

Lower Lea Valley Industrial land strategy, and its implications for Caxton Street, Canning Town

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29 May 2007

Introduction

One of the biggest challenges for the local and regional plan-making authorities in the Lower Lea Valley has been to establish an agreed geography of industrial land. The GLA with the boroughs, and with the LTGDC following its establishment, have been developing this industrial land strategy since 2003. This was consulted on and finalised as part of the LLV Opportunity Area Planning Framework, adopted by the Mayor in January 2007 and endorsed by the LTGDC and boroughs.

The industrial land release set out in the LLV OAPF is at the upper limit of the maximum acceptable release, and therefore careful definition, management and monitoring of the release of industrial land in the Valley is necessary to ensure that this is not exceeded.

For the purposes of this note, 'industry' includes a wide range of sectors and activities, including all uses categorised as B1C (light industrial compatible with residential areas), B2 (general industrial), B8 (storage and distribution), and also includes utilities, transport support and storage, and wholesale markets.

This paper will summarise the key drivers behind this strategy, and the implications of this strategy for the sites currently under review on Caxton Street, Canning Town.

Key drivers for retention of industrial land in LLV

The LLV plays an important role in the economy of London, and the overriding driver to retain industrial land in the LLV is to provide the capacity required for London to function as a sustainable world city. London Plan Policy 3B.5 and the draft Supplementary Guidance on Industrial Capacity (September 2003) seek to ensure the adequate provision of industrial land across London for employment uses, whilst recognising the opportunities to transfer genuinely surplus industrial land into more active uses.

Criteria for industrial activities which should be retained in LLV include:

- activities that perform functions that are important to the performance of London's economy, that require a location close to the central business areas of the City of London or Canary Wharf, and that cannot be relocated to suitable alternative sites
- activities that have a business need to be located within the Valley, or provide significant local labour or economic benefits to the local area
- predominantly central London serving activities such as strategic storage and distribution facilities, more localised supply including offices, food preparation, vehicle equipment hire and repair, small scale manufacturing, creative industries and depot facilities.
- construction and environmental industries (waste/recycling) – future expansion is likely to be significant.
- activities with 'fixed' infrastructure eg. utilities infrastructure serving central London (gas, electricity and water/sewage), rail and water freight facilities.

Analysis to establish levels of acceptable industrial land release in LLV

The analysis which underpins the LLV OAPF concluded that the LLV has the potential to release a maximum of 173 hectares of industrial land from 2005 to 2016 for other uses – equivalent to almost half of the existing industrial land in the LLV.

This was ratified by the East London Industrial Land Strategy, commissioned by the GLA and undertaken by URS in 2006. This study produced a detailed mapping of existing industrial activities within East London, and developed a future industrial land strategy based on analysis of:

- future trends in industrial sectors within London to establish future land take requirements
- implications of policies on future industrial land take (eg waste and recycling, renewable energy)
- requirement of industrial sectors to be located in close proximity to central London (eg to the City and Canary Wharf)
- requirement of industrial sectors to access road, rail or wharf infrastructure
- likely level of lorry movements resulting from industrial sectors, to determine most sustainable locations

The approach to industrial land and the proposed Strategic Employment Location boundaries set out in the LLV OAPF was ratified through the London Plan Sub Regional Development Framework process (adopted 2006). This in turn will inform the first review of the London Plan

The LLV OAPF industrial land strategy

The approach to land use set out in the OAPF is to retain and intensify industrial and employment development in locations that are in close proximity to strategic road, rail and water freight systems. There are three designations of industrial land, as follows:

1 Strategic Employment Locations (SEL)

There are seven key industrial land concentrations identified as Strategic Employment Locations in this OAPF, in accordance with London Plan policy 3B.5. Important site characteristics of SELs include that they:

- Are well located in relation to the strategic highway network or local highway network;
- Offer potential for transport of goods by rail or water transport;
- Offer potential for environmentally suitable 24-hour working; and
- Provide facilities for 'difficult neighbour uses', such as aggregate supply, waste management, and energy generating activities, in locations where they will not detract from the environment of other activities.

2 Locally Significant Industrial Locations (LSIS)

Locally Significant Industrial Sites (LSIS) perform similar functions to SELs. The difference between the two designations relates to the nature and scale of the industrial employment activity within an LSIS, which will often serve more local functions and needs. Many of these sites have been selected due to the specialised industrial activity accommodated, or sustainable transport connections. Similar to SELs, development of non-industrial uses within LSISs should be resisted, and the more efficient use of sites through intensification and rationalisation of activities should be promoted.

3 Other industrial sites with potential for mix

These are industrial areas that are seen as having potential to accommodate a proportion of non industrial uses whilst still maintaining existing industrial capacity, typically areas that have good public transport accessibility, especially those within or on the edge of town centres. Non-industrial uses could be introduced into such an area without incurring an overall net loss of industrial capacity through more efficient use of sites.

Introducing non-industrial uses into an area where industrial activities need to remain in the long term is challenging and few successful and sustainable precedents exist. Too often developments are very ad hoc, and result in poor quality residential accommodation which nevertheless undermines the long term viability of the industrial activities. Examples of this

can be found across the LLV. To address this risk, the LLV OAPF developed an approach to these opportunities which seeks to ensure that this intensification and the addition of non-industrial uses occurs in a managed way and is sustainable.

The LLV OAPF states that it is an essential pre-requisite that these areas are subject to a detailed analysis and spatially specific masterplan process that:

- Demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Strategic and Local Planning Authorities that there is no net loss of industrial capacity (defined as operational site area);
- Determines the geographical area of industrial land to be retained, the type and location of non-industrial uses;
- Demonstrates that no unacceptable disturbance would be caused to new land uses and the existence of new land uses would not unacceptably constrain existing and future flexibility of industrial uses. Design, massing, layout and access arrangements should be considered to minimise any potential conflict or disturbance between uses.
- Demonstrates that, where residential and community uses are proposed, they have adequate and safe 24 hour access to public transport and local community facilities.

Until the criteria above are met, these industrial areas should be considered as a LSIS for development control policy purposes, to ensure that a master planned approach to the site is not compromised by premature development.

Caxton Street sites

The Caxton Street area is identified in the LLV OAPF as a 'locally significant industrial area', where the introduction of non-industrial activities should be resisted, due to:

- its proximity to the strategic road network (A13, Silvertown Way and Lea Crossing)
- established and operational industrial activities which provide local employment, and provide local services.
- the poor environmental quality of this area for residential accommodation given the noise and air pollution created by the adjacent Silvertown Way flyover, and the barriers to movement created by the flyover and the rail corridor.
- The clustering of industrial activities to create a locally significant non-residential area where businesses are able to operate without creating a nuisance to neighbours.

Existing industrial areas with potential for industrial-led mixed use are identified to the north and west of the Caxton Street area by the OAPF (fig 4.13). These areas are specifically intended to provide a 'buffer' between the solidly industrial area at Caxton Street, and the residential communities and town centre uses proposed to the north-west. For example, the St. Luke's scheme (north of caxton street) has been carefully designed to orientate the industrial uses at ground floor adjacent to the Caxton Street LSIS, and community uses orientated towards the community centre, park and existing residential. Further these mixed areas are closer to the public transport hub at Canning Town station, which supports the introduction of non-industrial uses.

Conclusion and recommendations

As set out above, the industrial capacity required to be retained in the LLV has been established through a robust process of careful and detailed analysis. Whilst as individual areas the LSIS areas may appear relatively insignificant, in aggregate they comprise a significant component of this overall capacity. Therefore it is essential that the robustness of this newly adopted policy is preserved, and that the viability of these industrial areas is maintained.

The ad hoc introduction of residential uses into the Caxton Street LSIS would:

- Create a precedent which would seriously undermine the policy across the LLV and raise hope-value on industrial sites. Inflated land prices would damage the potential for effective value-capture by the LTGDC, and compromise the delivery of the vision for the LLV.
- Create high density residential accommodation in an inappropriate location with poor environmental quality, in an ad hoc manner. The wider Canning Town and Custom House area has huge capacity for new and upgraded housing to be delivered in highly appropriate locations – surely it is preferable to support the successful delivery of new residential units in those areas already identified.
- Create a situation where the remaining industrial sites in Caxton Street would be unlikely to be viable in the long term in such close proximity to residential, and therefore the only remaining cluster of light industry in Canning Town and Custom House would be removed.

If it was felt that there may be potential to explore the introduction of some non-industrial uses into the Caxton Street area, as part of a managed strategy to upgrade and intensify the industrial activities in the area, the guidance set out for 'other industrial sites with potential for mix' should be followed. Developing a clear masterplan for industrial activities in this area, whilst maintaining capacity, would ensure that the LLV OAPF policy was not undermined. Furthermore, this masterplan could also usefully incorporate the adjacent areas identified as having potential for mix in the OAPF, to ensure that a comprehensive approach was being promoted for this entire cluster.

References:

LLV OAPF section D (Development principles for the working valley)

LLV OAPF Figure 2.6, 4.13.