confined area, such as a town centre or a Central Business District. Clustering of tall buildings can create powerful and distinctive features on the skyline.

There are a number in Tower Hamlets, notably at Canary Wharf and at Aldgate. These have both come about as part of a planned approach, with Canary Wharf a deliberate vision to create a new financial district in the former docklands and Aldgate an extension of the city. Both areas were identified as suitable locations for tall buildings in the 2010 Core strategy.

Canary Wharf in particular, with One Canada Square at its heart, is an instantly recognisable cluster that is iconic both within London and internationally. The Aldgate cluster forms a natural extension of the city and is located at the meeting point of two important routes through the borough, Commercial Road and Whitechapel Road / Mile End Road.

For clusters to establish and remain distinctive features on the skyline they require management and coordination in respect of the location and height of potential tall buildings. Competition between sites for the 'tallest' building may shift the centre of gravity around and affect the reading of a cluster on the skyline. Tall buildings proposed outside a cluster can weaken its strength and legibility on the skyline. If not carefully managed clusters can easily mutate into an uncoordinated sprawl of taller buildings over time, and undermine the impact and reading of the cluster on the skyline.

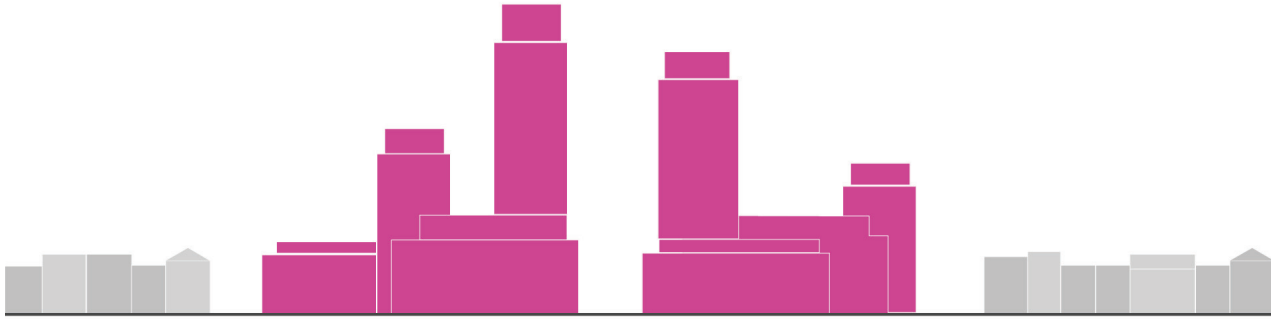


Figure 5.5: Principal diagram of a cluster of tall buildings - higher and taller buildings concentrated in a confined location

Ideally the tallest building is situated in the centre of a cluster. The height of other taller buildings should decrease the further they are away from the centre. Tall buildings need to stand sufficiently close together to be read as part of the cluster on the skyline. A cluster should be confined to a small square or circular geographical area and not be allowed to stretch out too far, for example along a street, to ensure it appears as a cluster from all directions and is clearly identifiable.

A related concept to the cluster is the skyline composition. This includes an arrangement of distinct landmark buildings or structures that constitute a (deliberate or incidental) striking spatial composition, for example in a waterfront view. A major skyline composition often is part of the city image and strongly valued by residents. Sidney, for example, presents itself with the image of the Opera House next to Sydney Harbour Bridge. A notable skyline composition in London are the three Barbican towers, which provide an unique landmark to central London and the iconic Barbican development.

The potential for the tall building cluster at Aldgate to grow is contained by the built heritage around it however there is increasing pressure on the Canary Wharf cluster with a considerable number of tall buildings proposal close by. This needs to be positively managed to both retain the iconic image of Canary Wharf, avoid impact on sensitive views, notably from Greenwich Park, and respond to the wider character.

Further unanticipated tall building clusters have emerged in the borough since the Core Strategy was adopted in 2010 notably at City Island in Leamouth, along the River Thames at Providence

Wharf and around Blackwall DLR station at Blackwall Reach. These take advantage of the opportunity presented by the changing context of the river Thames from an industrial river to a place to live and reflect the wider objectives within the Thames Gateway.

Change has been delivered in challenging areas within an environment that is dominated by infrastructure, busy roads, waterways and rail lines that reduce pedestrian permeability. Isolated islands of development have been created where the environment for residents is compromised. The building typologies have in many places contributed to a fragmented environment that lacks a human scale.

The cluster at City Island is being delivered in a coherent way as part of a single developer led plan and though isolated and wrapped by the river there is a co-ordinated design language and a sense of place is created. However other clusters that have emerged are unplanned and opportunistic with no clear focus or centre and a mix of architectural styles and building dispositions that do not deliver a harmonious composition.

Should the development pipeline identified in Section 4.2 of this report be delivered then these tall buildings clusters will grow and a further tall building cluster will also emerge in Wapping. This study will consider how these clusters should develop in the future so that they can create positive city image, a sense of place and aid legibility within the borough.

Development is underway at Wood Wharf - expanding Canary Wharf eastwards and delivering Canary Wharf's New District

City of London Skyline from Waterloo Bridge

5.5 TALL BUILDINGS – A CONTENTIOUS TOPIC

5.5.1 OVERVIEW

Tall buildings are a contentious topic. The last decade has seen many new tall buildings constructed all over London. This has had a profound effect on London's skyline, which in some places has altered beyond recognition. Towers have been developed, not only in the commercial centres of the City of London and Canary Wharf, but also along the river Thames, in the city fringe, in London's town centres, as well as in more peripheral and outer London boroughs. Towers have become higher and higher, with The Shard at some point becoming the tallest building in Europe and residential tall buildings reaching 40 and more storeys.

The proponents of tall buildings argue that tall buildings are essential for London's world city status, to compete globally and project an image of being open to business. Tall buildings are important in increasing development density, allow thousands more people to live and work near transport hubs, give previously unheralded areas a new identity and play an important role aesthetically and as economic catalyst for regeneration (Chris Brett, Barton Wilmore in Knight Frank, Tall Towers 2012).

There is a view that *"the fundamental quality of London's character has been that it is always changing, taking risks, experimenting, and unafraid to mix uses, materials, styles, dimensions and heights. London is neither Georgian, Victorian, Edwardian, nor any historical character at all. New buildings should add to this continuing tradition of variety and cosmopolitan change in creating heritage for tomorrow"* (GLA, Interim strategic planning guidance on tall buildings, strategic views and the skyline of London, 2001).

Tall buildings in this context are a contemporary expression of the economic success and adventurous nature of London and *"that proposals for tall buildings need to be considered for the positive qualities they can add to London's character, taking account of location, design and accessibility."* (ditto).

This view was adopted by the GLA during Ken Livingstone's period as Mayor of London (2000-2008), and by Boris Johnson (Mayor from 2008-2016) who took a similar position in promoting tall buildings. Policies and guidance by the GLA on tall buildings remained high level, and in the absence of a strong London wide policy framework on location, height and composition of tall buildings in the capital, this opened the door to a large number of speculative tall building proposals entering the pipeline.

Research by New London Architecture and GLHearn found that a total of 455 tall buildings (above 20 storeys) were in the pipeline in March 2017, of which 91 are under construction, 256 have planning approval but are not yet on site and 108 are proposed. The mean number of storeys of all tall buildings identified was 30 storeys. 60% are to be 20 to 29 storeys with 6% extending above 50 storeys. The primary use of the tall buildings remains as residential (92%) and it is sestimated that 30% of new homs under construction in London are within tall buildings.

26 tall buildings were completed in London in 2016, a 50% increase on 2015 and far more than in preceding years. The average number of completions in the years from 2004 to 2015 was six.

Keeling House in Bethnal Green - a modernist tower designed by Donald Lasdun in 1957 set adjacent to Victorian terraces

Landmark East tower viewed from Byng Street in Millwall

However, there have always been voices opposing tall buildings, for a variety of different reasons. Tall buildings can have an adverse impact on the value of special buildings, designated heritage assets or protected parks and gardens, or their settings. They can undermine the character of a place, or intrude into, and undermine cherished views of landmarks or urban skylines. They may impact on the quality and safety of the public realm for example through blank facades and a poor street interface or by generating adverse micro-climatic conditions such as wind funnelling at the base of the tower. They also may cause overshadowing or solar glare and undermine the quality and value of adjacent developments. In residential neighbourhoods their extreme height can feel overbearing, may affect the amenity and privacy of residential units and associated outdoor spaces.

The American urbanist Jane Jacobs warned of the consequences of the anonymity offered by skyscrapers in cities as they would compromise the *"very nature of cities, their real lifeblood of sociability and interdependence, and undermine the innate community awareness and safety mechanism of neighbourhoods where there are eyes on the street"* (as quoted by http://thephilosophersmail.com/utopia/the-great-urbanists-jane-jacobs).

Post-war social housing tower blocks, often monolithic, poorly designed and situated in failing estate developments have also tainted the image of tall buildings in the public perception.

Various commentators have reflected on the socio-economic and political aspects of tall buildings. Renowned architecture critic Aaron Betsky for example describes them as the *"purposeful symbols of wealth and power"*.

Flats in new tall buildings are frequently marketed and sold off plan to foreign investors, often from the Middle East or Asia, rather than to Londoners seeking residential accommodation in high density central locations.

Research by the Guardian revealed that the 50-storey St George's Tower at Vauxhall is two third foreign owned, with a quarter of apartments held through secretive offshore firms. Many of the homes are barely occupied and 85% of units have nobody registered to vote. This article raised a wider debate about 'empty towers' that do nothing to tackle London's housing crisis, failing to deliver affordable or family housing needed in the city.

The growing number of completed tall buildings in London inevitably will further raise public awareness of towers and their impact on neighbourhoods and city image. Already now there are few tall building proposals that are not opposed by a lively group of local people that fear harm to their locality. Public opposition to a tall building, specifically within the wider context of established residential areas is likely to increase in the future.

A YouGov poll commissioned by Historic England in March 2016 found that nearly half of Londoners (48%) think that the proposed tall buildings planned for the capital will have a negative impact on the skyline while 34% think they will have a positive impact. 60% say that they would like a say over tall buildings if they are proposed for a historically significant area in London, which shows that Londoners care for the image of their city beyond the place where they live and work.

An open letter signed by Sir Laurie Magnus, the Chairman of Historic England, Dr Lloyd Grossman, Chair of the Heritage Alliance and Sir Terry Farrell, Author of the Farrell Review, criticise the current approach to the planning for tall buildings in London: *"There is at present no strategic, pan-city plan for their location or design. Proposed developments are often promoted at random, and marketed to the public using idealised imagery. They lack proper analysis of any impact on existing views or settings for miles around. The planning approval process has, as a result, become somewhat chaotic and there is widespread confusion as to how those with an opinion can make their views heard. … Tall buildings that soar in the right places can make exciting contributions to London's environment and growth. It is vital, however, to provide a clear strategy in the forthcoming London Plan showing where they are acceptable and where not."* (Historic England, 5th April 2016)

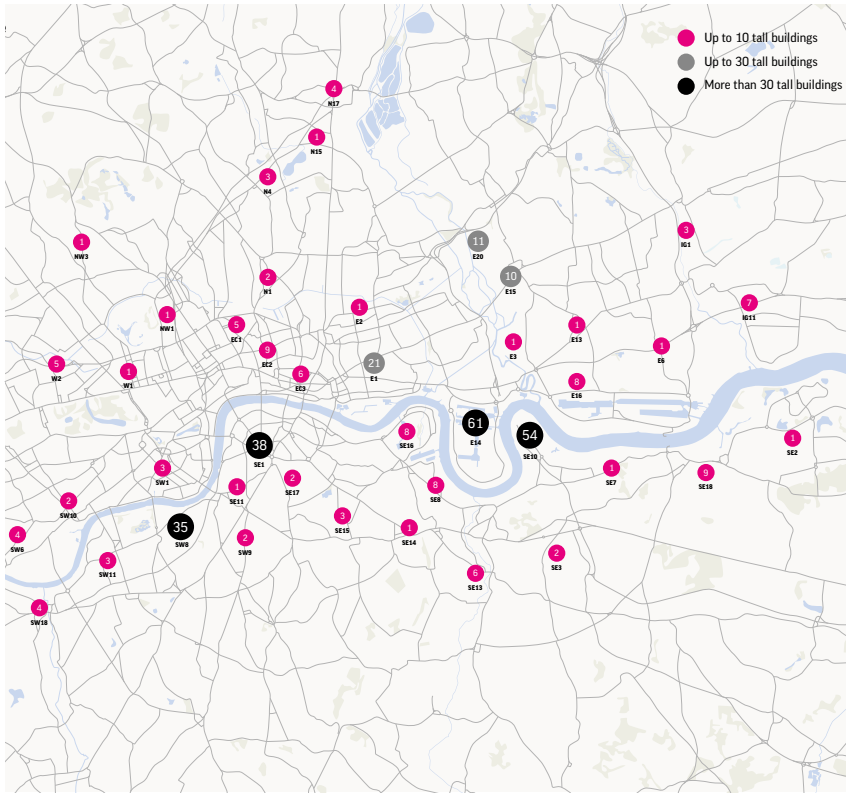


Figure 5.6: Number of tall buildings in the pipeline by London postcode, 2017 (source: London Tall Buildings Survey, NLA/GL Hearn, 2017)

Tower Hamlets has become a focus for tall buildings applications with the existing clusters at Aldgate and Canary Wharf expanding and other clusters emerging along the Thames waterfront. There are currently 77 buildings of 20 storeys and above in the pipeline in Tower Hamlets representing 17% of all proposed tall buildings in London and more than in any other borough.

Whilst some tall buildings in the borough are of striking design and are located where they aid legibility and enhance image the design and location of many others is less easy to justify and they have significant impact on local character and amenity.

The borough has been inundated with applications for tall buildings, often within inappropriate locations.

This study aims to provide an objective assessment of locations within the borough that are appropraite, inappropriate and sensitive to tall buildings and make recommendations on potential heights based on an understanding of character.

Cluster of tall buildings at Providence Wharf

5.5.2 TALL BUILDINGS AND THE DENSITY ARGUMENT

Residential

A common argument brought forward in support of tall buildings is the need to achieve higher densities to accommodate a growing population and to support London's employment growth. However there is a growing body of evidence that illustrates that high density residential and commercial development can be delivered with compact low and medium rise developments and do not require tall buildings.

Recent residential developments as well as historic examples of some Edwardian Mansion Blocks show that residential densities of 200 to 450 units per hectare can be delivered with buildings of less than 10 storeys with a common height range of six to eight storeys. Medium rise developments are likely to have less of an impact on neighbouring buildings such as overshadowing, compared to higher rise, and are also more likely to deliver better amenity for residents. They provide a human scale, and can offer a sense of intimacy and family friendly environments. However, some historic examples of mid-rise high density housing (ie some mansion blocks) would fall some way short of London Plan inclusive design and space standards and don't offer useful precedents for modern housing.

A study by Jan Gehl on perception and building scale has shown that beyond a height of six storeys people cannot recognise facial expression any longer and there is less scope for meaningful communication and engagement, which are essential for community life.

Grade A offices and residential towers in the Aldgate cluster

This does not mean that tall buildings cannot help to increase density of residential development. If densities beyond 450 units per hectare are sought, then tall buildings can have a role to play.

However, the London Plan's recommended maximum density threshold for the highest PTAL setting 6 and the Central Character setting is 405 units per hectare. Considering this there is no need from purely a residential density point of view to promote tall buildings, as increased densities can equally be achieved with compact low and medium-rise development forms such as terraces or urban perimeter blocks.

Commercial

For commercial floor space and in particular for Grade A offices, there is a preference for compact and efficient large floor plate provisions in "ground hugging" schemes with a minimum of 1,700sqm sized floor plates but more typically of 2,500 sqm and above. Large floor plates lend themselves to open plan office space, with flexibility to subdivide and share internal atrium spaces. They also allow for concentrating staff on single levels for better work organisation, reducing the need to travel between floors and limiting circulation infrastructure and cost.

While 'ground hugging' office development can go to heights of 10 storeys or more, typically they are below this range. Taller office buildings are generally less efficient and flexible than 'ground huggers', and while there might be cases where they are the perfect response to a certain location and market demand, they are rather the exception than the first choice for delivering high density office space.

5.5.3 TALL BUILDINGS AND REGENERATION

Tall buildings are often argued to have a role in regeneration projects. Regeneration is about bringing new activities to underperforming areas through changing the area's image, creating a new focus, promoting new uses and revitalising its activities.

Regeneration generally brings higher densities and a greater mix of uses. It has been argued that regeneration areas should be marked by tall buildings to signal change, raise the profile and generate confidence of investors in the area and its opportunites. However, regeneration projects are highly place and context specific, and what works in one area may be not be desirable in another. For example public realm improvements or establishing a new connection could be highly effective in signalising change and enhancing the urban experience in a more direct way. A tall building promoted in a regeneration area will have its biggest impact at the time when it is built. It is important that it remains a vital and successful beacon once the initial effects of novelty and gloss have worn off, and that it will contribute in longer term to the success of the area.

Tall buildings have the tendency to push land values upwards and encourage land speculation in their surroundings. The planning and construction of a single tall building frequently results in neighbouring sites also being promoted for tall buildings, often with greater height. While raising land values may be desirable for the regeneration of an area, for example by making schemes more viable, they can also undermine the affordablity of an area for local businesses and people and fuel gentrification. The potential local socio-economic and land value implications (including the potential ripple effect) should be thoroughly studied and carefully considered when a tall building is promoted as part of a regeneration initiative.

Tall buildings often form prominent part of large scale regeneration schemes - Royal Docks, London

Given the extent of permanent and significant change that a tall building brings to the built environment, and the prominence and impact it inevitable will have on the surrounding context as well as on the skyline, there is an argument that where they are permitted they should deliver tangible regeneration benefits, beyond mere token gestures. Thus while regeneration projects do not necessary require tall buildings, where a tall building is being brought forward there is an requirement for it to deliver significant benefits and added value to its locality beyond its simple function.

Development over the Spitalfields Market responded to the setting of Christ Church Spitalfields - an important local landmark

5.6 THE POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF TALL BUILDING

5.6.1 TALL BUILDINGS AND THE PROTECTED HERITAGE

Tower Hamlets currently has 58 designated conservation areas covering around 30% of the total local authority area. There are also more than 2,000 statutorily listed buildings in the borough and a significant number of locally listed buildings.

All of these heritage assets contribute greatly to the character, economy and community pride of the borough and are irreplaceable features, which need careful protection. Any change needs to be sensitively managed.

Due to their massing and height, tall buildings are likely to have a greater impact on the built and natural heritage than other buildings types. Tall buildings can affect the setting of a listed building and detract from its significance. A tall building can also be incongruous with the character of a conservation area. It may appear out of place, disrupting the urban pattern, character, scale, roofscape and building line of the protected townscape in conservation areas.

All tall building proposals will need careful assessment of their impact on local conservation areas and the setting of listed buildings. Due to the inherent low rise and consistent height characteristics of many of Tower Hamlet's conservation areas tall buildings are unlikely to be appropriate in them. However, conservation areas are not subject to automatic exclusion in the methodology. Where relevant they have been assessed and qualitative judgements have been made about the appropriateness of tall buildings.

The post war tower has a significant impact on St Pauls Shadwell viewed across the basin

Christ Church Spitalfields is a Borough Designated Landmark and views to it are protected

5.6.2 TALL BUILDINGS AND THE PROTECTION OF STRATEGIC AND LOCAL VIEWS

Due to their massing and height, tall buildings can intrude into, or detract from, important views, prospects or panoramas. Views from elevated vantage points and across open spaces can be especially sensitive because of the longer range views they can offer. The impact of tall buildings on a particular view can be established through a visual impact study. Impacts of a tall building on a view might be considered positive, neutral or harmful.

The GLA has designated a number of protected views that pass across the borough. The extent of the protected view corridors is described in Section 3.5.2. These protect the backdrop of views to St Paul's Cathedral and the Tower of London and proposals for buildings within these view corridors will need to be tested to ensure no detrimental impact is made.

The Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Guidelines and the Tower Hamlets Conservation Strategy (2016) identify a number landmarks (Borough Designated and local landmarks as indicated in section 3.5.2), and locally important views in the borough.

These landmarks are special and outstanding buildings that provide the focus for interesting views and skylines, and help to create local distinctiveness. Each landmark may feature within a number of important views from different locations. The impact of new development on these views will need to be considered when development is proposed in the vicinity. Tall buildings can have a detrimental impact on existing local landmarks, for example by competing with them, detracting from views or undermining their presence.

5.6.3 TALL BUILDINGS IMPACT ON THEIR IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT

Tall building have a significant impact onto their immediate environments and need to have due regard in their design response to the following aspects:

Microclimate
Tall buildings usually overshadow and overlook their immediate surroundings. Furthermore, wind funnelling, shadow patterns and sunlight reflection can create disturbing features and have a negative impact on the local microclimate. Reflected solar glare and night time light pollution require further considerations. Appropriate measures must be taken during the design development of tall buildings to minimise these negative impacts.

Public Realm Quality
Tall buildings have significant access and servicing requirements which come together at the base of the building. This can result in a poor relationship of the building with the public realm. While the front of the building is usually well designed with a generous and attractive lobby space, the sides and backs often fail to establish a positive and active interface with the public realm, especially where sites are relatively small. Servicing bays, blank walls, car parking entrances and other secondary functions can compromise the quality of these environments.

Residential Amenity
Tall building design needs to pay particular attention in residential environments, to privacy, amenity and overshadowing. Inappropriately planned, designed and located tall buildings can detract seriously from the quality of a residential environment. Tall buildings may overshadow, overlook and dominate their immediate surroundings and have harmful effects on living conditions, private gardens, patios and public spaces.

Tall buildings, with their large grain, substantial bulk, clean lines and modern materials can represent a jarring contrast when built in low-rise housing areas, and indeed can have the effect of visually demeaning the surrounding area. Tall buildings are often impersonal and therefore weaken the sense of ownership of an area by its people.

5.6.4 INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIREMENTS

Tall buildings can place a greater demand on infrastructure as a consequence of a large number of people locating to an area in a comparatively short period of time.

This can have a number of consequences:

Utilities and Waste
Tall buildings tend to use more energy due to the requirements for lifts, servicing, water, mechanical ventilation, cooling and lighting. This places a particular strain on utilities providers to respond quickly and effectively to meet the residential or commercial requirements. Utilities planning needs take place as early in the development cycle as possible to avoid problem later on relating to utilities provision. Waste management and disposal can also be challenging with sufficient space required for storage and additional strain placed on the waste collections and the local road network.

Schools and health care
Tall buildings, particularly those with family sized residential units can lead to significant additional pressure and demand for schools places and on social and health care. This need must be planned early with educational, social and health care providers. Where possible these requirements should be planned into schemes as sites that can accommodate such provision may not be available.

Transport and connectivity
Planning for tall buildings close to existing stations and public transport provision is essential however assessment of capacity is required and a multi modal approach should be taken that considers the potential to enhance connectivity through new bridges, cross river access and enhanced public realm to overcome infrastructure barriers.

5.6.5 TALL BUILDINGS AND SUSTAINABILITY

Tall buildings are considered less sustainable than medium rise buildings of comparable size in particular due to detrimental environmental effects and higher energy requirements.

The greater its height *"the more inefficient the building becomes in terms of the net area measured against carbon emissions from operation, construction and maintenance."* (Simon Sturgis of carbon profilers Sturgis Associates).

Tall buildings have an inherent requirement for more energy because of their vertical travel and servicing requirements and their poor ratio of external façade to floor area. Due to the high degree of glazing in many high rise buildings and sun exposure they are susceptible to overheating, often requiring intensive mechanical ventilation and hence greater amounts of carbon energy. Shadows from towers may result in the loss of daylight and solar gain in neighbouring developments, resulting in greater reliance on artificial light in affected properties.

Tall buildings are very specialised structures. They are typically less adaptable to changing economic circumstances and use requirements, and often need resource intensive and expensive refurbishment, or even complete re-development, when they become dated in layout, performance or appearance. The life expectancy of glazed cladding systems is only 40 to 50 years before replacement is required (Simon Sturgis).

5.7 A PLACE BASED APPROACH TO TALL BUILDINGS

5.7.1 THE CITY IMAGE

London, as a living city, is in a constant state of change. While its principal structuring features, including the river, road corridors and streets, its topographical features and open spaces only gradually change, its quarters, neighbourhoods, buildings and structures are subject to constant modification, through building alterations and redevelopment. The physical parts of the city, and also its people and their activities and movement constitute the everyday environment of the city. Every day, people observe and participate in this environment, and as such, they perceive the city with all their senses, forming an image of the specific environments they are in and the city as a whole.

The environmental image is a generalised mental picture of the physical environment, and involves the recognition of its pattern and specific elements. It is the product of immediate sensation and memory of past experience.

The environmental image is used to interpret information and to guide action. As such it helps legibility, on various scales, assists orientation and give cues to help navigation through the urban environment. A clear image of a particular 'special' city feature may become part of the collective memory of a place, be a signifier or symbol for this place, and may instil a sense of emotional security and belonging.

London's city image features a number of iconic buildings and structures visible from the river Thames

"The sense of home is strongest when home is not only familiar but distinctive as well." (Kevin Lynch, 1960, The image of the city)

The city image is not only generated by the physical attributes of a place. The meaning people associate with buildings and places also plays an important role. This may include a place's historical dimension, its role as a setting for current or past activities, or the significance of a place's or building's role in society. Beyond the realm of its spatial configuration this also affects whether an environment is liked or disliked.

A city image is not fixed. With time, as the physical environment and the pattern of activity within it change, the image of the city changes. New development and other interventions can enhance or weaken the city image.

In an environment where cities compete with each other on a national and global scale, cities strive to outperform others on many fronts, by focussing for example on attracting business, their green credentials and quality of life. Enhancing the city image is part of this contest, and cities can benefit from efforts that foster their uniqueness as a place by strengthening the identity of its distinctive features, and improving the inherent legibility of its urban areas through clarity of form and structure.

London's city image should clearly be a concern to the Mayor when drafting the next iteration of the London Plan. This should aim to make sense of the tall buildings that have sprung up across the capital in the last decade, and to provide firmer guidance to where tall buildings should go and why.

Modest scale housing near Columbia Road in Shoreditch

Tower Hamlets is made up of 24 places each with their own character and feel and including many fine buildings and landmarks, centres and open spaces. It is the unique patchwork of different character areas, nodes, open spaces and water, which creates the distinctiveness of east London of which Tower Hamlets is a part.

Tower Hamlets's is rich in history and the townscape includes special character areas such as Shoreditch, Spitalfields, Canary Wharf, St Katherines, Whitechapel, Stepney, Limehouse, Millwall and Mile End. Together they form composite part of the public image of the borough.

Beyond the Central Activities Zone Tower Hamlets is largely residential and whilst there are a number of taller towers mostly dating from the post war years the majority of the borough is low-to-medium rise in character. A notable exception is Canary Wharf where the character is strongly influenced by the cluster of tall buildings and in recent years a number of other tall buildings have started to shape the image and experience within the borough.

The Royal London Hospital is a highly visible landmark on the skyline in the west of the borough - here viewed from Weavers Field in Bethnal Green

London's skyline view from Alexandra Palace features the two distinct tall building clusters of the City of London and Canary Wharf, as well as the iconic Shard. While St. Paul's Cathedral is visible, it does not have prominently role in this view.

5.7.2 TALL BUILDINGS, THE SKYLINE AND VIEWS

An important aspect contributing to the city image is its skyline. Due to their prominence and height tall buildings can have a significant impact on the city skyline.

Historically the urban silhouette (or 'the city portrait') was a result of a cumulative process, and its reading was calculated. The landmarks that stood out in this picture were symbols of a collective life; they advertised civic priorities, and made palpable the hierarchy of public institutions.

Up to the late 19th century taller buildings were usually public beacons, those of religion (as St. Paul's Cathedral), or government (as the Houses of Parliament), or technological progress (as Tower Bridge). Their height was not particular useful except in the symbolic sense.

The skyscraper in contrast was the product of private enterprise, stacking up building mass for their functional payoff, with the symbolism as a bonus. From the end of 19th century this started to visually dominate cities in the new world. A city image dominated by skyscrapers, particular in the American context became symbolic of the prosperity and commercial vitality of a place. The only other private structures that began to populate the skyline of cities were artefacts of the industrial revolution - smoke stacks, water towers and cranes.

London did not see the advent of taller buildings during the first half of the 20th century as the London Building Act in 1894 restricted building height to 80ft (24.3m) tall. Until 1962 St. Paul's Cathedral was the tallest building in London, surpassed then by the Post Office Tower.

Since the advent of the private skyscraper alternate and opposing views have emerged on who should be allowed to dominate the skyline. One side of the debate focuses on the common 'ownership' of the city skyline, and argues that in a democratic system *"a minority of private interests should not be allowed to dominate the town architecturally anymore than it should be socially"* (Thomas Sharp, 1963).

"Skylines are … urban signatures. They are the shorthand of urban identity, and the chance of urban flourish. Cities of all descriptions and periods raise aloft distinctive landmarks, to celebrate faith and power and special achievement. These landmarks focus city forms and highlight city portraits. The presentation itself is contrived. It is chiefly meant for an external audience. …The image changes slowly and deliberately. … The skyline in the end is a negotiated symbol. What stands out as the city's official silhouette was given license to do so."
(Spiro Kostof)

London Skyline as seen from Greenwich Park

The other side argues that today's cities have their own socio-economic foundations that, with their modern practices, have set aside the traditional cities, and deserve their own skyline.

The shape of the skyline matters to residents. It may present a fond icon of the city form, a vision to cherish and come home to, the urban advertisement to the world, and the front they present to visitors. Taller buildings, with their outstanding height, impact on the skyline. They also affect the perception, identity and attachment that people hold for their city. When a building is associated with a negative connotation this can be particularly harmful.

A distinctive and attractive skyline is frequently used for the presentation of a city to the outside world, and plays an important role in city marketing and branding. Vantage points, or viewing balconies, from where a particular skyline can be appreciated, and distinctive landmark structures are often an important tourism focus, and as such foster the local economy.

The management of London's skyline sits firmly with the Mayor and extends to more than the protection of a few viewing corridors to St Pauls Cathedral and The Palace of Westminster.

The skyline at borough level concerns the protection or enhancement of local views across the borough (for example from the General Wolfe Statue in Greenwich Park), and the protection and enhancement of views onto local landmarks. This requires the coordination of any new taller buildings as distinct landmarks, for example to enhance vistas; the grouping of taller buildings in distinct and recognisable clusters; or the protection of existing views to local or city landmarks from harmful intrusion by tall buildings.

Incidental view in Farringdon of two City Scale Iconic Landmarks - Historic: St. Paul's Cathedral, and contemporary: The Shard

5.7.3 TALL BUILDINGS AS LANDMARKS

City scale landmarks

What iconic landmarks such as The Shard can deliver on a city scale, other buildings or structures do on smaller scales. Distinct landmarks are notable point references that exist on different scales, city-wide, district-wide or locally.

District or city wide landmarks can normally be seen from far away over the tops of houses and other buildings. If they are of a distinct shape and silhouette, they are recognisable even from far away and can become iconic place symbols. In London these include older buildings like St Paul's Cathedral, The Palace of Westminster, the Post Office Tower, and new additions including The Shard, 30 St Mary Axe (The Gherkin) and the London Eye.

Some tall buildings have received nicknames from the association of their shape on the skyline and their representation in public consciousness these include the 'Gherkin', the 'Walkie-Talkie', the 'Cheesegrater' and the 'Shard'. Many of these iconic buildings have place on the mental map of London's city image.

Local landmarks

Local landmarks are notable buildings that make their presence felt in a limited local area or within certain (local) views. Local landmarks do not need to be tall but can be equally expressed through their special form, architecture, use or other features that make them stand out from their context.

Landmark buildings offer distinctiveness to particular locations in the urban fabric. They contribute to the character of an area, make it special and easier to recall. They can enhance the legibility of an area, provide place markers that assist orientation and way finding. People recognise them as special features and include them in their mental map of an area. They are more powerful, when their unique aspects are associated with a special function or meaning, such as a public transport node, a civic, cultural or faith based function, or when they are located at nodal points in the urban fabric, such as at major cross roads, gateways or stations.

Kevin Lynch argued that a landmark's key characteristic was 'singularity': 'some aspect that is unique or memorable in the context', and that 'spatial prominence' can establish elements as landmarks by making them visible from many locations and/or creating contrast with nearby elements. Landmarks with a clear form contrasting with their background, and a prominent spatial location, are more easily identifiable and likely to be significant to the observer. As observed above this definition does not limit itself to tall buildings. In fact many of Tower Hamlets's designated landmarks are architecturally elaborate, but otherwise low or medium rise buildings.

New local landmark hotel tower at Walthamstow Central is a visual marker to the station and helps local way finding

The location of landmark buildings

Tall buildings can act as landmarks in the urban fabric and assist legibility and orientation, as discussed above. Potential locations that might benefit from a landmark are:

- Nodal points where important movement corridors come together or intersect;
- Arrival and departure points in the urban fabric, such as transport interchanges and stations;
- Gateway locations at the edge or border of neighbouring urban areas; and
- Prominent focal points at the end of vistas or important streets, that can emphasise the importance of a route or mark an important destination.

The scale and height of a landmark building should be proportionate and provide cues to the role and importance of a place in the hierarchy of the city. When seen from further away, a tall building in the urban fabric, usually denotes a concentration of activity, a centre with a mix of uses and / or potentially a transport node.

A disjuncture between the prominence of a building and the function and role of its location, undermines the legibility and common understanding of the urban fabric. It is confusing, disorientating and detracts from the 'sense of place'.

Being a 'landmark' and 'enhancing the legibility' are commonly arguments for taller buildings. However, not every tall building will qualify as a landmark and enhance legibility. Despite its height, a tall building may not be recognised as a landmark due to its lack of 'singularity' in form, height, expression or architecture, or when situated amidst other buildings of similar height or characteristics. If the 'landmark' building is not located in an exposed and notable position or at an important node within the urban fabric, then it is unlikely to support the landmark argument. For example, a tall building located in the middle of a street frontage amidst other buildings will be perceived as a lesser landmark (if at all) than the same building at an important junction or terminating a particular view. Therefore proposals for 'landmark' buildings that are not genuine landmarks are not justified.

To help shaping places that 'make sense' it is important to guide the location and height of tall buildings in respect to the character, function and structure of an area. The quality of a tall building and its response to its surrounding context need to ensure that it offers sufficient distinctiveness and contrast to justify the term landmark building.

Canary Wharf is highly visible from across the city - here its iconic form is appreciated in the view from Waterloo Bridge

Brick Lane with the Truman Brewery chimney in the backdrop - a local landmark in the area

6 IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL LOCATIONS FOR TALL BUILDINGS

6.1 INITIAL AREAS OF SEARCH

This study aims to identify parts of the borough that are appropriate, inappropriate and sensitive to tall buildings. The starting point is London Plan Policy 7.7 which generally limits tall buildings to sites in the Central Activities Zone (CAZ), opportunity areas, areas of intensification or town centres that have good access to public transport.

An overlay of the three opportunity areas, the borough's major centre and eight district centres and PTAL indicates that the initial Area of Search for parts of the borough appropriate for tall buildings is limited to the opportunity areas together with Roman Road West district centre. All Parts of the CAZ are within opportunity areas.

Roman Road East, has poor accessibility to public transport (most of the centre is PTAL 2) furthermore the built form in the area is low rise with buildings typically two to four storeys in height and so it is not considered appropriate. The other six district centres are within opportunity areas.

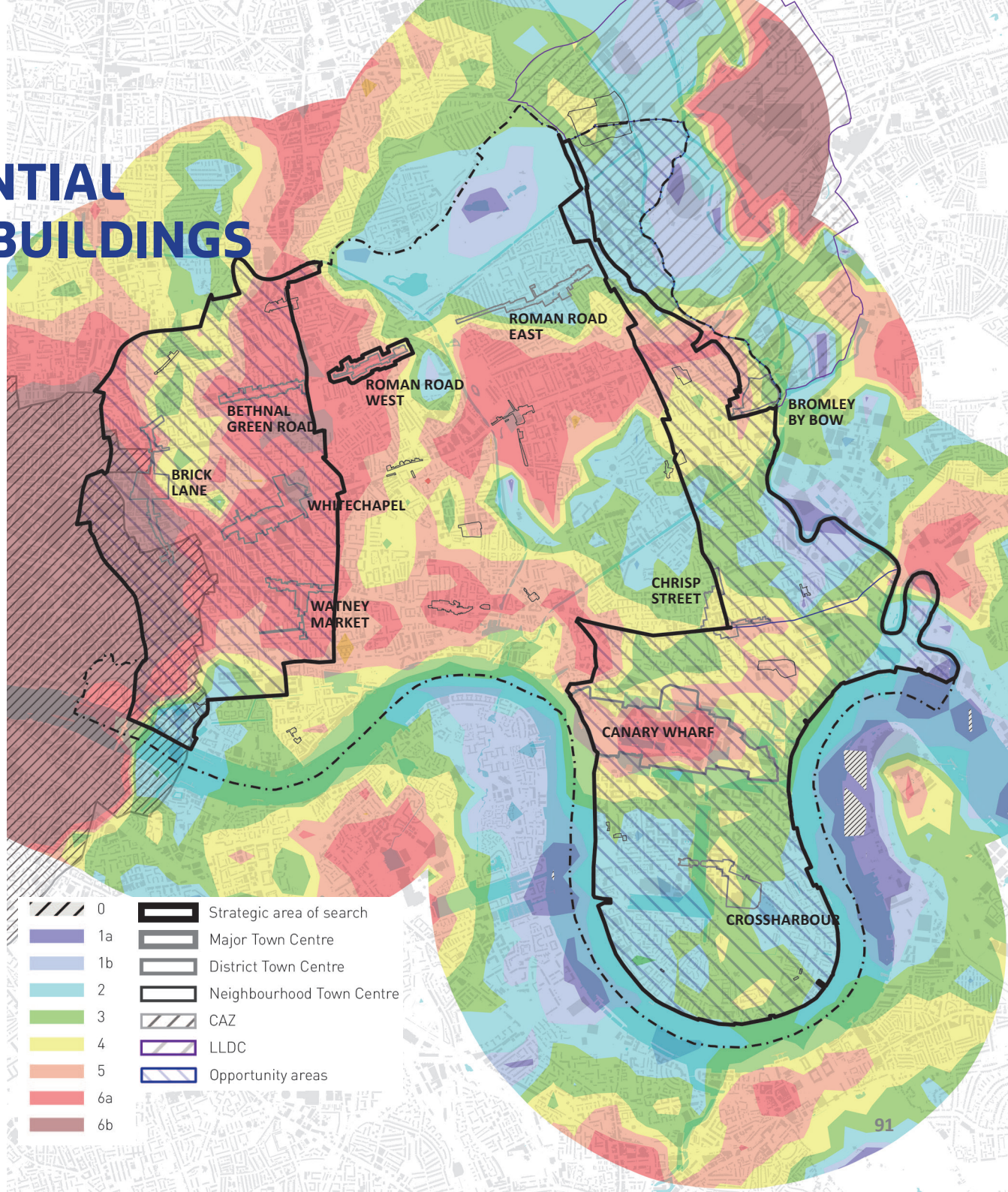


Figure 6.1: Plan indicating strategic search areas

6.2 A RESPONSE TO CHARACTER

London Plan Policy 7.7 states that tall buildings 'should only be considered in areas whose character would not be affected adversely by the scale, mass or bulk of a tall or large building'.

In order to understand this a detailed characterisation of the Areas of Search has been undertaken.

This adds to the Urban Structure and Characterisation Study (2009) and its Addendum (2016) and strengthens the understanding of character in respect of building form, scale and typology in order to help to identify sensitivities and the appropriateness of areas for tall buildings.

The Urban Structure and Characterisation Study sub-divided the borough into 24 Places reflecting the series of historic hamlets that have evolved and grown to form the borough we see today. The characterisation work carried out for this Tall Buildings Study uses the same sub-divisions.

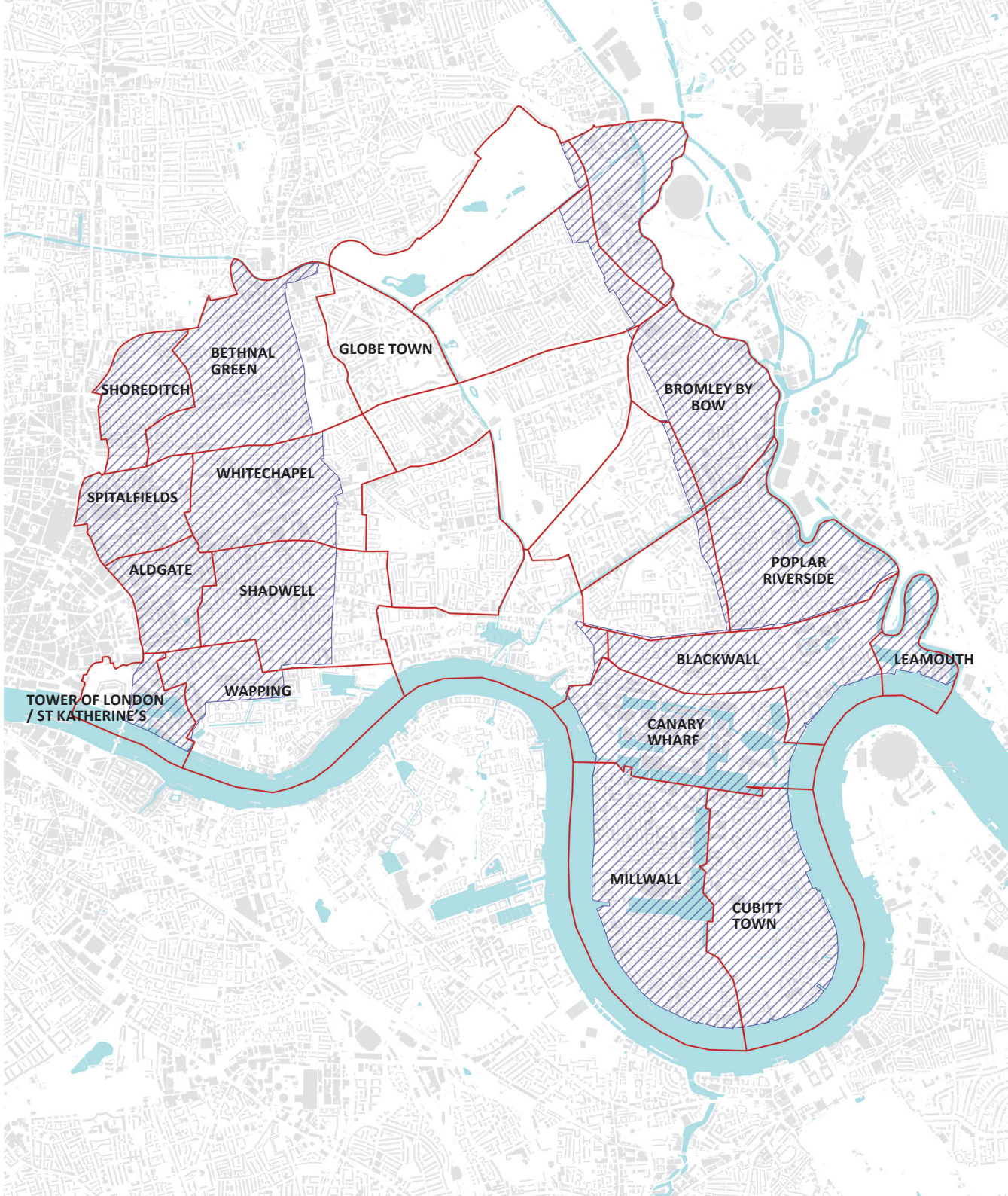


Figure 6.2: Plan indicating initial search areas

The following Places are analysed as indicated in Figure 6.2:

City Fringe
- Shoreditch
- Bethnal Green
- Spitalfields
- Aldgate
- Whitechapel
- Shadwell
- Tower of London / St Katherines
- Wapping

Isle of Dogs and South Poplar
- Canary Wharf
- Millwall
- Cubitt Town
- Blackwall
- Leamouth

Lower Lea Valley
- Poplar Riverside
- Bromley by Bow

The eastern most portion of Poplar is included within the analysis of Poplar Riverside and the eastern most portion of Bow and Bow Common within the analysis of Bromley by Bow.

Part of the Lower Lea Valley opportunity area within the borough, including Fish Island and part of Bromley by Bow, now falls under the planning remit of the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC). These areas are excluded from the characterisation work and the appropriateness or sensitivity of tall buildings within these areas is not considered as part of this study.

Whilst not within an opportunity area we have also carried out characterisation work on the portion of Globe Town centred around the Roman Road West district centre - the only district centre outside of an opportunity area that benefits from good PTAL and therefore a potential location for tall buildings.

CHARACTERISATION

The characterisation work included within this study is intended to supplement the Urban Structure and Characterisation Study and its Addendum and provides the following for each of the Places identified within the Area of Search:

- An assessment of the character and townscape – including identification of character areas and typologies and the locations of existing tall buildings and local landmarks;
- Identification of existing building heights;
- Public transport accessibility;
- Sensitivities to change including the location of conservation areas and listed buildings and public open space;
- Potential areas of change including site allocations, current tall building proposals and other potential areas of change; and
- A summary of whether the 'Place', or parts of it, are appropriate, inappropriate or sensitive to tall buildings.

6.3 CHARACTERISATION OF PLACE: SHOREDITCH

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Shoreditch is located in the north western corner of the borough and the 'Place' is defined by Shoreditch High Street to the west, Hackney Road to the north, Barnet Grove to the east and by Bethnal Green Road to the south. Shoreditch extends westwards and much of the creative and digital activity for which the area has become known is focused further west around Curtain Road and Old Street within the London Borough of Hackney. These uses extends to the southern portion of the area on Bethnal Green Road at Box Park and Shoreditch High Street Overground station and at the northern end of Brick Lane which extends into the area from Spitalfields to the south.

Part of the Brick Lane district centre is located within the area, as is Columbia Road neighbourhood centre, and these provide the focus for local shops and activity.

Whilst the northern portion of Shoreditch is predominantly residential, uses towards the south are more mixed and include creative space within a mixed-use area to either side of Bethnal Green Road.

The main movement corridors follow the boundary of the Place and the residential streets within the area are therefore relatively quiet.

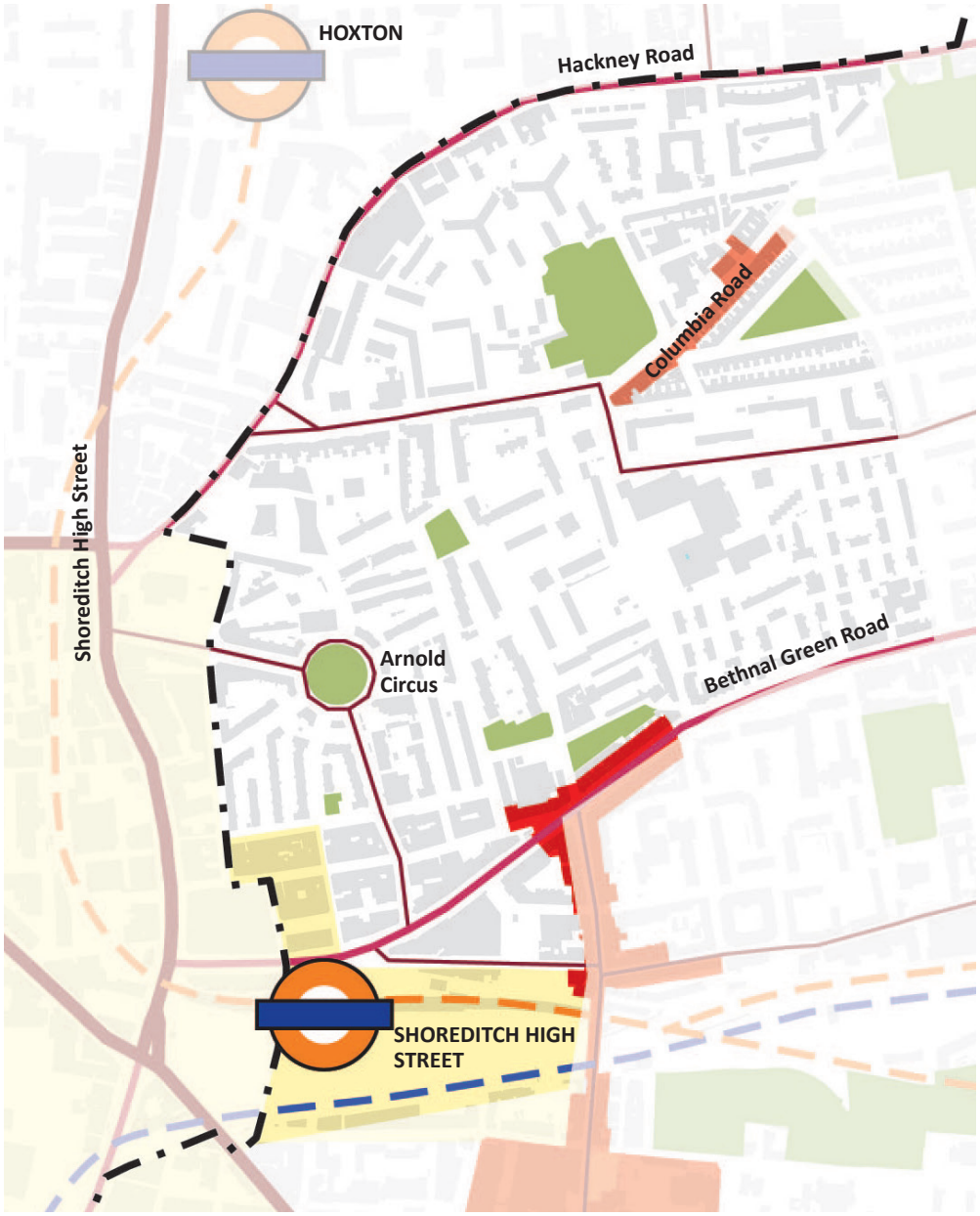


Figure 6.3: Shoreditch overview

Street stalls next to Bishopgate Goodsyard and Box Park on Bethnal Green Road

Recent development on Sclater Street

Shoreditch High Street to the west of the area

Columbia Road provides a neighbourhood focus

Graffiti and street art is a feature of the area

EXISTING CHARACTER

The character of the area is mixed with the very distinctive and fine townscape at the late 19th Century Boundary Estate and its substantial five storey blocks structured around Arnold Circus to the south west of the area and small scale two storey Victorian terraced house around Columbia Road to the north east. In between is an area of predominantly post-war housing typically in blocks of three to five storey but with a number of taller towers interspersed.

The southern part of the area is more dynamic and includes the bustling environment around Bethnal Green Road, Brick Lane and the Box Park. The streetscape includes a mix of Georgian and Victorian buildings fronting directly onto the street and with a typical height of 3-4 storeys but with later additions on the approach to Shoreditch High Street.

A more substantial development has recently been constructed on the junction of Bethnal Green Road with Sclater Street. This includes a tall and bulky residential tower that rises above the surrounding streetscape. This tower is highly visible from the wider area and is out of context with the local environment.

Townscape features and significant buildings:

- Boundary Gardens Estate
- Columbia Road and its collection of shops and famous flower market
- St Leonards Church at the western edge
- Fine Victorian terrace of shops on Bethnal Green Road and Georgian frontages on Brick Lane extending southward

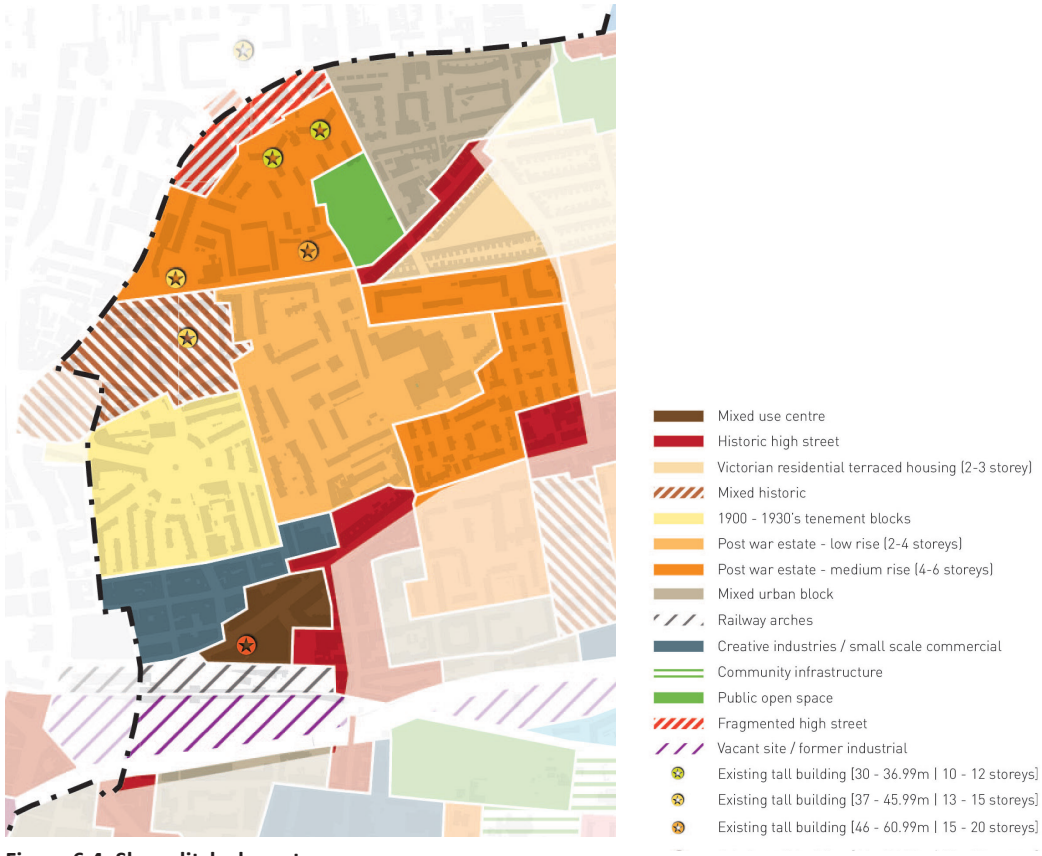


Figure 6.4: Shoreditch character areas

Open spaces:
The area lacks significant open spaces with the largest on Columbia Road and smaller spaces within the residential area including Jesus Green, Arnold Circus and Virginia Gardens.

However parts of the area benefit from significant mature trees and these add to the character.

Robust five storey perimeter blocks on Boundary Gardens Estate

The residential tower on Sclater Street is visually obtrusive

Modest scale Victorian terraces

The 14 storey Dunmore Point is visible over older properties on Columbia Road

Hackney Road

Recent development on Austin Street

Figure 6.5: Shoreditch existing building heights

EXISTING BUILDING HEIGHTS

Predominant height: Typically 3 – 5 storey but two storey at Columbia Road and with a number of taller structures as indicated below.

Existing tall buildings:

- Sclater Street tower (25 storey)
- Dunmore Point, Gascoigne Place (14 storey)
- Cuff Point, western end of Columbia Road (14 storey)
- Sivill House, Columbia Road (20 storey)
- George Loveless House, Ravenscroft Street (11 storey)
- James Hammett House, Ravenscroft Street (11 storey)

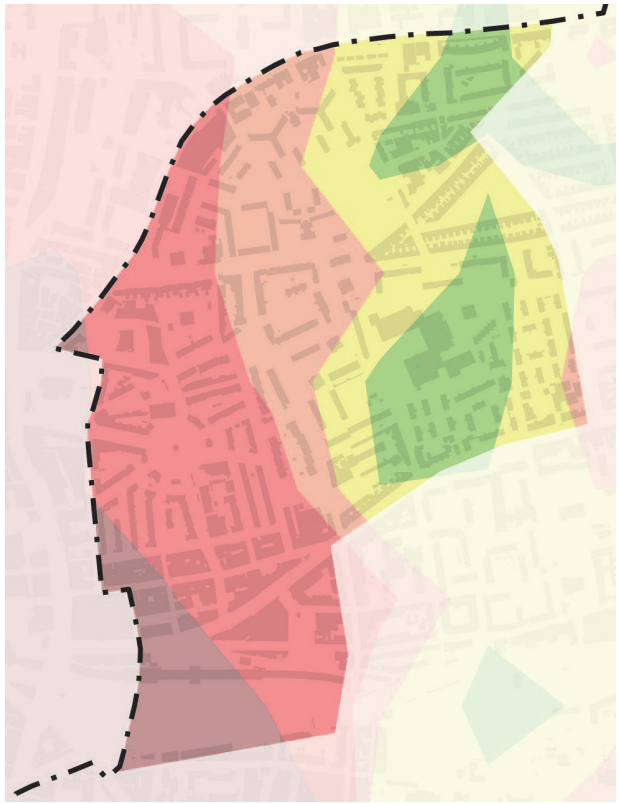


Figure 6.6: Shoreditch PTAL

PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACCESSIBILITY

Facilities: The area is served by buses on the main routes (Bethnal Green Road, Shoreditch High Street and Hackney Road) and by overground stations, Shoreditch High Street to the south and by Hoxton station to the north-west. (within LB Hackney).

PTAL Levels: Varies from 6b in the south west to 3 in the north east.

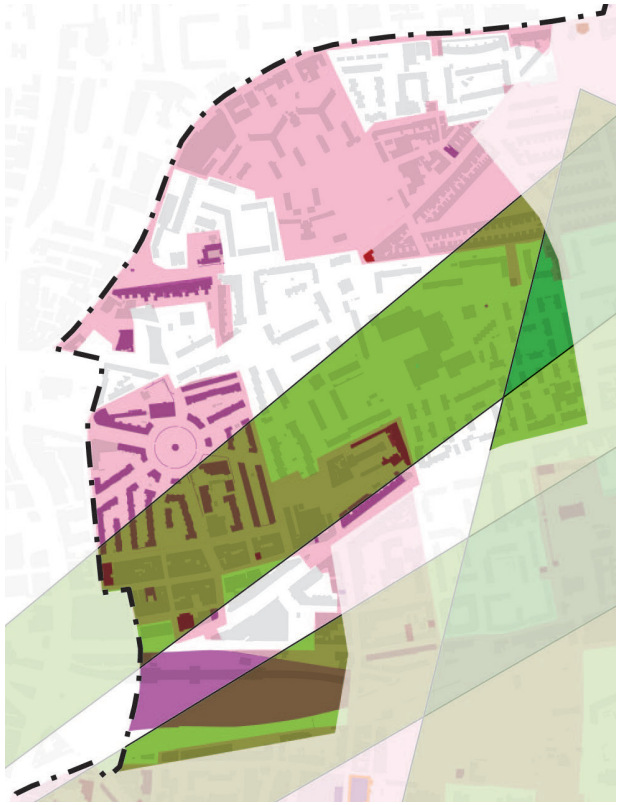


Figure 6.7: Shoreditch sensitivities

SENSITIVITIES TO CHANGE

Heritage: Several conservation areas and numerous listed buildings notably on the Boundary Road Estate. Bishopgate Goodsyard is also listed.

Views: LVMF protected views extend through the area.

Other: St Leonards Church within LB Hackney on the western edge of the area and Columbia Road are identified as local landmarks and the setting and views to these should be protected.

Figure 6.8: Shoreditch development potential

POTENTIAL AREAS OF CHANGE

Site Allocations: Bishopgate Goodsyard.

Development pipeline: A 16 storey residential tower (71 metres AOD) at the Huntingdon Industrial Estate at 2-10 Bethnal Green Road (western end)

Other sites: The frontage onto Hackney Road is fragmented and there are several potential development sites here.

SUMMARY

There is likely to be pressure for tall buildings towards the south-western portion of the area. The PTAL levels here are high and Bishopgate Goodsyard is a site allocation.

The impact of tall buildings here must be carefully considered to respond to the heritage sensitivities, avoid impact on LVMF strategic views and an assessment of cumulative effects will be required in the context of emerging development and tall building policies in the adjacent LB Hackney.

There may also be potential for compact higher density development on Hackney Road close to Hoxton station however this area is identified as a conservation area and any tall buildings proposal must be sensitive to its context. It is also considered that a tall building / local landmark would be better located where it marks Hoxton station – ie across the road in LB Hackney.

6.4 CHARACTERISATION OF PLACE: BETHNAL GREEN

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Bethnal Green is located in the north of the borough bordering on the London Borough of Hackney. The 'Place' is defined by the Regent's Canal to the north, Russia Lane / Globe Road to the east, an elevated railway line emerging from Liverpool Street station to the south and Brick Lane and Barnet Grove within Shoreditch to the west.

Bethnal Green Road is a district centre and extends east-west through the area. Cambridge Heath Neighbourhood Centre is also located to the north of the area at the junction of Cambridge Heath Road and Hackney Road.

An elevated rail line extends alongside Cambridge Heath Road and provides a barrier to movement between the east and western parts of the area. Land to the east of the rail line is outside of the City Fringe opportunity area and therefore not considered in detail in this study. The railway line on the southern boundary is a more significant barrier to movement with few routes through.

The main east-west route through the area is Bethnal Green Road which connects to Shoreditch and Central London to the west and Roman Road to the east and Cambridge Heath Road running north-south and connecting with Hackney to the north and Whitechapel to the south. Hackney Road is a locally important east-west route.

Figure 6.9: Bethnal Green overview

Bethnal Green Road district centre

The Regent's Canal defines the northern boundary of the area

Railway viaducts restrict movement

Hackney Road

View southwards to Royal London Hospital from Weavers Fields

Bethnal Green station

EXISTING CHARACTER

The three main road corridors through the area are historic routes with a mixed frontage of mainly Victorian buildings and new additions at a modest scale, typically of three storeys. These corridors are the focus of activity in the area, and Bethnal Green Road in particular, is a busy high street with a thriving market. An assemblage of memorable civic buildings is located on Cambridge Heath Road at its eastern end. To the north of Bethnal Green the area is predominantly residential and consists of a series of post-war estates with blocks laid out in a variety of arrangements. These estates are interspersed with areas of historic properties. The scale of development is typically 3 to 5 storeys. A number of taller post-war blocks rise higher but their locations offer little to the legibility of the area.

Further north parts of Hackney Road are lined by fine Victorian and Georgian properties and north of these are blocks of five storey LCC tenement blocks wrapping around internalised courtyards. Alongside the Regents Canal are a number of employment areas including a former gas works and light industrial sheds. Some of these are occupied by creative industries. Employment space is also provided within arches beneath the elevated rail lines that extend through the area.

To the south of Bethnal Green Road, Weavers Field provides a significant open space and a reminder in its name of the former focus of employment for the area. This space is overlooked by historic properties and offers extensive views towards the City and southwards to Whitechapel. Tall buildings are particularly prominent from here.

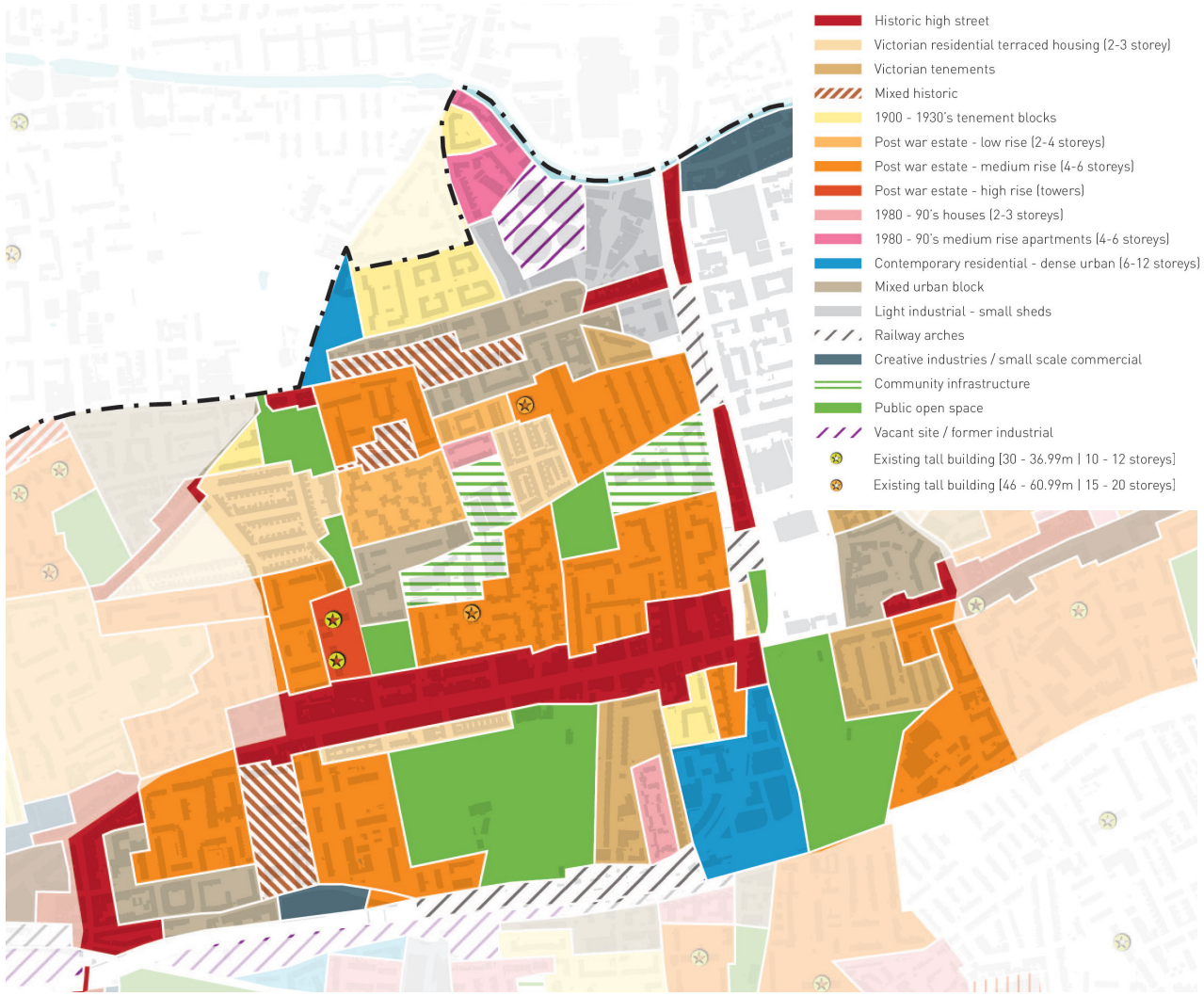


Figure 6.10: Bethnal Green character areas

Keeling House - a modernist intervention adjacent to historic terraces

Much of the area is composed of post-war blocks

Victorian terraces fronting Old Bethnal Green Road

Employment uses towards the north of the area at The Oval

Historic frontage on Cambridge Heath Road

Robust street fronting blocks to the south east of the area

Townscape features and significant buildings:

- St John on Bethnal Green together with Museum Garden and the V and A Museum of Childhood on Cambridge Heath Road
- Mixed Victorian frontage on Bethnal Green Road
- Historic frontages to Hackney Road
- Brick Lane extending southward

Open spaces:

- Weavers Field to the south
- Bethnal Green Gardens to the east
- Haggerston Park and Hackney City Farm immediately to the north in Hackney
- Ion Square Gardens, Pollard Square and Middleton Green provide more local spaces

Figure 6.11: Bethnal Green existing building heights

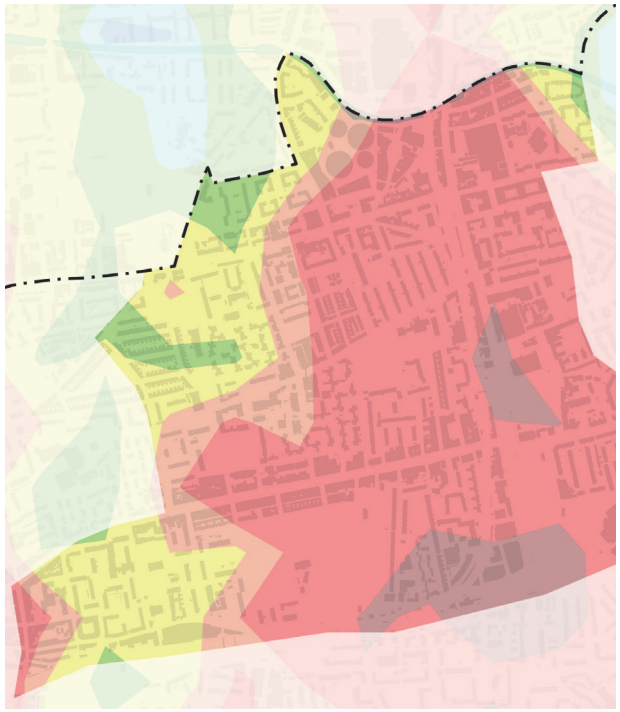


Figure 6.12: Bethnal Green PTAL

EXISTING BUILDING HEIGHTS

Predominant height: Typically 3 – 5 storey

Existing tall buildings:

- Charles Dickens, Mansford Street (22 storey)
- Keeling House, Temple Street (15 storey)
- Post war blocks – several at 10 or 11 storeys.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACCESSIBILITY

Facilities: The area is served by buses on the main routes (Bethnal Green Road, Cambridge Heath Road and Hackney Road) and by London Overground stations, at Bethnal Green and Cambridge Heath and the Central Line at Bethnal Green.

PTAL Levels: 6a in the centre ranging down to 3 in the west of the area.

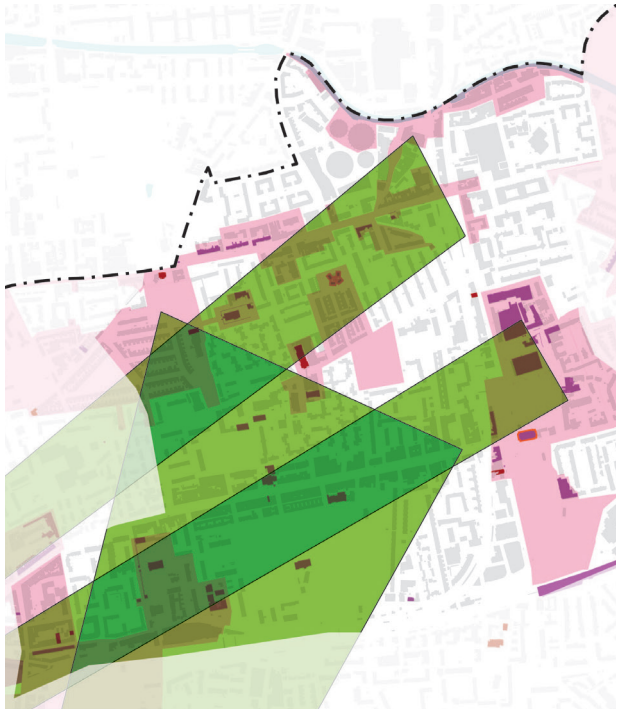


Figure 6.13: Bethnal Green sensitivities

Figure 6.14: Bethnal Green development potential

SENSITIVITIES TO CHANGE

Heritage: Several conservation areas and numerous listed buildings.

Views: LVMF protected views extend through the area.

Other: Keeling House, the Former Town Hall, Our Lady of the Assumption, RC Church, York Hall and and Museum of Childhood are identified as local landmarks and the setting and views to these should be protected.

POTENTIAL AREAS OF CHANGE

Site Allocations: Marian Place Gas Works and The Oval to the north of the area. This site could be developed as a compact mixed use opportunity but given the conservation areas nearby, the heights context and the fact that the site is not directly on the main strategic road network it is not considered an appropriate site for a tall building.

Development pipeline: A ten storey residential tower (36metres; 49m AOD), at the Peterley Business Centre at 472, Hackney Road in Bethnal Green is under construction.

Other sites: A number of sites have recently been developed on Cambridge Heath Road south of Bethnal Green station typically to a height of 6 to 8 storeys. There are more opportunities within this area but for development of a similar scale.

SUMMARY

The current character of the area is not one of a tall building 'Place' and there are no opportunities for tall building zones in the area. There may however be an opportunity for a local landmark in a central location that helps legibility for instance close to Bethnal Green underground station in the district centre. This would however need to be sensitively designed in the context of existing heritage and views.

6.5 CHARACTERISATION OF PLACE: GLOBE TOWN

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Globe Town is located in the north of the borough bordering on the London Borough of Hackney. The 'Place' is defined by the Regent's Canal to the north and east, Globe Road to the west, and an elevated railway line emerging from Liverpool Street station to the south.

Roman Road West is a district centre and extends east-west through the area providing shops and services for the surrounding area.

An elevated rail line extends to the south of the area and provides a barrier to movement southwards and the Regent's Canal and Mile End Park form a clear edge to the east. Whilst Globe Town is not located within an opportunity area the southern part of the 'Place' is considered here as public transport accessibility is relatively good and by virtue of the district centre designation.

Roman Road forms an extension eastwards of Bethnal Green Road and the main station serving the area is at Bethnal Green.

Figure 6.15: Globe Town overview

Roman Road West district centre - fine grain historic frontage

Public square on Roman Road

Roman Road West district centre - post-war frontage

Contemporary apartments overlooking Regents Canal

Murals of Globe Primary School wall

EXISTING CHARACTER

Roman Road is the focus for the area and provides a mix of shops along the length of the route. The character however varies to either side of the street. The northern edge is defined by fine grain historic properties of two and three storeys; the southern by post-war linear blocks of five and six storeys which provide shops and community facilities at ground floor level and apartments above. The blocks step back around a public square and home to the Globe Town Market.

To either side of Roman Road the area is largely residential and is dominated by post-war estates, composed primarily of four to six storey blocks but also including a number of point blocks. The layout of these estates is confusing and creates a disorientating environment and streetscape beyond the main street. To the north of Roman Road a number of pockets of older housing remain including impressive tenement blocks dating from 1900 and streets of Victorian two storey terraced houses.

The investment in Mile End Park at the beginning of the Millennium was a catalyst for development within the area and a number of dense urban residential schemes have been built alongside and overlooking the park and Regent's Canal and Meath Gardens.

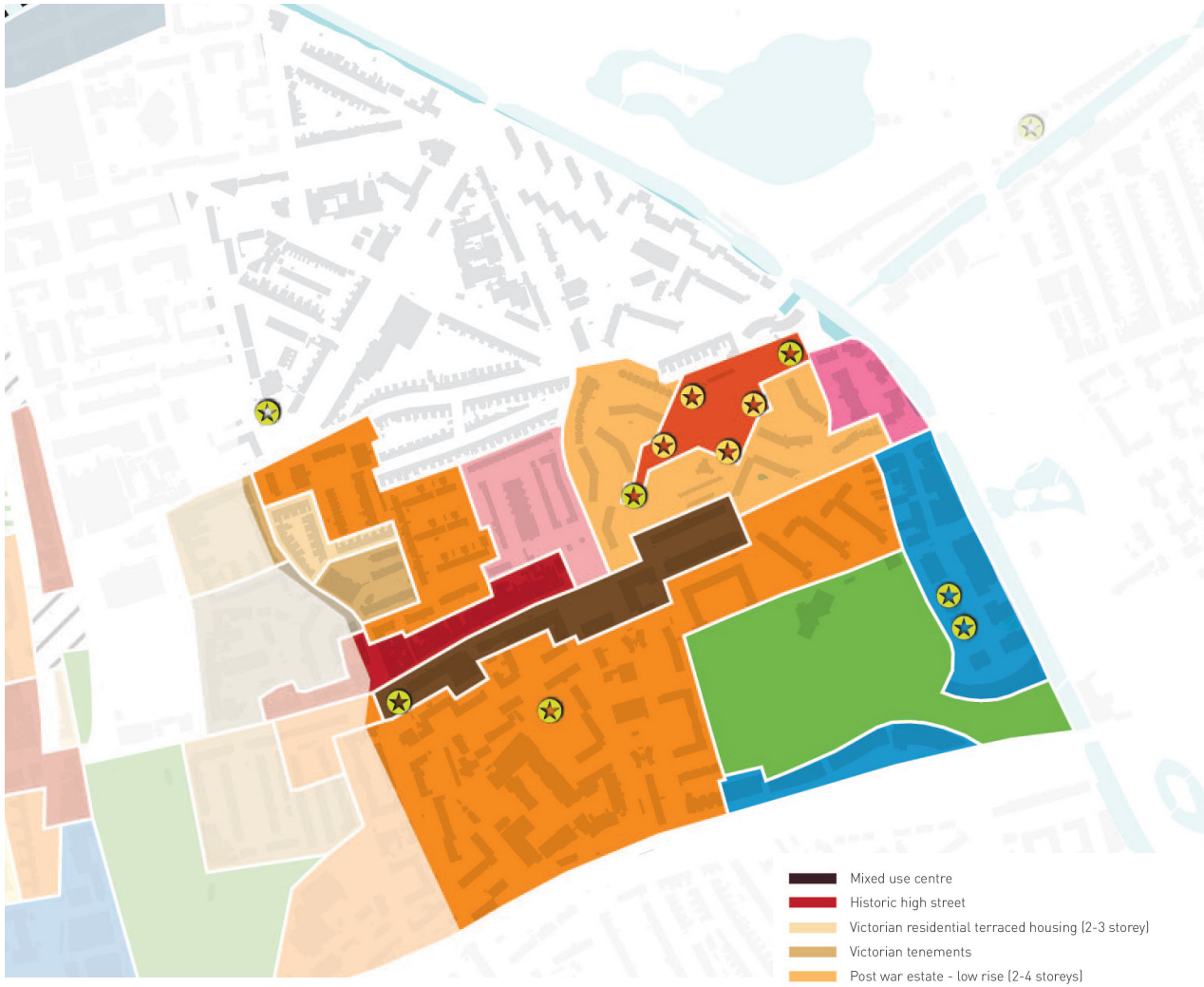


Figure 6.16: Globe Town character areas

Townscape features and significant buildings:

- Regent's Canal to the east
- Historic properties on northern side of Roman Road

Open spaces:

- Meath Gardens to the south east of the area
- Bethnal Green Gardens to the west
- Mile End Park to the east

Post war estates south of the district centre

Historic strets to the north of the centre

Point blocks on the Cranbrook Estate

New development overlooking Mile End Park

Robust apartment blocks dating from 1900

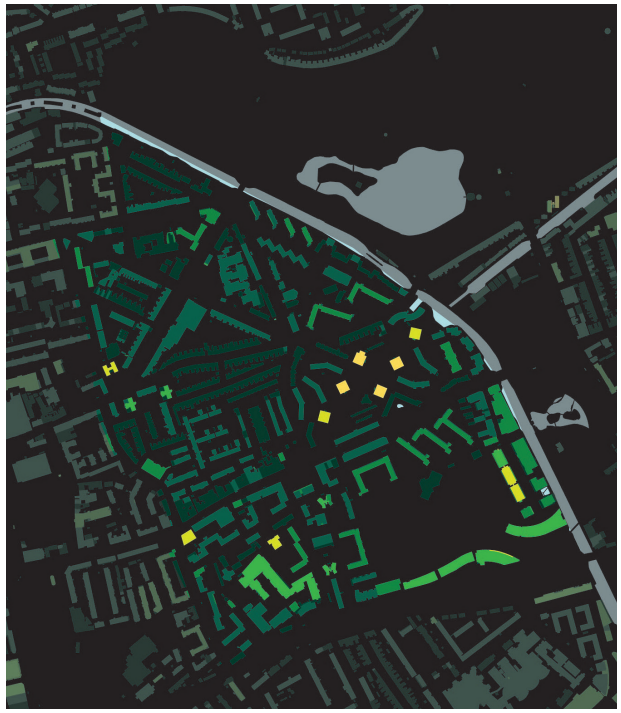


Figure 6.17: Globe Town existing building heights

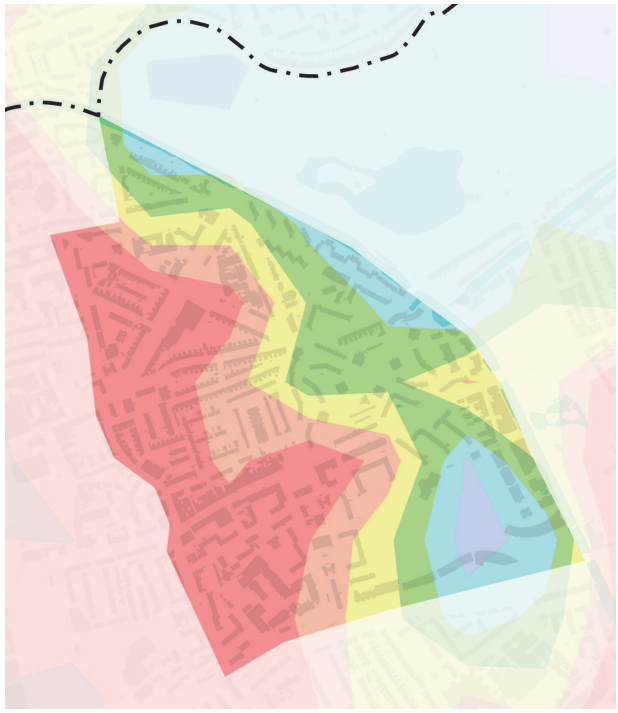


Figure 6.18: Globe Town PTAL

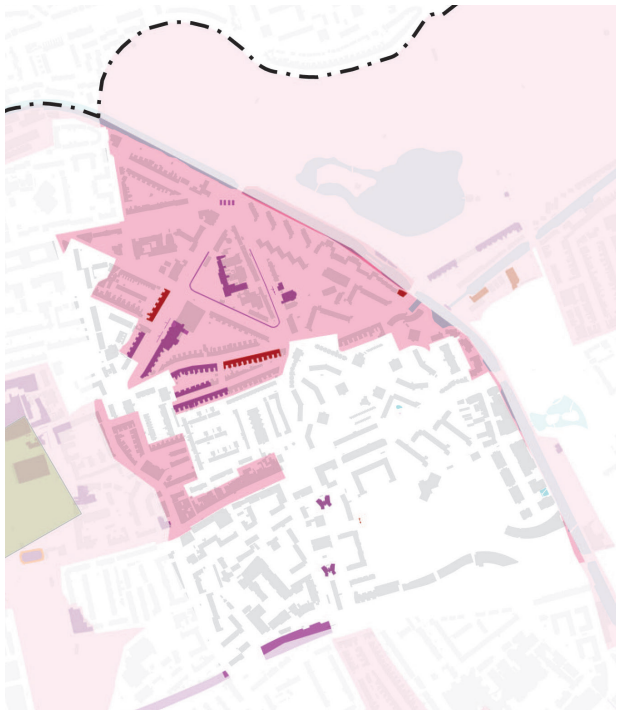


Figure 6.19: Globe Town sensitivities

EXISTING BUILDING HEIGHTS

Predominant height: Typically 3 – 5 storey.

Existing tall buildings:

- Six towers on the CRanbrook Estate (11 storey)
- 50, Roman Road (15 storey)

PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACCESSIBILITY

Facilities: The area is served buses on Roman Road and by Bethnal Green underground and Cambridge Heath Overground stations.

PTAL Levels: 6 to the west of the area but falling towardthe east of the area.

SENSITIVITIES TO CHANGE

Heritage: Several conservation areas and numerous listed buildings towards the north of the area.

Views: LVMF protected views don not extend through the area.

Figure 6.20: Globe Town development potential

POTENTIAL AREAS OF CHANGE

Site Allocations: None

Development pipeline: None

SUMMARY

Whilst there are several post-war tall buildings within the area these do not deliver a positive image for the area but on the contrary detract from the quality and impression of the place.

There may be opportunities to restructure some parts of the post-war housing within the area but should this be promoted a compact arrangement of street blocks at a more modest 4 to 6 storeys would appear to be appropriate and tall buildings are not promoted within the area.

6.6 CHARACTERISATION OF PLACE: SPITALFIELDS

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Spitalfields is located in the west of the borough bordering on the City of London. The 'Place' is defined by the elevated railway line emerging from Liverpool Street station to the north, Deal Street / Greatorex Street to the east, Wentworth Street to the south and Middlesex Street and Bishopgate to the west.

The Brick Lane district centre extends north-south through the area and the area also includes the historic Spitalfields Market and Petticoat Lane Market.

The area is extremely diverse. The western part of Spitalfields is within the Central Activities Area (CAZ) and the City has started to encroach on this part of the area; the eastern part of the area is primarily residential and has been historically the home of a variety of immigrant populations historically Huguenots, Irish weavers, East European Jews and currently the Bangladeshi community. Brick Lane has become the focus for curry houses and in more recent years the area has attracted artists and digital and creative industries.

The main vehicular route through the area is Commercial Street which connects Aldgate to the south with Shoreditch to the north.

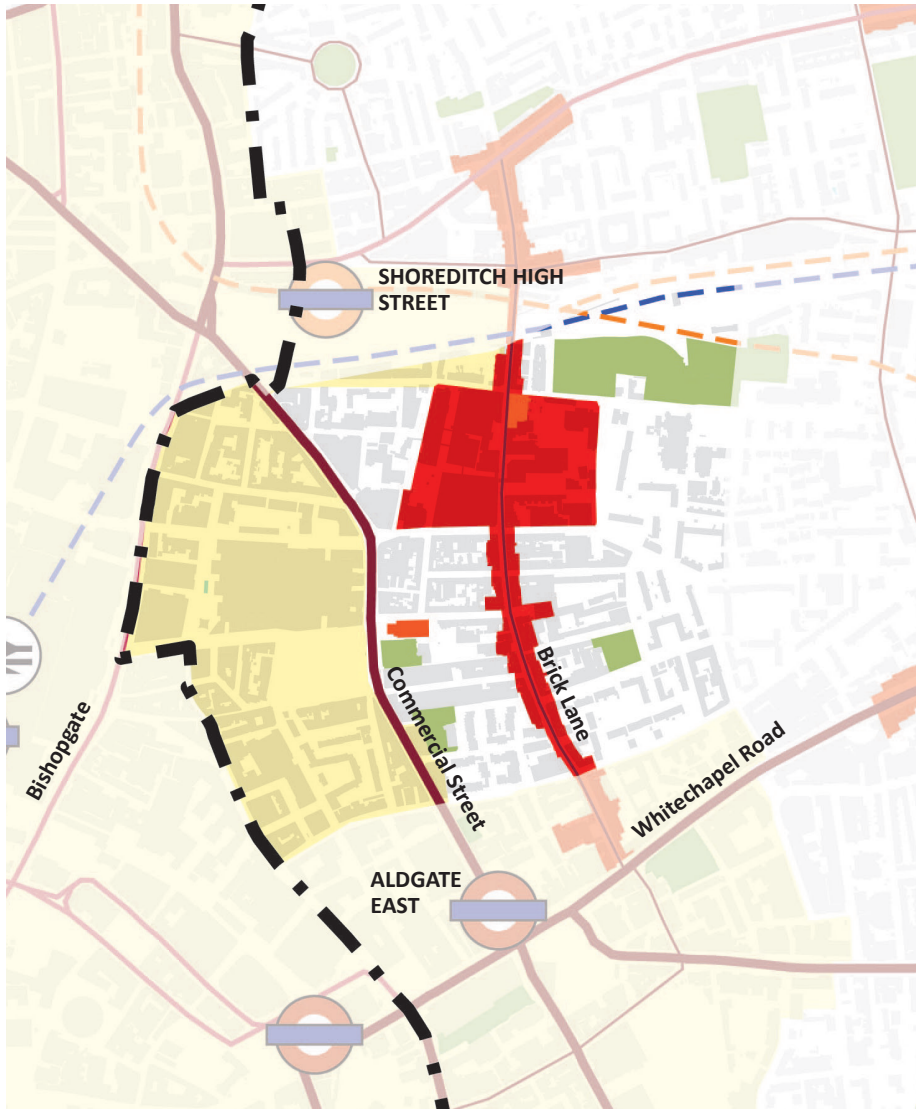


Figure 6.21: Spitalfields overview

Brick Lane district centre

Allen Gardens

Commercial Street with Hawksmoor's Christ Church, Spitalfields

Spitalfields Market

Petticoat Lane Market

EXISTING CHARACTER

The area is very varied and befitting its location at the edge of the city, mixed use. Much of the historic pattern of streets and blocks is retained including the dense Georgian street blocks to the south of Spitalfields Market and to the east of Commercial Street around Fournier and Hanbury Street. These fine grain streets contrast with the larger commercial buildings on Commercial Street – former factories now converted into warehouse apartments or creative spaces.

The older fabric is mixed with newer additions, post-war estates towards the east of the area and 1980's and 90's low density housing areas of two and three storey dwellings. These newer additions, with their internalised layouts or blocks placed within green areas, are out of place within the older street based fabric.

The area is also marked by its larger structures, the permeable Spitalfields Market, and less permeable Truman Brewery, both re-profiled to attract visitors to the area for shopping or creative arts and entertainment. Brick Lane with its lively mix of restaurants adds to the offer.

The proximity and advance of the city is very apparent with tall buildings looming over parts of the area and a large number of office workers visiting the area attracted by the food and drink offer. Some of these tall buildings notably Spitalfields Tower, appear totally out of scale with the surrounding context and character of the area.

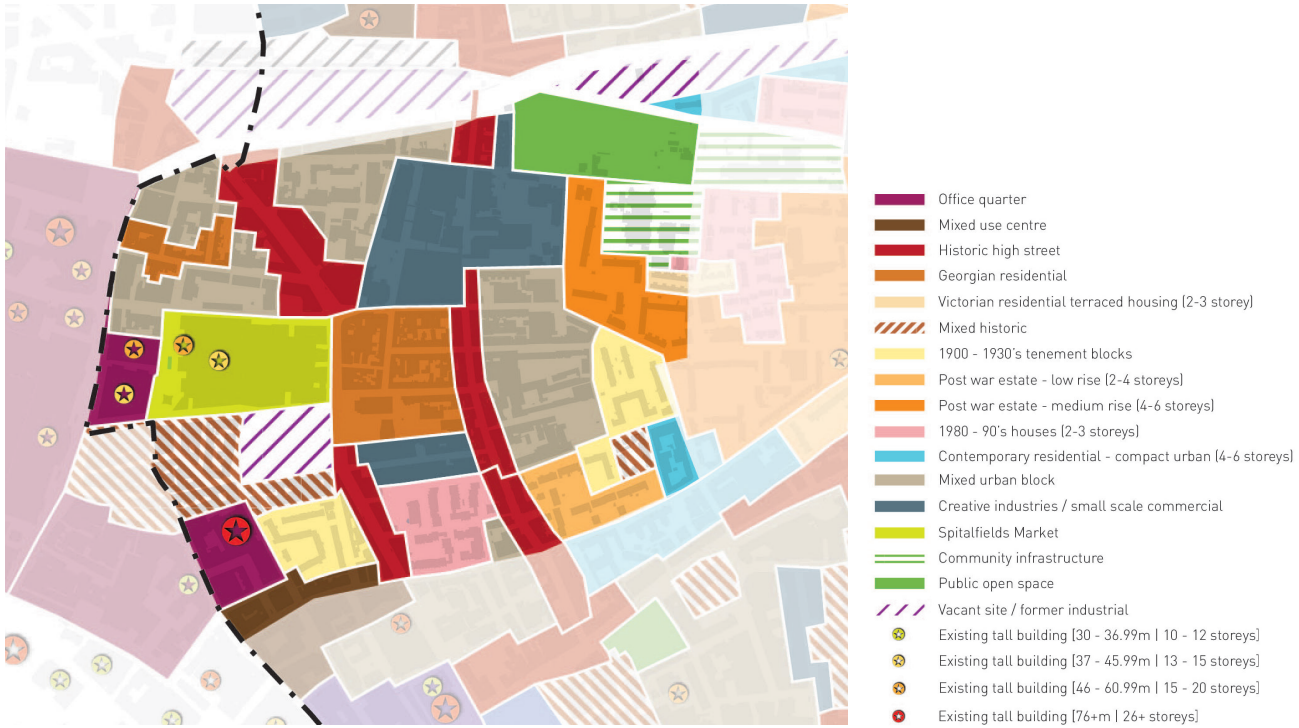


Figure 6.22: Spitalfields character areas

Townscape features and significant buildings:

- Christ Church, Spitalfields
- Brick Lane
- Spitalfields Market
- Truman Brewery and chimney
- Georgian streets around Fournier and Hanbury Street
- Petticoat Lane Market
- Bishopgate immediately to the east

Open spaces:

- The area lacks open spaces and trees - Allen Gardens to the north-east is the only significant green open space
- Bishops Square, west of Spitalfields Market provides a more commercial gathering space

Georgian homes front directly onto the network of streets in the heart of the area

The City is encroaching on the western part of the area

Employment space on Fashion Street

Former factories provide modern workspace and apartments

Housing built in the 1980s and 90s is of a modest scale

The Truman Brewery has become a focus for artists

Figure 6.23: Spitalfields existing building heights

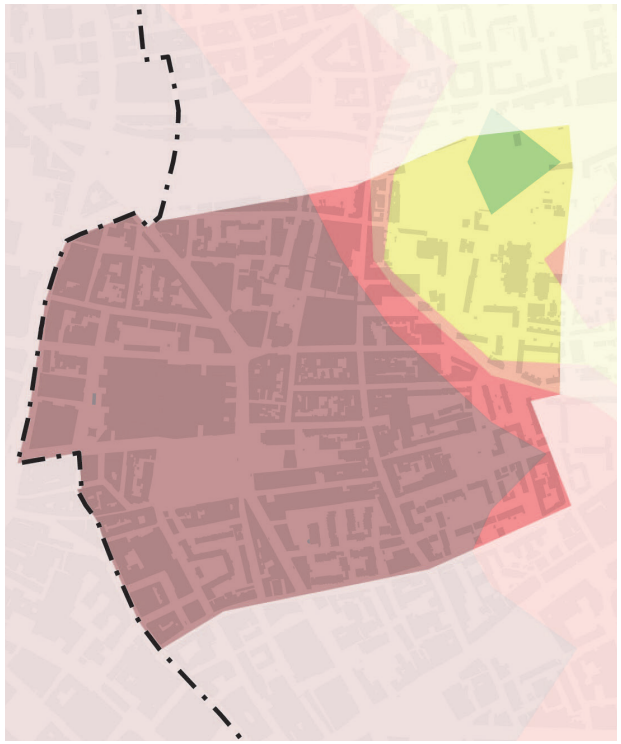


Figure 6.24: Spitalfields PTAL

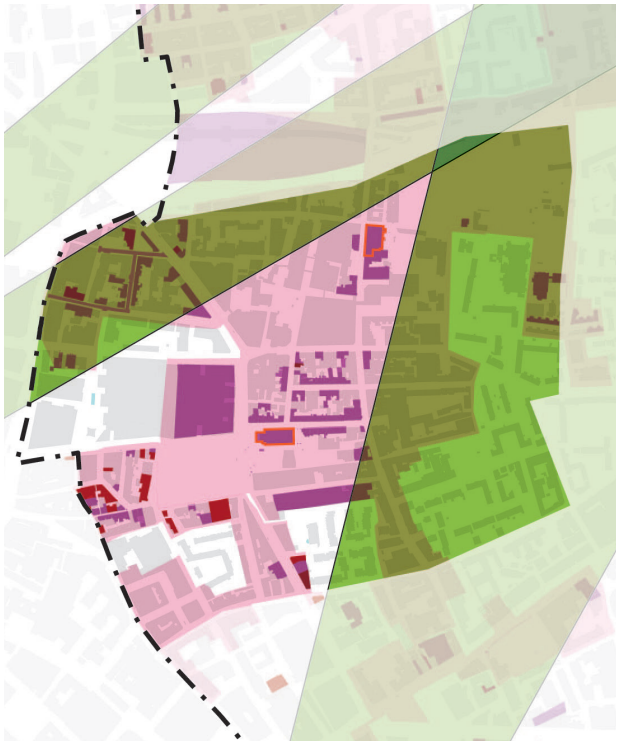


Figure 6.25: Spitalfields sensitivities

EXISTING BUILDING HEIGHTS

Predominant height: Typically 4-6 storeys.

Existing tall buildings:

- 150 Bishopgate Road (12 storey office)
- Office uses over the western portion of Spitalfields Market
- Spitalfields Tower (35 storey)
- Christ Church, Spitalfields

PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACCESSIBILITY

Facilities: The area is served by buses on Bishopgate and to a lesser extent Commercial Street and by the mainline station and underground at Liverpool Street station and Overground at Shoreditch High Street. Aldgate East underground station is located on Whitechapel Road to the south.

PTAL Levels: 6a in the majority of the area falling to 3 in the north east of the area.

SENSITIVITIES TO CHANGE

Heritage: A substantial proportion of the area is designated as conservation area and there are numerous listed buildings.

Views: LVMF protected views extend through the area.

Other: Christ Church, Spitalfields is a borough designated landmark and the Truman Brewery is identified as local landmarks and the setting and views to these buildings should be protected.

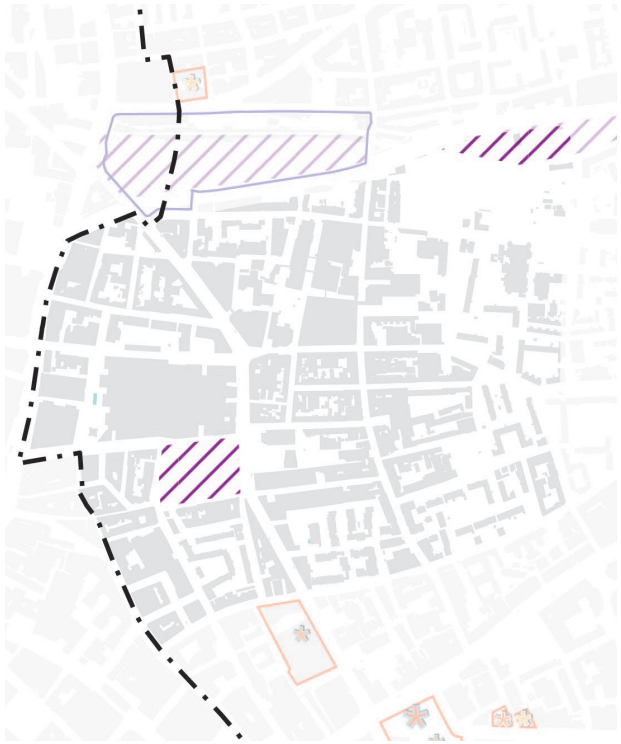


Figure 6.26: Spitalfields development potential

POTENTIAL AREAS OF CHANGE

Site Allocations: There are no site allocations within the area.

Development pipeline: Development is taking place on a central site on Brushfield Street / Commercial Street but does not include tall buildings.

Other sites: There is potential for development on a vacant triangular site to the north-east of the area but this site is isolated by rail lines, has a low PTAL and is covered by LVMF protected views and is not considered suitable for tall buildings.

Some sites to the south of the Bishopgate Goodsyard on the northern edge of the area may become available for development but a compact street based approach is recommended to respond to the prevailing character rather than a tall building.

SUMMARY

The current character of the area is not one of a tall building 'Place' and the area is considered inappropriate for tall buildings.

6.7 CHARACTERISATION OF PLACE: ALDGATE

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Aldgate is located in the west of the borough bordering on the City of London. The 'Place' is defined by Wentworth Street to the north, Greenfield Road / Back Church Lane to the east, the elevated railway line out of Fenchurch Street to the south and Mansell Street / Middlesex Street to the west.

The focus for the area is the coming together of Whitechapel Road, Commercial Road and Commercial Street.

Almost all of the area is within the Central Activity Zone and the western part of the area is identified as a preferred office location. In recent years the area has been a focus for new development of considerable height and density.

Figure 6.27: Aldgate overview

Whitechapel Road viewing westwards towards Aldgate

Whitechapel Road frontage

Whitechapel Gallery on Whitechapel Road

Altab Ali Park on Whitechapel Road

New development on Leman Street

EXISTING CHARACTER

The character of Aldgate is changing. In recent years a number of large-scale office developments have been built to the west of Commercial Street updating old stock and creating a focus around the western entrance to Aldgate East station. Adjacent to these a new high density residential quarter is developing that includes a cluster of tall residential towers, some free standing, others emerging from a number of perimeter block forms at Goodmans Field. Together these developments create a new focus at the western end of Commercial Street and Whitechapel Road.

Immediately adjacent, pockets of historic fabric remain at much more modest scale including a fine assemblage of historic buildings on Whitechapel High Street including the Whitechapel Art Gallery and Georgian and Victorian properties on Leman Street and Alie Street.

The remainder of the area provides a mix of employment, residential and educational uses within mixed urban blocks. Pockets of housing, including modest two storey dwellings dating from the 1980s and 90s, are also present and these appear to be out of scale with the surrounding urban fabric.

Townscape features and significant buildings:

- Whitechapel Art Gallery on Whitechapel High Street
- London Metropolitan University

Open spaces:

- The area lacks open spaces and trees – Altab Alli Park on Whitechapel Road is the only significant green open space.

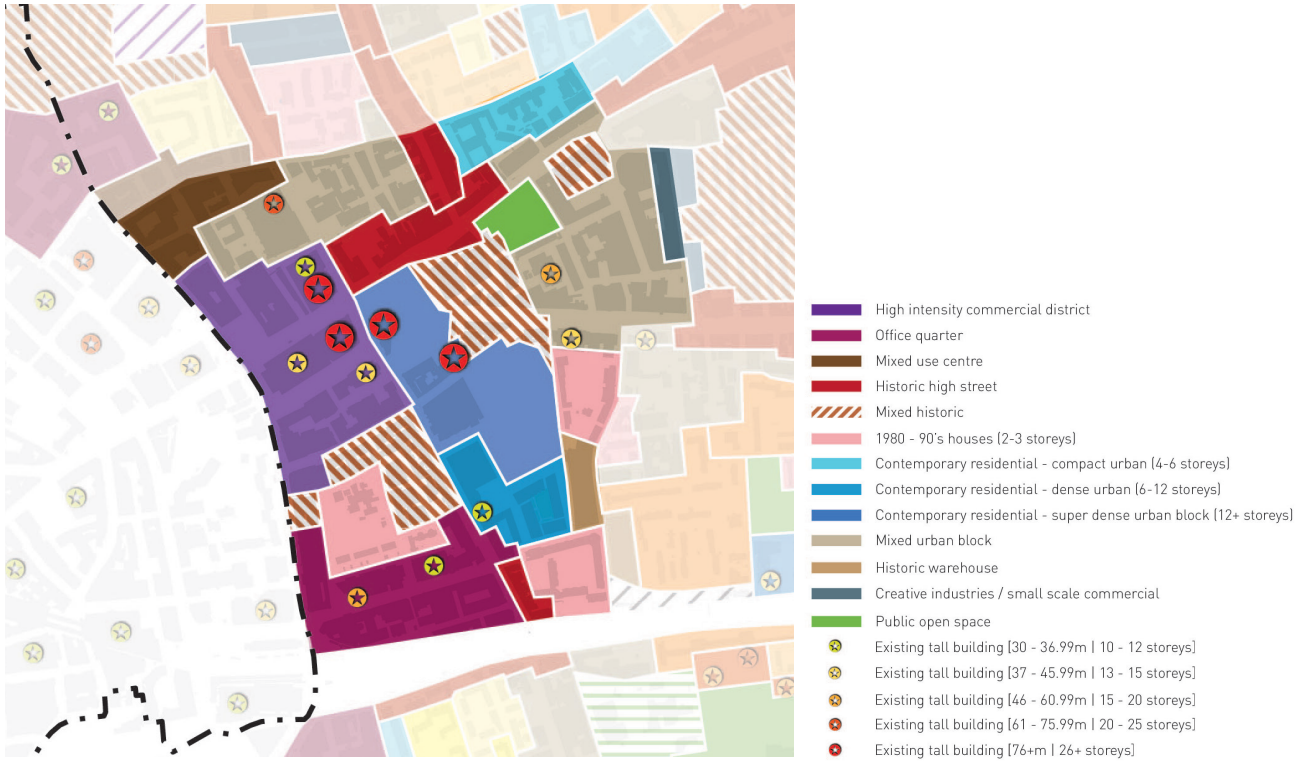


Figure 6.28: Aldgate character areas

Recent development has introduced a more intense residential typology of perimeter blocks with towers

Taller blocks rise above lower scale buildings towards the south of the area

A number of highly decorative historic buildings remain

Shops within more modest scaled buildings on Leman Street

Grade A office development

Figure 6.29: Aldgate existing building heights

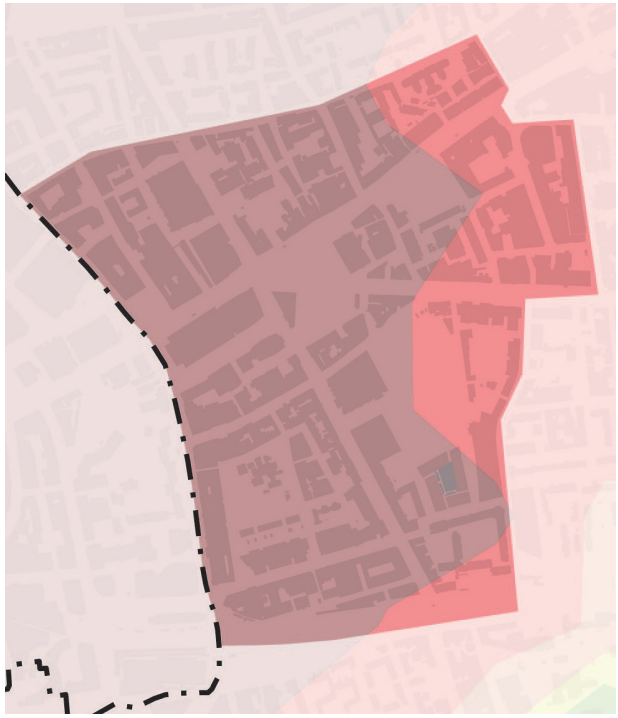


Figure 6.30: Aldgate PTAL

Figure 6.31: Aldgate sensitivities

EXISTING BUILDING HEIGHTS

Predominant height: Varies across the area. Older historic fine grain fabric is typically 3 to 6 storeys but office development is taller at 6 to 8 office storeys and rises significantly around the cluster at the meeting point of the three strategic routes where building heights rise to up to 80m. A number of tall buildings have also been developed further east along Commercial Road.

Existing tall buildings:

- Two residential towers at Aldgate Place (22 and 26 storey; 70 and 82 metres)
- A 23 storey hotel at 15-17 Leman, Street (72 metres)
- Aldgate Tower, 10-29 Whitechapel High Street (17 storey office, 78 metres)
- The Relay Building, 1 Commercial Street (22 storey office)
- Denning Point, Commercial Street (22 storey residential)

PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACCESSIBILITY

Facilities: The area is well served by buses and has easy access to Aldgate East, Aldgate, Tower Gateway DLR and Fenchurch Street mainline station.

PTAL Levels: The whole area is in PTAL 6b or 6a.

SENSITIVITIES TO CHANGE

Heritage: A substantial proportion of Whitechapel High Street is designated as conservation area and there are numerous listed buildings throughout the area.

Views: LVMF protected views extend through the area.

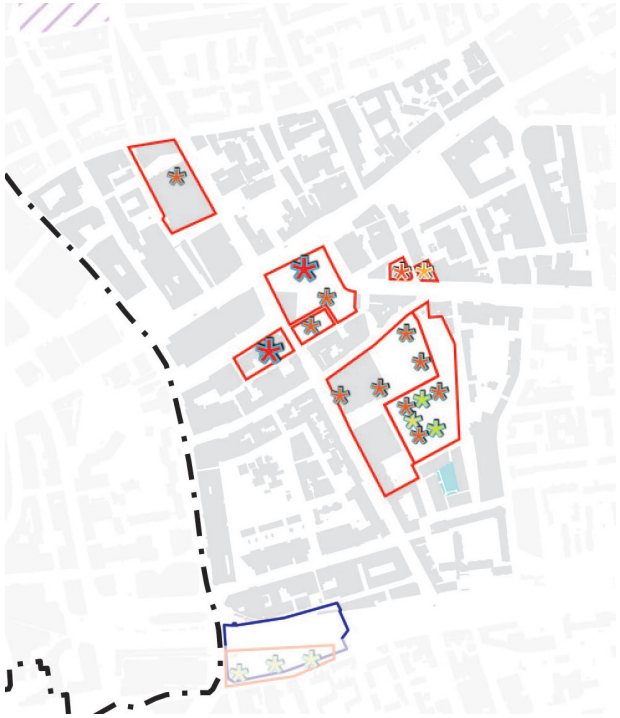


Figure 6.32: Aldgate development potential

POTENTIAL AREAS OF CHANGE

Site Allocations: There are no site allocations within the area.

Development pipeline: There are a significant number of tall building approvals in the area including

- A further 25 storey residential tower at Aldgate Place (79 metres; 93 metres AOD);
- An 18 storey office building at Braham Street, Beagle House (70 metres);
- A 17 storey residential tower at 34-40 Church Lane (62m; 75.5 metres AOD);
- Six residential towers at Goodmans Field ranging from 10 to 23 storeys (30-75 metres; up to 88 metres AOD); and
- A 22 storey hotel at 27 Commercial Road (70 metres AOD).

Other sites: The area was identified as a potential location for tall buildings in the Core Strategy 2010. The majority of potential sites have now come forward for development however there may be further opportunities on sites to the north west of the area that could be redeveloped.

SUMMARY

This area has been the focus for numerous tall building proposals in the last decade and many of these have been delivered or are under construction. The north western part of the area is considered an appropriate location for tall buildings.

6.8 CHARACTERISATION OF PLACE: WHITECHAPEL

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Whitechapel is located to the east of Aldgate, south of Bethnal Green and north of Shadwell. The 'Place' is defined by the elevated railway line emerging from Liverpool Street station to the north, Globe Road, Hannibal Road and Jacob Street to the east, Stepney Way to the south and Deal Street / Greatorex Street to the west.

Whitechapel Road and its district centre extends east west through the area and provides an attractive focus for the area. The centre provides local shopping a popular street market and large foodstore. The district centre is also home to the Royal London Hospital. The current hospital building was opened in 2012 and is a substantial structure that can be seen from far and wide. The Royal London has been on the site for over 250 years and the old hospital building fronts onto Whitechapel Road. This historic building is listed and is due to be transformed into a civic centre for the borough.

Beyond the district centre and hospital Whitechapel is largely residential.

Whitechapel Road is the main east-west route through the area with Vallance Road / New Road and Cambridge Heath Road / Sidney Street the main north-south routes. The elevated rail line that forms the northern boundary to the area is a barrier to north south movement.

Land to the east of Jubilee Street is not included within the City Fringe opportunity area and therefore not considered in detail in this study.

Figure 6.33: Whitechapel overview

Shops and the market on Whitechapel Road form the focus for the area

Vallance Gardens provides a local green space

The market is a major attraction

The Royal London Hospital is due to be transformed into a new civic centre for the borough

The hospital is a prominent building when viewed from the surrounding area

EXISTING CHARACTER

Whitechapel Road is a broad street with a fine mixed Georgian / Victorian shop frontage along its northern side and a mix of community/institutional buildings along the south side. These include the historic Royal London Hospital buildings and the East London Mosque. Whitechapel Road is home to an established street market and many mature trees, particularly at the eastern end of the street. These add to the character of the street space.

To the north of Whitechapel Road the area is predominantly residential. There is little historic fabric remaining and most of the area is laid out as a series of post-war estates composed of mid-rise, typically 4 to 6 storey blocks, set within a landscape of amenity grass but providing little active frontage to streets. Globe Town on Cambridge Heath Road includes a number of taller slab blocks. Pockets of low density housing have been built in the area through the 1980s and 90s.

East west connectivity through the area is very poor and the area has a fragmented feel. This is exacerbated by rail lines that pass through the area in cuttings.

In contrast development to the south of Whitechapel Road is laid out on connected street network. The Hospital dominates the area and extends southwards for several street blocks. The sharp contrast in scale between the hospital and the surrounding area creates an awkward interface.

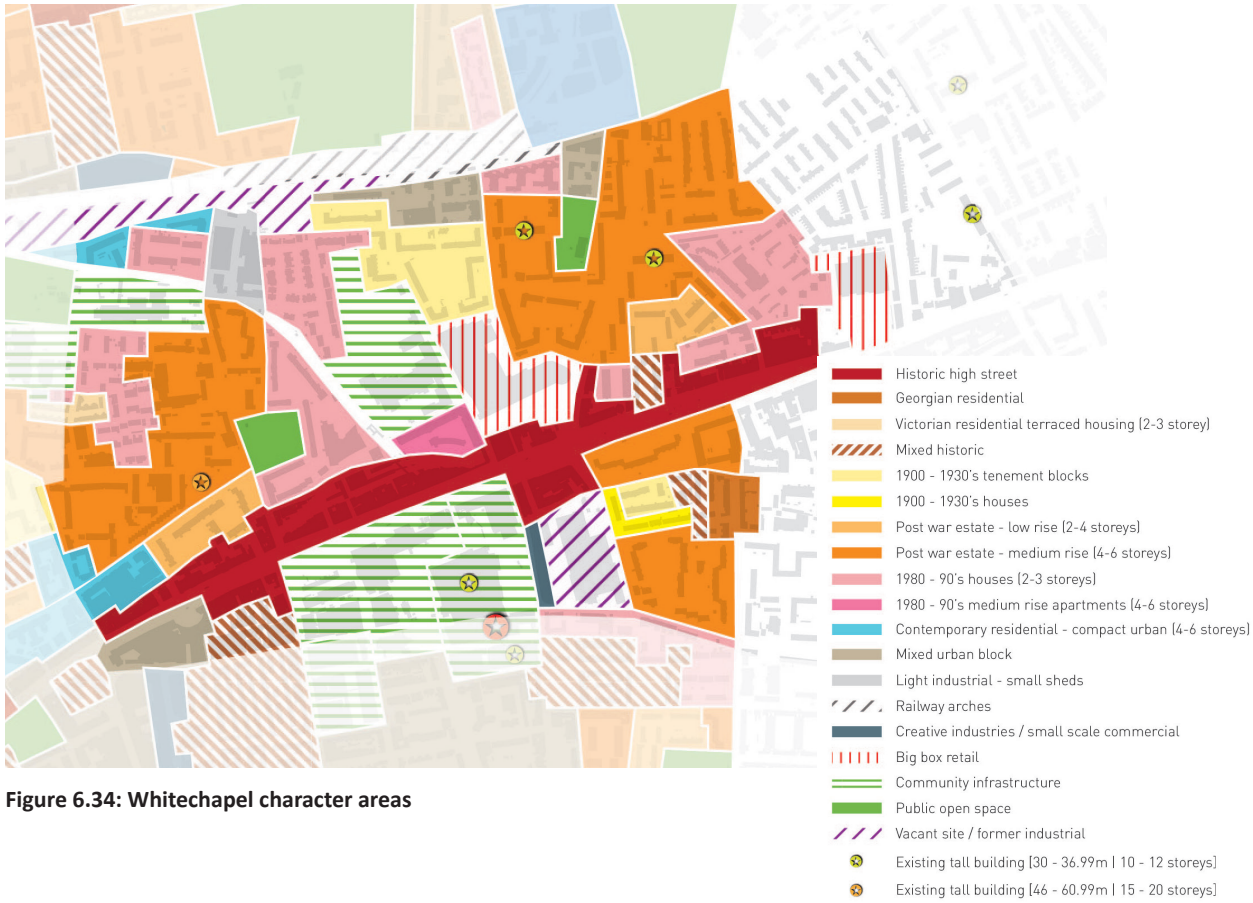


Figure 6.34: Whitechapel character areas

Townscape features and significant buildings:

- Royal London Hospital – both the new building and the historic frontage of the former hospital on Whitechapel Road
- Mixed Georgian / Victorian frontage on Whitechapel Road
- East London Mosque

Open spaces:

- Whitechapel Road is a broad street and provides a linear area of public realm through the centre with numerous mature trees adding to its quality
- Vallance Gardens and St Bartholomews Gardens provide local public open spaces

Whitechapel Road is an historic high street with many fine buildings

LCC mansion blocks

Post war blocks in Globe Town

1980s and 90s development in the area is generally of a modest scale

Historic terrace

Post war blocks southwest of the centre

EXISTING BUILDING HEIGHTS

Predominant height: Typically 4-6 storeys but some areas are 2-3 storeys.

Existing tall buildings:

- The Royal London Hospital is the UK's second tallest hospital at 101m
- Gouldman House and Orion House in Globe Town (11 storey)
- Pauline House, Old Montague Street (20 storey)

PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACCESSIBILITY

Facilities: The area is served by buses on Whitechapel Road, Cambridge Heath Road and, to a lesser extent, Vallance Road. Whitechapel is a well connected station providing District Line and London Overground services. A Crossrail station / Elizabeth Line station is due to open at Whitechapel in 2018.

PTAL Levels: 6b at Whitechapel station, 6a in the majority of the area but falling to 3 in the pockets towards the west of the area.

SENSITIVITIES TO CHANGE

Heritage: Several conservation areas and there are numerous listed buildings on Whitechapel Road.

Views: LVMF protected views extend across the western part of the area.

Other: Tower House, 81 Fieldgate Street, the Royal London Hospital and 69-70 and 83-89, Mile End Road are identified as local landmarks and the setting and views to these should be protected.

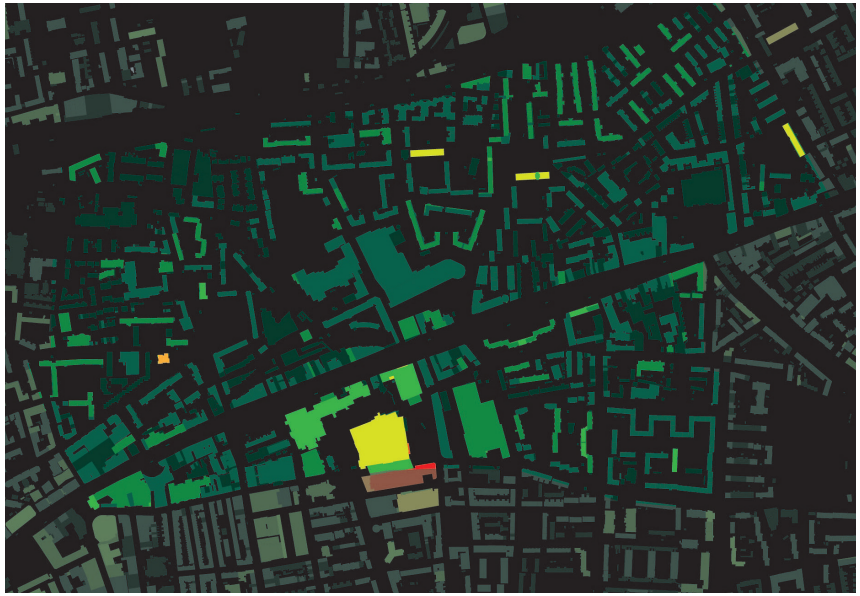


Figure 6.35: Whitechapel existing building heights

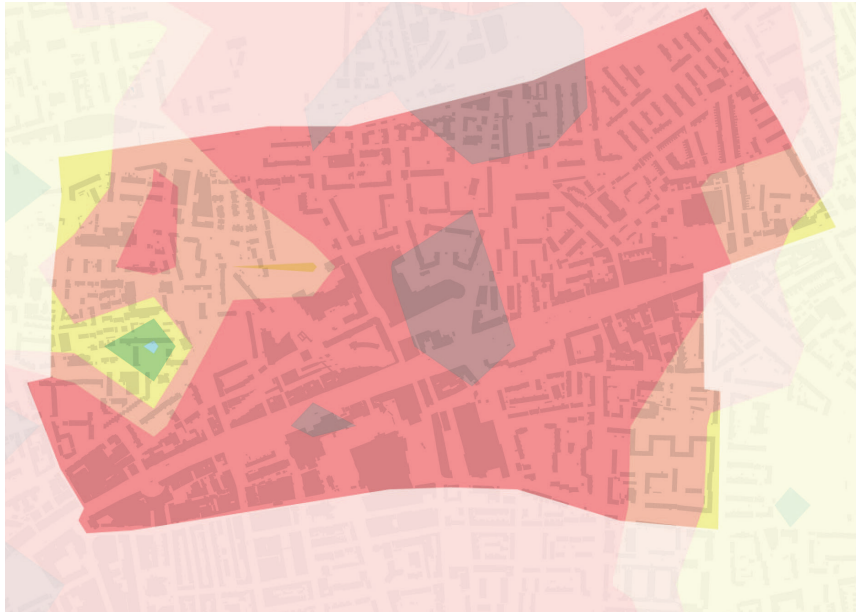


Figure 6.36: Whitechapel PTAL

Figure 6.37: Whitechapel sensitivities

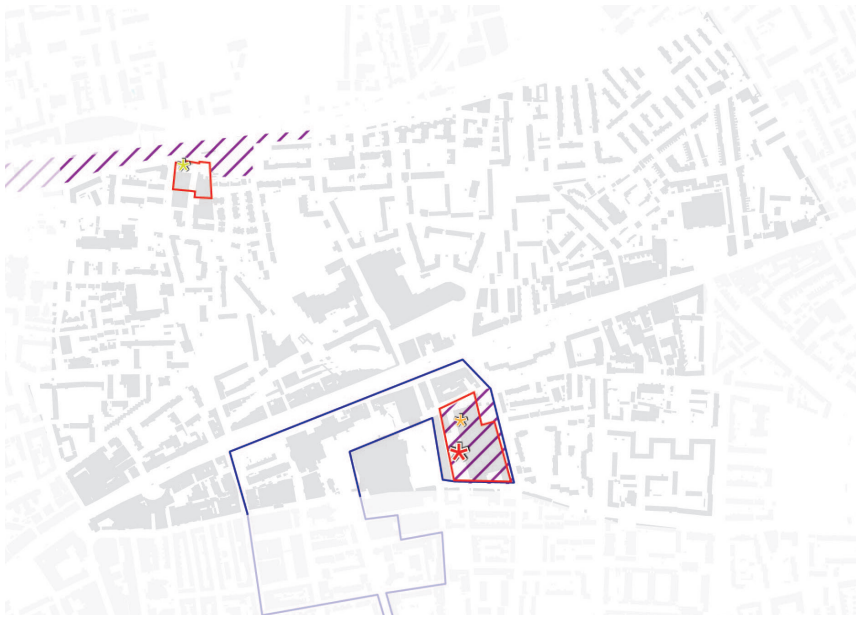


Figure 6.38: Whitechapel development potential

POTENTIAL AREAS OF CHANGE

Site Allocations: Much of the Royal London Hospital estate is a site allocation (Whitechapel South).

Development pipeline: There have been a number of applications for tall buildings within Whitechapel. Several of these have been refused planning permission however two residential towers of 18 and 23 storeys have been consented at Central Square (62 and 83 metres; 73 and 93 metres AOD).

A ten storey residential building at 120 Vallance Road also has consent.

Other sites: The environment to the rear of the Whitechapel high street northern frontage is fragmented and provides a poor pedestrian experience. The northern approach to the new Crossrail station could be enhanced through development in the air space above the station and a reconfiguration of the Sainsbury's site and potentially other sites in the vicinity.

There are also further opportunities for change on vacant and under used sites around the Royal London Hospital to the south of Whitechapel Road. Some of these sites may be suitable for taller buildings but only if they provide significant community benefits particularly in respect of improved connectivity, enhanced legibility and respect the heritage assets in the centre.

SUMMARY

The arrival of Crossrail in Whitechapel and the excellent public transport accessibility that this brings makes Whitechapel a target for tall buildings. There is already one significantly tall and bulky building in the centre – the hospital. This does not, on its own, justify development of further tall buildings in the centre – the hospital has a particular and recognisable function and any other building of its bulk and massing would no doubt be resisted strongly.

Any further tall buildings in the centre must be located where they can aid legibility and deliver other enhancements to pedestrian connectivity in the centre. A tall building above the station may therefore be appropriate and could help to create an improved approach to the station from the north. Equally a tall building at the Sainsbury site could be considered but only if it brings with it improvement to the public realm and pedestrian experience in that part of the centre enhancing access to the station, school and the sports centre and is in itself of a high design quality.

These potential enhancements must be considered in the context of the heritage assets in the centre. Whitechapel is not therefore considered an appropriate location for tall buildings but rather a sensitive location that could accommodate tall buildings if appropriately sited to respond to heritage sensitivities, to aid legibility and if they bring with them other town centre benefits.

6.9 CHARACTERISATION OF PLACE: SHADWELL

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Shadwell is located to the south of Whitechapel, east of Aldgate and north of Wapping. The 'Place' is defined by Stepney Way to the north, Jamaica Street to the east, The Highway to the south and Greenfield Road / Back Church Lane to the west.

Watney Market district centre on Commercial Road is the main retail focus for the area. This extends both east-west along the main street and north-south within a pedestrianised environment extending to Shadwell station.

The main vehicular route through the area is Commercial Road which connects to Aldgate and the City in the west and extends eastwards to Canary Wharf and the Thames Gateway. The main north-south routes through the area are New Road / Cannon Street and Jubilee Street / Sutton Street. These provide connections to Whitechapel and Bethnal Green to the north and extend to The Highway to the south.

Mainline trains out of Fenchurch Street and DLR trains pass through Shadwell on an elevated route that cuts east-west through the area.

Land to the east of Jubilee Street is not included within the City Fringe opportunity area and therefore not considered in detail in this study.

Figure 6.39: Shadwell overview

New development at Shadwell station

St George in the East on The Highway

Watney Market district centre

Commercial Road

Elevated railines create a barrier to movement

EXISTING CHARACTER

The character of Shadwell varies across the area. To the north of Commercial Road there is a more ordered fabric of urban street blocks with substantial areas of historic fabric; to the south there has been greater change through the 20th Century and in places the pattern is disrupted with post-war estates that are laid out to orientate blocks north-south rather than to engage with the surrounding streets.

Heights are relatively consistent across the area at 4-6 stories with a number of post-war towers rising higher – apart from Kelder Heights at Shadwell station these do little to enhance legibility within the area.

Commercial Road is the main street through the area and provides a fine grain frontage of shops along its length. Many properties are however in a poor state of repair and the heavily trafficked route impacts on the pedestrian experience. The Centre at Watney Market is traffic free and provides the main retail focus for the area. It also creates a legible element in a wider townscape that offers few identifiable features to aid orientation or identity.

The area generally lacks green space or trees with a few small squares providing the only 'breathing spaces' within an urban fabric.

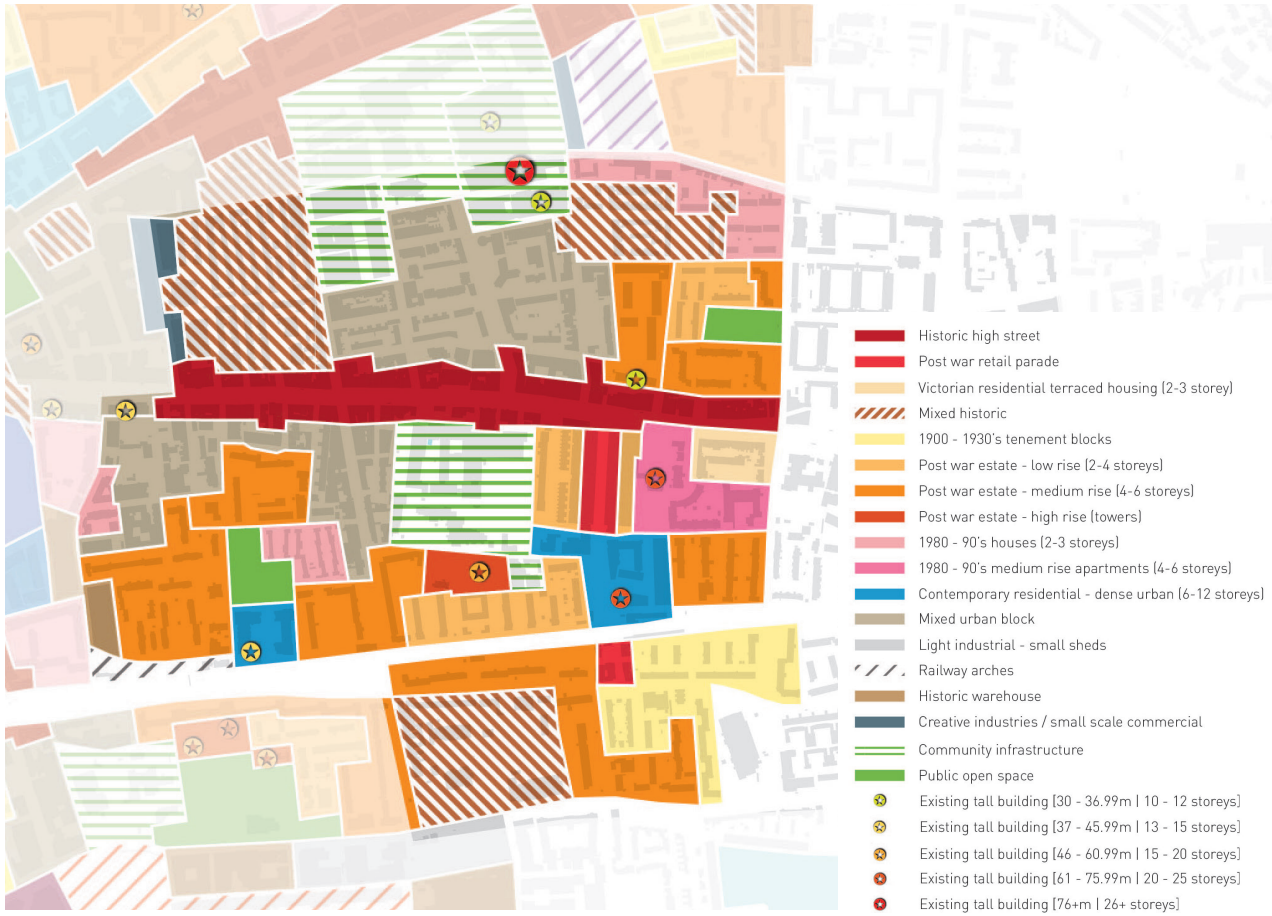


Figure 6.40: Shadwell character areas

Townscape features and significant buildings:

- Watney Market
- St George in the East Church (south west of the area)
- Royal London Hospital on the border with Whitechapel to the north

Open spaces:

- The area lacks open spaces and trees – all open spaces in the area are modest in scale and include Ford Square, Sidney Square and a small space on Jubilee Street to the north and Rope Walk Gardens and the St Georges Garden to the south.

Post-war housing towards the south of the area

Mixed housing typologies towards the south of the area

Contemporary blocks on Christian Street

Large warehouse buildings towards the west of the area

There are several London Squares to the north of the area

Much of the north of the area is laid out as a tight grid of streets

EXISTING BUILDING HEIGHTS

Predominant height: Typically 4-6 storeys.

Existing tall buildings:

- The Royal London Hospital is the UK's second tallest hospital at 101m is on the northern edge of the area

Post-war blocks include:

- John Harrison House on Varden Street (10 storey)
- Winterton House on Commercial Road (25 storey)
- Luke House on Bigland Street (22 storey)
- Seige House on Sidney Street (11 storey

Contemporary tall buildings include:

- Kelder Heights at Shadwell station (20 storey)
- Wilson Tower (13 storey)

PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACCESSIBILITY

Facilities: The area is served by buses on Commercial Road and some services route through the area. Shadwell station provides London Overground and DLR services.

PTAL Levels: 6a in the majority of the area, 5 towards the south and east and falling to 4 in east of the area.

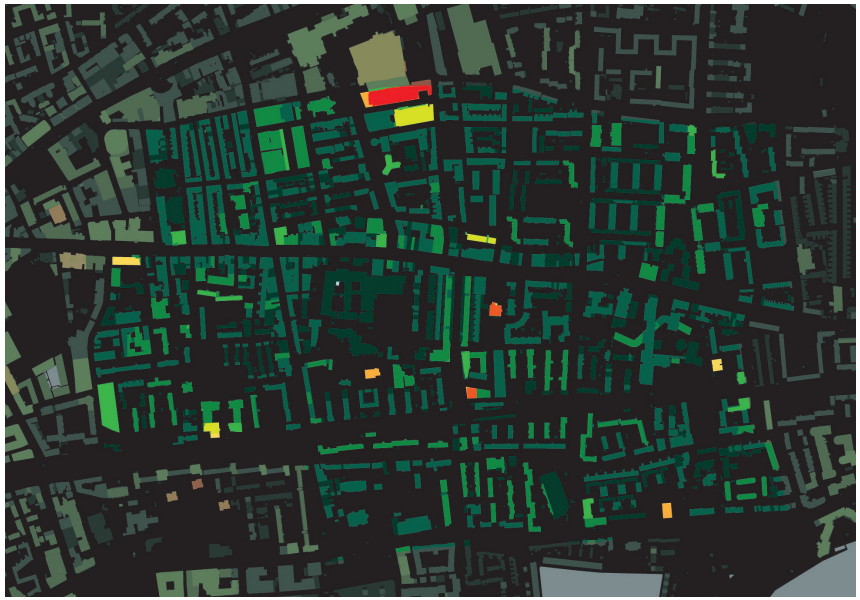


Figure 6.41: Shadwell existing building heights

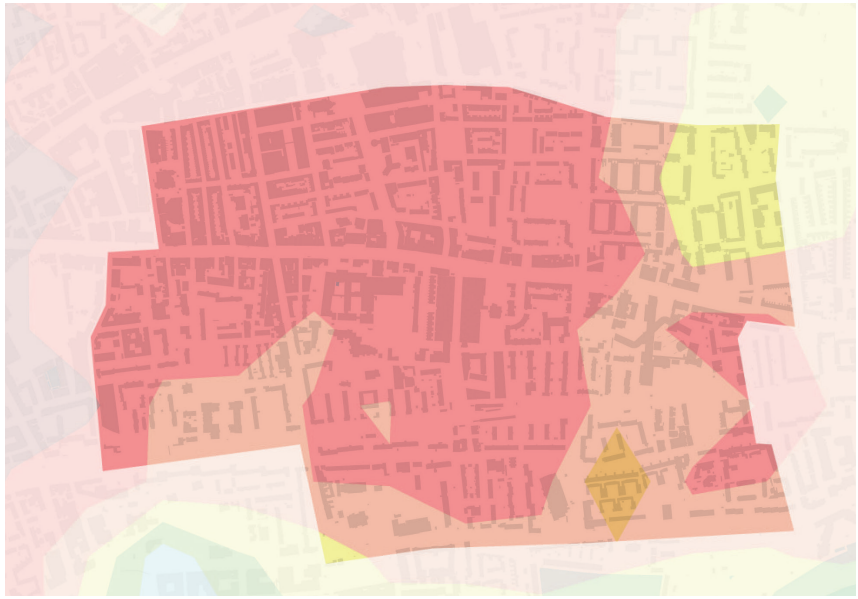


Figure 6.42: Shadwell PTAL

Figure 6.43: Shadwell sensitivities

Figure 6.44: Shadwell development potential

SENSITIVITIES TO CHANGE

Heritage: Several conservation areas and numerous listed buildings.

Views: There are no LVMF protected views in the area.

Other: St George in the East Church on Cannon Street Road, The George Tavern, Commercial Road and St Mary and St Michael Church on Commercial Road are identified as local landmarks and the setting and views to these should be protected.

POTENTIAL AREAS OF CHANGE

Site Allocations: Much of the Royal London Hospital estate is a site allocation on the northern edge of the area (Whitechapel South).

Development pipeline: There are no approved proposals for tall buildings within the area however there have been applications submitted for sites close to the hospital that have been refused planning permission.

Other sites: There are no obvious development sites for tall buildings within the area.

SUMMARY

Further compact urban development could be delivered at Shadwell station as part of estate regeneration or as part of a comprehensive plan for the area around the hospital but given the shortage of quality open space in the area improvements in this regard would be expected to counter the impacts.

6.10 CHARACTERISATION OF PLACE: TOWER OF LONDON / ST KATHERINE'S

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The Tower of London and St Katherine Dock are located in the south-west corner of the borough adjacent the City of London and the River Thames.

The 'Place' is defined by the River Thames to the south, Thomas More Street to the east, by Trinity Square and London Wall to the north and by the immediate setting of the Tower of London to the west.

The western part of the area is dominated by the Tower of London World Heritage Site and its setting; the eastern part by St Katherine Dock.

Significant road infrastructure impacts on the setting of both areas with East Smithfield and Tower Hill passing east-west and Mansell Street / Tower Bridge Approach extending north-south toward Tower Bridge.

The area includes part of the North Bank of the Thames and its embankment together with the southern part of Tower Bridge. These locations offer the opportunity to experience a wider appreciation of the city with views up and downstream towards city landmarks including City Hall, The Shard Tate Modern and the City of London and Canary Wharf.

The entire area is within the Central Activities Zone but only the eastern portion is within the City Fringe opportunity area. The character, setting and Outstanding Universal Value of the Tower of London is set out in the WHS Management Plan and not therefore considered in detail as part of this study.

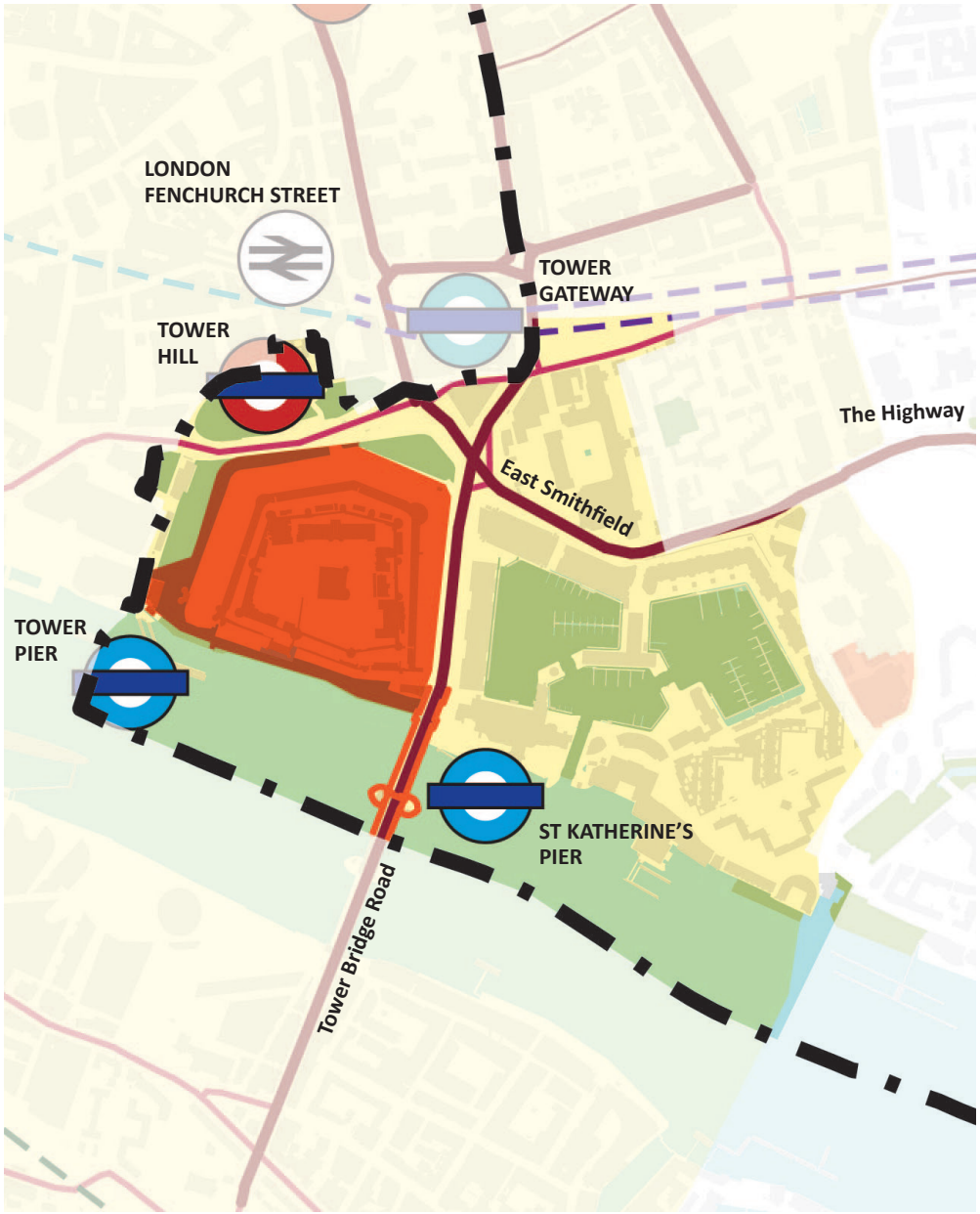


Figure 6.45: Tower of London / St Katherine's overview

Former warehouses fronting onto the River Thames downstream of Tower Bridge

Tower Bridge and the Tower of London

The White Tower

East Smithfield provides a hostile pedestrian environment

EXISTING CHARACTER

The Tower of London is an historic building of international significance, one of the world's most famous fortresses and Britain's most visited heritage sites. With the White Tower largely intact since the Norman period it is an impressive feature on the north bank of the river. Once London's tallest building it now sits within a more urban setting however the LVMF protects views to it and the setting of the tower.

St Katherine Docks opened in 1828 with a linked east and west dock built to maximise wharf edge. The area experienced heavy bombing during the war and most of the warehousing to the east of the docks was destroyed. Some survived along the river frontage and between the two docks and have been converted to workspace.

The development around the docks is reflective of the period within which it was built with office and hotels dating from the 1970's to the west and a mix of contemporary apartments and lower scale 1980's development overlooking the waterbodies to the north and east of the docks. The former docks have become marinas with a myriad of small vessels adding to the quality of the place. The area is inward looking turning its back onto East Smithfield and wrapping around and enclosing the dock.

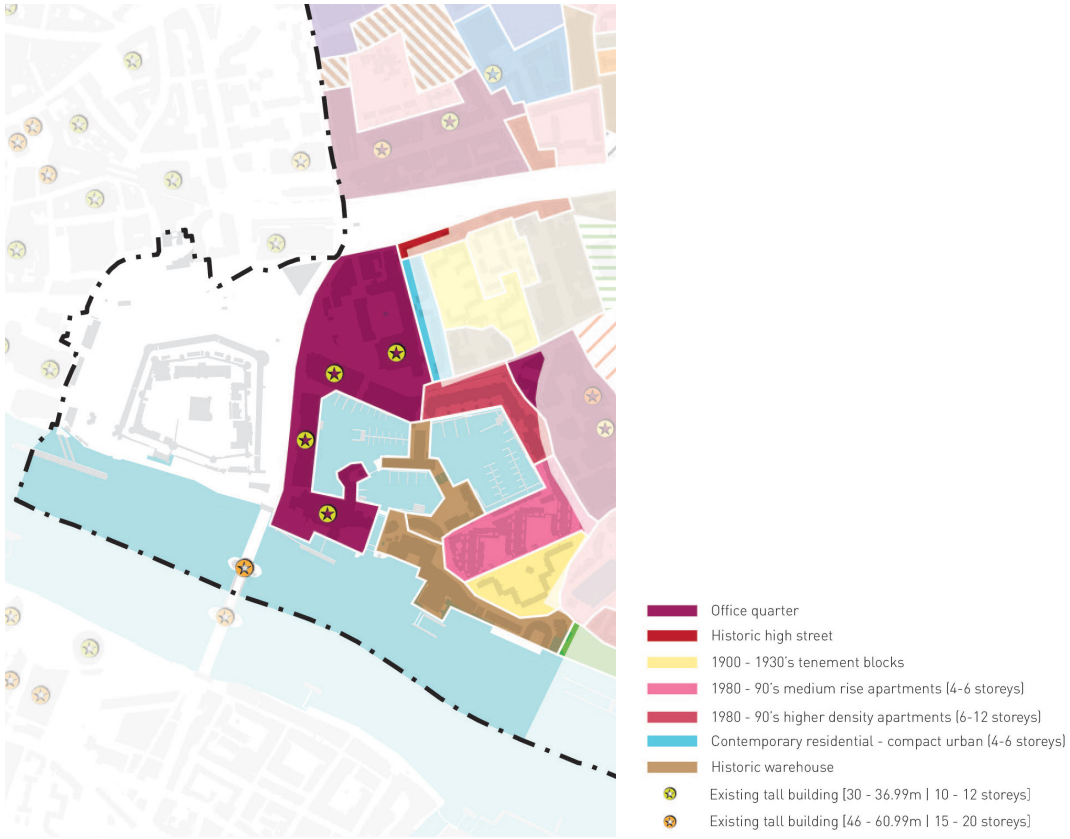


Figure 6.46: Tower of London / St Katherine's character areas

Townscape features and significant buildings:

- Tower of London World Heritage Site
- St Katherine Docks and historic warehouses
- Tower Bridge
- The Royal Mint
- North Bank of the River

Open spaces:

- Trinity Square Gardens
- Northbank of the river
- St Katherine Docks

Apartments overlooking the former dock

Former warehouses on St Katherine's Way

The over scaled 'Tower' hotel adjacent Tower Bridge

Robust interwar housing blocks wrap around a green square

Modest scaled 1980s apartments

Figure 6.47: Tower of London / St Katherine's existing building heights

EXISTING BUILDING HEIGHTS

Predominant height: Typically 5-8 storeys.

Existing tall buildings:

- Tower Bridge
- The Tower hotel is 13 storeys

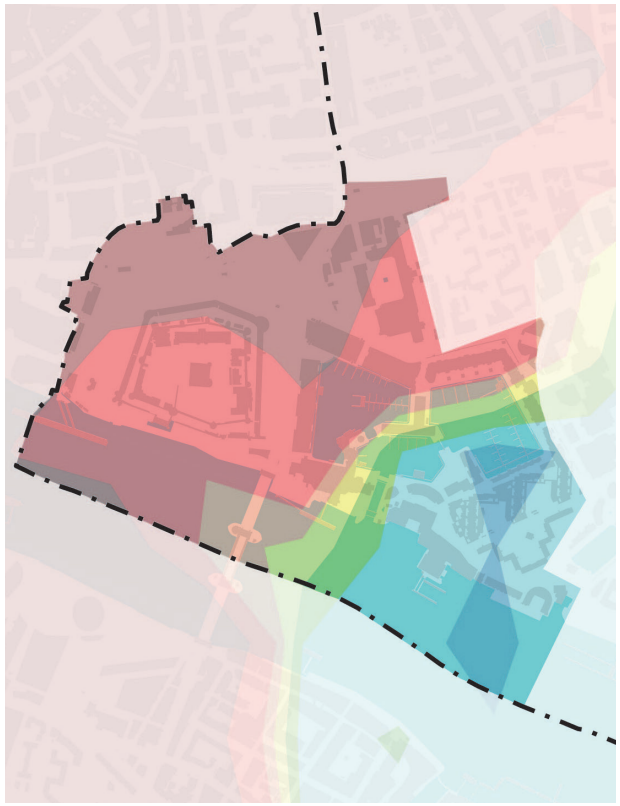


Figure 6.48: Tower of London / St Katherine's PTAL

PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACCESSIBILITY

Facilities: The area is served by buses on the main routes and Tower Hill and Tower Gateway provide underground and DLR services. Fenchurch Street provides mainline trains eastwards out of London. Water taxis are serve the area.

PTAL Levels: 6b around the Tower but falling to just 2 in east of the area.

Figure 6.49: Tower of London / St Katherine's sensitivities

SENSITIVITIES TO CHANGE

Heritage: Tower of London is a World Heritage Site and the buffer zone extends across much of the area. It is also a listed building and Scheduled Ancient Monument. The whole area is a conservation area and there are a number of other listed buildings.

Views: The LVMF protects views to and the setting of the Tower of London.

Landmarks: Tower of London.

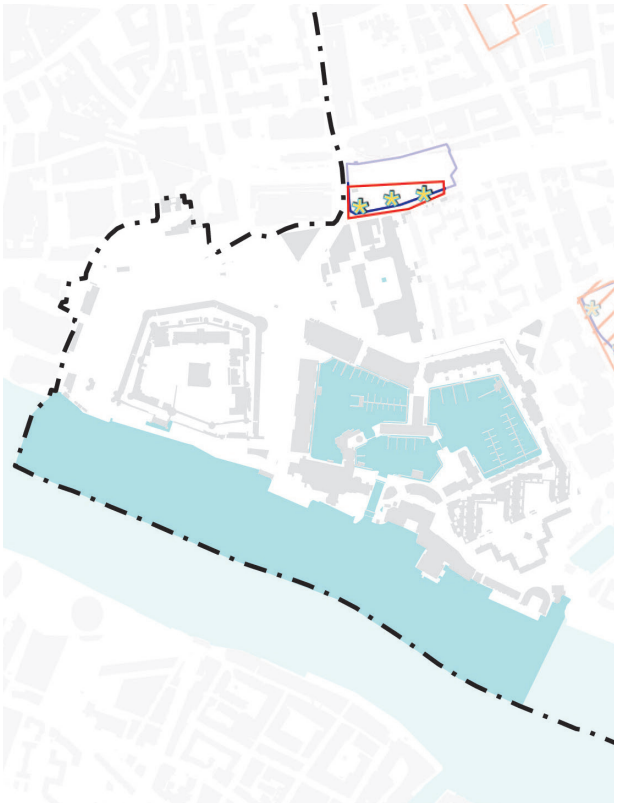


Figure 6.50: Tower of London / St Katherine's development potential

POTENTIAL AREAS OF CHANGE

Site Allocations: Royal Mint Street.

Development pipeline: Three residential towers of 13, 14 and 15 storeys are under constriction at Royal Mint Street (the above site allocation).

Other sites: There are no obvious development sites for tall buildings within the area.

SUMMARY

Given the sensitivities within this area Tower of London / St Katherine's is considered to be an inappropriate area for tall buildings.

6.11 CHARACTERISATION OF PLACE: WAPPING

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Wapping is located to the south of Shadwell and extends southwards to the River Thames. The 'Place' is defined by the Highway and the elevated railway line emanating from Fenchurch Street station to the north, King Edward VII Memorial Park to the east, the river to the south and Thomas More Street to the west.

Neighbourhood centres are located at Thomas More Street in the west of the area and Wapping Lane to the east. The Highway provides the main movement connection through the area and extends east-west from Canary Wharf to the city. It is a busy arterial and creates significant severance with Shadwell to the north.

With no river crossings to the south the area experiences little through traffic with local roads only serving the area itself.

Only the north-western part of Wapping is within the City Fringe opportunity area and the other parts of the area are therefore not considered in detail in this study.

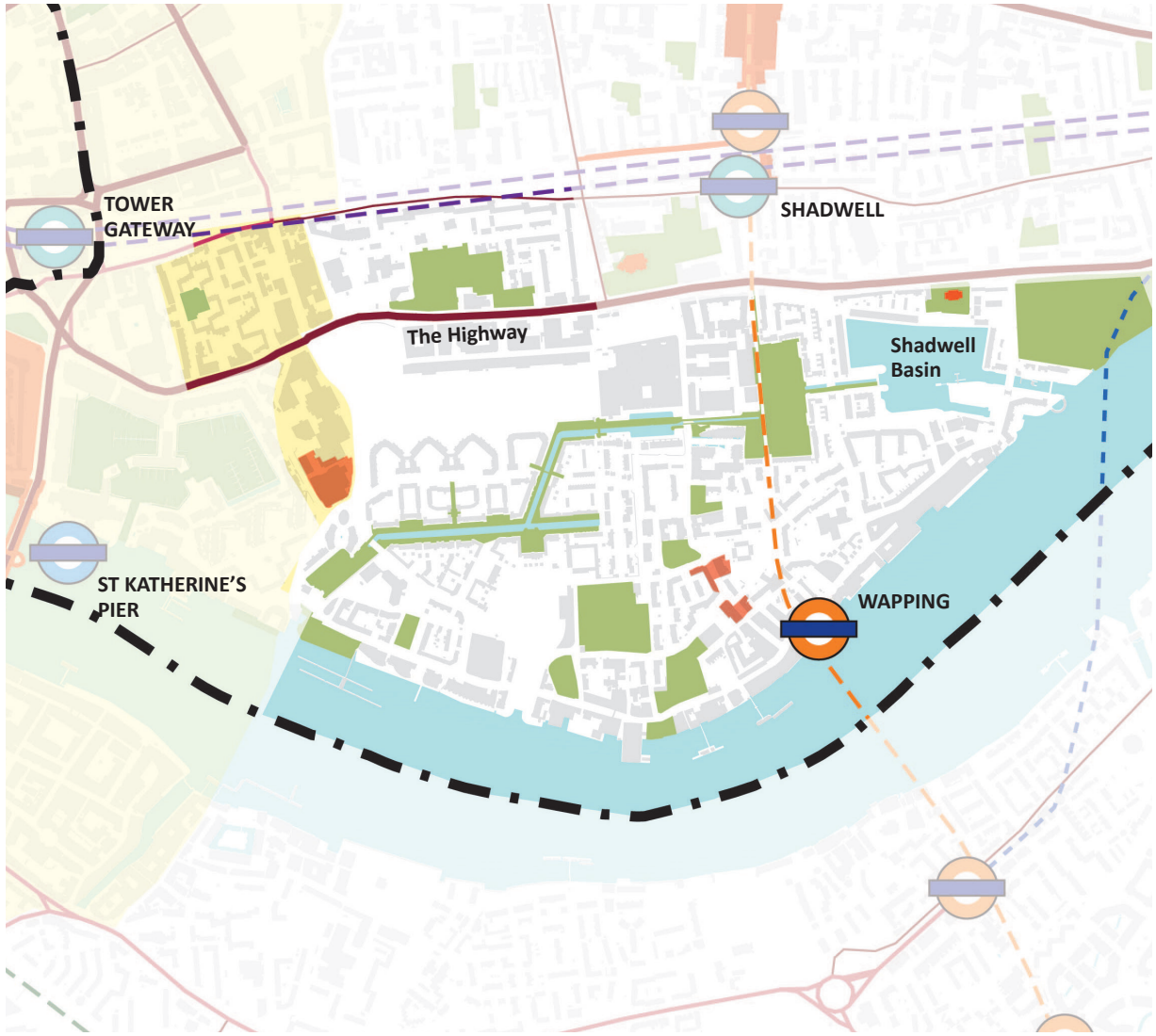


Figure 6.51: Wapping overview

A changing environment along The Highway

Housing is developed around a network of historic waterbodies

Elevated rail lines reduce connectivity northwards

Hermitage Wharf and Memorial Garden

Shops on Cable Street

EXISTING CHARACTER

Historically Wapping was a riverside community with activity focused along the rivers edge and Wapping High Street. Through the 19th Century a number of docks were created, but as with those in other parts of the borough they are now disused and have either been infilled or become the focus around which new homes have been built.

Wapping's character is strongly influenced by its history with numerous waterbodies and in places, old warehouse buildings, now converted for alternative uses.

Much of the area was developed through the 1980s and 90s and at a low density mostly with houses rather than apartments. The north-western portion of the area was a focus for employment with a corporate office focus at Thomas More Street, with News International on the adjacent site and a mix of employment uses along the Highway. This area is changing with the News International site being redeveloped with a dense residential proposal that will bring many more people to the area.

To the north of the Highway there is a fragmented mix of post-war estates and historic buildings. Overall the north-western part of the Wapping suffers from fragmentation with a variety of built forms and uses located within a coarse grain of blocks and an impermeable and, in places, hostile pedestrian environment.

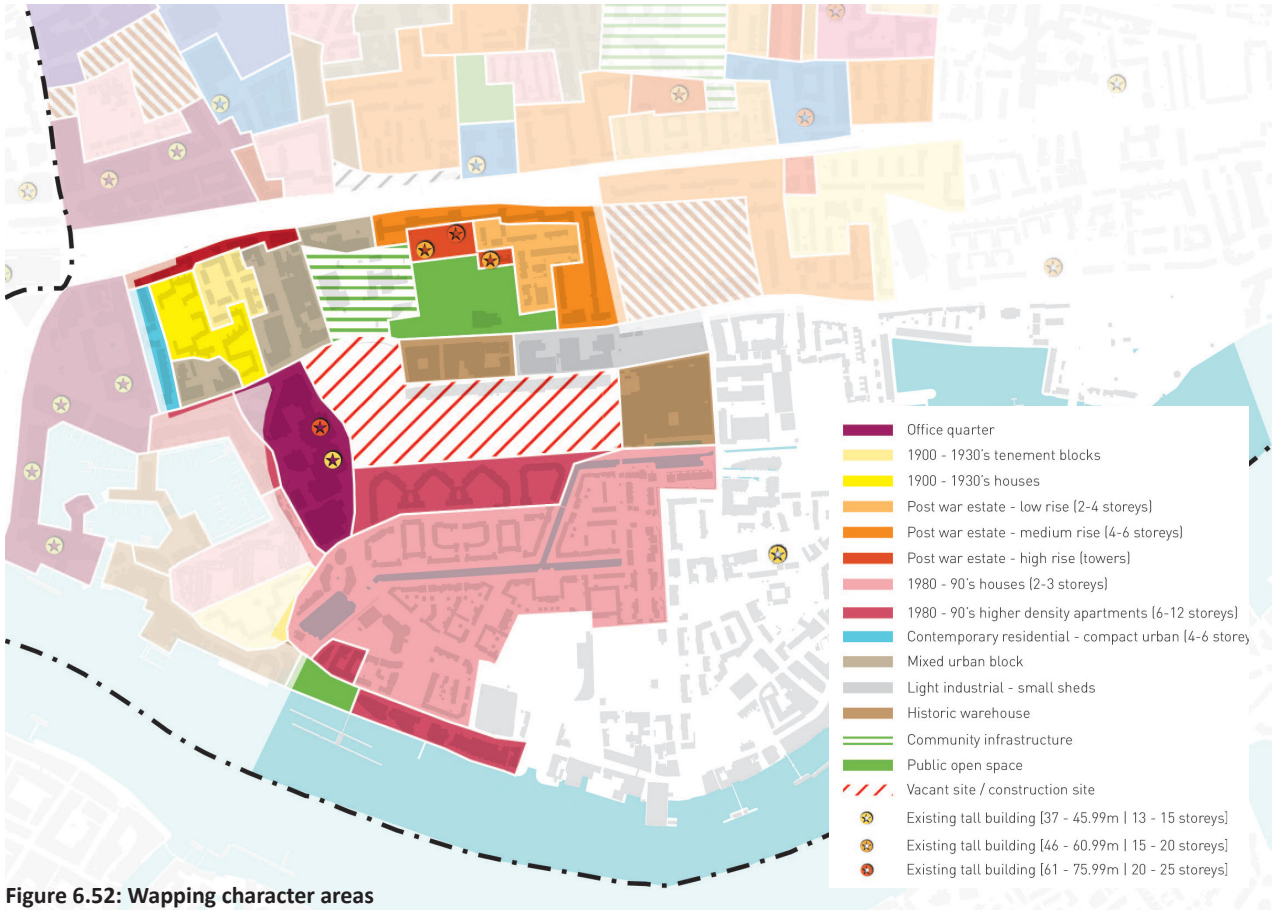


Figure 6.52: Wapping character areas

Townscape features and significant buildings:

- St George in the East Church (north east edge of the area in Shadwell)
- Wilton Music Hall (for use rather than visibility)
- Tobacco Dock

Open spaces:

- Swedenborg Gardens
- Ornamental Canal
- Hermitage and Shadwell Basins
- Hermitage Riverside Memorial Park

Quiet waterside residential neighbourhoods overlooking the Ornamental Canal

New development on the former News International site

Thomas Moore Centre on Vaughan Way

Historic street blocks within the CAZ in the north west of the area

Post-war high rise point blocks in Swedenborg Gardens

EXISTING BUILDING HEIGHTS

Predominant height: Typically 4-6 storeys but 2-3 storeys in much of the area.

Existing tall buildings:

- Offices at Thomas More centre
- New residential buildings at London Dock (20 and 13 storey)

Post war blocks include:

- Stockholm House (17 storey)
- Shearsmith House (25 storey)
- Hatton House (25 storey)

PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACCESSIBILITY

Facilities: Local buses serve Wapping and run along Vaughan Way and East Smithfield. Wapping provides London Overground services but is to the south-east of the area. Shadwell to the north but across The Highway also provides London Overground and DLR services.

PTAL Levels: 6 in the north-west corner of the area but falling to level 2 to the south.

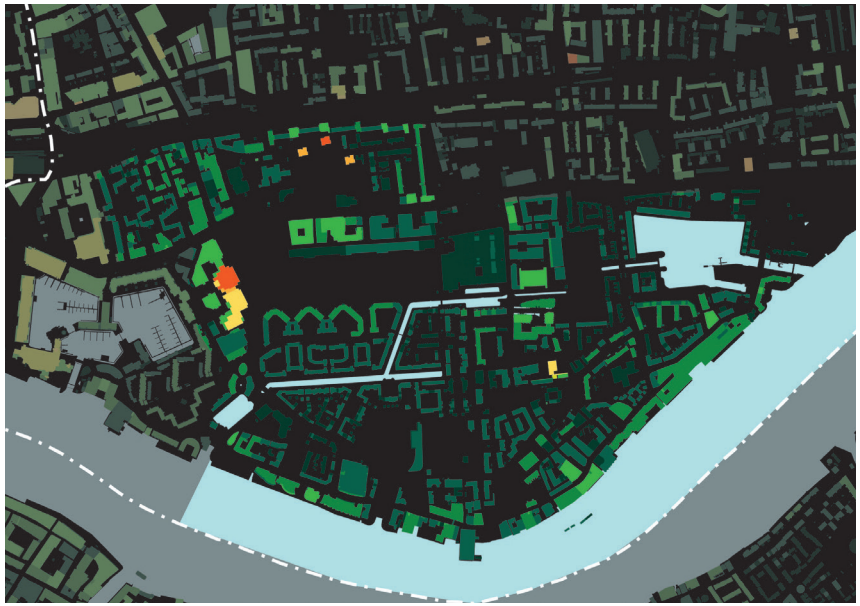


Figure 6.53: Wapping existing building heights

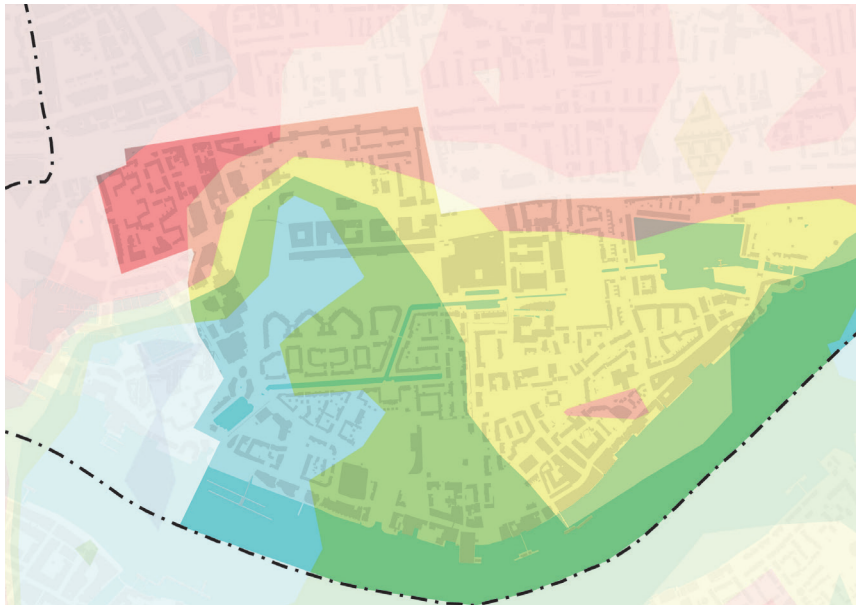


Figure 6.54: Wapping PTAL

Figure 6.55: Wapping sensitivities

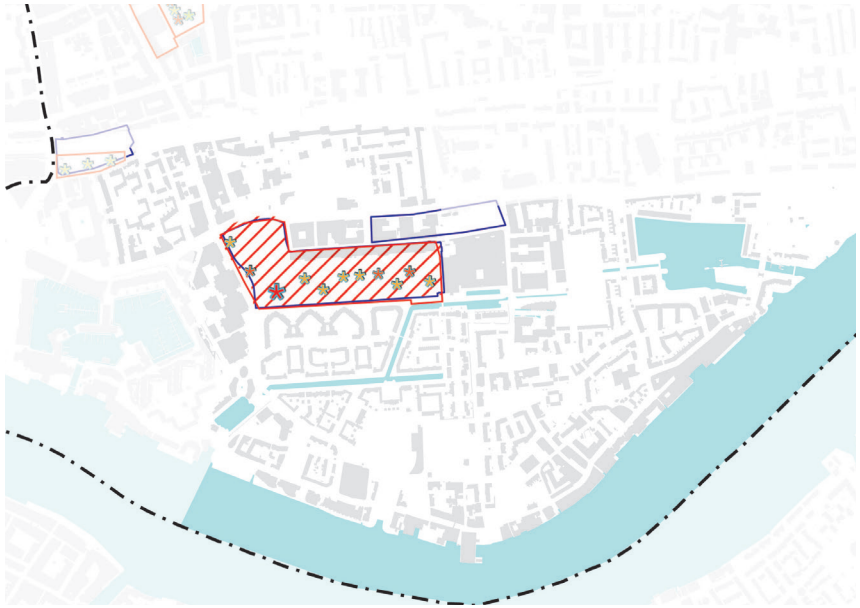


Figure 6.56: Wapping development potential

SENSITIVITIES TO CHANGE

Heritage: Several conservation areas and numerous listed buildings but mainly along the riverside.

Views: There are no LVMF protected views in the area.

Other: St Pauls Church, Shadwell is a borough designated landmark and St George in the East Church on Cannon Street Road is identified as a local landmark and the setting and views to these should be protected.

POTENTIAL AREAS OF CHANGE

Site Allocations: Two - London Dock and The Highway.

Development pipeline: Eleven tall residential buildings (up to 25 storeys) have been approved at the former News International Site in Wapping. Three have detailed consent and are under construction on site; eight are approved in outline. The detailed consent is for 15, 20 and 25 storey buildings (57, 69 and 91 metres high; 62, 72 and 96 metres AOD).

Other sites: There are no obvious development sites for tall buildings within the area.

SUMMARY

The development at the former News International site establishes a new taller typology within Wapping. When built this proposal could, through enhanced public realm, improve the pedestrian environment between Wapping and Shadwell and Aldgate.

The site allocation on The Highway offers opportunity to redefine the quality of the environment along this arterial route. A compact development form that provides enhanced frontage to The Highway and delivers significant community benefits including an improved street environment and better connectivity with Shadwell station. A tall building here is likely to have significant impacts on the setting of the Grade I St George in the East Church on Cannon Street Road and is not therefore considered appropriate.

6.12 CHARACTERISATION OF PLACE: CANARY WHARF

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Canary Wharf is located towards the east of the borough at the northern end of the Isle of Dogs. The 'Place' is defined by Aspen Way to the north and the South Dock to the south and extends to the River Thames to either side of the Isle of Dogs.

Canary Wharf is a major centre and international focus for business and finance. It is located within the heart of the former docklands and is a symbol of the regeneration of the area delivered through the 1990s.

At its heart is a cluster of tall buildings and this cluster with One Canada Square at its centre, is instantly recognisable, both nationally and internationally. Canary Wharf was identified in the Core Strategy 2010 as a suitable location for tall office buildings and in recent years there has been considerable development activity in the area.

A Crossrail station will open at Canary Wharf in 2018 and this will improve access further. Vehicular access is provided off Aspen Way via Westferry Road and Trafalgar Way.

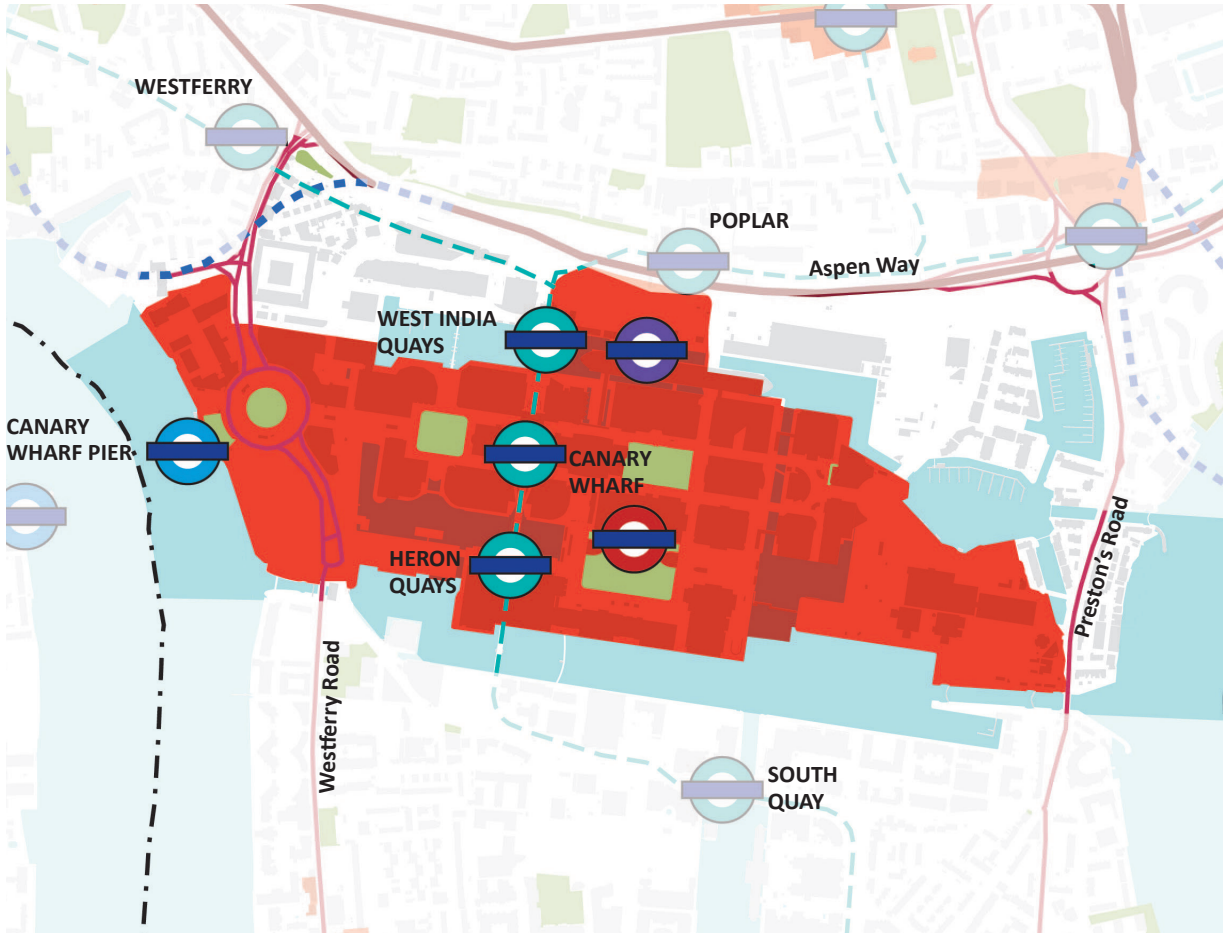


Figure 6.57: Canary Wharf overview

One Canary Wharf is an instantly recognised symbol of the international finance centre

Canary Wharf's New District under construction to the east

Canary Wharf viewed from Westferry

Grade A offices are set around a high quality public realm

Housing on Blackwall Basin

EXISTING CHARACTER

Canary Wharf was developed on the former West India Dock and the main centre is located on an island. It is laid out as a clearly organised grid with the tallest buildings at the centre arranged around a central space, Canada Square. Canary Wharf is a centre of finance and most buildings are occupied by banks with the designs symbolising corporate wealth and strength. A subterranean shopping centre is located beneath the centre and active food and drink uses are at ground floor. The outlook is onto a series of waterbodies – the former docks.

Surrounding the main office cluster the character of Canary Wharf is varied. Historic reminders of the former docks are located to the north with a large former warehouse occupied by the Museum of Docklands and food and drink uses which spill out onto North Quay. To the east, adjacent the river, are a mix of small scale, fine grain, Victorian and Georgian buildings close to the entrance to the docks.

Much of the area around the central offices was developed as low and medium rise housing and apartments in the 1990s. This is evident around the Blackwall Basin to the east. Other parts of the area were occupied by light industry and distribution uses including Billingsgate Market. These are now being redeveloped at Wood Wharf to create what is described as Canary Wharf's New District – a dense new mixed use area that could deliver approximately 3,000 homes.

This will change the feel of the area both spatially and in terms of activity with a new resident population bringing additional animation and life to the area particularly at the weekend.

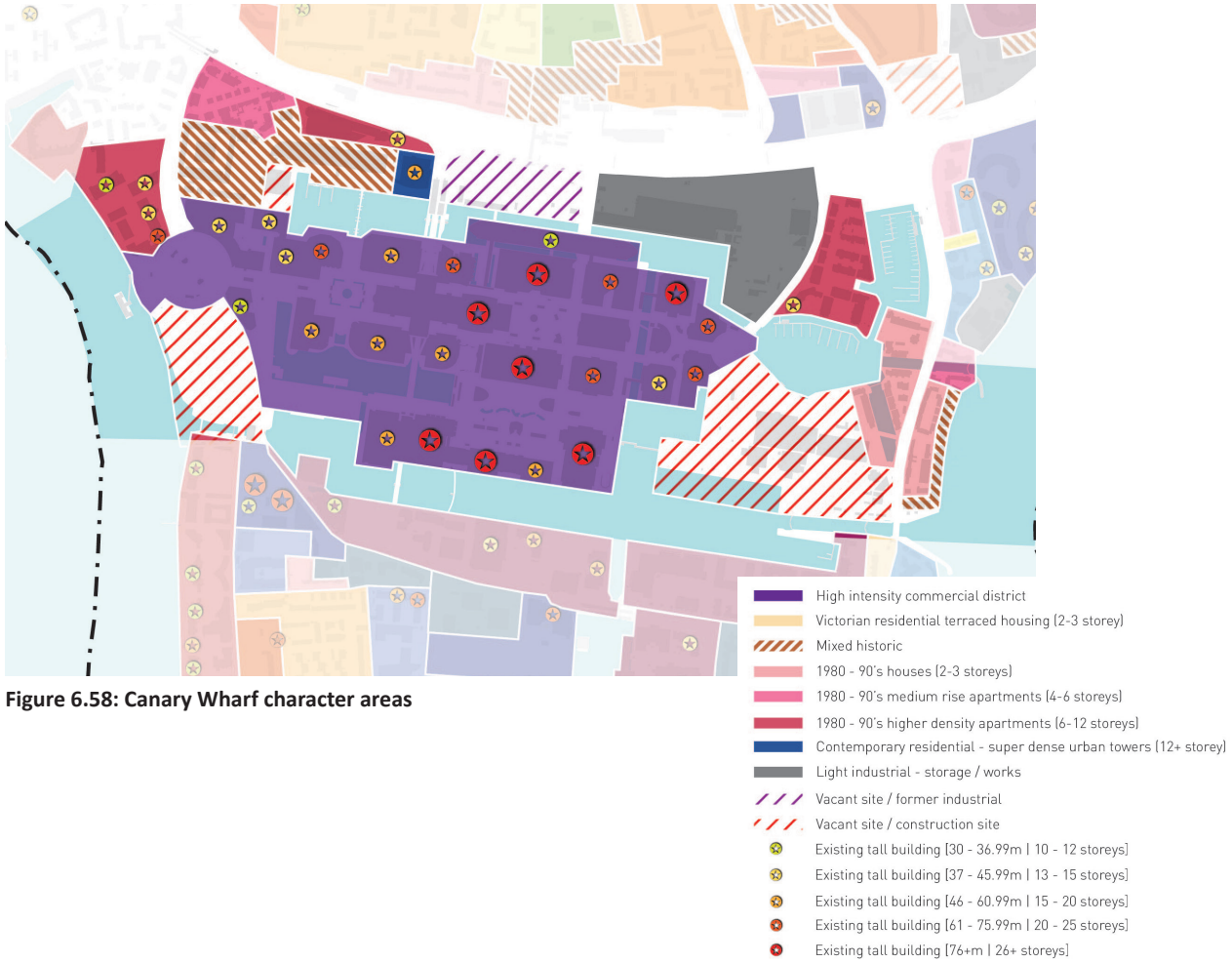


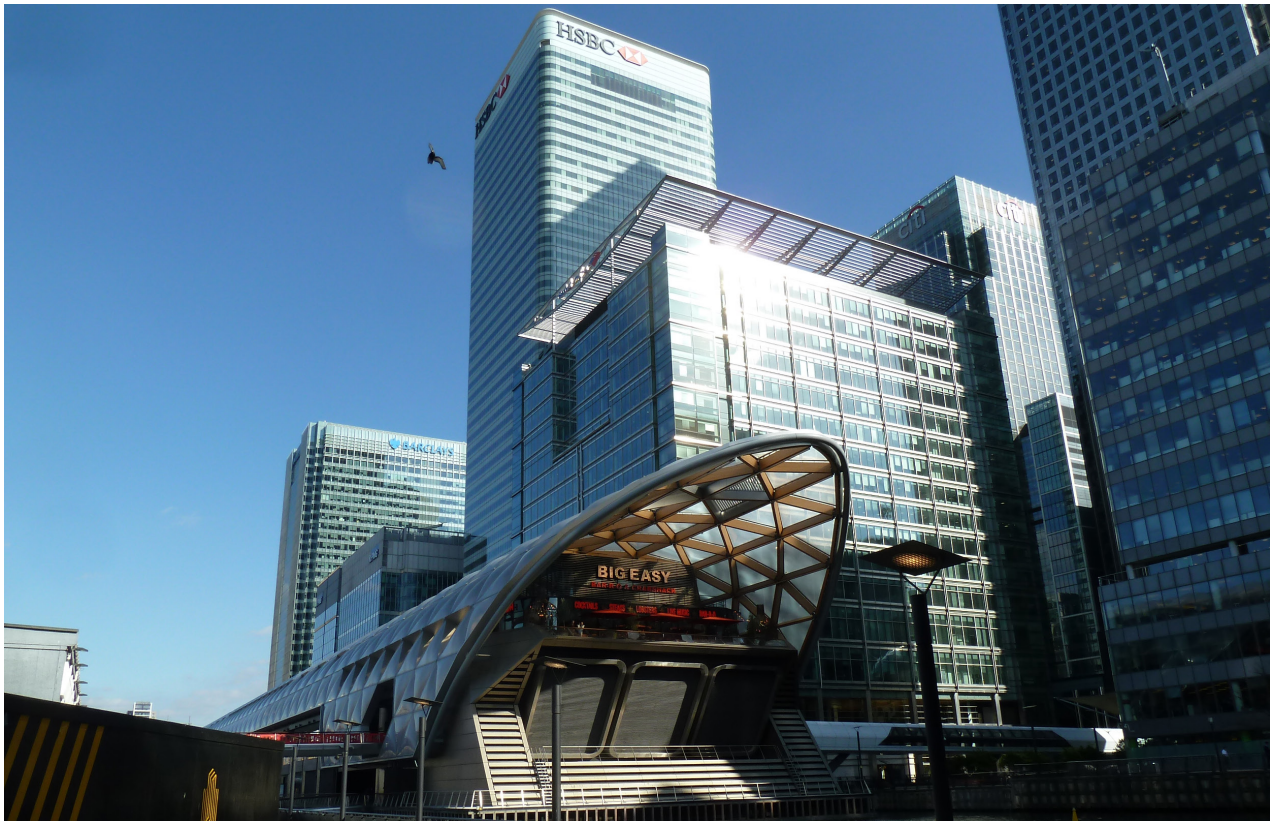
Figure 6.58: Canary Wharf character areas

Townscape features and significant buildings:

- One Canada Square
- Warehouse at North Quay and Museum of London Docklands
- Views of River Thames particularly from Westferry Circus

Open spaces:

- Canada Square Park, Cabot Square and Westferry Circus
- Jubilee Park
- North Quay
- North, Middle and South Dock
- Blackwall Basin



Crossrail station and international finance centre

Historic waterfront to the east

Historic warehousing and restaurants on North Quay

Billingsgate Market to the north-east of the area

Modest scaled historic properties on Garford Road to the north-west

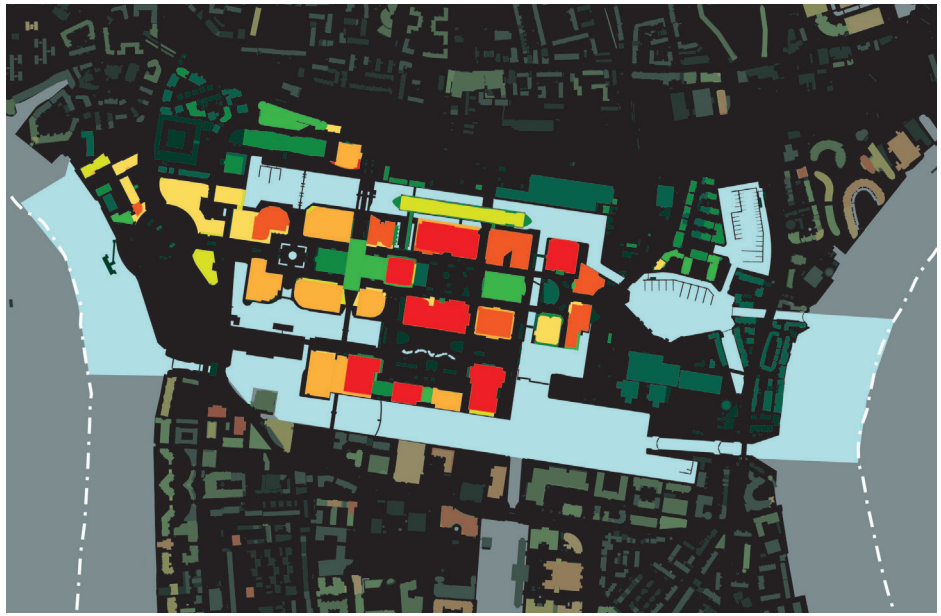


Figure 6.59: Canary Wharf existing building heights

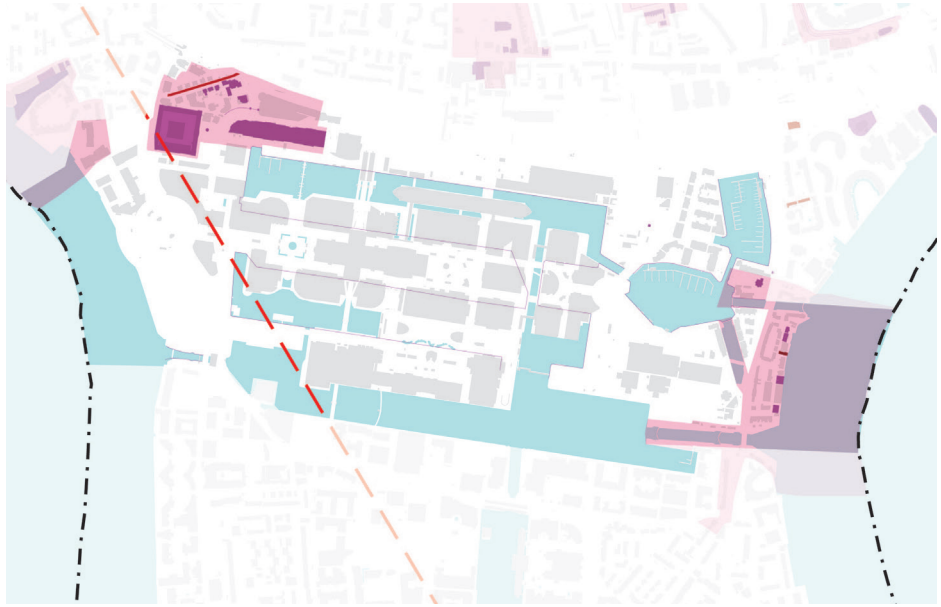


Figure 6.61: Canary Wharf sensitivities

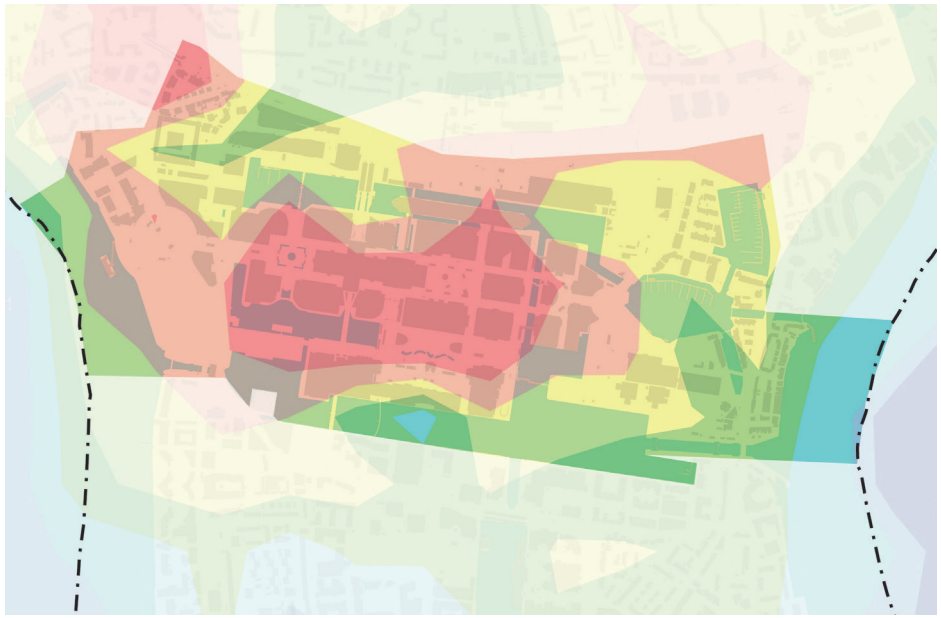


Figure 6.60: Canary Wharf PTAL

EXISTING BUILDING HEIGHTS

Canary Wharf is of exceptional height and provides a cluster of tall buildings that step up to the 50 storey (245.8m AOD) office at One Canada Square in the centre.

The surrounding context varies with 2-3 storey historic buildings on the river to the east and 10-12 storey 1990's apartments to the west.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACCESSIBILITY

Facilities: Served by buses and by the Jubilee line, DLR and water taxis. A Crossrail / Elizabeth Line station will open later this year.

PTAL Levels: 6 in the centre but falling to 3 and 4 at the edges of the area.

SENSITIVITIES TO CHANGE

Heritage: Several conservation areas and listed buildings to the north-west and east of the area.

Views: The LVMF Panoramic View from the General Wolfe statue in Greenwich Park extends across the area.

Other: St Anne's Church in Limehouse is on the axis of the above view but visibility of this borough designated landmark from Greenwich Park is no longer possible.

POTENTIAL AREAS OF CHANGE

Site Allocations:
There are four site allocations within Canary Wharf:

- Billingsgate Market
- North Quay
- Riverside South
- Wood Wharf

Development pipeline:
The following developments are under construction in Canary Wharf:

- Newfoundland a 59 storey residential tower on Westferry Road (226 metres AOD);
- A 28 storey office at Heron Quay West, 1 Bank Street (145 metres AOD);
- Spire London (formerly known as Hertsmere House) a 69 storey residential tower at the western end of North Dock (240.5 metres AOD);
- Landmark Pinnacle (formerly known as City Pride) a 75 storey residential tower at the western end of South Dock (239 metres AOD); and
- Several tall buildings as part of Canary Wharf's New District (formerly known as Wood Wharf) including 35, 43 and 58 storey residential towers (129, 150 and 211 metres AOD).

Consented proposals include:

- Twenty tall buildings from 10 to 58 storeys in Canary Wharf's New District (formerly known as Wood Wharf). Approved in Outline with detailed consent for ten buildings and some of these are under construction (see above);
- Two office towers of 43 and 37 storeys (221 and 209 metres respectively) at North Quay;
- Three office buildings at Riverside South (south of Westferry Circus) of 9, 32 and 44 storeys (80, 191 and 241 metres AOD); and
- Outline consent for an office building of 191 metres AOD at Heron Quays West.

Figure 6.62: Canary Wharf development potential

SUMMARY

Canary Wharf is changing and expanding. One Canada Square remains at the centre of the tall building cluster but the cluster is expanding and a number of buildings under construction are of a similar height. Care needs to be taken to ensure that the recognisable identity of the cluster is not lost through intensification should the cluster expand further.

Canary Wharf is a highly legible cluster that is visible across London both locally within Tower Hamlets itself and further afield from Greenwich Park, Alexandra Palace and along the river from Central London. It is a clear representation of the major centre and the tallest buildings should represent the heart of the financial district where the offices, station and shopping centre are located. The supporting residential areas should be secondary and therefore of a lower scale that steps away from the taller centre. The stepping down must also allow views of the taller buildings that are in the centre and this must be tested properly. Stepping down too slowly will result in the centre of the cluster becoming invisible from medium range views.

Development of further tall buildings is considered appropriate within Canary Wharf on the Site Allocations but this must be carefully managed.

6.13 CHARACTERISATION OF PLACE: MILLWALL

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Millwall is located on the western side of the Isle of Dogs to the south of Canary Wharf. The 'Place' is defined by South Dock to the north, by Millwall Inner Dock, Clippers Quay and East Ferry Road to the east and by the River Thames to the south and west.

Millwall Inner Dock extends north-south through the centre of the Isle of Dogs separating Millwall from Cubitt Town to the east and turns east-west as Millwall Outer Dock. This sub-divides Millwall into the area north of the dock and that to the south. These docks, and the river wrapping around the Isle of Dogs create a unique environment, but one that is disconnected from the rest of the borough.

The main movement corridor through Millwall is Westferry Road and this extends from Westferry Circus in the north to meet Manchester Road to the south of the peninsula at Island Gardens. From here a foot tunnel provides a route under the river to Greenwich.

Barkantine Estate Neighbourhood Centre provides local services within Millwall.

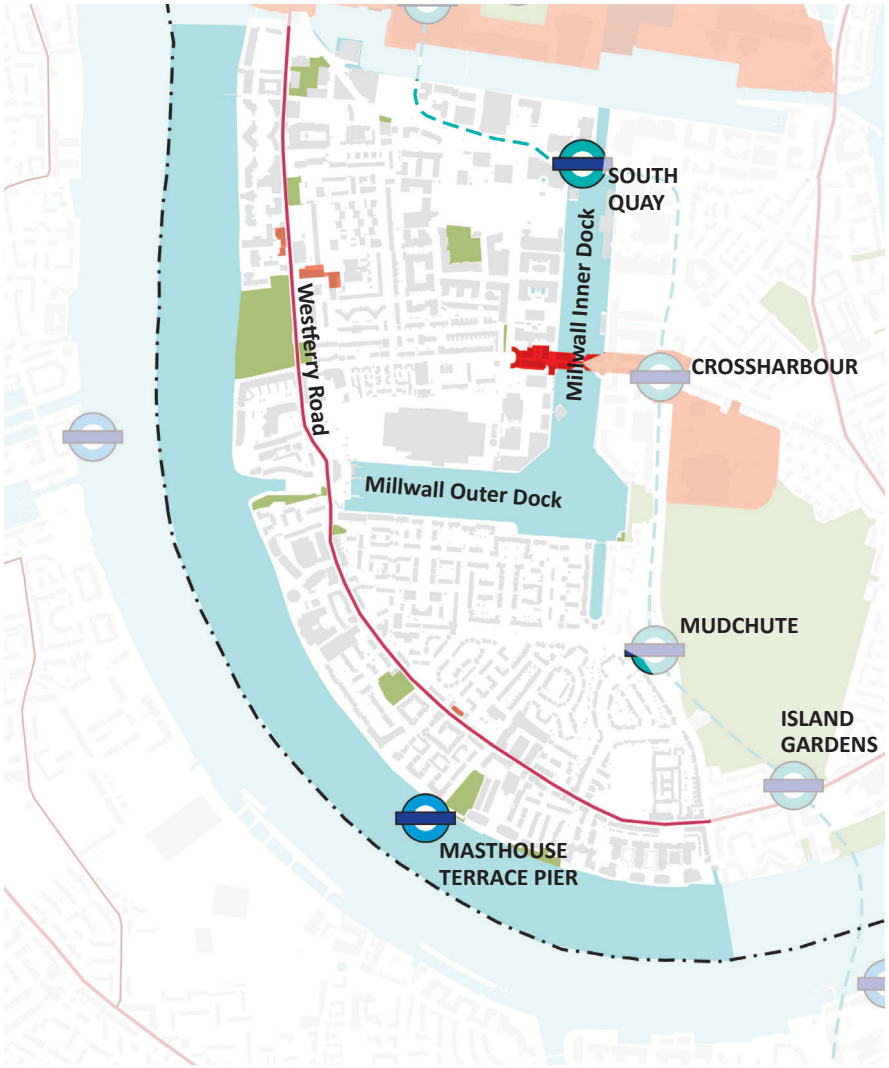


Figure 6.63: Millwall overview

A mix of free standing point blocks and dense urban blocks have changed the character of the area at Millharbour

Sr John McDougall Gardens on Westferry Road

Millwall Outer Dock is used for watersports

Barkantine Neighbourhood Centre on Westferry Road

Canary Wharf viewed from south of Millwall Outer Dock

EXISTING CHARACTER

During the 1980s and 90s Millwall changed from a largely working environment to a residential one. Whilst there are pockets of older housing and a few former warehouse buildings in Millwall, much of the current building stock dates from this period.

The building typologies relate to their location with apartments generally wrapping around the edge of the peninsula and enjoying the river prospects, and housing within the core. A promenade extends along the river around the entire Isle of Dogs peninsula and this allows the public to appreciate the river and the views that it offers, including towards Maritime Greenwich in the south. Many of the apartments developments are however gated which restricts permeability.

Whilst the edge and southern part of the peninsula was developed for housing much of the area to the north of Millwall Outer Dock provided employment developed along Marsh Wall and Millharbour often at a modest scale. In recent years some of this has been replaced by much higher density developments that include numerous tall buildings. These developments take two general forms; the perimeter block out of which tall buildings emerge and the point block developed out of a podium. The former is more successful in most cases as it better addresses animation at ground floor level and can hide servicing in the heart of the block. However both typologies loom over the more modest, older developments within the area.

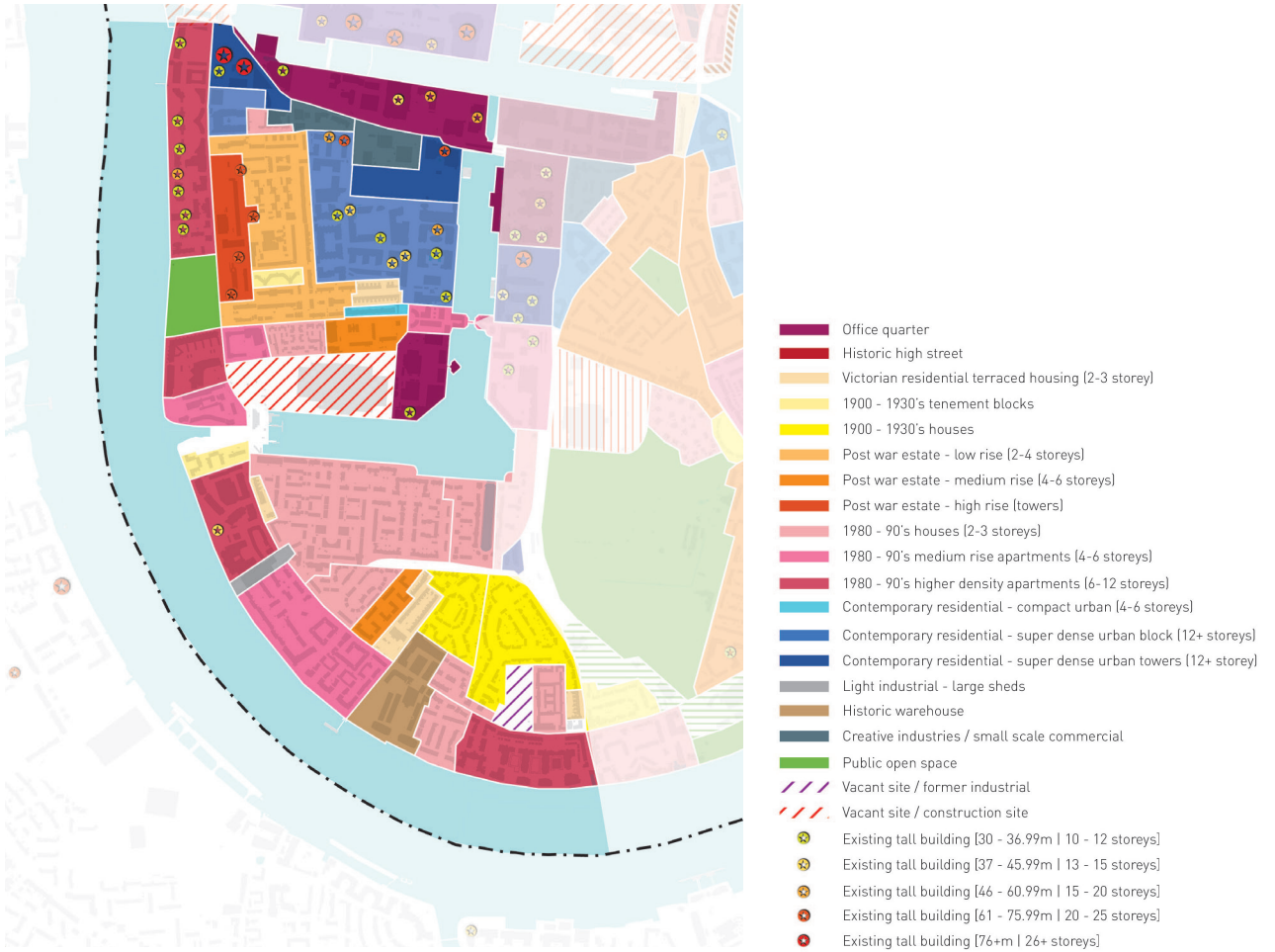


Figure 6.64: Millwall character areas

Townscape features and significant buildings:

- Novotel Hotel
- Burrells Wharf on Westferry Road
- Views towards Greenwich Maritime
- Docklands Sailing and Watersports Centre

Open spaces:

- Sir John McDougall Gardens
- Millwall Dock
- Riverside Promenade
- South Dock

Apartments overlook the river and the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage site

Docklands homes built in the 1990s are at a modest scale

Historic housing towards the south of the area

Westferry Printworks on Millwall Outer Dock

1990s development alongside the river is often gated

Dense contemporay development arranged as perimeter blocks

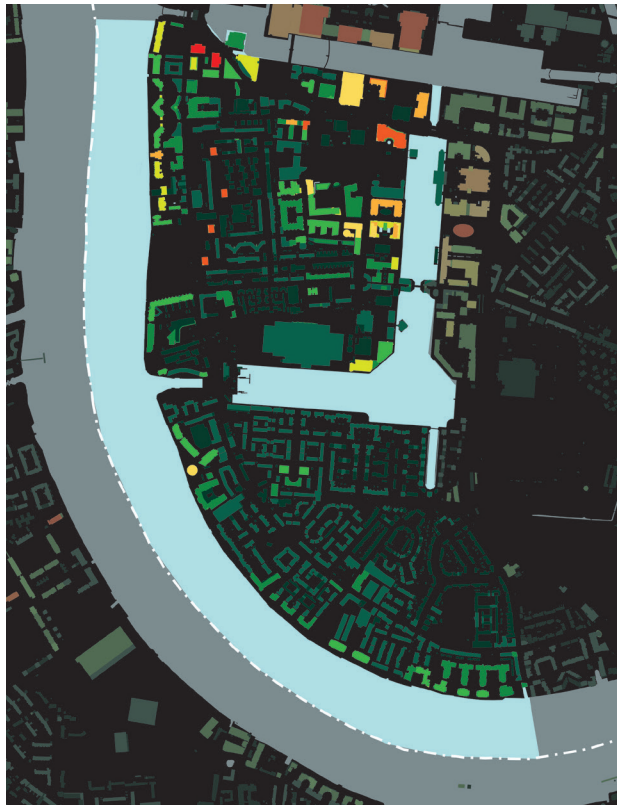


Figure 6.65: Shoreditch existing building heights

EXISTING BUILDING HEIGHTS

Predominant height: South of Millwall Outer Dock - 2-3 storey within core and 4-6 storey along perimeter adjacent the river.

North of Millwall Dock height is inconsistent, with older development typically 2- 4 storeys but new development up to ten times that height including post-war towers on the Barkantine Estate and several new tall buildings in excess of 40 storeys (120m).

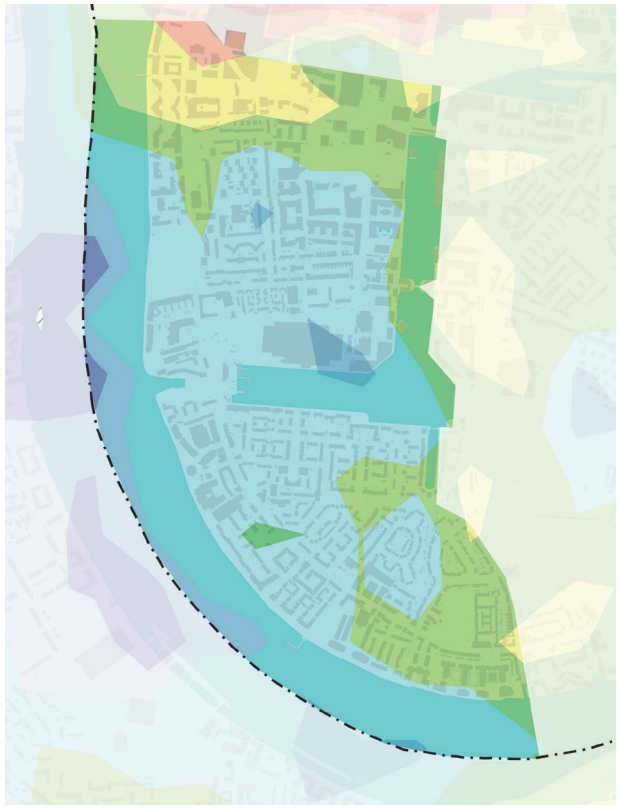


Figure 6.66: Millwall PTAL

PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACCESSIBILITY

Facilities: Served by buses on Westferry Road and Marsh Wall and by the DLR which runs through the centre of the peninsula and also by water taxis. A Crossrail / Elizabeth Line station will open in Canary Wharf in 2018.

PTAL Levels: Low; 4 at Marsh Wall but generally 2 or 3.

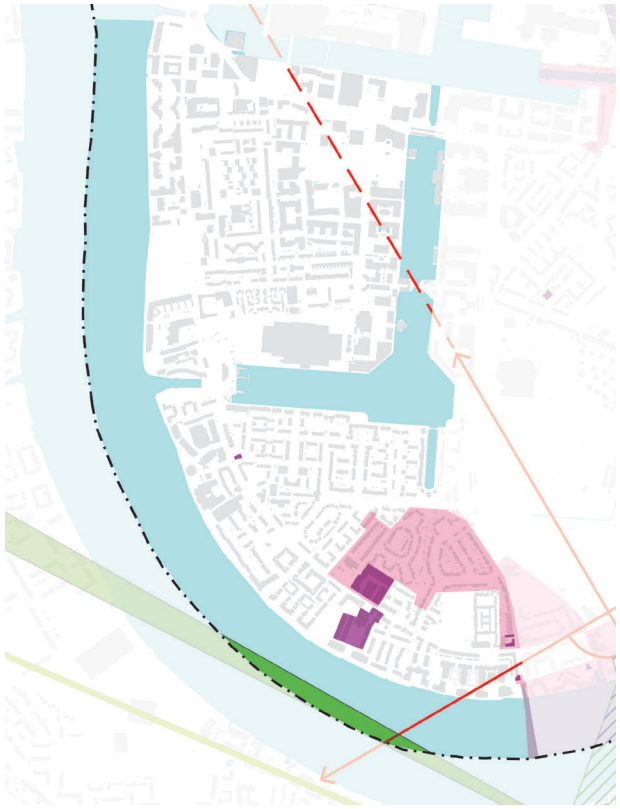


Figure 6.67: Millwall sensitivities

SENSITIVITIES TO CHANGE

Heritage: There is a conservation area and a number of listed buildings towards the south of the area.

Views: The LVMF Panoramic View from the General Wolfe statue in Greenwich Park extends across the area.

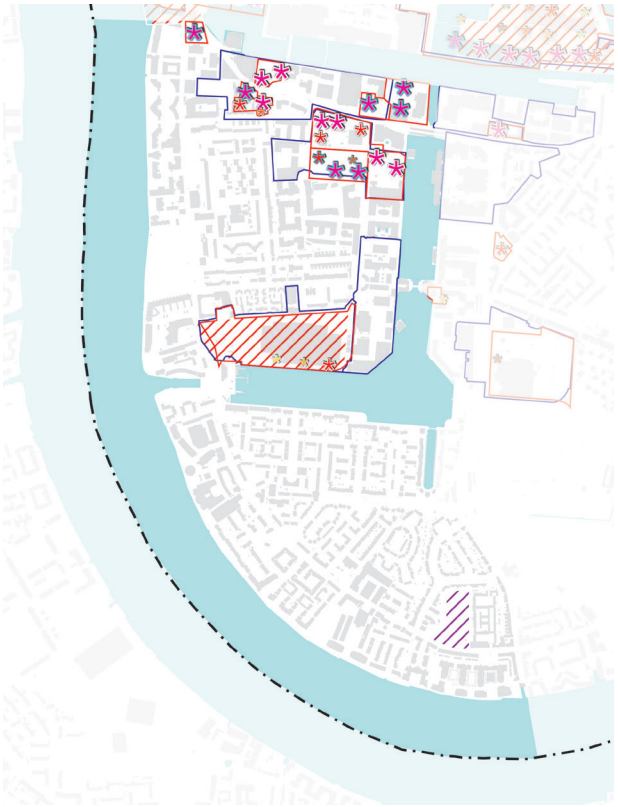


Figure 6.68: Millwall development potential

POTENTIAL AREAS OF CHANGE

Site Allocations: There are four site allocations within Millwall:

- Millharbour
- Marshwall West
- Milllhabour West
- Westferry Printworks

Development pipeline:
The following developments are under construction in Millwall:

- Wardian London at Arrowhead Quay, Marsh Wall – two residential towers of 50 and 55 storeys (172 and 187 metres AOD);
- Two residential towers of 36 and 68 storeys at South Quay Plaza (121 and 220 metres AOD); and
- Four residential towers at 2 Millharbour ranging from 25 – 42 storeys (89 - 144 metres AOD).

Consented proposals include:

- Three residential towers at Alpha Square, 163 Marsh Wall of 20, 34 and 65 storeys (80, 124, 217 metres AOD);
- Six residential towers at South Quay Square ranging from 32 to 45 storeys (106 to 146 metres AOD);
- A 16 storey hotel on 82 West India Dock Road (57 metres); and
- Three residential towers at the former Westferry Printworks on Millwall Dock of 13, 17 and 30 storeys (56, 69 and 111 metres AOD).

SUMMARY

Millwall is changing rapidly with new development to the north of the area. Much of this is out of scale with the existing context and is creating awkward relationships between the new and old.

Whilst tall buildings are considered appropriate in the northern portion of the area the location and scale needs to be carefully mediated to ensure that the views to, and the identity of the Canary Wharf cluster is not irreparably altered and that a wall of development is not perceived from distant locations.

Further advice is presented in Section 7 of this report.

6.14 CHARACTERISATION OF PLACE: CUBITT TOWN

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Cubitt Town is located on the eastern side of the Isle of Dogs to the south of Canary Wharf. The 'Place' is defined by South Dock to the north, by Millwall Inner Dock, Clippers Quay and East Ferry Road to the west and by the River Thames to the south and east

Millwall Inner Dock extends north-south through the centre of the Isle of Dogs separating Cubitt Town from Millwall to the east. Mudchute Farm and Park and Millwall Park provide a significant open space towards the southern part of Cubitt Town.

The main movement corridor through Cubitt Town is Manchester Road which extends from Aspen Way in the north to meet Westferry Road to the south of the peninsula at Island Gardens. From here a foot tunnel provides a route under the river to Greenwich.

A district centre provides local services at Crossharbour. This is however in the form of a large supermarket and bus station.

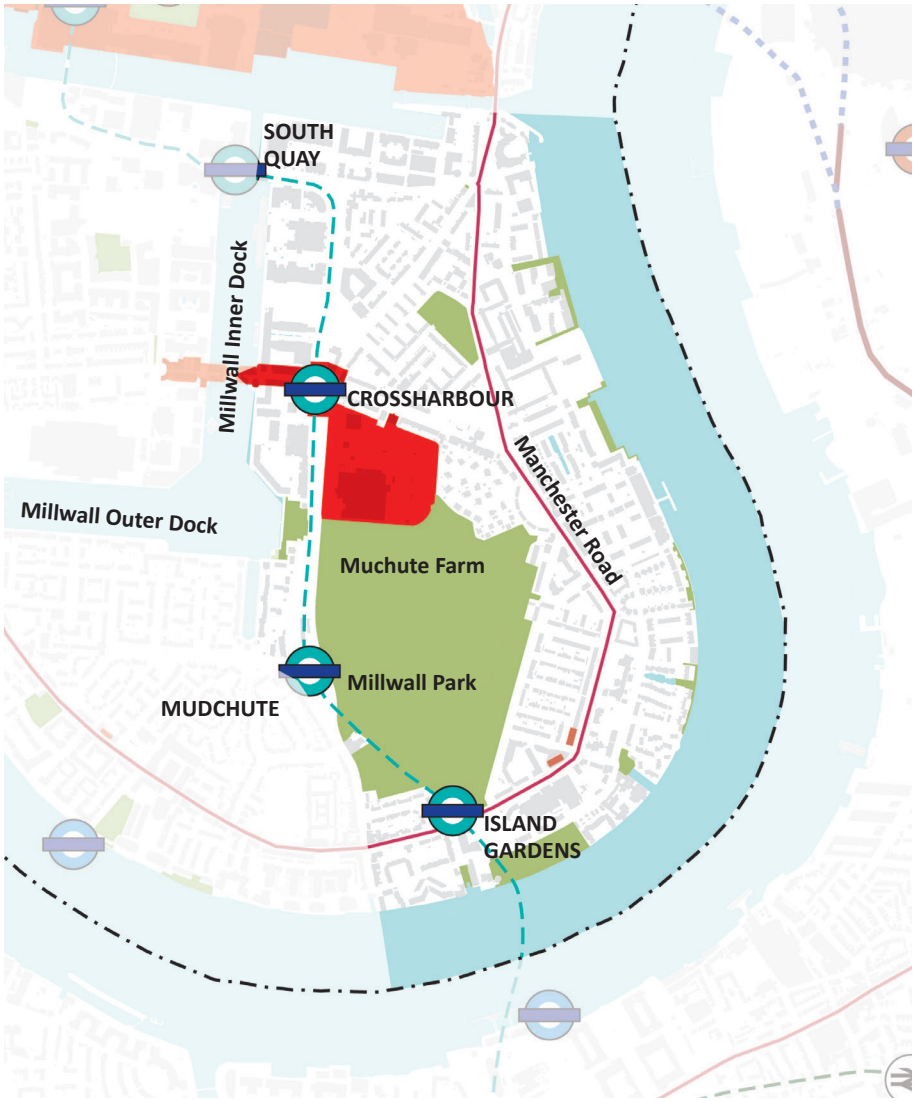


Figure 6.69: Cubitt Town overview

Baltimore Tower on Inner Millwall Dock

Kelson House is prominent in local views

Small scale business units south of Marsh Wall

Island Gardens

View from Greenwich Maritime - development at the southern end of the Isle of Dogs is modest in scale

Island Gardens DLR station

EXISTING CHARACTER

Very little historic development remains in Cubitt Town and it is a predominantly residential environment with estates dating from 1970s towards the north of the area and 1990s housing towards the south and overlooking the river.

Millwall Park and Mudchute farm provide an oasis in the city and within these large open spaces it is easy to escape from the much more urban environment to the north. However these spaces contribute to an illegible pedestrian environment in Cubitt Town where routes are disconnected and simple journeys can be quite circuitous.

The urban fabric is fragmented with a mismatch in terms of the type, layout and scale of adjacent developments.

As with Millwall the area is seeing change towards the north around Millwall Inner Harbour and Marsh Wall with taller denser development replacing modest scaled development from the 1990s but the scale needs to be mediated to create a more harmonious interface with the existing character and form.

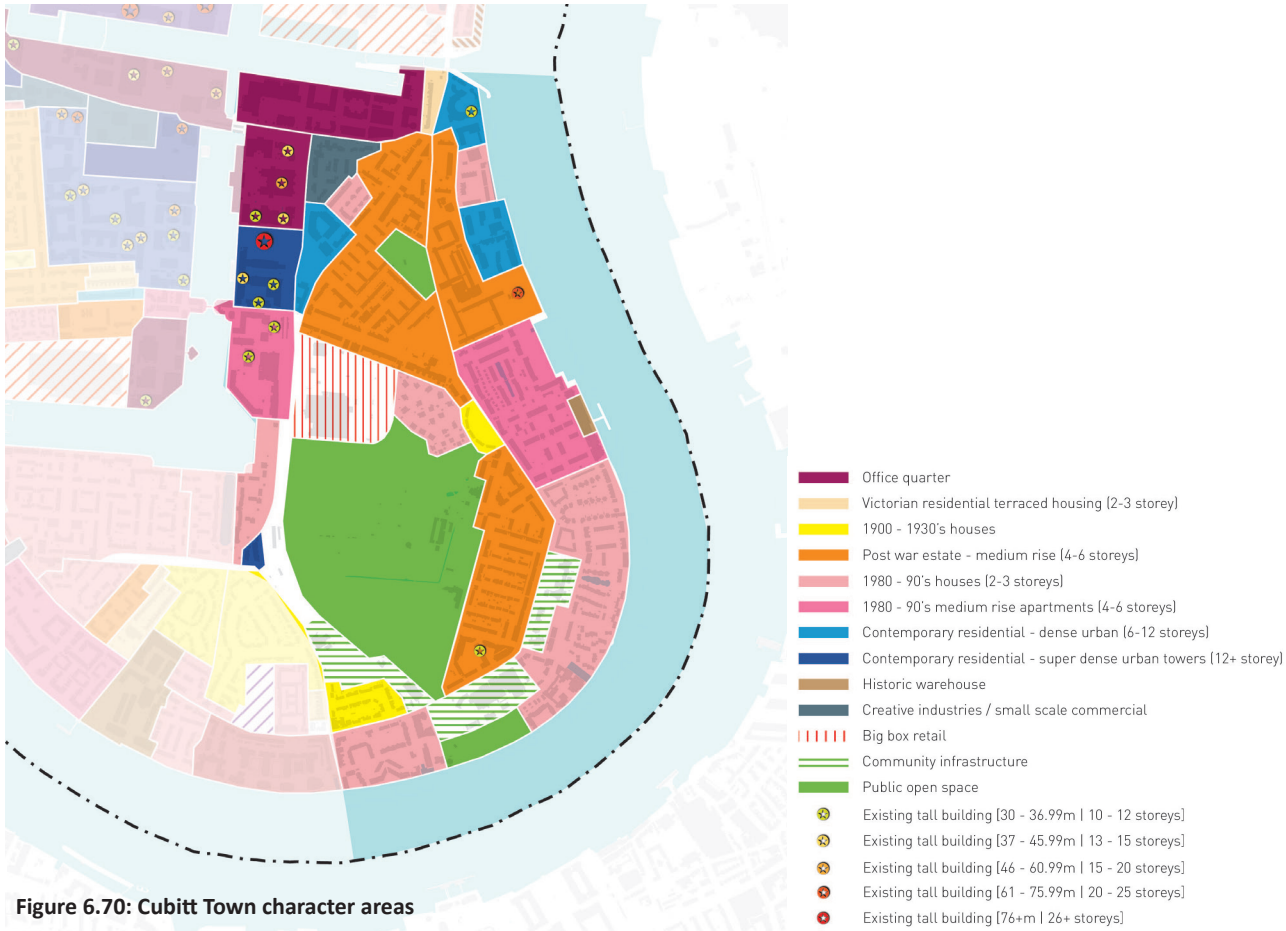


Figure 6.70: Cubitt Town character areas

Townscape features and significant buildings:

- Views towards Greenwich Maritime and to the O2 Arena
- Baltimore Tower
- Dollar Bay Tower
- Views to Canary Wharf from Parks

Open spaces:

- Millwall Park
- Mudchute Park and Farm
- Island Gardens
- St John's Park
- Millwall Dock and South Dock
- Riverside Promenade

Dollar Bay Tower rises high above two storey homes on streets to the south

Post-modern office development fronting Inner Millwall Dock

Homes to the south of the area are modest in scale

1990s homes overlooking the riverwalk

Post-war estates are a feature to the east of the area

Mature trees add to the streetscape

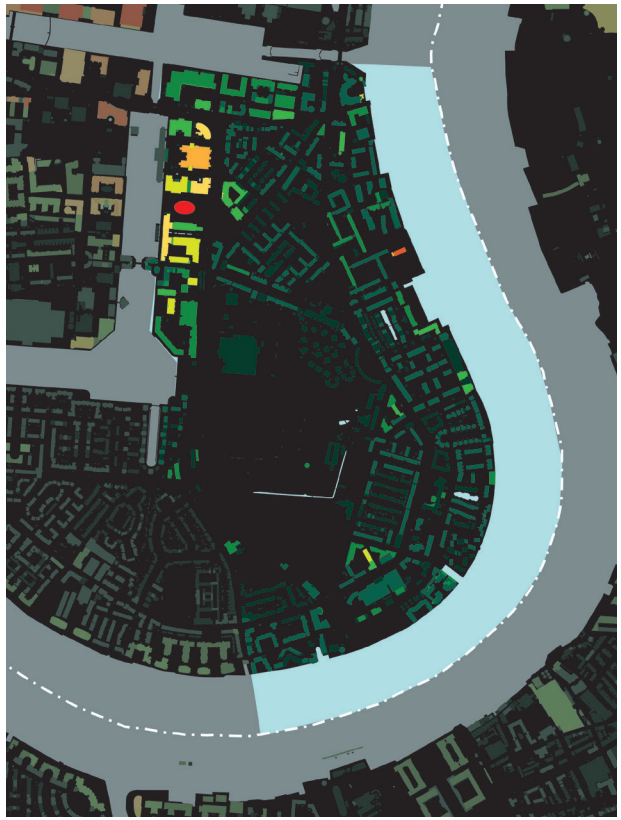


Figure 6.71: Cubitt Town existing building heights

EXISTING BUILDING HEIGHTS

Predominant height: South and east of Millwall Park 2-4 storey.

North of Mudchute Park height is inconsistent, with older development typically 2 - 4 storeys but new development up to ten times that height.

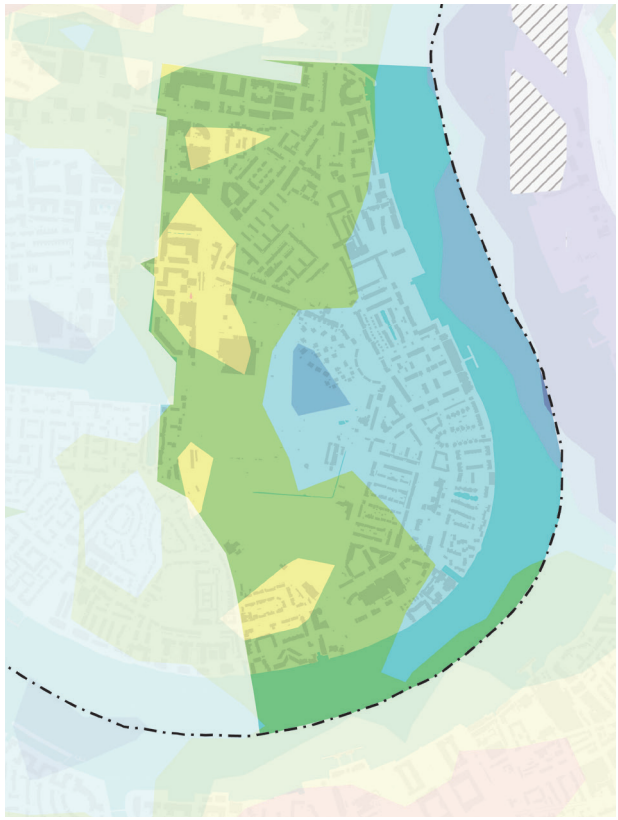


Figure 6.72: Cubitt Town PTAL

PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACCESSIBILITY

Facilities: Served by buses on Manchester Road and Marsh Wall and by the DLR which runs through the centre of the peninsula and also by water taxis. A Crossrail / Elizabeth Line station will open in Canary Wharf later this year.

PTAL Levels: 4 around DLR falling to 2 or 3 elsewhere.

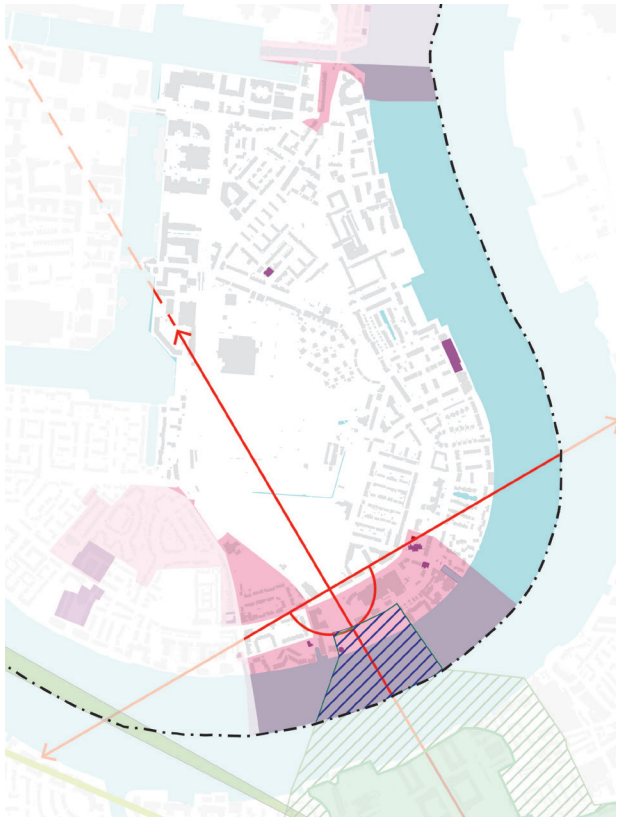


Figure 6.73: Cubitt Town sensitivities

SENSITIVITIES TO CHANGE

Heritage: Conservation areas to the north and south of the area and a number of listed buildings.

Views: The LVMF Panoramic View from the General Wolfe statue in Greenwich Park extends across the area.

Other: Christ Church and George Green's School, both on Manchester Road, are identified as local landmarks and the setting and views to these should be protected.

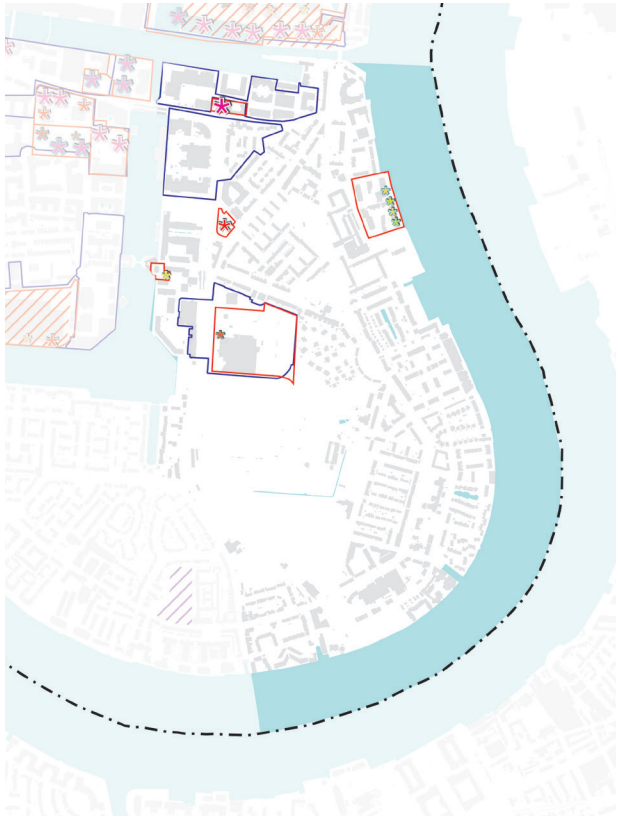


Figure 6.74: Cubitt Town development potential

POTENTIAL AREAS OF CHANGE

Site Allocations: There are three site allocations within Cubitt Town:

- Marshwall East
- Limeharbour Marshwall
- East Ferry Road

Development pipeline: The following developments are under construction in Cubitt Town:

- The Madison (formerly known as Meridian Gate) a 54 storey residential tower on Marsh Wall (182 metres AOD); and
- A 12 storey residential tower at Turnberry Quay.

Consented proposals include a 21 storey residential tower approved as part of an outline consent on the ASDA store at Crossharbour although it is understood that this is unlikely to be implemented as an alternative proposal is being developed for the area.

SUMMARY

Cubitt Town is changing rapidly with new development to the north of the area. Much of this is out of scale with the existing context and is creating awkward relationships between the new and old.

Whilst tall buildings are considered appropriate in the northern portion of the area the location and scale needs to be carefully mediated to ensure that the views to, and the identity of the Canary Wharf cluster is not irreparably altered and that a wall of development is not perceived from distant locations.

Further advice is presented in Section 7 of this report.

6.15 CHARACTERISATION OF PLACE: BLACKWALL

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Blackwall is located to the north of the Isle of Dogs. The 'Place' is defined by Aspen Way and the River Thames to the south, East India Dock and Leamouth Road to the east, East India Dock Road to the north and by Birchfield Street to the west.

The area is strongly impacted by road infrastructure. Aspen Way and East India Dock Road extend east-west through the area and the Blackwall Tunnel Approach and Leamouth Road run north-south. Large intersections where these routes meet create inhospitable environments for pedestrians and isolate parts of the area. Whilst the area is immediately north of Canary Wharf, connection to the financial centre is very poor.

Chrisp Street district centre is located to the north of the area on East India Dock Road and further shops are provided at the neighbourhood centre on Poplar High Street.

Proximity to Canary Wharf and the availability of sites has led to development pressure for tall buildings within recent years.

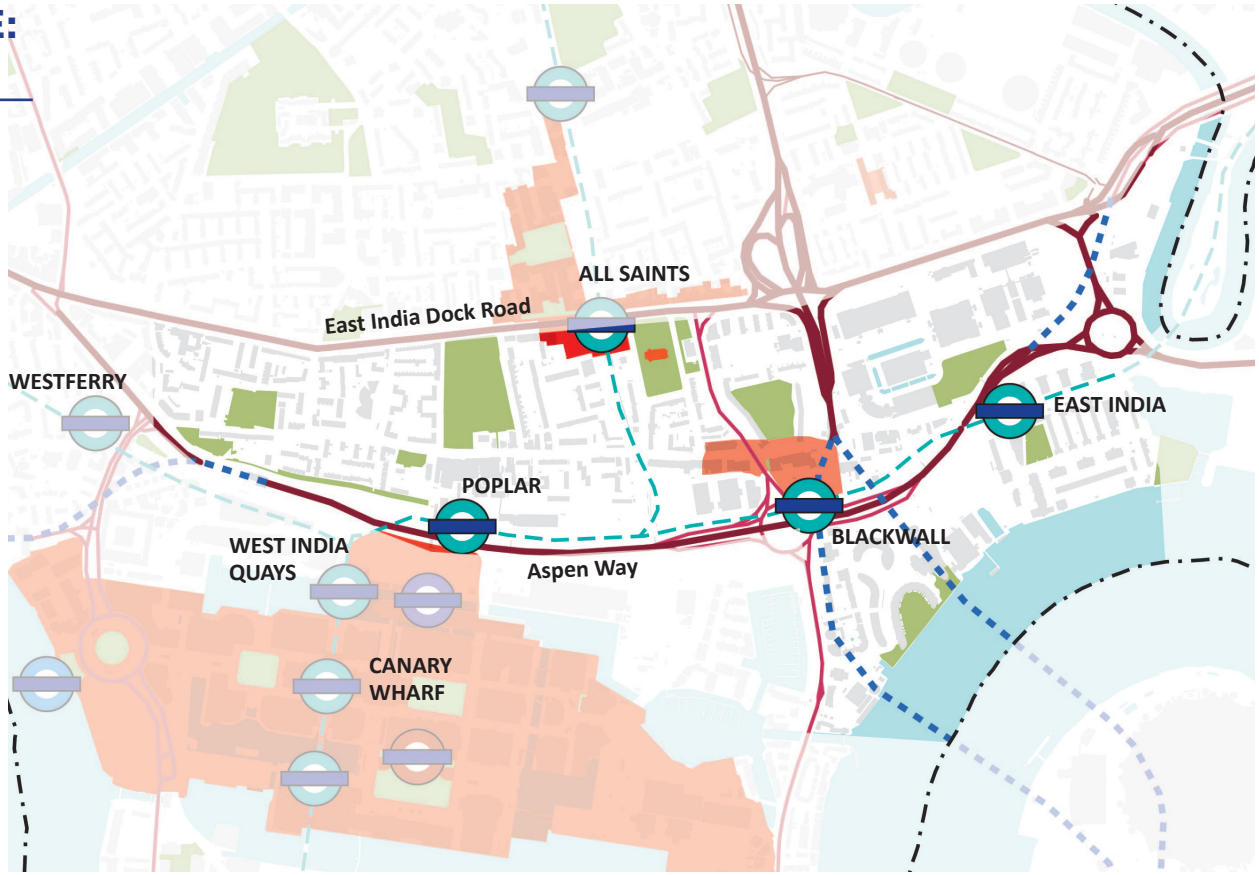


Figure 6.75: Blackwall overview

Road infrastructure is a barrier to movement in Blackwall

The DLR extends through the area

St Matthias Church on Woodstock Terrace

Robin Hood Gardens Estate

Poplar Recreation Ground

Poplar High Street

EXISTING CHARACTER

Blackwall is a place of contrasts. On Poplar High Street and East India Dock Road there are fragments of the areas historic past with a number of fine buildings including All Saints Church, Tower Hamlets College and the recently restored Art Deco Poplar Baths and a number of streets of fine Victorian and Georgian terraces. This historic fabric is inter-mixed with a number of unremarkable post-war estates at a variety of scales.

Further east, and towards the Blackwall Tunnel Approach, the scale and character of development changes. Large scale office development and tall residential towers respond to the considerable scale of the road infrastructure delivering a patchwork of intense uses that face away from the roads and create inward looking enclaves. Connectivity between the different areas is compromised and there is a lack of a co-ordinated language between the disparate parts.

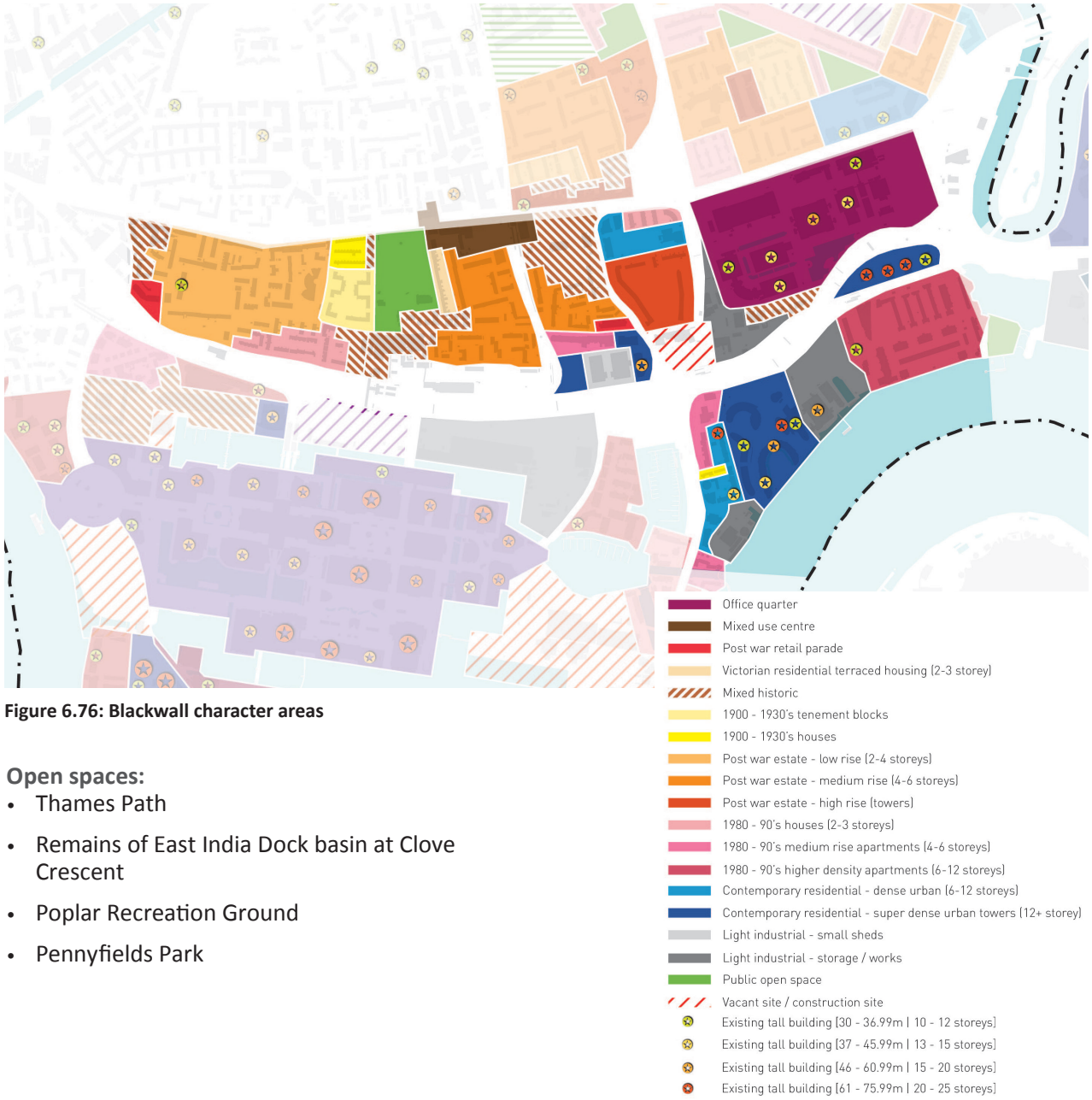


Figure 6.76: Blackwall character areas

Townscape features and significant buildings:

- All Saints Church on East India Dock Road
- Tower Hamlets College on Poplar High Street
- Art Deco Poplar Baths on East India Dock Road
- Providence Wharf (45 storey tower)
- Views from the Thames Path to the O2 Arena

Open spaces:

- Thames Path
- Remains of East India Dock basin at Clove Crescent
- Poplar Recreation Ground
- Pennyfields Park

Point blocks rise above modest scaled 1980s homes at Providence Wharf

Variety of building typologies at Providence Wharf

Offices at Mulberry Place

The riverfront at Blackwall

New development on Cotton Street

Post war housing towards the west of the area

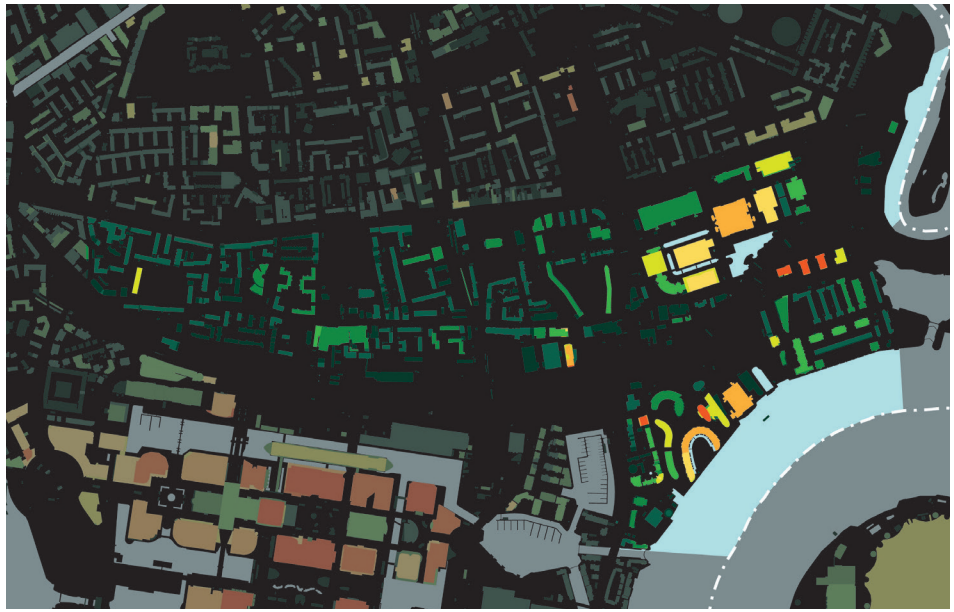


Figure 6.77: Blackwall existing building heights

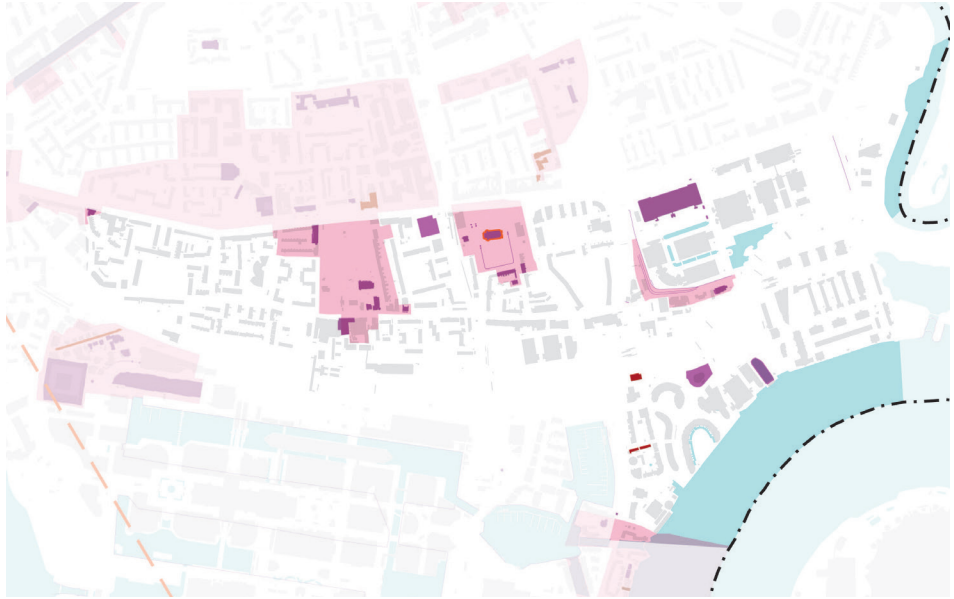


Figure 6.79: Blackwall sensitivities

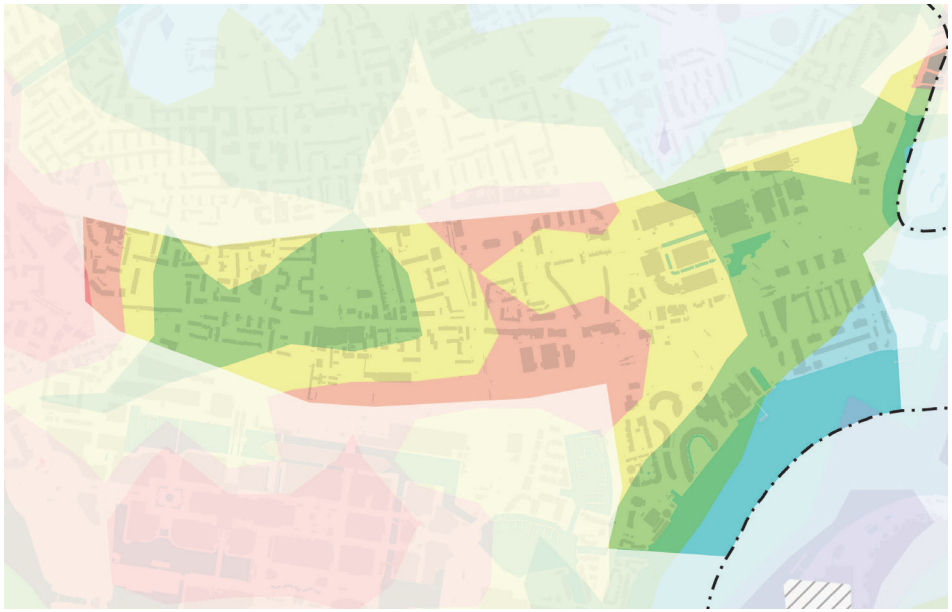


Figure 6.78: Blackwall PTAL

EXISTING BUILDING HEIGHTS

Predominant height: Typically 2-4 storey west of Cotton Street; 6-8 storeys east of Cotton Street and with a number of tall buildings at Clove Crescent, Blackwall Way and Providence Wharf.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACCESSIBILITY

Facilities: Served by buses on East India Dock Road and Cotton Street and by the DLR.

PTAL Levels: 5 around DLR stations but majority of area is level 3 or 4. Falls to 2 in the east.

SENSITIVITIES TO CHANGE

Heritage: Conservation areas to the north and south of the area and a number of listed buildings.

Views: The LVMF Panoramic View from the General Wolfe statue in Greenwich Park extends across the area.

Other: Balfron Tower to the north is a borough designated landmark. All Saints Church on East India Dock Road, St Matthias Church on Woodstock Terrace and the former Hydraulic Pumping Station, Naval Row are identified as local landmarks. The setting and views to these buildings should be protected.

Figure 6.80: Blackwall development potential

POTENTIAL AREAS OF CHANGE

Site Allocations: There are three site allocations within Blackwall:

- Aspen Way
- Clove Crescent
- Reuters Ltd

Development pipeline:

Five residential buildings at Poplar Business Park of 10, 14, 16 21 an 22 storeys (39 to 77 metres AOD) are under construction in Blackwall.

Consented proposals include:

- Two residential towers at Castle Wharf, Leamouth Road of 20 and 24 storeys (66 and 78 metres; 71 and 83 metres AOD);
- Outline consent for nine tall buildings at Blackwall Reach. Six at 10-12 storey the remaining three (close to Blackwall DLR) at 25, 31 and 37 storeys.

SUMMARY

Development of tall buildings is considered appropriate in parts of Blackwall (towards the east) however this needs to be co-ordinated in order to enhance the sense of place and deliver an improved pedestrian environment.

Further advice is presented in Section 7 of this report.

6.16 CHARACTERISATION OF PLACE: LEAMOUTH

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Leamouth is located to the east of the borough at the mouth of the River Lea. This tidal river meanders around the Leamouth peninsula with the eastern bank defining the edge of the borough. The 'Place' is defined by the River Lea to the north and east, the River Thames to the south and East India Dock and Leamouth Road to the west.

Leamouth is geographically isolated with only one vehicular point of access onto the peninsula from the Lower Lea Crossing. A pedestrian footbridge across the River Lea to Canning Town in LB Newham has recently been introduced but connection westwards is inhospitable for pedestrians and requires the crossing of large road infrastructure.

The closest local facilities are at the Poplar Neighbourhood Centre in Blackwall.

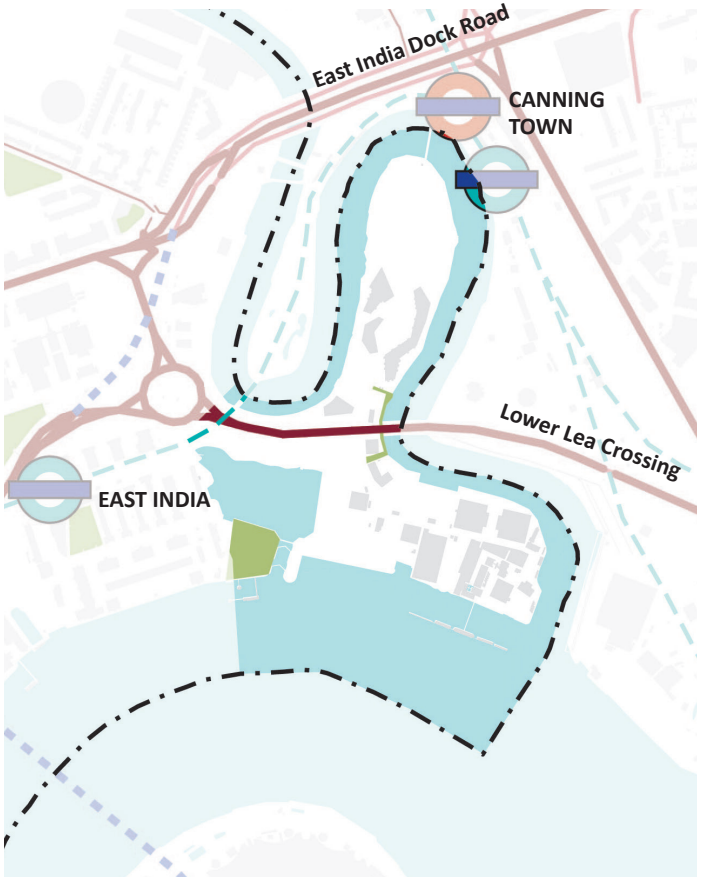


Figure 6.81: Leamouth overview

Infrastructure - road and DLR fragments the area

Employment uses on Orchard Place

Trinity Buoy Wharf

View to Canary Wharf from Trinity Buoy Wharf

Footbridge linking Leamouth Peninsula with Canning Town

EXISTING CHARACTER

Leamouth is changing. A new high-density residential district 'City Island', is being established on the Leamouth peninsula. This is being delivered as part of a single vision and with a clear design language and co-ordinated public realm treatment. A pedestrian footbridge provides access to Canning Town station.

The development responds to the unique conditions of the peninsula to create a place with a clear identity. The development includes buildings above ten storeys but the river contains the spread of development so that a distinct cluster of taller buildings is created.

To the south, and adjacent the river, land is still occupied by employment uses with storage and distribution functions. Where the River Lea meets the Thames, Trinity Buoy Wharf provides a focus for creative industries and arts. This is an atmospheric location that offers opportunity to view up and down the river to either side of the Greenwich Peninsula.

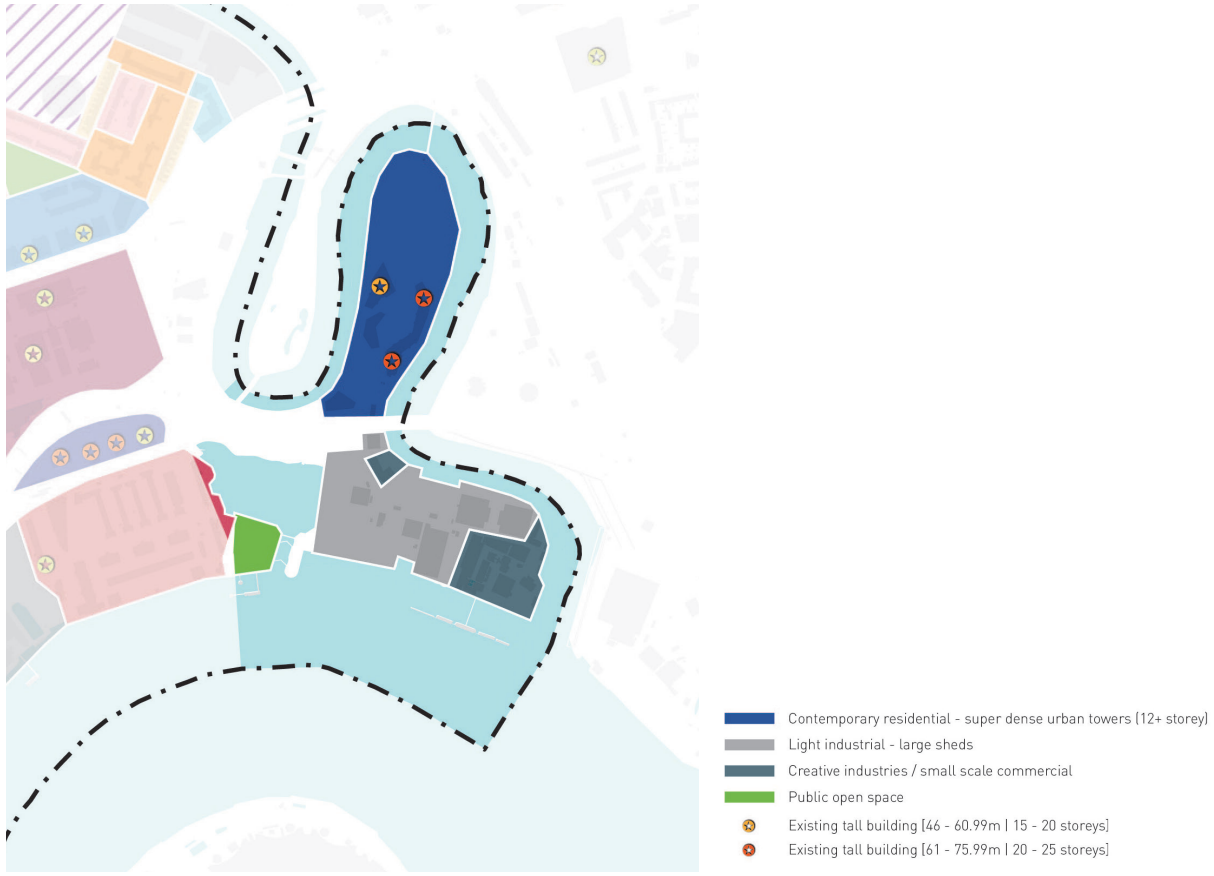


Figure 6.82: Leamouth character areas

Townscape features and significant buildings:

- River views in particular from Trinity Buoy Wharf
- Bow Creek Lighthouse
- Assemblage of new buildings at City Island

Open spaces:

- Limmo Peninsula Ecological Park (in LB Newham)
- East India Dock Basin
- Thames Path

Contemporary apartments enclose a green courtyard space on the Leamouth Peninsula

Creative space at Trinity Buoy Wharf

Former warehouse converted to workspace

Cluster of tall buildings on the peninsula contained by the river

The Lower Lea Crossing cuts across Leamouth

Leamouth lighthouse

Figure 6.83: Leamouth existing building heights

EXISTING BUILDING HEIGHTS

Predominant height: 6-10 storeys with taller towers at City Island; 2-4 storeys at Trinity Buoy Wharf.

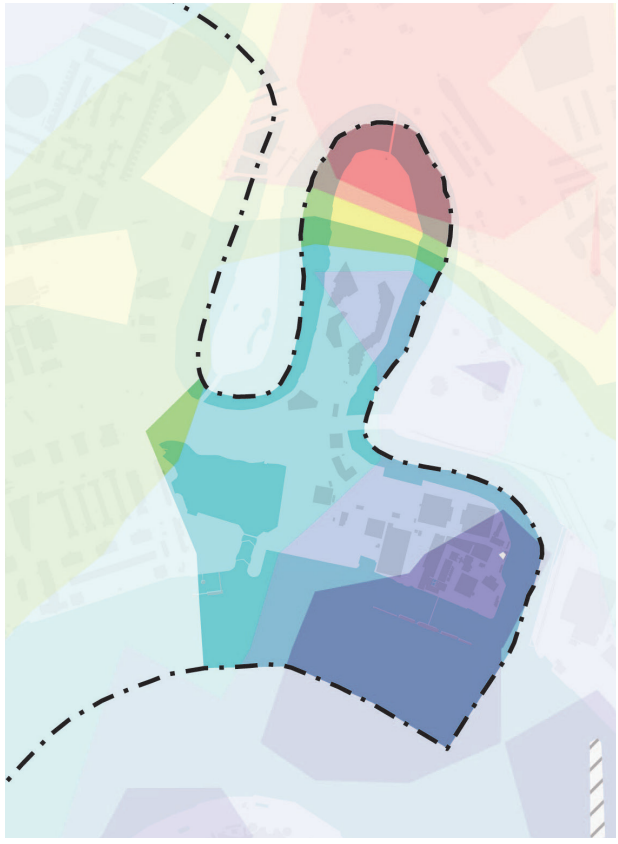


Figure 6.84: Leamouth PTAL

PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACCESSIBILITY

Facilities: Poorly served by buses and rail and reliant on Canning Town station in LB Newham.

PTAL Levels: 5 at northern tip of the Leamouth Peninsula but falls away quickly and is Level 1A at Trinity Buoy Wharf.

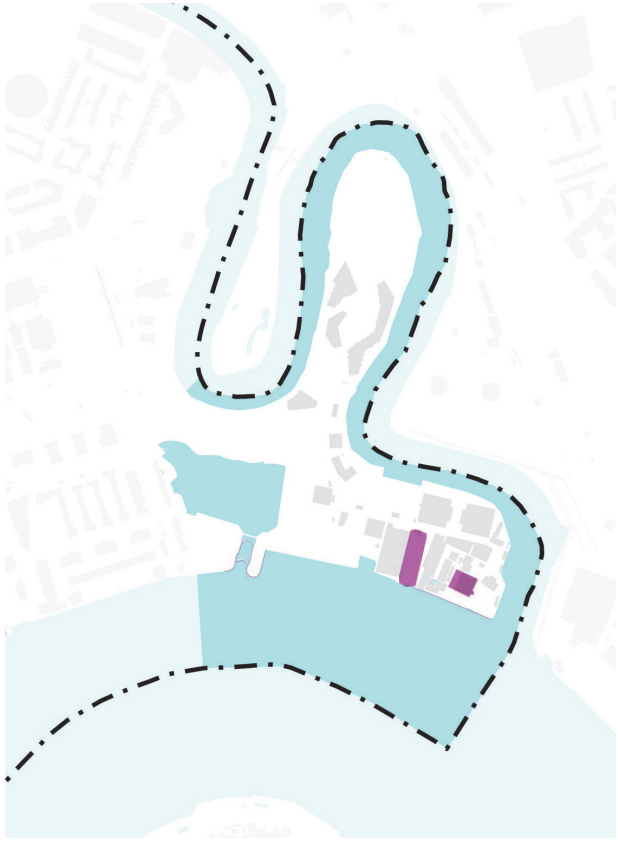


Figure 6.85: Leamouth sensitivities

SENSITIVITIES TO CHANGE

Heritage: Listed buildings at Trinity Buoy Wharf.

Views: The LVMF Panoramic View from the General Wolfe statue in Greenwich Park extends across the area.

Figure 6.86: Leamouth development potential

POTENTIAL AREAS OF CHANGE

Site Allocations: Hercules Wharf

Development pipeline: Six residential buildings as part of the northern second phase of development at City Island, development, ranging from 37 to 80 (43 to 86 metres AOD) are under construction.

Five tall residential buildings at Hercules Wharf of 10, 12, 16, 21 and 30 storeys (the taller three at 57, 73 and 100 metres) have been consented.

Other sites: Leamouth Peninsula and Hercules Wharf are identified sites for the Poplar Riverside Housing Zone.

SUMMARY

Development of tall buildings is considered appropriate in Leamouth however this needs to be co-ordinated as part of a wider vision for the riverside extending from Canary to Leamouth and to avoid creating a wall of tall buildings along the river.

Further advice is presented in Section 7 of this report.

6.17 CHARACTERISATION OF PLACE: POPLAR RIVERSIDE

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Poplar Riverside is located on the eastern edge of the borough. The 'Place' is defined by the River Lea to the east, the Limehouse Cut to the north, the DLR line to the west and the East India Dock Road to the south.

The area is largely residential and is sub-divided by the Blackwall Tunnel Northern Approach which runs north-south through the area and creates a significant physical barrier between neighbourhoods to either side. The East India Dock Road running east-west to the south of the area is a further barrier and the River Lea contains the area eastwards. The eastern neighbourhood, focused around the Aberfeldy Street Neighbourhood Centre, is particularly isolated.

The western part of the area turns to the Chrisp Street district centre for its services. The DLR line runs along the western boundary but in a cutting and there are several connections across the route. A strip of land to the west within Poplar is also within the opportunity area and therefore included within the area for analysis.

The River Lea provides a strategic asset for east London. The river corridor is being transformed into a continuous walking and cycling route, 'The Leaway', that extends the length of the 26 mile Lee Valley Park and that will connect Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and Three Mills Green to the Thames at Trinity Buoy Wharf and East India Dock Basin, as well as Canning Town and the Royal Docks.

The Limehouse Cut connects with the River Lea toward the north of the area and provides an attractive walking and cycling route that links with the River Thames to the south-west at Limehouse Basin.

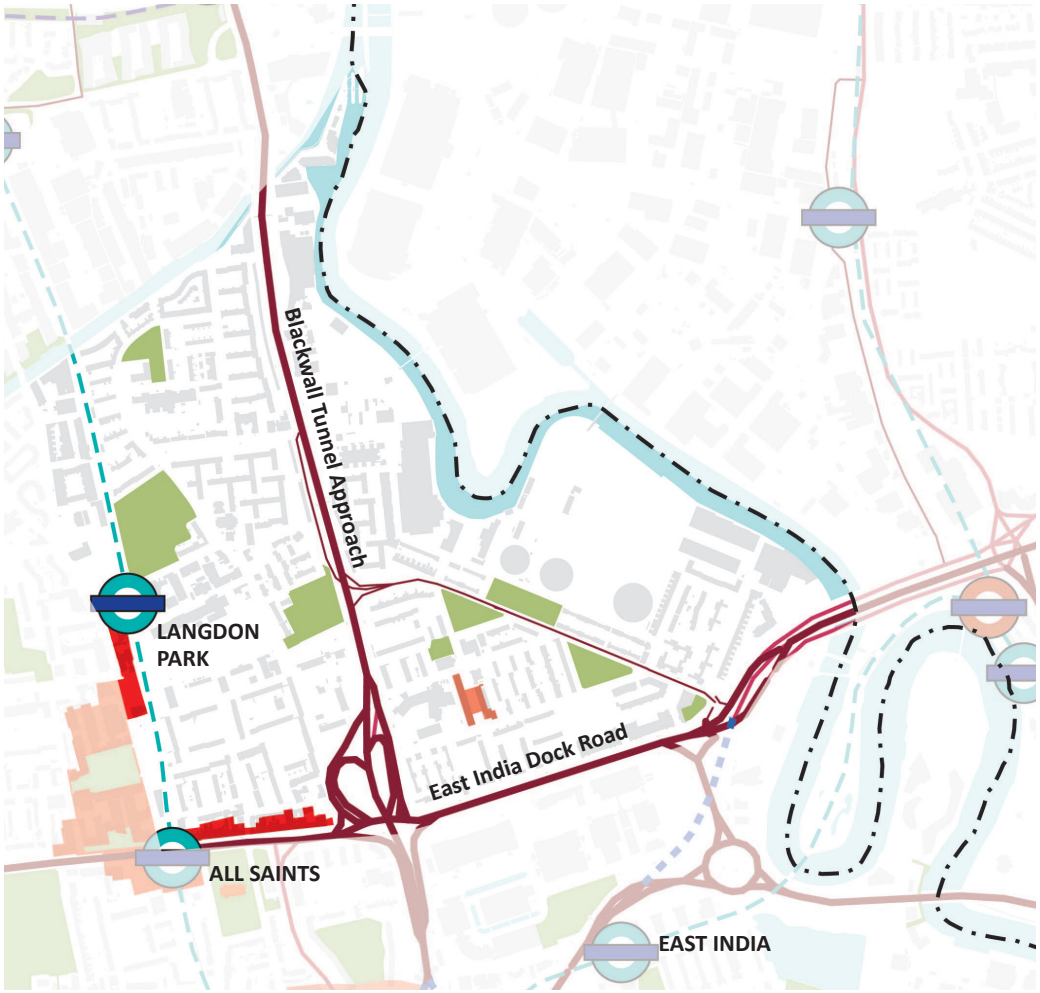


Figure 6.87: Poplar Riverside overview

The Blackwall Tunnel Approach is a major barrier to movement through the area

Properties back onto the Blackwall Tunnel Approach

Langdon Park

Shops on East India Dock Road

New apartments on the Limehouse Cut

Historic properties on St Leonard's Road

EXISTING CHARACTER

Large expanses of the Poplar Riverside area were developed in the post-war years and a number of mostly low to mid-rise estates extend across the area. These take a variety of forms and include a number of taller buildings, including the iconic Balfron Tower.

Pockets of lower density two storey houses were built in the area during the 1990s but until recent times the area has seen limited investment. The area is now the focus of the borough's housing zone and new residential blocks have been built at the Aberfeldy Estate to the east of the area and significant improvements to homes and the public realm have taken place in residential areas near to Chrisp Street.

The road infrastructure creates major severance and properties turn away from the A12 Blackwall Tunnel Approach in particular.

A parade of shops on East India Dock Road provides local colour and there are pockets of historic fabric, short terraces of older homes or groups of older buildings that provide interest within the area.

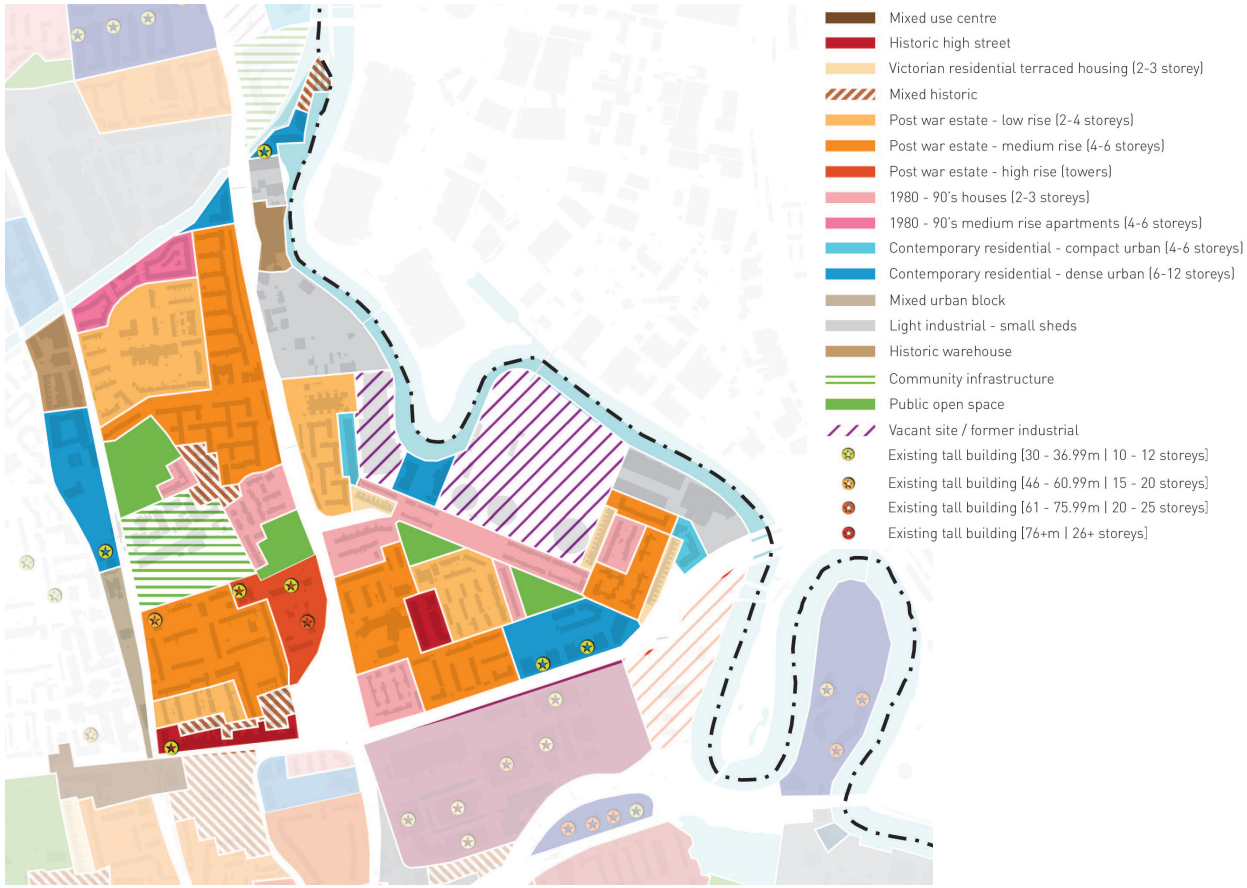


Figure 6.88: Poplar Riverside character areas

Townscape features and significant buildings:

- St Michael's Church on St Leonards Road
- All Saints Church on East India Dock Road
- Balfron Tower on St Leonards Road
- Former public library on Blackwall Tunnel Approach
- Gas holders on Leven Road

Open spaces:

- Langdon Park
- Jolly's Green
- Limehouse Cut
- River Lea, and in particular the lock gates and pedestrian bridge at the meeting point with Limehouse Cut

Post war housing with Balfron Tower in the backdrop

The former Spratts factory on the Limehouse Cut

Post-war housing with blocks aligned east-west

Terrace ovf Victorian properties on Abbott Road

Post-war housing on Teviot Street

1990s housing close to the gas holders on Leven Road

Figure 6.89: Poplar Riverside existing building heights

EXISTING BUILDING HEIGHTS

Predominant height: 2-4 storeys with a number of taller mainly post-war towers extending above the prevailing height including:

- Balfron Tower (26 storey)
- Glenkerry House (14 storey)
- Carradale House (11 storey)
- Panoramic Tower (20 storey)
- The Fusion Building, East India Dock Road (15 storey)
- Yeoman Court – on junction of Limehouse Cut with Blackwall Tunnel Approach (13 storey)

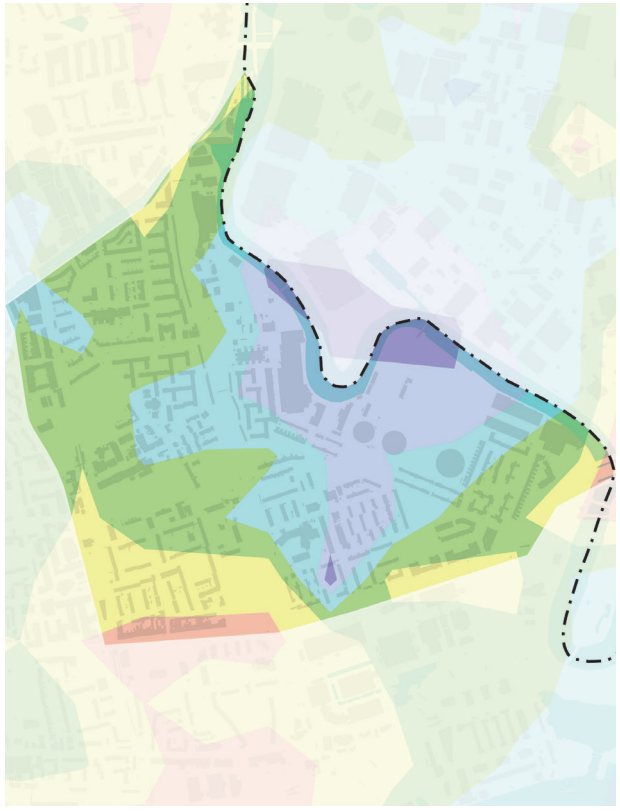


Figure 6.90: Poplar Riverside PTAL

PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACCESSIBILITY

Facilities: East India Dock Road is well served by buses but the rest of the area is less well served. DLR stops are at All Saints and Langdon Park.

PTAL Levels: 4/5 at All Saints DLR to the south but falling away to just 1b in the east of the area.

Potential new infrastructure: The potential for improved crossings over the River Lea and A13 to enhance access to Canning Town station are being explored with LB Newham.

Figure 6.91: Poplar Riverside sensitivities

SENSITIVITIES TO CHANGE

Heritage: There are several conservation areas and a number of listed buildings in the area.

Views: There are no LVMF protected views in the area.

Other: Balfron Tower is a borough designated landmark. Spratt's Factory Complex on Morris Road and St Michael's Church on Spey Street are identified as local landmarks. The setting and views to these buildings should be protected.

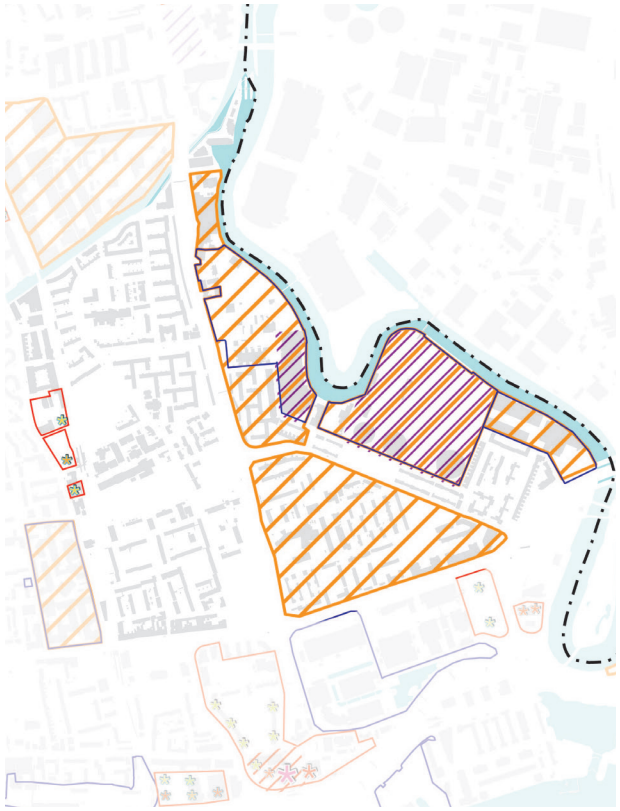


Figure 6.92: Poplar Riverside development potential

POTENTIAL AREAS OF CHANGE

Site Allocations: There are three site allocations within Poplar Riverside:

- Ailsa Street
- Leven Road Gas Works
- Oban Street

A further site allocation is adjacent at Chrisp Street Town Centre.

Development pipeline: There are no developments either under construction, or with planning consent for tall buildings within the Poplar Riverside area however a number of tall buildings are proposed just to the west within Poplar:

- A 22 storey residential tower at 134-156, Chrisp Street next to Langdon Park station), which is under construction;
- A 13 storey residential building at 116-118, Chrisp Street, Poplar; and
- A 13 storey residential building at 160-166, Chrisp Street, Poplar.

Two planning applications have been submitted within the Poplar Riverside area that include tall buildings:

- Two 15 storey towers as part of a residential led mixed use development at Gillender Street. A screening opinion has been sought to increse height to 20 storeys; and
- Four tall residential buildings of 17, 15, 13 and 10 storeys as part of compehensive mixed-use scheme at Ailsa Street.

Other sites: There are a number of other sites identified for change as part of the Housing Zone.

SUMMARY

The Poplar Riverside area faces a number of challenges principally related to its isolated location, the severance caused by infrastructure and the poor public transport accessibility. Opportunities are created through the Housing Zone status, the availability of significant sites and potential to deliver comprehensive change that takes advantage of assets, including the River Lea.

Improved connections across the Blackwall Tunnel Approach, A13 and River Lea towards Canning Town are critical and change must focus on creating quality living environments with good access to amenities including green spaces, schools and shops and also accessibility to employment opportunities.

The potential development sites do not benefit from good public transport accessibility and are not therefore considered appropriate as tall building zones however local landmarks that help to aid legibility, for instance marking the location of a new crossing over the Blackwall Tunnel approach or bridge links over the river may be appropriate.

The use of tall buildings to mark key locations and aid legibility towards the west of the area is likely to be less successful – there are already a number of tall buildings, mostly delivered as part of post-war estate development in the area, and so any new tall building is unlikely to deliver that effect.

6.18 CHARACTERISATION OF PLACE: BROMLEY BY BOW

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Bromley by Bow is located on the eastern edge of the borough. The 'Place' is defined by the River Lea to the east, a number of railway lines to the north and east and the Limehouse Cut to the south.

The area is bisected by the Blackwall Tunnel Approach with land to the east largely non-residential, although that is starting to change.

The A11 Bow Road crosses east-west towards the north of the area and extends to Stratford in the east and Mile End and Whitechapel in the west. Bromley by Bow is also bisected by, and bordered by, several rail lines. These reduce the permeability of the area.

A district centre in the form of a large foodstore is located to the east of the A12 and local facilities are provided within the neighbourhood centre at Stroudly Walk towards the north of the area.

The boroughs strategic industrial location is located on Empson Street to the south of the area.

The Limehouse Cut provides a strategic waterbody that links the River Lea with the River Thames at Limehouse Basin. It now forms an attractive walking and cycling route on the southern edge of the area.

The characterisation of Bromley by Bow includes a small area of land to the west within Bow Common and to the north in Bow - these are also within the Lower Lea Valley opportunity area.

Land to the east of the Blackwall Tunnel approach is located within the LLDC administrative area and while the character has been explored in this study for completeness it will not inform policy considerations.

Figure 6.93: Bromley by Bow overview

Historic Frontage on Bow Road

Mixed frontage on Bow Road

Grove Hall Park

Blackwall Tunnel Approach cuts through the area

Bow Bus Garage

Stroudley Walk Neighbourhood Centre

EXISTING CHARACTER

The Bromley by Bow area is fragmented by infrastructure (roads and railway lines) and isdiverse in character. To the north it is primarily residential with mix of historic and post-war residential developments and a few 21st Century additions. To the south, and east of the Blackwall Tunnel Approach, the area is primarily employment although this is changing in the east with new homes delivered on some sites and an opportunity to deliver a more comprehensive change that brings additional life to the river.

The variety of building styles and forms and the breaking of the street network by infrastructure reduce legibility and identity.

A number of fine historic buildings front onto Bow Road but the traffic volume impacts on the pedestrian experience here. This experience is worse where the major roads meet at Bow roundabout and the district centre is located to the east of the Blackwall Tunnel Approach where it is hard to access of foot.

Development of a considerable scale, including several tall buildings, has been delivered at the former hospital at St Andrews. This is of a considerable scale that contrasts with the modest scale of development in the rest of the area.

Townscape features and significant buildings:

- Bow Church on Bow Road
- Historic frontage on northern side of Bow Road
- Bow Garage bus station on Fairfield Road
- Three Mills Island to the east in LB Newham

Open spaces:

- Grove Hall Park
- Prospect Park
- River Lea
- Limehouse Cut

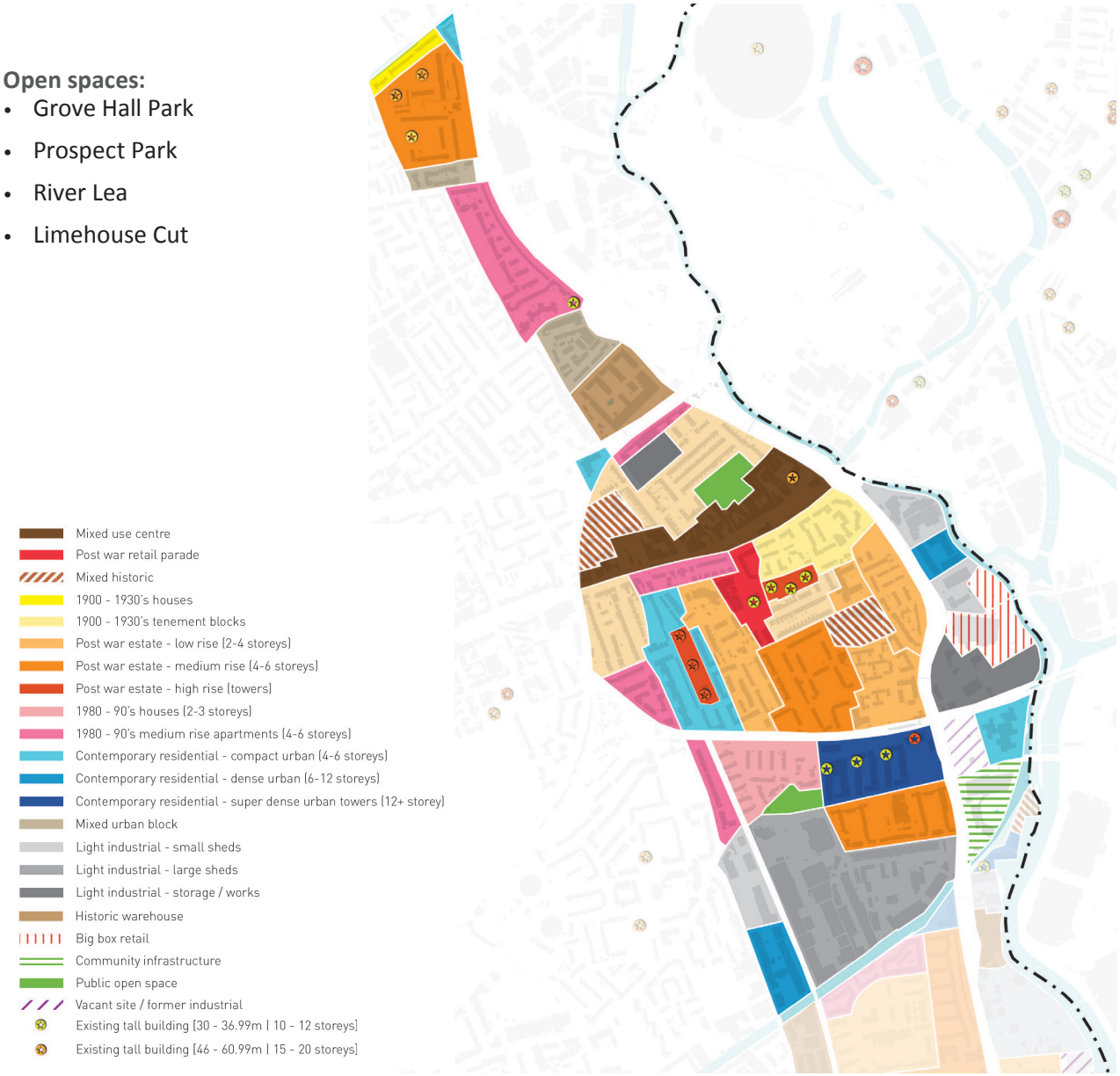


Figure 6.94: Bromley by Bow character areas

Contemporary apartments overlook the River Lea

New development at Bow Roundabout

Recent mixed-use development on Violet Road

Historic housing on Arnold Road towards the north of the area

Employment at Empson Street towards the south of the area

Figure 6.95: Bromley by Bow existing building heights

EXISTING BUILDING HEIGHTS

Predominant height: 2-5 storeys with a number of taller mainly post-war towers extending above the prevailing height including:

- The View, at Bow Roundabout (16 residential storeys)
- Capital Towers, residential tower adjacent Bow roundabout in LB Newham (34 storey)
- 3 residential towers on Rainhill Way (each at 24 storeys)
- 3 residential towers on Parnell Road (2 at 20 storeys and the third 16 storeys)
- 4 residential towers on Bromley High Street (each 11 storey)
- A number of taller buildings at the former hospital site at St Andrews (tallest are 24 and 18 storey)

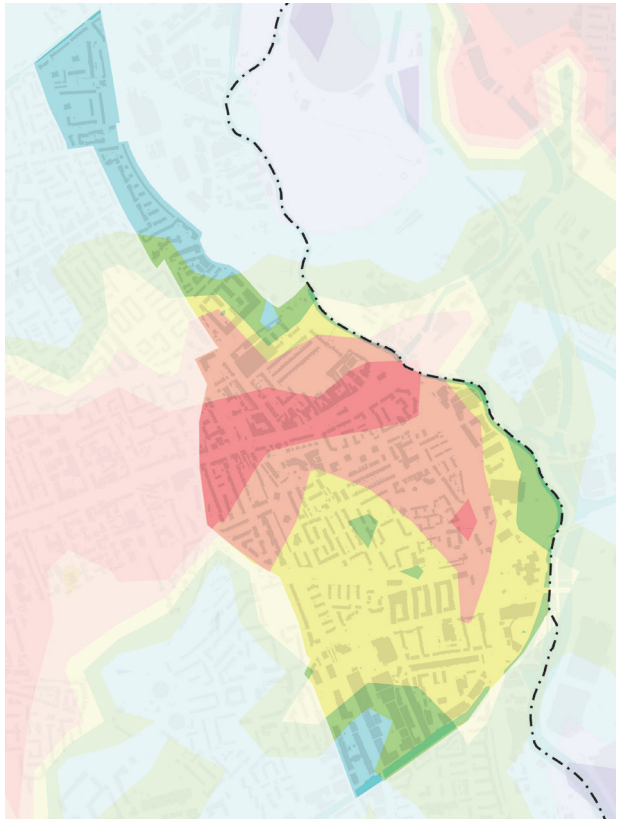


Figure 6.96: Bromley by Bow PTAL

PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACCESSIBILITY

Facilities: Bow Road is well served by buses and local routes extend through the area. DLR services are provided at Bow Church and Devons Road and Bromley by Bow provides District and Hammersmith and City line services.

PTAL Levels: 6 on Bow Road and at Bromley by Bow station but falling to 4 across the southern part of the area.

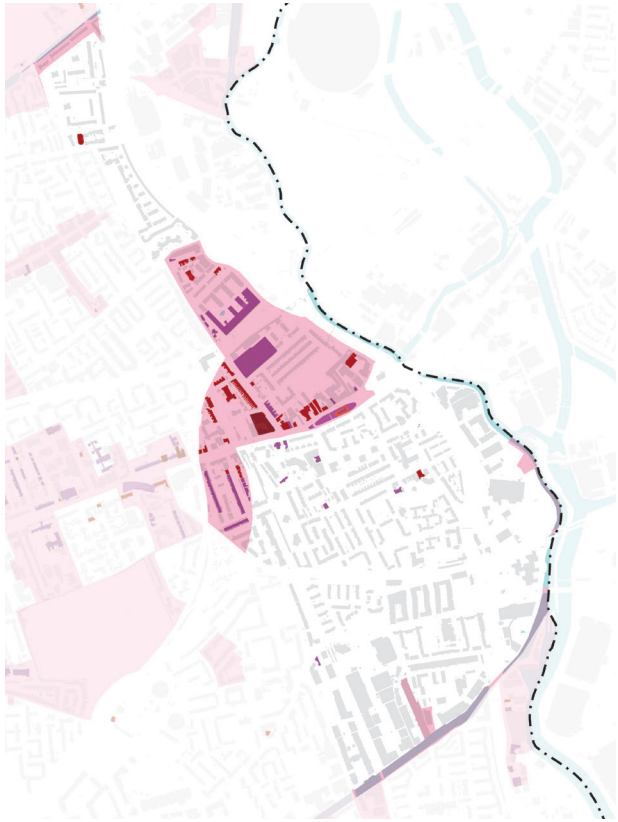


Figure 6.97: Bromley by Bow sensitivities

SENSITIVITIES TO CHANGE

Heritage: Conservation areas and listed buildings focused to the north of the area.

Views: There are no LVMF protected views in the area.

Other: Bow Bus Garage and the Former Bryant and May factory both on Fairfield Road are identified as local landmarks. The setting and views to these buildings should be protected.

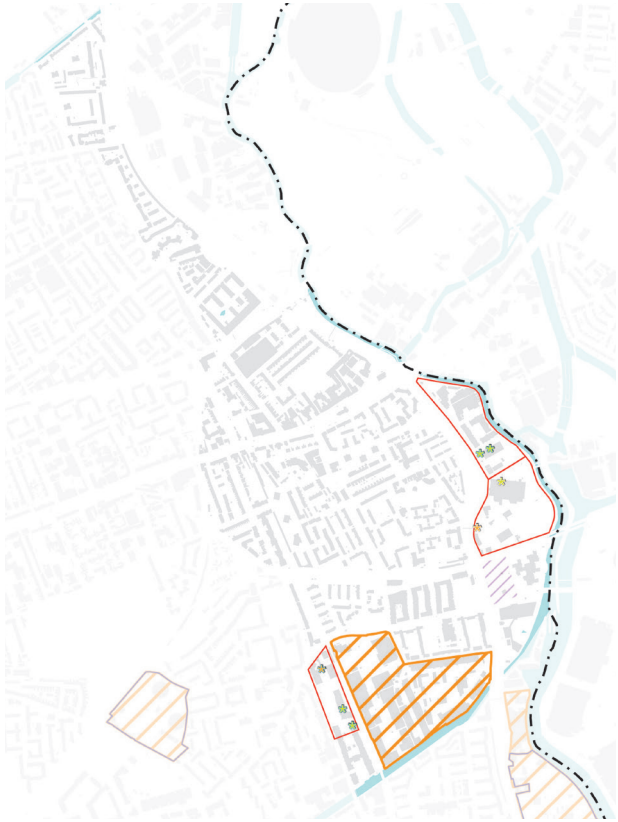


Figure 6.98: Bromley by Bow development potential

POTENTIAL AREAS OF CHANGE

Site Allocations: None

Development pipeline: There are no current tall buildings approvals within the land administered by LB Tower Hamlets planning authority in Bromley be Bow. However approvals for a 19 storey and three 10 storey residential buildings has been granted east of the Blackwall Tunnel Approach.

Consent has also been granted for three residential buildings at Bow Enterprise Park, adjacent Devons Road DLR, two at 10 storeys and one at 18 storeys immediately to the west in Bow Common.

SUMMARY

The main opportunity for change within Bromley by Bow is on land administered by the LLDC to the east of the Blackwall Tunnel Approach. Here there is potential to create a new mixed-use quarter through comprehensive change. Achieving access across the Blackwall Tunnel Approach will be critical to this. Carefully located tall buildings could help to mark the new development from the main road.

View northwards towards Baltimore Tower and Canary Wharf from Clippers Quay

7 A TALL BUILDING STRATEGY

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This Section of the report establishes a tall buildings strategy for Tower Hamlets. It sets out a number of high level tall building principles for the borough, identifies locations (tall building zones) where tall buildings are considered to be appropriate and provides advice on potential heights for tall buildings.

Consideration is then given to tall building design criteria. This explains the design criteria that any tall building proposal will need to consider and includes understanding of context, response to heritage assets, approach to landmarking, tall building clusters, land uses, architectural quality, relationship to public realm and impacts on the local environment.

This section of the report is intended to be a guide for both developers and their designers and also a useful tool for planners in considering and assessing a tall building proposal.

The following twelve tall building principles are promoted within Tower Hamlets.

1 To promote outstanding design

2 To enhance image and strengthen sense of place

3 To protect and enhance the existing heritage and townscape

4 To strengthen legibility

5 To control the location of tall buildings

6 To be proportionate to the role and importance of place

7 To form clusters where appropriate

8 To safeguard Canary Wharf's iconic image

9 To deliver economic growth and regeneration

10 To deliver comprehensiveness

11 To promote compact development

12 To deliver added value

7.2 TOWER HAMLET'S TALL BUILDINGS PRINCIPLES

The following tall buildings principles are identified for Tower Hamlets:

1) TO PROMOTE OUTSTANDING DESIGN

The quality of design and the right siting of tall buildings is critical for making a positive and lasting contribution to their locality. More than any other development type they require design excellence to maximise their contribution to the skyline and local environment and mitigate their negative impacts, particularly at street level. Every tall building should be of the highest architectural and urban design quality and in the case of residential tall buildings must deliver a high quality living environment.

2) TO ENHANCE IMAGE AND STRENGTHEN SENSE OF PLACE

Tall buildings can play an important role in shaping perceptions of an area, creating memorable associations and enhancing sense of place within Tower Hamlets 24 Places. However, they can create negative image if poorly designed or insensitively located.

3) TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE EXISTING HERITAGE AND TOWNSCAPE

The important aim that guides the planning for tall buildings is to protect and enhance the unique quality of the heritage and townscape that characterises Tower Hamlets. Tall buildings can be especially harmful to the setting of listed buildings, conservation areas, historic parks and significant views. Tall buildings can affect the setting of listed buildings and views of historic skylines even some distance away. They often appear out of place disrupting the urban pattern, character, scale, roofscape and building line of historic quarters. Tall buildings should only be promoted where they help to enhance the character and distinctiveness of an area without adversely affecting established valued townscapes or landscapes, or intruding into important views.

4) TO STRENGTHEN LEGIBILITY

Tall buildings should perform a positive landmark role within the townscape. They need to be of exceptional design and offer distinctiveness to a locality. A tall building should respect and respond to townscape, enhance the legibility of an area and contribute positively to its character and sense of place.

5) TO CONTROL THE LOCATION OF TALL BUILDINGS

Tall buildings should generally be limited to mixed-use areas with high levels of activity, excellent public transport accessibility and an appropriate character that can accommodate a taller building in terms of its townscape as well as increased activity levels and transport.

6) TO BE PROPORTIONATE TO THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF A PLACE

The principle of proportionality should apply, whereby the height of tall buildings corresponds to the role and relative importance of the location in the local, wider borough or metropolitan context:

a) Local landmarks should help to mark special locations in the townscape, such as a strategic street corner, a public space or a particular function, such as a station;

b) District landmarks should only be located central to locations that are of district or borough wide importance, such as strategic infrastructure nodes or public institutions; and

c) Metropolitan landmarks should be confined only to areas in the Central Activities Zone that have a London wide strategic importance and form part of a high intensity employment cluster.

7) TO FORM CLUSTERS WHERE APPROPRIATE

District and metropolitan landmarks should not be scattered around but confined to discrete and identifiable clusters to control the form and impact on the skyline. The height of tall buildings in a cluster should drop away from the centre to the periphery to support its central emphasis and not all buildings within a cluster should be tall to avoid creating a wall of development. The layout and form of other development in clusters should provide a context of larger scale buildings, and sufficiently scaled streets that can integrate and support tall buildings. A number of tall building zones are promoted within Tower Hamlets.

8) TO SAFEGUARD CANARY WHARF'S ICONIC IMAGE

The Canary Wharf cluster forms an essential part of the city image an internationally recognisable feature on the skyline that represents one of London's financial centres and the successful regeneration of the docklands. Canary Wharf is identified as a Skyline of Strategic Importance with One Canada Square a globally recognised silhouette. This cluster must be carefully managed to retain its iconic character and image.

9) TO DELIVER ECONOMIC GROWTH AND REGENERATION

In the right location and deploying the highest design standards tall buildings can help to signal change, raise profile, generate confidence and support regeneration. They can deliver intensity, high density and transformational change providing jobs and strengthening the local and national economy.

10) TO DELIVER COMPREHENSIVENESS

All too often tall buildings are promoted on small sites where they compromise potential development opportunities on neighbouring sites and where it is difficult to address the challenges of servicing and the provision of a mix of uses to provide activity at ground floor level. Tall building proposals should be part of a more comprehensive development so that these issues can be adequately addressed.

11) TO PROMOTE COMPACT DEVELOPMENT

High density development of the type and mix of uses that is needed in Tower Hamlets can be delivered through well-designed compact development without the need for taller buildings. Compact buildings below the tall buildings threshold offer ample flexibility for increased density and additional height in accordance with Tower Hamlet's place specific and design policies.

However, it is recognised that taller buildings can contribute to efficient use of land for living and working particularly where there is good public transport accessibility.

12) TO DELIVER ADDED VALUE

Tall buildings bring significant and permanent change to a locality and its community. Therefore they are expected to deliver wider regeneration and social benefits for their locality. Benefits should be well beyond the normal development contributions or tokenistic gestures, but could include significant environmental improvements, comprehensive change or delivery of important infrastucture.

These twelve principles form the basis for the tall building guidance set out in this report.

7.3 TALL BUILDING ZONES

The following five tall building zones are promoted for Tower Hamlets:

1 Aldgate Cluster
2 Canary Wharf Cluster
3 Millwall Inner Dock Cluster
4 Blackwall Cluster
5 Leamouth Cluster

The location of these clusters is derived from a thorough analysis of the character of potential areas of the borough as set as set out in Section 6 of this report and is indicated in Figure 7.1.

Each tall building zone is different and tall buildings within the zones will need to respect the existing character and respond to sensitivities.

As mentioned earlier in this report the height of tall buildings within a cluster should reflect the role and function of the cluster and normally the tallest elements should be located towards the centre of the cluster which should mark a particular feature or location.

Development and height principles that apply to each of the proposed clusters are indicated on the facing page.

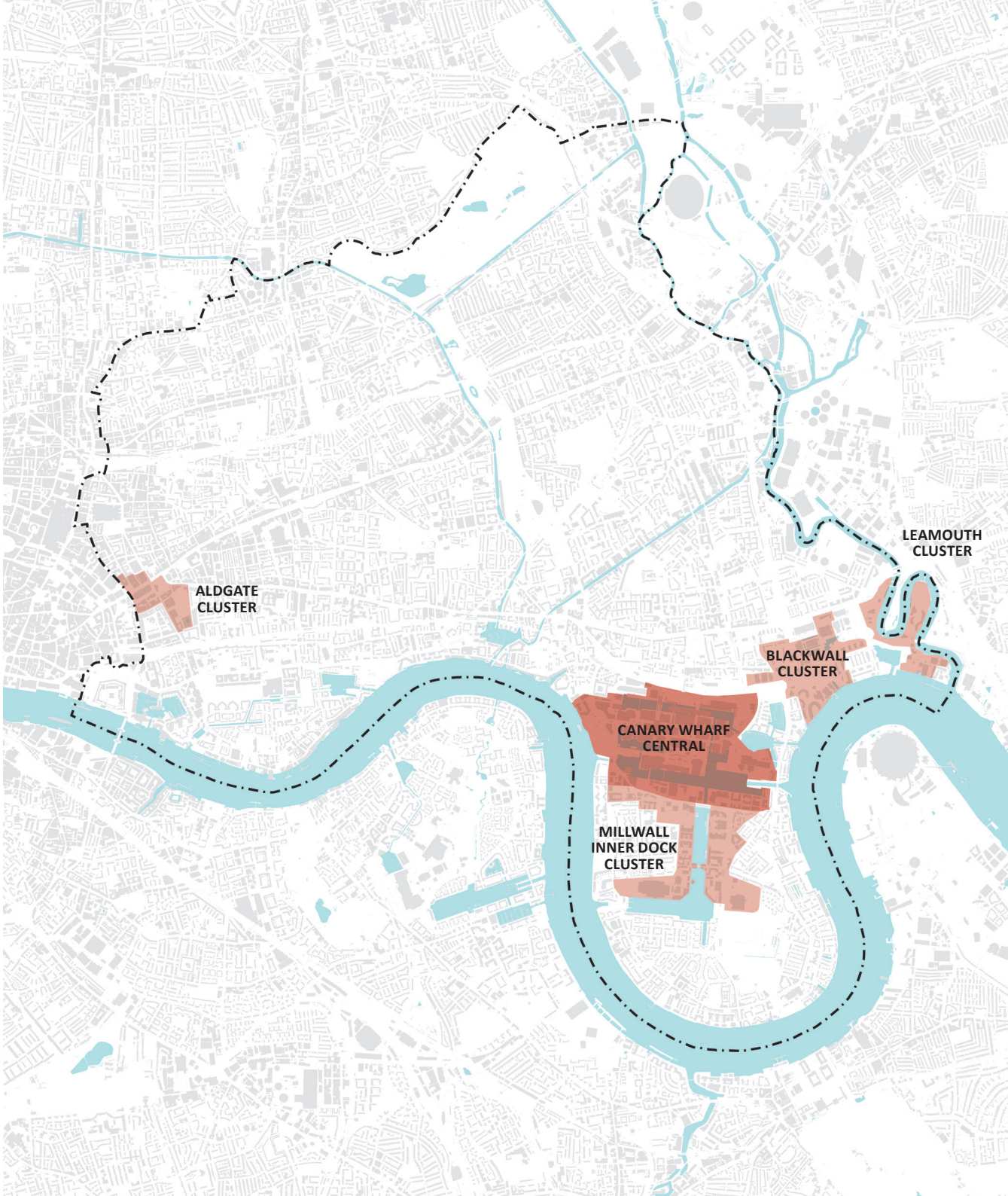


Figure 7.1: Tall building zones

1) Aldgate Cluster

This cluster is focused around Aldgate East station on the junction of Commercial Street and Whitechapel High Street. Part of the area is identified as a Preferred Office Location and office development is therefore anticipated. The tallest buildings should be at the centre of the cluster and step down away from that centre.

Tall building height: maximum height 80m at the centre of the cluster. This reflects the height of the recent tall buildings delivered here and the sensitivity of townscape views from Queens Walk towards the Tower of London (LVMF 25A).

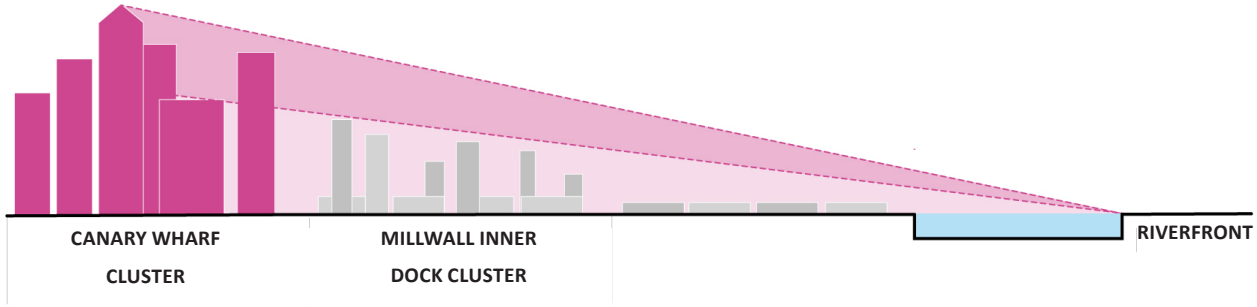


Figure 7.2: Relationship between Canary Wharf and adjacent clusters

2) Canary Wharf Cluster

This cluster is centred around One Canada Square (245.8m AOD) and was established with a very well structured and recognisable iconic form with buildings stepping away from this central building. Whilst other tall buildings of similar (or marginally greater height) are being developed within this cluster, One Canada Square remains at the centre and it is important that this centrality remains in order to retain its globally recognised silhouette and its importance in respect of the setting of the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site, and visibility from strategic views in London including designated LVMF views.

Part of Canary Wharf is identified as a Preferred Office Location and office development is therefore anticipated in that part of the area. The cluster encompasses Canary Wharf and South Quay. Any new buildings promoted within the cluster must step down in height away from this central location.

Tall building height: maximum height 245.8m (AOD) at the centre of the cluster

3) Millwall Inner Dock Cluster

Canary Wharf is expanding southwards in a piecemeal fashion and this needs to be carefully controlled and managed to prevent the loss of the recognisable silhouette and skyline and the creation of a wall of tall buildings extending down the Isle of Dogs with the consequent loss of the symbolic form and character of the cluster and impact on views both from Greenwich Park, along the river and locally within the borough.

Whilst the view from the General Wolfe statue in Greenwich Park is identified as a Protected London Panorama in the LVMF, Canary Wharf and its iconic form is also highly visible in other identified views within the LVMF including that from several London bridges (notably downstream from Waterloo Bridge and London Bridge) in the heart of London and from Alexandra Palace.

Appreciation of the form changes dependant on location but careful consideration must be given to the height of any buildings in this adjacent tall building cluster to ensure that the main cluster is clearly visible. As an example another notable location from which Canary Wharf is highly visible is from Greenwich waterfront, home to the Cutty Sark and Maritime Greenwich WHS which receives over 2.5million visitors per year. A clear appreciation of Canary Wharf and One Canada Square is possible from here but this would be lost if development to the south of Canary Wharf within the Millwall Inner Dock cluster were too high.

As a principle development should be no higher than two thirds of the height of the main Canary Wharf cluster (ie maximum height 160m AOD) and must step down as it moves away from the centrality of One Canada Square. Detailed modelling will however need to be carried out to establish impacts on a range of views (refer to Section 7.3 of this study).

4) Blackwall Cluster
The centre of the Blackwall cluster will broadly extend between Blackwall and East India DLR stations located to either side of Aspen Way and helping to bridge the severance that this causes. Development heights will step down from this centre. The cluster must be subservient and separate from the nearby Canary Wharf cluster and will need to be carefully managed to ensure that an appropriate composition is formed with buildings of varying height allowing sky views between them when viewed from the river or the O2 on the Greenwich Peninsula.

Currently the tallest building in the area is Providence Tower at Providence Wharf at 136m. Greater height is not considered appropriate ensuring that the cluster is perceived to step down significantly in height from Canary Wharf.

Developments must deliver added value required to create a better functioning place and to address the severance issues in the area.

5) Leamouth Cluster
The Leamouth cluster delivers a new neighbourhood to the area where the River Lea meets the River Thames. The cluster must be sensitive to Trinity Buoy Wharf and establish a plan led approach to the area – creating a co-ordinated composition that gives a new identity to the area. The maximum height should not exceed 100m creating a stepping down away from the tallest cluster at Canary Wharf.

OTHER TALL BUILDINGS

Whilst a number of tall building zones have been identified there may also be opportunities for individual tall buildings across the borough where they serve to act as landmarks. The height of these buildings should relate to their role as a local, district or metropolitan landmark and the context height.

The characterisation work identified potential, but sensitive locations, in Shoreditch, Bethnal Green, Whitechapel, Shadwell and Poplar Riverside.

Ratio to Context Height (CH)	Building height classification	Perception in relation to its context	Visual impact on the skyline	Potential location
Up to 2 x CH	**Large/higher building**	Large/Higher building establishes a localised high point. Building is more notable within a setting of consistent height, and less notable where there is a greater variation in the context height for example allong corridors	Higher building is of limited visibility and its significance is local.	To mark a locally important location or use for instance a street corner or local node or a building of civic, institutional or leisure use.
Above 2x CH and up to 3x CH	**Local Landmark** Tall building of local significance	Tall building establishes a prominent exception within its context, yet may be perceived as constituent part of the context.	Tall building is outstanding, yet its impact on the skyline is mainly local.	To mark special locations in the townscape, such as a strategic street corner, a public space or a particular function, such as a station.
Above 3x CH up to 5x CH	**District Landmark** Tall building of district wide significance	Tall building is markedly outstanding and establishes a pronounced contrast with its context.	Tall building is highly visible and notably affects the skyline on a district wide scale.	Limited to locations that are of district or borough wide importance, such as strategic infrastructure nodes or public institutions.
Above 5x CH	**Metropolitan Landmark** Tall building of metropolitan significance	Tall building establishes a jarring contrast with its context, unless a locally increased building height and/or a cluster of other tall buildings help to mediate and visually build up to and integrate its height.	Tall building is highly visible and significantly affects the skyline on a London wide scale.	Confined only to areas in the Central Activity Zone that have a London wide strategic importance and form part of a high intensity employment. cluster.

Table 7.1: Table indicating principles of height relativity, tall building classification and their potential location

7.4 TALL BUILDINGS DESIGN CRITERIA

7.4.1 INTRODUCTION

Through the characterisation work a number of tall building zones and other potential locations for tall buildings have been identified, however height of a tall building, is only one aspect of a tall building. This section deals with other design aspects that are equally or even more important, in determining how well a building integrates with its context, the impact it has on its immediate environment, how it is perceived on the skyline and ultimately how successful a building is in adding to its locality.

Tall buildings are exceptional developments that in many cases have a transformative impact on their surrounding area. By virtue of their size and widespread visibility, the impact of a tall building will be significantly greater than that of a building of ordinary scale and height. It is therefore critical that the utmost attention and scrutiny goes into the design of a tall building to ensure the best possible design solution for a place is delivered.

This section details a range of design criteria that any tall building proposal will need to consider. Design and Access Statements for tall buildings would be expected to provide a detailed tall buildings statement that addresses all of the following points with explanations and relevant justifications for the chosen approach.

7.4.2 RELATIONSHIP WITH ITS CONTEXT AND THE ROLE OF A TALL BUILDING

The spatial characteristics of the immediate and wider area surrounding a tall building will be the context within which a tall building is perceived and its impact felt. A tall building proposal will need to consider and appropriately respond to the following contextual attributes:

- The height, scale and massing of buildings, its coherence or variation;
- The urban grain (sub-division of blocks and plots) and townscape;
- The streetscape, including the scale of streets, the alignment of buildings and the building interface and the street level experience;
- The building composition, silhouette and skyline characteristics;
- Aspects of built form and articulation of building elements, such as the base, body and roofscape;
- Architectural language, materials and detailing; and
- The spatial response to special morphological situations such as open spaces, waterways and railway lines.

London Plan Policy 7.7, Point C states that

Tall and large buildings should: …

b only be considered in areas whose character would not be affected adversely by the scale, mass or bulk of a tall or large building

c relate well to the form, proportion, composition, scale and character of surrounding buildings, urban grain and public realm (including landscape features), particularly at street level; …

Tall buildings need to respond appropriately to their context, that is they should generally not be perceived to be 'out of character' with a place's typical characteristics, especially where they are unique, sensitive and valued. Some places will have a particularly coherent character, while others are more varied and diverse. Some places are dynamic and in a process of transition, while others are well established and have low pace and degree of change.

In a few areas tall buildings are already part of the prevalent spatial characteristics, for example in Canary Wharf. Other areas again, by virtue of their comprehensive redevelopment, may establish a unique character in their own right, where taller buildings are planned as integral elements of the built form, for example at City Island in Leamouth. However, along the edges of the two former types, and in most other areas, the existing context is one where tall buildings are either absent or exceptional features.

Where a tall building breaks with the prevalent characteristics of the surrounding urban fabric it will need to present a strong rationale that justifies its departure from a contextual design response. This could for example be that it satisfies an overriding strategic policy objective, which requires the delivery of a building of a certain scale or form in this location, for example a station, hospital or stadium. Alternatively, there may be the need to landmark an important location, such as a station, a district centre, civic function, or the expression of a gateway (entrance point into an area or transition point between areas), so as to enhance the presence of this use, role or morphological feature in the urban fabric. The purpose of such a landmark, (with its height or other exceptional feature), is to enhance the legibility, that is the intuitive understanding of the urban fabric, helping people to make sense of a place and with orientation and wayfinding. The direct association of the landmark building with the place or programme that it is emphasising is important to be meaningful to people.

London Plan: 7.27 states that:

The location of a tall or large building, its alignment, spacing, height, bulk, massing and design quality should identify with and emphasise a point of civic or visual significance over the whole area from which it will be visible.

Proposals will need to demonstrate, through illustrations and visuals, how this enhanced legibility can be perceived from a street level perspective from relevant approaches, local views, as well in longer distance views and on the skyline. Proposals will also need to clearly justify why the specific location or programme merits the expression through a landmark building.

Where a proposal presents a significant departure from the prevalent character of an area, especially where this is particularly sensitive, coherent or valued, without a clear justification of the imperative for a landmark building, or other superior policy objective that overrides character considerations, then it should not generally be permissible.

Not withstanding the above, any tall building proposal will need to demonstrate and justify how the design of its various parts has responded to the characteristics of its surrounding area, in respect to the contextual aspects listed above, and the design policies contained within the Local Plan.

7.4.3 AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO HERITAGE ASSETS

London Plan Policy 7.7, Point C states that:

The impact of tall buildings proposed in sensitive locations should be given particular consideration. Such areas might include conservation areas, listed buildings and their settings, registered historic parks and gardens, scheduled monuments, battlefields, the edge of the Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land, World Heritage Sites or other areas designated by boroughs as being sensitive or inappropriate for tall buildings.

Tall Buildings Historic England Advice Note 4 states that:

The NPPF makes it clear that the Government attaches 'great weight' to the conservation of designated heritage assets, including their settings, and 'great importance' to the design of the built environment. The design policies make several references to the importance of good design responding to local character and history, and integrating new buildings into the historic environment. In addition, the NPPF confirms that the significance of heritage assets derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

Tall buildings can have a significant detrimental impact on heritage assets and their setting, as well as on the character of conservation areas. Heritage and character are sources of distinctiveness, meaning and quality of a place. As a shared resource they are assets that need to be managed carefully and nurtured for the benefit of future generations. Positive conservation of heritage values should enable cities to respond to social, economic and technological change in a manner that allows change to sustain and reinforce these values.

The height and scale of new development should respect, respond and contribute to Tower Hamlet's character, and that of its 24 Places, building on its heritage and the values associated with it. The impact and design of a tall building, in respect of heritage assets in its immediate, and wider surrounding, will need to be assessed and guided by an experienced heritage expert. As a general rule tall buildings will not be acceptable in conservation areas.

Tall buildings must be carefully sited so as not to have an excessive intrusive impact on the historic environment and to damage historic settings. Recognised local views, vistas or panoramas that show a heritage asset in its setting are particularly vulnerable to damaging intrusion by insensitive tall, or massive-scale development. Such development could detrimentally alter the sense of scale, the relationship of built form with sky and green space, and the colour, materiality and form that typifies what is special about a historic place, and what essentially contributes to its heritage value. The height of tall buildings should be tested and calibrated to reduce the aggressive domineering effect that dramatically tall new structures can have on heritage assets. Modelling of such towers must aim to soften the profile and reduce the monumental impact. Choice of facing materials is important to assist in visually weaving the new building into its established surroundings.

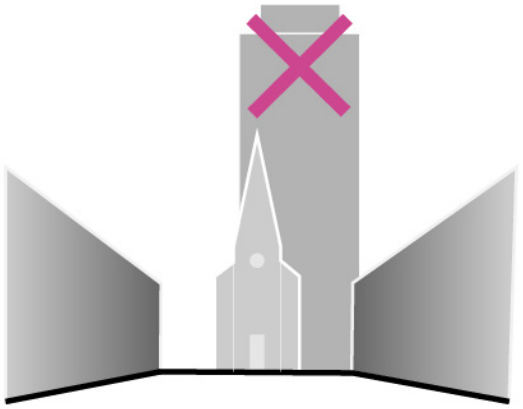


Figure 7.3: Tall Buildings should not detract from heritage assets, their setting or views to them

A heritage impact statement will need to be produced that identifies the heritage assets that the proposal has taken into account. This should demonstrate how the tall building proposal has responded to the heritage asset and its value, and how proposals have mitigated its potential adverse impact to limit harm to the heritage asset and its setting.

Proposals for tall buildings should include a visual impact assessment study that illustrates the impact on the context, especially on heritage assets and significant views.

This should include a computer-generated zone of visual influence and the impact on local, medium and long distant views which should be carried out through accurate visual modelling of proposals represented in photomontages that show the 'before' and 'after' view. Relevant views should be defined by the Council and may include views from outside the borough when appropriate.

It is recommended that the London Borough of Tower Hamlets develop, or gain access to, a fully interactive 3D model of the borough and wider London context in order to test and evaluate the potential impact of tall building proposals.

Proposals for tall buildings as part of pre-application discussions and the planning application should be required to provide massing (for the former) and accurate architecturally detailed 3d inset models (for the latter) to be assessed and evaluated within this model.

7.4.4 LANDMARKS, CLUSTERS AND IMPACT ON VIEWS AND THE SKYLINE

London Plan Policy 7.7 states that:

Point C, d: Tall and large buildings should:

… individually or as a group, improve the legibility of an area, by emphasising a point of civic or visual significance where appropriate, and enhance the skyline and image of London

Point D, b: Tall buildings

… should not impact on local or strategic views adversely

London Plan Policy 7.27 states that

… Ideally, tall buildings should form part of a cohesive building group that enhances the skyline and improves the legibility of the area, ensuring tall and large buildings are attractive city elements that contribute positively to the image and built environment of London.

IMPACT ON VIEWS AND PANORAMAS

Due to their massing and height, tall buildings can impact, harm or significantly alter important views, prospects and panoramas, and detract from or contribute to the visual experience, image and character of the borough. Relevant views may include views of borough designated and local landmarks, waterfronts, assemblages of buildings, townscape and their setting, or more broadly the skyline.

The London Plan, the LVMF SPG, the Local Plan and conservation area statements make reference to protected strategic vistas and local views that will need to be protected. There are likely to be many more 'unregistered' views on a local, as well a London wide scale, that are cherished by people and important for the collective understanding and the 'making sense' of a building in its setting, or the physical characteristics of a place. Views from the river are especially significant because the openness of the water space allows for relatively long-distance views. This applies similarly to large parks and open spaces, especially where they are elevated and allow unrestricted views over London. Viewpoints may be within and outside the borough.

One recognised important view of the latter type is the London Panorama from the General Wolfe Statue in Greenwich Park, which shows Canary Wharf and the borough in the backdrop of the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site. Similarly important skyline views are the view from Waterloo Bridge to Canary Wharf and the London panorama from Alexandra Palace.

This study expresses its hope that the forthcoming revision of the London Plan will expand its examination of strategic London views beyond the narrow focus on the St Pauls Cathedral and a few other landmarks, and include a discussion of the city image and the role of London's skyline, and identify relevant strategic landmarks, skyline features and views, that should be considered, protected and enhanced.

Notwithstanding the above, any tall building proposal in Tower Hamlets will need to undertake a

view shed analysis to identify potential locations of impact on a local, regional and London wide scale. It should test and assess the impact of its tall building proposals on identified and pertinent views, and demonstrate how it has considered its impact on views, how it has mitigated any adverse impacts on a view, or how its contributes to enhancing a view or the distinctiveness of the skyline. This should make use of 3d modelling and representation techniques discussed earlier. Views should be agreed with the Council.

A few recent developments in London have identified the inadequacy of the current LVMF to appropriately protect the backdrop of strategic London Views, especially to St Pauls Cathedral. It is anticipated that the GLA will revise its policies governing these views, in due course. Not withstanding this, this strategy requires tall building proposals within the borough to specifically consider their impact on the backdrop of identified strategic and local views, even if situated outside the designated view cones. Many view points identified by the LVMF allow a wider appreciation of London's skyline including of the Canary Wharf Cluster and other notable landmarks and tall buildings clusters in the East of London. The impact on these should generally be considered.

CLUSTERING OF TALL BUILDINGS

Canary Wharf is a widely visible cluster of tall buildings and the most important skyline feature in Tower Hamlets. Whilst the Tower of London and Tower Bridge are also of international importance they are perceived locally from the river and within Central London – Canary Wharf is perceived from much further afield. The Canary Wharf cluster forms an essential part of London's city image, representing one of the two financial centres in the UK on London's skyline. The assemblage of Canary Wharf towers can be seen from many places in London, including from elevated view points over the roof tops, from open spaces and river views, as well as when approaching London from the outside, for example on the M11.

The silhouette of the Canary Wharf cluster is instantly recognisable due to its relative compactness and simplicity. The One Canada Square tower with its distinct pointed roof is situated in the centre of the cluster while the height of surrounding towers drops away with distance from the centre. This creates a strong and unique skyline feature that is perceived similarly from different directions. The Canary Wharf cluster contrasts sharply with the cluster of towers in the City of London, which is constituted of many competing sculptural landmark buildings, and whose skyline image differs subject to the direction it is viewed from.

Tall buildings within the Canary Wharf cluster and in the immediate surrounding area will need to demonstrate how they relate to, and contribute to, the distinctiveness and recognisability of the Canary Wharf Cluster on the skyline. It is recognised that the Canary Wharf cluster is not static and will change in its shape and form as permitted new tall buildings come forward. Nevertheless, future new development should avoid undermining the central position of One Canada Square Tower within the cluster as the marker of the focus and functional centre of the cluster. As a general principle, the height of taller buildings should drop away from the centre to the edge of the cluster.

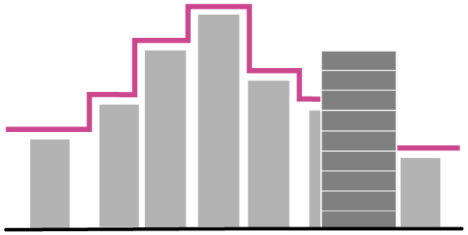


Figure 7.4: Tall Buildings in the foreground of the cluster should not break the silhouette of this cluster when seen from the riverfront

Other identified tall building clusters that can be seen in juxtaposition with the Canary Wharf cluster should be clearly subordinate in height. No new tall building outside the Canary Wharf cluster should be allowed to detract from its integrity or break its skyline when seen from places along the river around the Isle of Dogs (refer to Figure 7.2).

Taller buildings in other tall building zones should also consider their collective image on the skyline and how individual 'feature' buildings could contribute to its distinctiveness and legibility.

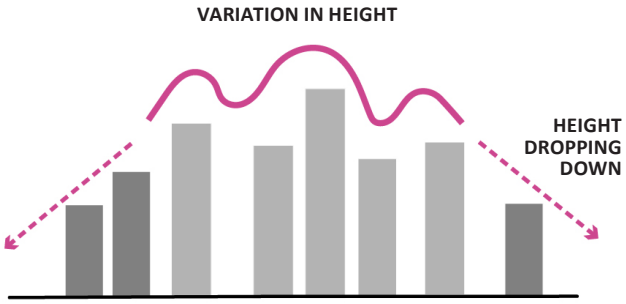


Figure 7.5: Cluster Principle One: height should vary but drop down towards the edge

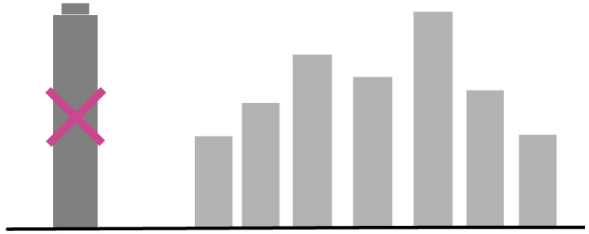


Figure 7.6: Cluster Principle Two: tall buildings outside of the cluster are not desirable

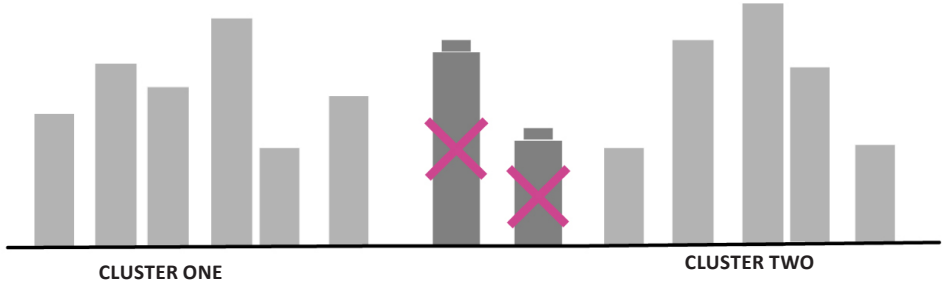


Figure 7.7: Cluster Principle Three: avoid the merging of clusters

Tall buildings within a cluster should be located relatively close together to avoid the spread of the cluster and its dilution or merging with neighbouring clusters. However the spacing of buildings within a cluster should prevent coalescence and the impression of a wall of tall buildings.

Not all buildings within a cluster should be tall and tall buildings should vary their height to add to a lively and diverse skyline, and to avoid a uniform or repetitive response to the skyline. The height of tall buildings at the perimeter of a cluster should drop down and help mediate with the surrounding lower height.

Open views across the river allow the aesthetic appreciation of tall building clusters especially along the river. Proposals must consider and demonstrate how a tall building adds to the shape, image and distinctiveness of a cluster on the skyline and the appearance of the riverfront.

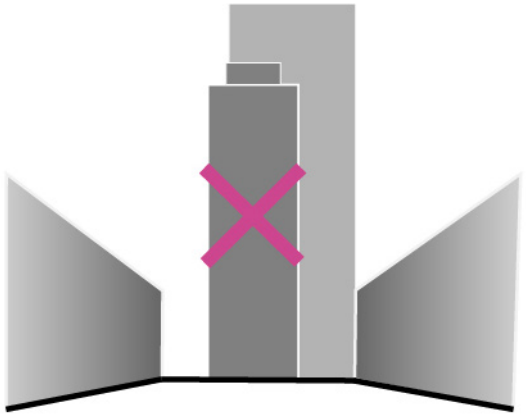


Figure 7.8: Landmark buildings should be singular and not obscured by other tall buildings nearby, equally they should not detract from other tall buildings

LANDMARKS

Where a tall building is proposed to perform a landmark role (as discussed in section 7.4.2), it should be carefully sited to enhance its visibility and positive contribution towards views from important approaching routes or other vistas. The response to the built form and articulation of a landmark buildings should consider the particular views it will be perceived from and demonstrate how it adds distinctiveness and contributes to the legibility of the townscape. To ensure its presence and singularity, the landmark building should not be obscured or detracted from by other (tall) buildings, for example in the background, and its silhouette should be clearly visible and contrasting before the sky.

7.4.5 URBAN DESIGN QUALITY

Given the exceptional nature of a tall buildings and its considerable local and wider impact, tall buildings should generally be part of a larger development and not be confined to the site of the tall building alone. Integrating a tall building within a larger scheme can help to mediate and mitigate the height of the taller building against the height of the local context. A larger scheme can also deliver comprehensive development and offers a greater reach and flexibility to respond effectively to the issues and opportunities of a place, enhance the townscape and realise regeneration benefits, in ways a tall building on its own cannot.

As with any other development, the London Plan and the borough's design policies apply in guiding an appropriate and high quality design response. However, tall building developments should bring forward an exceptionally well considered urban design response including, but not limited to, the following aspects.

- A tall building development should appropriately address the connectivity of the site and the permeability of the wider area;
- Through the location of height and expression of the built form a scheme should contribute to the legibility of the townscape, for example by opening up or terminating views or by articulating a point of significance;
- The height and massing of the development needs to consider how it integrates the tall building element and prevent it from feeling 'overbearing' onto surrounding streets, and existing and new developments;
- The distance between buildings, which must demonstrate the quality of accommodation or residential experience and the response to fire safety;
- A development proposal should demonstrate how it has considered the scale of surrounding streets and spaces, their sense of enclosure and the quality of the ground floor experience; and
- Excessive enclosure or the creation of a 'tunnel' effect should be avoided, for example by applying set-backs to effectively limit the visual impact of greater height on the street space.

Development should also explore opportunities to complement and counter the greater height and density of a scheme with a gain in high quality open space for public enjoyment as a benefit to the community. Tall buildings can have a significant microclimatic impacts on the surrounding fabric (refer to section 7.4.9) and development will need to demonstrate how adverse impacts on the quality of public open space, (whether new or existing), have been considered and mitigated.

Tall building proposals need to demonstrate their understanding of the urban design and movement issues within the wider context and establish how the proposal contributes to the enhancement of the connectivity, function, amenity and character of the surrounding area.

7.4.6 LAND USE AND ACTIVITIES

There is an expectation that tall buildings located in mixed-use locations, such as town centres and opportunity areas, provide a mix of uses. Tall buildings can be designed as mixed-use buildings that combine residential, hotel, office or other uses within a single building providing part of a sustainable development that reduces the need to travel.

Many tall buildings however will have only one primary use within the tower element. This is due to the functional, opeational and structural arrangements required by different uses, including the requirement for separate entrances, cores and servicing arrangements, which make truly mixed use towers more complex, service intensive and expensive, and therefore only viable in very large or tall buildings, such as, for example, the Shard. The mix of hotel and residential uses within the tower element however is more common.

As a minimum a tall building should provide a mix of other uses at the street level where they help to animate the street space. If the tall building has a wider base or is part of an urban block there is more opportunity to accommodate a wider functional mix.

Very few tall buildings planned nowadays in London are office buildings. Office buildings typically require large flexible floor plates, which only substantial taller buildings can provide. Usually these would be within the established central business district (CBD) of the City of London or Canary Wharf, where rental values can support this level of investment and the development risk is lower. In the past, tall buildings, especially in the classical CBD, were synonymous with commercial vitality, and seen as important in expressing economic strength of a place. While this cognition of towers still remains in the collective consciousness, the reality is that most tall building proposals are now for residential use.

Although the iconography of residential and commercial towers are relatively similar, they essentially provide for totally different user groups, require different supporting infrastructures and will impact differently on the nature, vitality and viability of activities in their locality.

For example, high-end residential towers at the edge of the city may be seen as a natural expansion of a common typology found in the city, but in effect change what was a secondary employment location around the CBD into a residential area, thereby displacing lower value and smaller businesses and affecting the future expansion potential of the city. It also generates an additional demand for social infrastructure such as schools, health and community facilities that cannot be met by the existing provision.

The planning authority should consider the wider economic impact of tall buildings, and provide additional policies that define appropriate uses and development quantum in areas targeted for tall buildings, to ensure development supports the strategic purpose of an area, objectives for economic development and housing delivery are appropriately balanced, and sufficient social and transport infrastructure are provided.

High-rise residential developments often are targeting an exclusive higher value market. Smaller studio, one and two bedroom apartments are typical, aside from extensive penthouse apartments at the top of the building.

Tall residential buildings offer magnificent views over London and proximity to transport and facilities, as well as security and other benefits to its residents. Higher build costs and significant service charges add a premium to the cost of flats in tall building in comparison to those in more conventional low and mid-rise blocks. Therefore tall buildings have been criticised for being out of reach of ordinary people, as being responsible for gentrification and for creating social exclusion. Given the multi-ethnic and weaker socio-economic profile of many parts of Tower Hamlets this is a pertinent issue to be considered.

Promoters of tall residential buildings should demonstrate how their proposal has taken into account the socio-economic characteristics of their surrounding area, the housing need of ordinary Londoners and local people, how it provides adequate affordable housing, and an appropriate tenure mix preferably as an integral part of the scheme, and delivers substantial wider regeneration benefits.

Proposals must also demonstrate how they will deliver quality living environments that provide amenity and play spaces both within the building envelope and additional amenity areas and quality public realm areas that encourage social cohesion.

Proposals must provide adequate gathering area outside of the building to accommodate all occupiers in the case of a need to evacuate the building, for instance in the case of a fire or other emergency.

7.4.7 ARCHITECTURAL QUALITY

Due to its wider visibility and prominence the architectural quality of a tall building needs specific attention. This should cover the following aspects:

ARCHITECTURAL FORM

Depending on its width and depth a building might appear very different from various angles. Generally it can be distinguished between a point block, where the width and depths are similar, and a slab block where the width sometimes significantly exceeds the depth of the building. The impact of tall slab blocks on their immediate surrounding is usually more severe, particularly in terms of overshadowing and wind funnelling. They also can appear very different from different directions, slender from one angle and bulky from the other, which might affect their distinctiveness and legibility.

SLENDERNESS

A slender tower with a strong sense of verticality, 'reaching to the sky', is commonly considered more attractive and elegant, while a large and bulky tall building can be found intrusive and out of scale in the skyline. The slenderness of a tower can be expressed through the height to width ratio - the greater the ratio - the more slender the building. The slenderness of a building typically is appreciated only from further away, along a vista, across a water body or across the rooftops of the surrounding buildings.

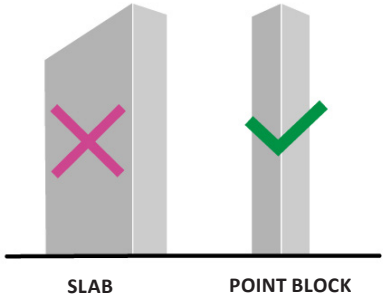


Figure 7.9: Slender point blocks are preferred to slab blocks

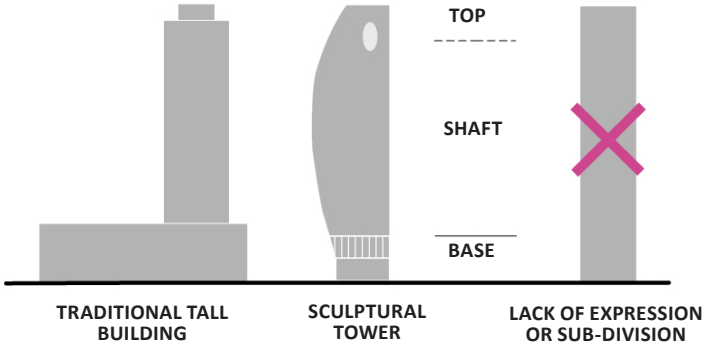


Figure 7.10: Compositional elements of tall buildings

Floor plan efficiencies that require a certain footprint size within the tower element can make designing a slender tall building challenging, especially in areas where heights are limited to local landmarks only. Here the modulation of the building form and other design measures can help achieve a sense of verticality. For example, the bulk of a building can be subdivided to visually appear composed of a number of vertical elements rather than a single block.

COMPOSITION AND SUB-DIVISION

A tall building can benefit from its form, or architecture, changing with its height. As the eye wanders up and down the shaft of the tower and its supporting base, subdivision and other modulation of form and the façade will make the building more interesting and distinctive. Amenity spaces may be used as dividers within a tall building.

Stepping floors back with increasing height can also make a building appear more slender. A tower that is a simple extrusion of a typical floor plan with a repetitive façade may appear monotonous and unexciting.

A tall building has three compositional elements that should be expressed: the base, the shaft and the top. The top part of a tall building, as it ends the vertical mass of the body, needs careful articulation. A tower that lacks an expressed top usually appears incomplete and unfinished. The top is normally seen in views from further away and its shape and impact on the skyline will need to be considered. Some feature towers apply a sculptural approach to the entire building, where the shaft and top of the building flow into each other and are expressed more subtlety through the modulation of the form of the building. In more traditional tall buildings the distinction between the shaft and top should be more clearly expressed. The base of the tall building is where it meets the ground, which determines how it

is experienced from the street and how well it integrates with and responds to the townscape.

In relation to their base two principal types of tall buildings can be distinguished, the stand-alone tower, and the tower that sits on top of a podium or develops out of an urban block.

Stand-alone towers can be more iconic sculptural features. However, due to the concentration of functions at the bottom of the tower and limited footprint, they often establish a poor relationship with the public realm around the base. Towers that develop out of an urban block or podium can usually better internalise their servicing requirements and establish an active relationship to the street space all around the block. The more the tower element sits back from the building line of the street block the lesser will its impact be on the scale and enclosure of the street space and the character of an area.

Both forms are present within Tower Hamlets with numerous stand alone towers delivered in Canary Wharf, South Quay, and Blackwall in particular. In many places these create challenging environments at the street level. Towers delivered as part of coherent blocks are being delivered within the Millwall Inner Dock cluster and have delivered a more successful ground floor environment.

Setting back the tower can also improve the micro climatic condition in the street space around the building. Towers developing out of urban blocks relate better to the human scale perception of the street space, and are generally the preferable type of tall buildings in an urban context.

ORIENTATION

As a tall building will be visible from many places it must have an outlook to all sides. In some instances a tall building may benefit from a principal orientation towards a particular side or direction, for example to address an important view or to orientate toward river, waterfront or open space. However, buildings that are recognisable as a single coherent sculptural object from all around are easier to recognise than buildings that appear different from different angles. While a tall building may assume a special response towards a particular side or direction, all facades should have openings or windows and provide an active frontage. No blank frontages should be permitted.

MATERIALITY AND DETAILING

The materiality, detail and texture of façade, its colour in relation to its back-drop, such as the sky or other tall buildings, its night time impression, feature and aircraft warning lighting, are all important aspects that affect the appearance and impact of a tall building in views both from afar as well as close up.

The choice of facing materials is often important to assist in visually weaving the new building into its established surroundings, or where appropriately provide a contrast.

At design stage they need to be carefully tested through three-dimensional modelling and visualisations to fully understand their impact.

Consideration should be given to how design detailing is perceived both from close up and in long distance views.

All aspects of the design should be represented in accurate visualisations including façade details to allow a detailed three dimensional understanding of the tall building proposals from all sides and from important views and to allow an assessment of its land mark qualities.

7.4.8 RELATIONSHIP TO THE PUBLIC REALM

In the past many taller buildings have failed to establish a positive relationship with the public realm. Many towers in post-war housing estate developments provide infamous examples for this, often exhibiting large windswept and underused green spaces around the tower base, blank walls and inactive ground floors, poorly marked entrances and over dominant servicing arrangements.

To ensure a tall building sits comfortably within an urban environment it needs to establish a positive relationship and interface with the street space. The building interface with the public realm should generally provide well-defined edges and activated frontages with transparent facades. Underutilised 'leftover' spaces and set-backs that create hidden or unsupervised corners at the street space should be avoided. The design will need to contribute to the safety, diversity, vitality, social engagement and 'sense of place' of the building's surroundings, and maximise access for people of all abilities.

Entrances and lobbies should be clearly recognisable, be proportionate to the size and use of the building, while also reinforcing the fine grain of activity at street level. Usually the ground floor of towers should provide other uses, such as retail or leisure uses that are active, outward looking and help animate the street space. Blank frontages should be avoided. These spaces together with internal circulation ares within a building should be designed to encourage interaction and foster social cohesion and increase liveability.

Cycle parking areas, storage and plant space, and other inactive uses should be internalised within the building envelope and wrapped by other active uses.

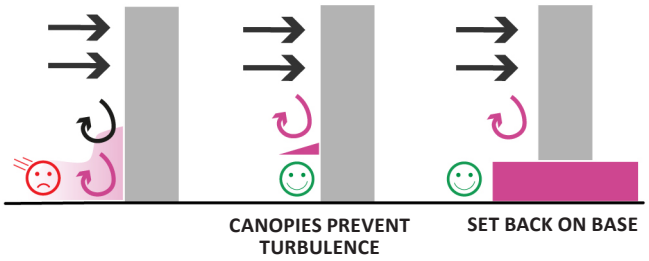


Figure 7.11: Compositional elements of tall buildings

Servicing yards should be integrated in the building, located away from primary pedestrian areas and be appropriately screened from public view.

The public realm at the front of a tall building should be generous and provide appropriately for the increased pedestrian flow outside entrances as well as for waiting and mingling of people. The space must also provide adequate gathering area outside of the building to accommodate all occupiers in the case of a need to evacuate the building, for instance in he case of a fire or other emergency.

The vehicular drop off for the building should be at the back of the carriageway or otherwise away from the main entrance to avoid conflicts with pedestrian activity. Access to servicing should be realised at the side or rear of the building away from pedestrian activity. The width of driveways and vehicular entrances should be consolidated and minimised, and routes should not create barriers at street level.

7.4.9 IMPACT ON THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

IMPACT ON MICROCLIMATE

Tall buildings, due to their size and their significant extension above the typical height in an area, will have significantly greater impacts on the local microclimate than other ordinary building types. The following micro-climatic impacts will need particular attention:

WIND

Tall buildings, as they reach above the general height of an area, disturb wind patterns. They can create downdraughts, turbulence, as well as higher wind speeds, especially around building corners. Proximity between tall buildings can create a wind canyon effect with intense wind acceleration. These wind features can have a significant impact on the quality and safety of the public realm around the building. Airflows can also create noise when interacting with a buildings form or detailing, which can be annoying and detract from the amenity of spaces and building uses.

The design of tall buildings and the positioning, orientation and form of height on the buildings base should consider and aim to mitigate the impact of redirected wind, especially where it directly affects people. Setting back of the taller building element on the base or the provision of low-level canopies can help to reduce the impact of wind on the public realm. Architects should test and refine their proposals with the aid of physical wind tunnel testing or computational fluid dynamics modelling. This should consider all wind directions and not only prevailing winds. The design of the building and detailing of the façade should consider and mitigate against wind noise.

OVERSHADOWING AND DAY LIGHTING

As the sun moves through the day tall buildings create a wandering shadow pattern that can significantly affect the quality and amenity of surrounding areas and uses. It can block sunshine from reaching neighbouring uses and overshadow public spaces, courtyards or gardens.

Direct sunlight has a clear amenity value and is important for the enjoyment particularly of balconies, private outdoor spaces, communal courtyards as well as public spaces. As part of the design phase the massing and siting of a development and its elements should be tested to minimise impact of shadowing, on it surrounding spaces and buildings.

Placing more floor space in lower parts of the building and moving the tall building element back from the open space or other sensitive area where shadowing is pronounced, can help to alleviate the problem.

Development should also consider daylighting, that is the amount of skyview visible, not only from indoors (within development and affected neighbouring developments), but also from open spaces, courtyards and the street space. Adequate skyview can make an area feel more pleasant. The skyview can be enhanced through the setting back of taller building elements from the building front or the modulation of its shape and form.

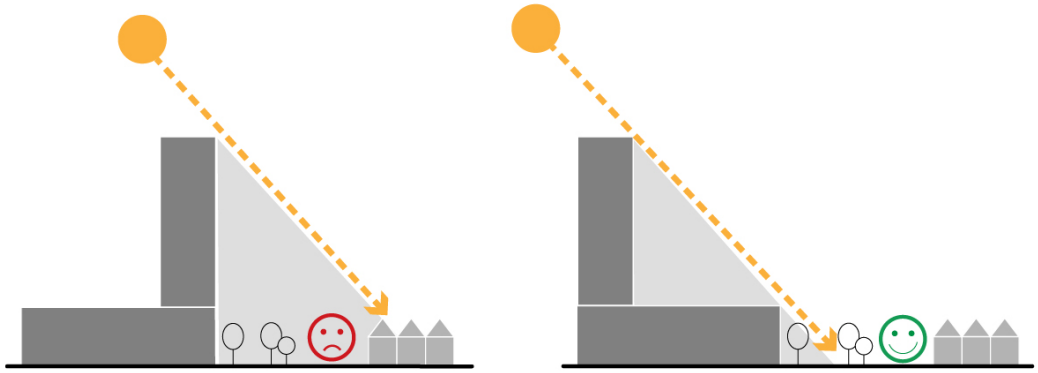


Figure 7.12: Move building away from sensitive areas to avoid overshadowing

SOLAR GLARE AND LIGHT POLLUTION

Sun reflection from tall buildings can have unintended consequences on the surrounding environment that should be properly considered as part of the design of the building form and the materiality of a façade.

Light pollution caused by tall buildings can be detrimental to bio-diversity, create a nuisance to other uses, especially residential amenity, but also may be a waste of energy and a source of unnecessary carbon emissions. The external lighting of tall buildings however can also have a positive impact on the appearance, distinctiveness of a tall building, create drama and excitement on the skyline, and add night time distinctiveness to the city image.

Lighting should be carefully considered to avoid unnecessary loss of lighting to the outside of buildings. External illumination should highlight certain features and elements of the building rather than provide blanket lighting of the entire building. Night time visualisations that demonstrate the approach to lighting should be produced to accompany a tall building proposal.

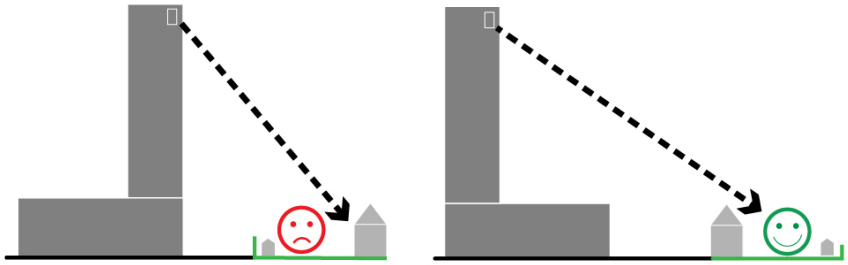


Figure 7.13: Avoid tall buildings looming over existing buildings and their amenity spaces

PRIVACY AND SENSE OF OWNERSHIP

Tall building proposals need to pay particular attention and minimise their impact on existing and new residential environments. Looming over other housing and their outdoor areas can have significantly adverse impact on the amenity and privacy of residents. Tall buildings should be spaced far enough apart to prevent overlooking and loss of privacy.

Tall buildings, with their large grain, substantial bulk, clean lines and modern materials can represent a jarring contrast when next to low-rise housing areas, and indeed can have the effect of visually demeaning the surrounding area. Tall buildings are often impersonal and therefore weaken the sense of ownership of an area by its people. Proposals will need to demonstrate how the design minimises and mitigates against this impact.

7.4.10 DELIVER SUSTAINABILITY

In principle, tall buildings are less sustainable than medium rise buildings of comparable size. Tall buildings are more resource and carbon intensive to construct per unit of floor area than low or medium rise buildings. This is due to their increased wind loadings and heavier frames, their vertical transportation and servicing requirements. The operation of tall buildings is also more energy intensive and expensive, due to the vertical travel and servicing requirements, the high façade to floor area ratio, the need for mechanical ventilation and cooling, as well as the challenges of maintaining and replacing cladding and other building components at height. Due to the prevalence of glass and other light façade materials tall buildings are susceptible to solar gain and overheating.

Tall buildings are highly specialised structures. They are also typically less adaptable to changing economic circumstances and use requirements, and often need resource intensive and expensive refurbishment, or even complete re-development, when they become dated in layout, performance or appearance.

Tall buildings should aim to enhance their energy efficiency through the use of latest sustainable design and construction practices and technologies, with detailed consideration given to the built form configuration and orientation, energy sources and conservation, material source and lifecycle, internal temperature control and use of natural ventilation, water use and conservation and mitigation of water run-off, waste management and on-site ecology. Consideration should also be given to how to reduce the embodied energy in the building and enhance the long-term energy and resource efficiency by designing for flexibility and building adaptation. Renewable energy generation and the installation or future proofing for PVs should also be considered.

Tall building proposals should demonstrate how they have minimised the carbon footprint of the building and benchmark the proposal against comparable best practice schemes. Developments should aim for the highest BREEAM or other equivalent industry standard sustainability rating. The annual carbon emission per floor area (kg/m2/yr) could be adopted by the Council as a simple and transparent measure to evaluate and compare the energy efficiency of new buildings.

7.4.11 AN APPROPRIATE PROCESS TO ENSURING DESIGN QUALITY

Tall buildings must bring forward the highest quality architecture and urban design solutions that responds appropriately to a place, provide benefits to the local community, including the provision of affordable housing, and support and encourage social cohesion.

This process should be supported by a proactive approach to the planning for tall buildings by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets working closely with the GLA. The Council should consider preparing masterplans for identified tall buildings zones as well as other sensitive areas where tall buildings may be acceptable. These should establish a spatial vision and develop a design framework within which tall buildings are located and against which they can be evaluated.

Developers seeking to promote a tall building should engage in a constructive dialogue with the Council and follow a process that ensures the highest design quality and alignment with the Council's policies and objectives:

- Developers seeking to develop a tall building should commence a dialogue with the Council early on in the design process as part of pre-planning discussion. This should provide an early indication of whether a tall building proposal would be, in principle, welcomed within a certain location and establish relevant key design criteria and constraints. This would help avoid wasting resources on speculatively applications;
- The dialogue between the Council and the developer should ideally be continued throughout the design phase prior to the application being launched. It is recommended that applicants for significant tall buildings enter into a Planning Performance Agreement with the Council to obtain appropriate design support and input during this period, as well as an efficient management of the application;
- External scrutiny is critical in ensuring the highest design quality of a tall building. Proposals should be reviewed by the Tower Hamlets Conservation and Design Advisory Panel at least twice. The first review should be early on and provide input into the design process, while the second review should cover the full design solution;
- Tall building proposals will affect the everyday environment of local people. Applicants will need to formally consult with the local community, and applications will need to demonstrate how comments have been considered and taken into account; and
- The planning permission should require the developer to demonstrate the capability and commitment to carry through the vision and design qualities set out by the original architect during the process of procurement, detailed design and construction to ensure delivery on site matches the application design and aspiration.


TOWER HAMLETS