

Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood Planning Area - Options appraisal related to the area boundaries

This analysis explains why the Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood Planning Forum has chosen the area that it has. That area was drawn together based on a consultation and discussion with residents and was unanimously approved in a public vote in November 2014.

This analysis for the sake of clarity and simplicity will be broken down into the following areas to explain why they are or are not in the Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood Planning Area (referred to as the Area from now on);

1. Northern Canary Wharf
2. Canary Wharf Estate
3. Wood Wharf
4. Billingsgate Fish Market
5. Blackwall
6. Blackwall business estate
7. The old Isle of Dogs – south of South Quay, Westferry Circus and the Blue Bridge

There is then a discussion of;

- Site allocations
- Political boundaries
- Physical boundaries
- Community connections
- Boundaries used by other organisations
- National Planning Policy Guidance Note on Neighbourhood Planning

Northern Canary Wharf – Garford Street, North Quay, Hertsmere Road West, Canary Riverside

Has been included for the following reasons;

- At the request of residents
- Because it is part of the Canary Wharf political ward
- The area is within the hard boundaries of the Area
- The area is predominately residential with two hotels, a number of restaurants/bars, Docklands Museum, cinema, two gyms and the Canon Workshops
- The area lacks the scale to be an Area on its own but neatly connects the wider Area with the proposed Limehouse Neighbourhood Planning Forum area.
- With the exception of North Quay and Hertsmere House it is a fully developed area.

Canary Wharf Estate

Has been excluded from the Area at the request of Canary Wharf Group who manage the estate.

The composition of the area is also very different from the rest of the Area as being a predominately business and high-end retail destination.

It currently possesses no residents (until Newfoundland is built) but the working population at approximately 110,000 people substantially exceeds the residential population of the wider Area of 40,000+. If it was to be included in the Area this would substantially change the complexion of the Area and Forum but with little benefit.

Most people who work in Canary Wharf have no connection to the wider Area and rarely leave the estate except to visit the bars on West India Quay, pray nearby or to run on the roads around the island at lunchtime.

The estate is almost fully developed and being managed by CWG a Neighbourhood Plan would have little real benefit to people who work on the estate or who own property there.

Blackwall

Covers the area south of Aspen Way, north of the blue bridge, to the east of Billingsgate Fish Market / Wood Wharf and west of Bow Creek. The area is predominately residential but also with two hotels but hardly any other infrastructure as it contains only a few small shops and the private school at Orchards Wharf.

Has been included for the following reasons;

- At the requests of residents
- Because they are part of the Blackwall & Cubitt Town political ward
- They are within the hard boundaries of the Area

As they lack much of their own public infrastructure they are using infrastructure to their west in the wider Area and therefore form part of the same community.

Blackwall business area

This is the area including the current Council building, Mulberry Place, Saffron Avenue (including the data centres) and Naval Row. With the exception of the residents on Naval Row it is currently an all business area.

This was originally added at the request of residents in Blackwall. They felt that their immediate area was so developed and yet lacked so much infrastructure (they have no state schools, supermarkets or GP surgeries) that in effect it was too late for them to influence their immediate neighbourhood in a future Neighbourhood Plan. But any development in this area could potentially have a major impact on them and they wished to have some influence over what happened to their immediate north.

With a major residential development in the pipeline this area is becoming more like the areas to the south.

All three data centre operators in the area have joined as Forum members.

Wood Wharf

Given that construction has started with a complete Masterplan it is clear that a Neighbourhood Plan would have little impact on this area.

However in order to have a cohesive Area with clear boundaries and also because of the need to plan transport connections and other public infrastructure it makes sense to keep Wood Wharf in the Area. The Council for example expects the new school, GP surgery and Ideas store on the site to serve the wider community not just residents of Wood Wharf and is therefore a key component of the wider Neighbourhood Plan.

For example all of the analysis we do includes the future population of Wood Wharf within the statistics of the Area. It is also an important part of the Blackwall & Cubitt Town ward.

Billingsgate Fish Market

This is clearly a very important asset to the wider community because of the jobs it supports.

If the Fishmarket were to be moved it would create a very important new development site which would affect neighbouring residents & the whole Area. The Neighbourhood Forum feel that it is important to have some involvement with what happens in this area in order to ensure that all future development is influenced by the same Neighbourhood Plan.

By keeping this area in we also have maintain a cohesive Area with clear boundaries.

The old Isle of Dogs – south of South Quay

This area includes South Quay, Millwall, Cubitt Town & Island Gardens

It makes no sense for this area to be divided up, it is the island. When Cllr Ted Johns declared UDI for the island in March 1970 he drew the line at the two bridges to the island and did not partition the area. Many of the reasons for him declaring UDI remain issues today as infrastructure delivery has always lagged development.

The area is increasing residential with an increasing number of hotels, one large supermarket and one secondary school.

Most of the offices in the area are being re-developed with the exception of the Harbour Exchange office estate. Other offices, which remain i.e. Greenwich View & Admirals Way estate we understand, are in the early phases of re-development.

The area is becoming residential with three new hotels, we are not aware of any other material office or retail development (except the already approved ASDA re-development).

Site allocations

A number of site allocations exist in the area;

- Millennium Quarter – many thousands of residents live in this area including many Forum members & the Chair of the Forum. To remove this area from the Forum would disenfranchise them from have any say over the area they live in. A Deputy Mayor of Tower Hamlets also lives in this area.
- Marsh Wall East – hundreds of residents live in this area including Forum members.
- Crossharbour Town Centre – most of this area has planning permission for the ASDA re-development. With 55% of all shopping trips in the Area going to ASDA it has become de facto the town centre for the island
- Westferry Print Works – is in the final stages of public consultation and will likely gain planning approval before any Neighbourhood Plan has a material impact.
- Wood Wharf – is under construction
- Leamouth Peninsula – is under construction
- Blackwall Reach – only a small part of this area next to Blackwall DLR station is in the Area

We have chosen to include these site allocations for the following reasons;

- Simplicity and clarity – to exclude them would make the Area far more complicated to explain, it would create large holes in the Area resulting in a loss of coherence and would make the boundaries of the Area extremely complicated. The Area would probably not be viable with such large exclusions.
- Government policy – The Ministerial Foreword to the NPPF says ‘This should be a collective enterprise. Yet, in recent years, planning has tended to exclude, rather than to include, people and communities. In part, this has been a result of targets being imposed, and decisions taken, by bodies remote from them. Dismantling the unaccountable regional apparatus and introducing neighbourhood planning addresses this.’
- 2011 Localism Act – was designed to empower residents to have a more formal role in the planning process. Neighbourhood Plans are in theory designed to encourage more development by involving residents in decision making rather than excluding them. Neighbourhood Plans are therefore only useful in areas undergoing development i.e. site allocations.

- Democratic choice – residents who live in the area have agreed to the Area through a democratic vote and live in or next to many of the Site Allocations.
- Legality – we do not believe it would be legal to exclude those site allocations where residents currently reside as it would be contrary to the provisions of the 2011 Localism Act.

Other Planning Boundaries

Other organisations have also had to draw up an area or boundaries in this part of London. We believe those boundaries are also influenced by the same geographic constraints that affect the Forum and are therefore relevant comparisons.

There are three main examples of where other organisations have drawn up very similar boundaries to those of the Area recognising the unique characteristics of the Area or else using the same boundaries that we have;

LAP 8 – Tower Hamlets Council use Local Area Partnerships areas to co-ordinate a range of activities across the Borough. LAP 8 has almost identical boundaries to the Area except that it includes more of Poplar to the west of the Blackwall Tunnel entrance.

Isle of Dogs Area Action Plan, October 2007 – also has an almost identical boundary to the Area except for excluding the Leamouth Peninsula, Orchard Wharf and the Blackwall business estate. It was adopted for the purpose of development control. To quote from the document;

‘The Isle of Dogs is a genuinely unique area. The isolating effect of the Thames’ meandering course, the physical legacy of the docks and shipping, and the area’s re-invention as one of the world’s key financial centres has created a place that is recognisably different from the rest of the Borough.’

The Forum fully concurs with this statement.

Isle of Dogs & South Poplar Opportunity Area Planning Framework – launched July 2015. This is larger than the Area as it also includes parts of Poplar and Limehouse. However the Area is 100% contained within the OAPF area. The Area also shares most of the OAPF boundaries except on its northern and north-western boundaries.

Political boundaries

The Area is based on and includes the following three Tower Hamlets political wards of;

- Canary Wharf
- Blackwall & Cubitt Town
- Island Gardens

- + part of Poplar ward (with three residential buildings in Naval Row)

The Area boundaries are the same as the political wards except that we do not include all of Poplar Ward, stopping at the A102.

This will make any future referendum very easy to organise.

The Boundary Commission made a number of changes in 2013 to the ward boundaries mainly by excluding Poplar from the old Blackwall & Cubitt Town ward. They would have done a lot of work on ensuring that those boundaries were clear and definable and representative of settled communities.

The Area is entirely within the Borough of Tower Hamlets.

Physical boundaries

The Area has very hard boundaries on all 4 sides;

On three sides we have the River Thames or Bow Creek

On the fourth side we have a number of large multi-lane A roads – from east to west we have the A13, A102, A1261, A1206 and then the Limehouse Link entrance

Only in two small areas is it possible to enter or leave the Area without either crossing one of the above A-roads by bridge, tunnel or pedestrian crossing;

- Thames Path above the Limehouse Link tunnel to 3 Colt Street
- Prestage Way north of the Blackwall DLR

Such hard boundaries are one of the main reasons why the Area is so cohesive.

Community Connections

Although the Area may appear large there are a number of common connections as residents share;

- Only one state secondary school at George Green
- GP surgeries are all in the old island area, so residents travel from other parts of the Area to use the GP surgeries. Many residents of Blackwall are patients of the Barkantine Surgery for example.
- Retail is predominately based at only two locations, ASDA and Canary Wharf
- Political – all three wards are mixed politically with no one party controlling all Cllrs in a ward
- Demographics – the demographics of the Area are very similar especially Canary Wharf and Blackwall & Cubitt Town but dissimilar to the wider Tower Hamlets population.

What could be considerations when deciding the boundaries of a neighbourhood area?

National Planning Policy Guidance Note on Neighbourhood Planning says the following could be considerations when deciding the boundaries of a neighbourhood area. The guidance is in Italics with how the Area matches those considerations below each section;

- *Village or settlement boundaries, which could reflect areas of planned expansion*

The boundaries follow the political boundaries of the area except for cutting off part of Poplar ward. It includes long settled communities in Millwall, Cubitt Town and Island Gardens.

- *The catchment area for walking to local services such as shops, primary schools, doctors' surgery, parks or other facilities*

55% of all shopping trips in the Area are to ASDA. The only other centre for supermarkets is in Canary Wharf (M&S, Waitrose and Tesco).

There is only one state secondary school, George Green whose catchment area covers the whole Area.

Millwall Park is the largest green open sports area shared by all residents of the Area

Tiller Road leisure centre is the only local authority leisure centre in the Area

- *The area where formal or informal networks of community based groups operate*

With the exception of AICVC there are no formal community based groups that cover the whole area but that in part reflects the fragmentation of the community due to the enormous population growth over the years. The population of the Isle of Dogs was around 12,00 people in the early 90's then grew to 27,500 in 2007 but was 40,251 by the time of the national census in 2011.

- *The physical appearance or characteristics of the neighbourhood, for example buildings may be of a consistent scale or style*

The Area is becoming increasingly homogenous as offices or industrial units are being replaced with high rise residential buildings across the Area. These new buildings are generally all tall thin dense towers.

- *Whether the area forms all or part of a coherent estate either for businesses or residents*

With Canary Wharf Estate excluded from the Area it is predominately residential with some retail and a number of hotels.

- *Whether the area is wholly or predominantly a business area*

The Area is increasingly residential

- *Whether infrastructure or physical features define a natural boundary, for example a major road or railway line or waterway*

As detailed above in the physical boundaries section the Area has very strong natural boundaries with major roads or waterways on all boundaries

- *the natural setting or features in an area*

The whole area is within the Thames flood plain area and is bounded by water and A roads.

- *size of the population (living and working) in the area*

The population is continuing to grow substantially with each new development. That is perhaps the strongest connection across the Area, the presence of very similar large-scale developments which affect all parts of the Area.

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