

Planning Committee Report

London Thames Gateway Development Corporation

Tower Hamlets Core Strategy

Report of the Director of Planning

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the Tower Hamlets Core Strategy Options and Alternatives for Places Stage 2 Paper and sets out the proposed response to consultation.
- 1.2 The LTGDC Planning Committee has responsibility for considering policy documents and agreeing LTGDC's formal response. The public consultation closed on 19th March 2009, but owing to the LTGDC committee cycle, Tower Hamlets has agreed that the LTGDC response can be received following the committee meeting.
- 1.3 This report summarises the key elements of the Options and Alternatives Paper and highlights where these have implications for LTGDC projects. The consultation document sets out specific consultation questions to be addressed and this report summarises the proposed response to these questions where these are relevant to LTGDC projects.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Core Strategy – Options and Alternatives for Places is the second consultation document which will inform the borough's Local Development Framework Core Strategy. The first stage of consultation, on the Core Strategy – Options and Alternatives, was undertaken in summer 2008.
- 2.2 The Planning Committee formally considered a report summarising the Stage 1 consultation report on 11th September 2008.
- 2.3 The current Options and Alternatives for Places document is more spatially specific and tests how the borough wide alternatives and options set out in the previous consultation document will affect places in Tower Hamlets.
- 2.4 It is anticipated that the pre-submission draft of the Core Strategy will be published for a further round of consultation in autumn 2009 with a submission to Government in late 2009.

3. Structure of the Options and Alternatives for Places Document

3.1 The document sets out a preferred strategy for the borough as a whole, which is structured around four spatial themes:

- Strengthening Neighbourhood Well-Being;
- Enabling Prosperous communities;
- Designing a high quality city; and
- Tackling climate change.

3.2 The second part of the document applies these themes to specific places. The Core Strategy is based on the spatial idea of reinventing the hamlets and the strategy divides the borough into 24 areas which reflect the historic hamlets and peoples' understanding of the borough. The second part of the document sets out a series of 'place plans' for these areas, grouped into the four paired Local Area Partnerships (LAPs). Of these, four 'place plans' are within the LTGDC area: Fish Island, Bromley by Bow, Leamouth, and Poplar Riverside.

3.3 For each section of the document, a brief summary of the content is provided below, followed by the consultation questions which are relevant to the LTGDC area and a summary of the proposed response.

4. Summary of Issues and Proposed Consultation Response

4.1 The Spatial Vision and Preferred Strategy

4.1.1 The emerging spatial vision for the borough is: *“Tower Hamlets continues to be a strategically important and unique part of inner London, set alongside the iconic River Thames and Tower of London. It will prosper through sustainable regeneration which stems from the major economic hubs of Canary Wharf, Aldgate (the City) and Stratford. This will filter down to the connected network of vibrant and regenerated locally distinct places which has evolved from the Borough’s rich history. From Spitalfields to Poplar and from Canary Wharf to Bow, each place will have a distinct identity, role and function but all will be well designed, vibrant and a great place to live.”*

4.1.2 A number of key programmes are identified to assist in the delivery of this vision. Within the LTGDC area, these include the regeneration of Fish Island and Bromley-by-Bow, the Green Grid, (including Lea River Park) and High Street 2012.

4.1.3 The preferred approach is to focus growth on town centres. This is based on Option A from the previous round of consultation, which LTGDC supported in its response.

- 4.1.4 The strategy identifies a hierarchy of town centres in accessible locations across the borough. This includes proposals for new, expanded and redefined centres. Bromley by Bow is identified within the proposed hierarchy as a new Neighbourhood Centre.
- 4.1.5 The strategy is to develop town centres based on an understanding of their current strengths and weaknesses. The importance of connecting town centres and key destinations is emphasised as well the need to ensure the scale and type of uses is appropriate to the hierarchy, role and function of each town centre. In order to further develop understanding of the current network of town centres, including their catchment areas and their different roles and functions, the Council is preparing a Town Centre Spatial Strategy.

Consultation Questions

- 4.1.6 Do you agree with the preferred overarching strategy? If not, how could it be improved?
- 4.1.7 Do you agree with the proposed town centre hierarchy? If not what would be the alternative?

Proposed Response

- 4.1.8 Officers consider that the preferred overarching strategy is sound and should be supported.
- 4.1.9 However, officers consider that Bromley by Bow should be identified as a District Centre rather than a Neighbourhood Centre. The LTGDC has prepared a Land Use and Design Brief for Bromley-by-Bow in partnership with London Borough of Tower Hamlets. This document has been adopted as Interim Planning Guidance by both organisations. The brief indicates that the scale of development likely to come forward in the area including on the proposed development sites at St Andrews, Hancock Lane/Three Mills Lane area, Bow Locks and Sugar House Lane, would justify its designation as a district centre.
- 4.1.10 It is considered that designating the area as a Neighbourhood Centre would unduly limit the development potential of these sites and prejudice the delivery of the new centre and the improvements to transport and connectivity in the area which the Land Use and Design Brief identify as key to the successful development of the area.
- 4.1.11 The Land Use and Design Brief also identifies potential for a tall building in the south-west of the area adjacent to the station. There is a concern that if the area were designated as a neighbourhood centre, scope for taller buildings would be restricted. The preferred strategy in relation to location of tall buildings in the Options and

Alternatives document is that taller buildings should be located in appropriate locations such as around some district town centres and major transport interchanges and that the scale of tall buildings should reflect the scale and significance of the location to the community (i.e. town centre hierarchy).

4.2 Spatial Themes

Strengthening Neighbourhood Well-Being – Urban Living

- 4.2.1 The strategy identifies the aim of developing “socially balanced and inclusive communities with a range of dwellings to meet their needs and ensuring everyone has access to decent homes which are affordable”.
- 4.2.2 The strategy sets out a broad pattern for the distribution of housing types and densities across the borough. Bromley by Bow, Poplar Riverside and Leamouth are identified as high growth areas and Fish Island is identified as a medium growth area (Figure 4.3). Leamouth is identified as part of an area suitable for ‘more intensive housing’ while Fish Island is part of an area suitable for ‘less intensive housing’. Bromley by Bow is one of the locations highlighted as suitable for family housing (Figure 4.2)

Consultation Questions

- 4.2.3 Do you agree with the overall approach to Urban Living for Everyone? If not, how could it be improved?
- 4.2.4 Do you agree with the identified locations and intensity of housing growth? If not, what would be the alternatives?
- 4.2.5 Do you agree with the indicated locations for new larger family housing? If not, what would be the alternatives?

Proposed Response

- 4.2.6 Officers support the overall approach to housing distribution which is based on sound planning principles of focusing higher density housing in town centres and areas of higher transport accessibility and directing family housing to areas with better access to schools and open spaces.
- 4.2.7 Officers also support the broad locations identified for higher intensity of housing growth, including Leamouth. Although, Bromley by Bow is part of an area for less intensive housing, its future role as a town centre with potential for higher densities than surrounding areas is acknowledged.
- 4.2.8 The inclusion of family housing in Bromley-by-Bow is compatible with the work undertaken to develop the Land Use and Design Brief and is therefore supported.

- 4.2.9 LTGDC would welcome the opportunity to work with the borough to further develop the proposals for housing types and densities in these areas.

Strengthening Neighbourhood Well-Being – Supporting Growth with Infrastructure

- 4.2.10 The strategy sets the principle of focusing new infrastructure provision and services in accessible locations and town centres and emphasises the need to ensure that infrastructure provision meets the needs of existing communities and needs arising from growth.
- 4.2.11 In particular, Fish Island is identified as a preferred location for a new secondary school and 4 areas of search are identified to secure land to deliver primary schools Fish Island East, Bromley-by-Bow and Polar Riverside.

Consultation Questions

- 4.2.12 Do you agree with focusing services and some infrastructure in town centres and other accessible locations? If not, what would be the alternatives?
- 4.2.13 Do you agree with the overall approach to Supporting Growth with Infrastructure? If not, can you suggest any improvements to this strategy?
- 4.2.14 Do you agree with the preferred option for a location of a secondary school within Fish Island?

Proposed Response

- 4.2.15 Officers support the general approach to infrastructure planning. Having the proposals formally set out in policy documents will provide more certainty for LTGDC in terms of what education facilities are needed and where they should be provided.
- 4.2.16 In particular, the specific proposals for a new secondary school at Fish Island and new primary schools within the LTGDC area are supported. Officers have been taking into account such proposals and working with Tower Hamlets to bring forward provision of new primary schools alongside development. The proposal to locate a new secondary school in Fish Island is compatible with the work that has been undertaken to date on the Hackney Wick Fish Island Masterplan.
- 4.2.17 The Development Corporation has adopted a Planning Obligations Community Benefit Strategy. This requires development to contribute financially and in kind towards infrastructure that is required within the LTGDC area, to support the level of

development coming forward. Reference to this strategy could usefully be made in this section

Strengthening Neighbourhood Well-Being – Creating a Green Grid

- 4.2.18 The strategy recognises the need to increase open space throughout the borough, with a focus on growth areas in east and south, using the Green Grid. The strategy also recognises the need to maximise access to and provision of open space as part of the Lea River Park through green corridors and high quality pedestrian and cycle routes.
- 4.2.19 The need to identify opportunities through the site allocations DPD to facilitate the development of the East London Green Grid and Lea River Park is recognised. In particular, the need to safeguard sites for significant open space such as Leven Road, which forms a key part of the new River Lea Park is highlighted.
- 4.2.20 The strategy emphasises the need to ensure excellent levels of access to the Olympic Park across the borough, with a specific focus along High Street 2012.

Consultation Questions

- 4.2.21 Do you agree with the safeguarding of existing open spaces? If not, what/ where would you suggest?
- 4.2.22 Do you agree with the requirement that new development which increases the living and working population of the borough contribute to the creation of new open space?
- 4.2.23 Do you agree with the overall approach to Creating a Green Grid? If not, how could it be improved?

Proposed Response

- 4.2.24 Officers support the safeguarding of existing open spaces and the general approach to creating new open spaces. It is noted, however, that East India Dock which forms part of the proposals for Lea River Park, is not identified as existing Metropolitan Open Land on Figure 4.22. It is assumed that this is an omission.
- 4.2.25 The recognition of the Green Grid and Lea River Park is supported (though greater consistency is required as the document uses the terms 'Lea River Park and 'Lea Valley Park' interchangeably). Greater clarity is also required as to the process for safeguarding the necessary sites through the Allocations DPD. LTGDC would welcome being involved in this process.
- 4.2.26 Although the FAT walk is identified as a proposed Green Link, it is considered that this proposal should be given greater prominence in this part of the strategy as a key element of the Lea River Park.

Strengthening Neighbourhood Well-Being – Dealing with Waste

4.2.27 The preferred option is to relocate existing waste facilities in potential regeneration areas, such as at Ailsa Street in Poplar Riverside and in the northern part of Fish Island to a consolidated recycling facility at Fish Island south.

Consultation Questions

4.2.28 Do you agree with the proposed preferred option of Fish Island South? If not, what alternatives would you suggest?

Proposed Response

4.2.29 This is an important issue that affects the LTGDC's objectives for land at Ailsa Street. There is an existing waste transfer station on the site, which is operating without the benefit of a formal planning consent. However, London Plan Policy means that the facility would need to be retained or the capacity replaced elsewhere within the borough if the Ailsa Street site is developed. This policy requirement affects Tower Hamlets, as a unitary waste authority, more than other boroughs, which have combined into, for example, the East London Waste Authority. The East London Waste Authority includes Newham, Redbridge, Havering and Barking and Dagenham. These boroughs therefore have more land available, some of which is more suitable for waste management, and are able to allocate land for waste and deal more efficiently with their waste apportionment than Tower Hamlets is able to as a unitary authority.

4.2.30 The preferred option as set out in the Core Strategy is to consider options to relocate existing waste facilities in potential regeneration areas, such as at Ailsa Street and around the northern part of Fish Island into a consolidated recycling facility in Fish Island South. This is compatible with work being undertaken as part of the Hackney Wick Fish Island Masterplan which has assessed the suitability of three potential sites to the south of the Greenway within the consolidated Strategic Industrial Location (SIL).

4.2.31 LTGDC officers support the principle of relocating the waste recycling facility, but consider that the suitability of potential sites needs more detailed consideration to ensure constraints such as proximity to residential areas and access can be resolved.

Enabling Prosperous Communities – Delivering successful employment hubs

4.2.32 The preferred strategy with regards to industrial employment uses is to safeguard the existing Local Industrial Locations at Empson Street and Poplar Business Park. Subject to finding other sites for Strategic Industrial uses, the preferred strategy supports mixed use

including some housing and business space in Fish Island, resulting in a significant reduction in land available for industrial uses.

- 4.2.33 Although the text does not specify the extent of reduction or the area to be retained as SIL, Figure 4.36 shows the area to the north of Hertford Union Canal as removed from its SIL designation. The Core Strategy therefore implies that the northern portion of the SIL would be released from its designation.

Consultation Questions

- 4.2.34 Do you agree with the overall approach of Making Successful Employment Hubs? If not, how could it be improved?
- 4.2.35 Do you agree with the preferred option for reducing the amount of land allocated for SIL at Fish Island? If not, what are the alternatives?

Proposed Response

- 4.2.36 Officers support the overall approach to employment development. The preferred strategy for reduction in land allocated for SIL is considered appropriate. This is broadly compatible with proposals being developed through the draft Hackney Wick Fish Island Masterplan in which Mid Fish Island is to retain its employment focus and Fish Island South is to remain an industrial location.
- 4.2.37 However, officers consider that the text should clarify whether it is indeed proposed that the northern area would be released as implied by Figure 4.36, or whether this is to be determined at a later date, to be informed by further studies such as the Industrial Land Use Survey and on-going work under the Hackney Wick Fish Island Masterplan.
- 4.2.38 Fish Island is identified in the London Plan as a SIL. As such its boundaries and extent should be defined and revised through policies in Development Plan Documents. The preferred option should therefore indicate the process for redefining the boundary through an Area Action Plan or Site Allocations DPD. LTGDC may wish to comment further on a more detailed boundary when this is forthcoming.

Enabling Prosperous Communities – Encouraging Tourism

- 4.2.39 The preferred strategy highlights the High Street 2012 programme as a mechanism for encouraging engagement with the Olympics and associated tourism activities.

Consultation Questions

- 4.2.40 Do you agree with the overall approach to Encouraging Tourism? If not, how could it be improved?

Proposed Response

- 4.2.41 Officers support the identification of High Street 2012 as a key project within the borough

Designing a High Quality City – Making Connected Places

- 4.2.42 The severance effect of the A12 is recognised as a key issue. The preferred strategy includes seeking to improve transport and pedestrian connections, particularly around the Lower Lea Valley in order to facilitate proposed housing and employment growth.
- 4.2.43 The preferred strategy identifies the need for interchange improvements at Bromley-by-Bow and highlights priorities for pedestrian/cycling improvements including improved crossing of the A12 at Bromley-by-Bow.

Consultation Questions

- 4.2.44 Do you have any views on areas of opportunity for public realm improvements?
- 4.2.45 Do you agree with the overall approach to Making Connected Places? If not, how could it be improved?

Proposed Response

- 4.2.46 Officers support these principles and consider that addressing the barrier of the A12 is adequately reflected as a key priority. LTGDC has appointed consultants to undertake a transport and access study of the A12. The objective of this work is to assess the impacts of proposed development on the A12, identify capacity issues and propose a series of interventions to address connectivity in the area (A12 – Transport Capacity and Access Study). The outcomes of this work should be used to inform specific interventions for addressing the barrier for the A12 which should be identified through the Local Development Framework within Area Action Plans or area specific Supplementary Planning Documents.

Designing a High Quality City – Creating attractive, safe streets and public places

- 4.2.47 The preferred strategy includes improvements to address major barriers including Aspen Way and the A12. It identifies the High Street 2012 programme as a key mechanism to improve the public realm within its area.

4.2.48 The strategy identifies areas of priority for pedestrian and cycle and public realm improvements. The A12 is identified as a priority for public realm improvements and improved crossings at Stratford High Street and Bromley-by-Bow are identified. All the consultation centres (including Bromley-by-Bow) are identified as areas with potential for public realm improvements.

4.2.49 Three proposed crossings over the River Lea are identified on the diagram summarising the proposed strategy. The identified locations are compatible with LTGDC on-going master planning work and are therefore supported.

Consultation Questions

4.2.50 Do you agree with the proposed locations for public realm improvements? If not, what / where are the alternatives?

4.2.51 Do you agree with the priority areas for pedestrian / cycling improvements? If not, what / where are the alternatives?

4.2.52 Do you agree with the overall approach to Creating Attractive and Safe Streets and Public Places? If not, how could it be improved?

Proposed Response

4.2.53 Officers support the proposed locations for public realm improvements including at Bromley-by-Bow and the identified priorities for pedestrian cycle improvements. As highlighted above specific interventions should be informed by the A12 study which will report in August 2009 and should be reflected in more detailed planning policy.

Tackling Climate Change – Working Towards zero carbon built form

4.2.54 There is an overall aim to ensure that all new homes reach zero carbon by 2016 and that all non-domestic properties reach zero carbon by 2019. To this end, the strategy identifies potential locations of low/zero carbon areas. This includes the whole of the LTGDC area that falls within Tower Hamlets.

4.2.55 Appropriate locations for the development of decentralised heat and energy networks, including locating a combined cooling heat power plant in the Lower Lea Valley. Facilitate the development of the potential energy and waste treatment plant and Olympic Energy Centre on Fish Island.

4.2.56 High Street 2012 is to be used as an exemplar showcase for renewable energy generation utilising methods such as solar panels and wind turbines.

4.2.57 Detailed guidance is to be provided in the Development Management DPD.

Consultation Questions

4.2.58 Do you agree with the proposed location of the Combined Cooling Heating Power Plants? If not, what / where are the alternatives?

4.2.59 Can you suggest any areas in which the Council should identify potential energy actions zones under the emerging Community Energy Saving Programme?

4.2.60 Do you agree with the overall approach to Living and working within Environmental Limits? If not, how could it be improved?

Proposed Response

4.2.61 Officers support the objectives of the preferred strategy, including the potential to locate a CCHP within the Lower Lea Valley.

4.2.62 However, flexibility needs to be built into the guidance to be set out in the Development Management DPD policies in relation to all homes achieving zero carbon by 2016 within the LTGDC area to ensure development viability is not affected.

4.3 Application to Places

4.3.1 Each 'places plan' consists of an overall vision for the area supporting by a spatial diagram, a series of short term (0-5 years) and long term (5-15 yrs) objectives and strategic development and design principles.

Fish Island

4.3.2 The vision for Fish Island is a mixed use eco-quarter set amongst the extensive waterways connecting Tower Hamlets with the Olympic Park. Fish Island will gradually evolve with a greater mix of residential uses taking advantage of the improved public transport node at Hackney Wick. New and improved streets and bridges to connect Fish Island to the Olympic Park.

4.3.3 The spatial vision includes the creation of a north spine that connects Fish Island south to Hackney Wick Station and recognises the need to improve east-west connectivity across waterways and the A12. The area around Hackney Wick Station is identified as a mixed use hub forming a centre and focal point to the area. As highlighted above, a site is to be identified for a new school.

4.3.4 The interface between Fish Island and the Olympic Park is identified as a potential area for family housing and new green space. The new Olympic Media centre is identified as a potential

catalyst for enhancing the existing small and medium enterprise industry cluster.

- 4.3.5 A series of short-term objectives are set for the first 6 years, including improvement to Hackney Wick transport hub and connections to it. Longer term objectives include improving connections with the Olympic Park and overcoming the barrier of the A12, powering all future uses from the Olympic Energy Centre and interlinked heat and energy network and identifying a site for secondary school.

Bromley-by-Bow

- 4.3.6 The vision for Bromley-by-Bow is a prosperous neighbourhood set against the River Lea and Park and a transformed A12 with improved connections to the Three Mills and the Olympic Site. New housing, businesses, social infrastructure to create new communities set around a new town centre. Bromley-by-Bow is identified as a gap in the current town centre network.
- 4.3.7 Key sites such as Bow Lock, St Andrew's and sites to the east of the A12 in Newham are identified as key to achieving this.
- 4.3.8 The spatial vision diagram identifies potential for a new town centre with the improved Bromley-by-Bow stations as its focal point.
- 4.3.9 Improve east west connectivity to and through the new centre and over the River Lea. A new green space is proposed to connect with the Lea River Park and a green link east to West connecting with Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park. Improve north south connectivity.
- 4.3.10 Housing estate renewal of existing communities, focus new low density family housing along the canal with non family housing concentrated in higher density development blocks above the relocated supermarket. A new primary school is to be provided to support this housing growth.

Consultation Questions for LAP 5 and 6 (includes Fish Island and Bromley-by-Bow)

- 4.3.11 Does the context information accurately describe LAP 5 and 6? Are any changes needed?
- 4.3.12 Do you agree with the emerging vision for each Place? Are there any alternatives?
- 4.3.13 Are you aware of any other opportunities that exist for each Place?
- 4.3.14 Do you agree with the short term and long term objectives for each Place? If not, what are your suggested alternatives?

Proposed Response

- 4.3.15 Fish Island - officers consider that the current issues and constraints are correctly identified. The strategic vision is supported and is compatible with the initial work undertaken for the Hackney Wick Fish Island Masterplan. However, greater clarity is required as to how the next level of detail is to be developed, whether through the development of the Hackney Wick Fish Island Masterplan into an AAP or SPD.
- 4.3.16 Bromley-by-Bow - officers support the overall vision and spatial strategy for Bromley-by-Bow. However, Section 3 identifies the area as a neighbourhood centre. It is considered that the scale of development planned and its future role is compatible with designation as a District Centre rather than a Neighbourhood Centre.

Poplar Riverside

- 4.3.17 The vision is for Poplar Riverside to change from a largely industrial area to a predominantly residential area, characterised by its connection with the River Lea and A12. A large new green space is proposed on the Leven Road site forming part of the Lea River Park and FAT Walk connecting up the Lea Valley communities with green space.
- 4.3.18 Regeneration of existing Abbott Road neighbourhood centre. New open space and social infrastructure make it a desirable location for family housing.
- 4.3.19 Overcome the barrier of the A12 to improve accessibility.

Leamouth

- 4.3.20 Leamouth to become a mixed urban with a creative and arts hub at Trinity Buoy Wharf alongside new residential communities, set around the River Thames and River Lea. Pedestrian and cycle links to public transport node and town centre at Canning Town and to East India DLR.
- 4.3.21 The strategy reiterates support for safeguarding of Orchard Wharf
- 4.3.22 Protection of East India Basin MOL and creation of a green river edge along the River Lea as part of the new River Lea Park.
- 4.3.23 Bridge connections over the River Lea at Trinity Buoy Wharf and to connect to Canning Town.

Consultation Questions for LAP 7&8 (including Poplar Riverside and Leamouth)

- 4.3.24 Does the context information accurately describe LAP 7 and 8? Are any changes needed?

4.3.25 Do you agree with the emerging vision for each Place? Are there any alternatives?

Proposed Response

4.3.26 Polar Riverside - officers support the identification of the Leven Road site for open space and recognition of the FAT walk and its role in connecting up the Lea Valley communities with green space.

4.3.27 Leamouth – the identification of East India Dock as part of a wider green space network is supported as is the recognition of the need to promote a green edge along the river as part of the new River Lea Park.

5. Recommendation

That the Committee:

- a) Agree that the Director of Planning respond to the consultation with comments based on the above and any additional comments made by members at the meeting.
- b) Note that a further report on the pre-submission version of the Core Strategy will be brought forward in autumn 2009.

Date: 31st March 2009