

Planning Committee Report

London Thames Gateway Development Corporation

Emerging Planning Policy in the Lower Lea Valley: Hackney Wick Area Action Plan (Phase 1)

Report of the Director of Planning

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report sets out the Corporation's proposed response to consultation on the Draft Hackney Wick Area Action Plan (Phase 1). Section 4 summarises the document; the document is available to view on Hackney's web-site: [Hackney Wick Area Action Plan](#). Section 5 of this report sets out the proposed response to consultation.

2. Decision Required

- 2.1 That the Committee **Agree** that the Director of Planning respond to the consultation with comments set out below and any additional comments made by members at the meeting.

3. Background to the Document

- 3.1 It was initially anticipated that a document covering Hackney Wick and Fish Island would be pursued jointly by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and the London Borough of Hackney. However, the boroughs subsequently decided to progress separate Area Action Plans (AAP). The area covered by the Hackney Wick AAP is shown on Figure 1, reproduced at Appendix 1 to this report. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets is in the initial stages of preparing an AAP for Fish Island.
- 3.2 This is the first round of public consultation on the document. A further iteration of the document (referred to as Phase 2) will be published for consultation once the Core Strategy is adopted, which is currently anticipated to be in September 2010.
- 3.3 LTGDC officers have been involved in the production of the document, but the Area Action Plan will ultimately be adopted by the London Borough of Hackney.

4. Summary of the Hackney Wick Area Action Plan

4.1 A brief outline of the Draft Area Action Plan is set out below.

Context, Key Issues and Opportunities

4.2 The Area Action Plan identifies the following baseline issues to be addressed by proposals for the area:

- Severance and Isolation – the barrier effect created by the physical infrastructure that surrounds and runs through the area, especially the North London Railway and the Hackney Cut;
- Economic decline – the decline in traditional inner urban industries and replacement by live/work developments (which in many cases have been converted to residential only) and impact of clearance for the creation of the Olympic Park;
- Socio-economic conditions – all the areas within Hackney Wick score within the lowest 10% most deprived in England;
- Flood risk – Hackney Wick is within an area at risk of both fluvial and tidal flooding (Zones 2 and 3);
- Land ownership – fragmented ownership presents a challenge to comprehensive development. There are problems associated with investors renting premises to existing businesses in the short term contributing to uncertainty in the area.

4.3 The following are identified as opportunities:

- Impact of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games both in terms of infrastructure left behind in Legacy and in terms of opportunities for development on the remediated land after the Games;
- Recent growth of the creative and cultural sector in the area and potential to develop the area as a centre for creative production;
- Open space and waterways – the area benefits from being located between Victoria Park to the west and future Legacy Park to the east as well as other local open spaces and being crossed north to south by the Lea Navigation and west to east by the Hertford Union Canal;
- Accessibility and Transport – despite the perceived isolation and severance, the area has significant and improving strategic rail, bus and road connections; and

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- Character and heritage – historic buildings and streetscape which should be viewed as regeneration opportunities and could contribute to the development of new character areas.

Vision and Objectives

- 4.4 The vision for Hackney Wick as set out in the AAP is for Hackney to develop as a:

“Vibrant, diverse and well connected area on the edge of the Olympic Park. Hackney Wick Hub around the railway station is a lively mixed-use local centre containing a blend of high quality new and old buildings, employment space for a range of activities, with high accessibility to rail and bus services. Hackney Wick North is a successful residential community with excellent access to services and leisure facilities. The Creative Media City is a thriving, highly accessible mixed-use employment urban quarter on the former Olympic Park, home to strong, competitive creative, technology and green industries, and well provided for by local services. The area as a whole is a vibrant stimulating place to live, work and visit, with an attractive mix of housing catering for a range of needs including families, strong public transport links, local services and infrastructure, and excellent access to parkland.”

- 4.5 Based on this vision, three distinct character areas have been identified: Hackney Wick North; Creative Media City and Hackney Wick Hub.
- 4.6 Hackney Wick North will remain a residential neighbourhood with an enhanced local centre for community infrastructure. Developments adjacent to the St Mary of Eton Church, Hackney Wick Green and Hackney Wick Community Centre will provide additional community facilities. Improvements to the local streetscape and public realm will be made to improve routes to Hackney Wick Station, Gainsborough Primary School and the new Creative Media City and parkland east of the Cut.
- 4.7 The Creative Media City is to be a mixed use area of new employment, leisure and residential development occupying the Olympic Park. In the north of the area, the buildings which formed the Main Press Centre (MPC) and International Broadcast Centre (IBC) during Games will be adapted for use by a range of new media engineering, production and post-production activities. The south of the area will have a more leisure focus, with the Handball Arena converted into an indoor sports venue (known as the Multi-Use Sports Venue). The cooling and heat power plant (CCHP) will be retained as part of new sustainable utilities infrastructure for future development in the area.
- 4.8 The Hackney Wick Hub will be focused on a new station and enhanced public realm. The hub will include restaurants, cafes and shops to serve new and existing communities in the surrounding area, building on the collection of heritage buildings in the area.

Objectives, Principles and Proposals

- 4.9 In order to achieve this vision, a set of four objectives and a series of supporting proposals have been developed. These are summarised below along with the key proposals/interventions under each objective

Objective 1 – a highly accessible place

- 4.10 The strategy to address current severance and isolation is based on the character areas outlined above and identifies a hierarchy of links and connections between them. The AAP then sets out a range of proposals to improve accessibility and permeability by foot, cycle and public transport.
- 4.11 Public transport proposals include upgrading Hackney Wick Station (several options are set out in the document and will be subject to further consultation with TfL) and extension of bus routes to create new bus stops in close proximity to the station and improve bus/rail interchange.
- 4.12 The AAP proposes the following interventions to improve pedestrian and cycle routes:
- Pedestrian and cycle bridge across the Hackney Cut at the eastern end of Wallis Road, providing access to the Olympic Park and Creative Media City;
 - A pedestrian and cycle bridge linking Gainsborough School and local residents to the park, playing fields and other legacy uses;
 - The opening up of a footpath on the western side of the Hackney Cut from the railway bridge to the Eastway;
 - Improvements to the bridge crossing the A12 to Victoria Park from the corner of Chapman and Wallis Roads; and
 - Pedestrian and cyclist improvements at the junction of Wick Road and Chapman Road.
- 4.13 The AAP also identifies key connections points that should be improved including improvements to the junction of Wick Road/Chapman Road, improvements to the pedestrian bridge over the A12 to Victoria Park and the Red Path to Mabley Green. The Eastway Bridge (which currently only permits vehicular traffic in a westerly direction) is to be upgraded to allow buses to travel in both directions.
- 4.14 The diagram which summarises these enhancements (Figure 10: Enhancing Connectivity) is reproduced at Appendix 1 to this report. The Corporation has agreed to fund several of these enhancements as part of a comprehensive programme to improve access for pedestrians and cyclists from both Hackney and Tower Hamlets to the Legacy Park area.

Objective 2: a high quality public realm and open space network

- 4.15 As there are already a number of significant areas of open space in the vicinity (Victoria Park, Mabley Green, the Lea Valley Regional Park and the future Legacy Park), the AAP does not propose any major elements of open space. Instead it proposes to improve access to these existing spaces and complement this provision with a series of local public spaces and streetscape improvements.

Objective 3: a distinct new urban Quarter

- 4.16 The AAP sets out principles for the scale, grain, height and massing of development. It emphasises that new development should respond to the historic building fabric while recognising that a variety of uses will require a diversity of building scale. Development principles for scale and grain are:
- Key movement corridors should be fronted by finer grain development;
 - Where active frontages are required, these should be of finer grain development; and
 - Bulkier, larger footprint development should generally be concentrated in the west and east of the AAP area.

- 4.17 With regards to building heights the key principles are that tall buildings will be focuses on The Hub, particularly around the station and canal. Acceptable building heights around the station should range from 6-8 storeys. The area adjacent to the Hackney Cut is identified as suitable for tall buildings of approximately 10 storeys. Outside the hub, buildings should be of low to medium rise (4-6 storey maximum). The AAP also identifies locations appropriate for active and improved frontages.

Objective Four – A Balanced Mix of Uses

- 4.18 The AAP acknowledges that, as Hackney Wick changes, there will be demand to include a greater mix of uses within developments. This will depend on the managed released of some industrial land for a broader mix of uses. The AAP refers to the Core Strategy, which allocates a large part of Hackney Wick as 'Other Industrial Area' and states that within this area, the Council will support development proposals which seek to intensify the use of sites through the introduction of other uses as long as existing industrial floorspace is re-provided within the development.
- 4.19 The proposed distribution of land uses can be summarised as:
- New employment uses in the Creative Media City and the Hub;

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- Opportunities for new residential development in the Hub and to the east and south of the Creative Media City;
- New community uses in Hackney Wick North and in the Hub; and
- New retail provision in the hub

4.20 Figure 15 which shows the proposed distribution of land uses is reproduced at Appendix 1. The AAP acknowledges that there will need to be sufficient residential development across the area to generate a critical mass of people to support the development of a wide range of commercial space and contribute to the funding of key pieces of new infrastructure. The AAP reiterates the target of 500 dwellings for the area. It should be noted that the most recent version of the Core Strategy increased this target to 620 units.

4.21 New residential development will be concentrated in the Hub and Hackney Wick North. The AAP identifies 'Areas of Change' where significant redevelopment is anticipated. Figure 16: Areas of Change is reproduced at Appendix 1 for ease of reference.

4.22 Community facilities will be concentrated along Eastway, including an improved Hackney Wick Community Centre and additional facilities at St Mary of Eaton Church. Redevelopment within the hub is to provide increased retail activity and services.

4.23 The AAP seeks to direct different employment activities across the various character areas. Within the 'Creative Media City' the built legacy of the IPC/MPC in north and the Multi Use Sports Venue (MUSV) in the south will dictate the type of commercial space to be developed, with the northern part having a focus on employment and the southern part on leisure and mixed uses. Appropriate commercial development in the Hub includes studio space, research and development space, small to medium light industrial (which is compatible with residential uses), clusters of small to medium workspace units and retail and food.

4.24 The AAP highlights that the existing uses and built form as well as the opportunities created by the IBC/MPC, offer a prospect to build on the current cluster of creative and cultural industries (CCI) in the area. In order to foster this sector, a range of spaces will be required to accommodate the differing needs of businesses across the CCI spectrum, ranging from shared incubator spaces to 'move-on' and larger spaces suitable for growing businesses.

The Hub Development Options

4.25 Given the complexity of the hub area and the importance of the railway station, the AAP examines this area in greater detail and sets out three options for interventions to improve access to and use of the station. These are summarised in the table below.

	Key Features
Option 1: Minimal Intervention	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved frontages along Wallis Road assist in guiding people towards the existing station entrances. 2. Station entrances are upgraded with better signage, lighting and paving to improve visibility. 3. The permeability through the Hub is improved with the size of the blocks broken down to allow a greater level of accessibility. 4. A pedestrian and cycle bridge is built at the end of Wallis Road providing improved connections into the Olympic legacy development. 5. The Hackney Cut western footpath is fully opened providing an improved north south connection. 6. All heritage buildings located within the hub are maintained and either upgraded or incorporated into new developments.
Option 2: Station Hub - This option aims to create a hub of activity focused around a new access route to the station, which also has a new ground level entrance.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A new pedestrian space is created to a new ground level station entrance from the intersection of Prince Edward, Wallis and Berkshire Roads 2. The new station entrance could include both stairs and lift access to the platforms. 3. New bus stops are introduced along Wallis Road providing an improved connection with the station. 4. Permeability is improved across the Hub with development plots sized to reflect the urban grain existing to the west of Hub around Oslo House. 5. A series of small courtyards and terraces are introduced to provide public space, and to also establish varied experiences across the Hub. 6. The pedestrian and cycle bridge built at the end of Wallis Road is expanded to accommodate vehicular traffic, but is restricted to bus access. This bridge provides improved access to the IBC/MPC, Stratford City and the wider Olympic Legacy Development. 7. The Hackney Cut western footpath is fully opened providing an improved north south connection. 8. Direct access to the eastern side of Hackney Cut to the Media City and MUSV via a footway adjacent to the rail bridge extending from the rail platform.
Option 3: High Street - Establish the eastern end of Wallis Road as a high street for Hackney Wick, which both extends the emerging high street function of Felstead Street, and connects to the high street uses proposed as part of the Olympic legacy development.	<p>Key features:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A new ground level station entrance is established within the Hub that is aligned along a shared surface route to the Central Books building. 2. Station access from platform level is established down to the canal towpath, which is fully opened providing an improved north south connection. 3. The station ramps are removed and Wallis Road underpass is expanded. 4. Bus stops are established in front of the Central Books building, which provides a direct connection to the station, but also provides possible bus connection to the Olympic Legacy development via the Wallis Bridge. 5. The pedestrian and cycle bridge built at the end of Wallis Road is expanded to accommodate vehicular traffic, but is restricted to bus access only. This bridge provides improved access to the IBC/MPC, Stratford City and the wider Olympic Legacy Development, and also establishes the eastern end of Wallis road as a high street. 6. Permeability is improved across the hub with development plots sized to reflect the urban grain existing to the west of Hub around Oslo House. A mix of shared surfaces, tertiary roads and pedestrian and cycle routes are introduced between the plots. 7. A waterside terrace is introduced along the eastern end of Wallis Road, providing a small public space that could be fronted by retail uses.

Phasing

- 4.26 This section of the AAP identifies key delivery partners, including the Corporation, and outlines their roles and responsibilities. This section also provides a general commentary on the types of interventions that will be delivered in Phase 1 (1-3 Years), Phase 2 (3-6 Years) and Phase 3 (6+ Years). It is highlighted that as the AAP is developed, specific mechanisms to protect and grow support CCIs will be identified.

5. The Proposed LTGDC Response

- 5.1 LTGDC officers will continue to work with the Hackney officers to develop the Area Action Plan prior to the next round of consultation. At this stage, it is considered that the response to consultation should be grouped under the topics below and that the comments outlined below should be used as a basis for further discussions with Hackney officers.

Land Use – SIL Designation

- 5.2 LTGDC officers consider that in the next stages of preparation the Area Action Plan should be developed to give a clearer policy statement on quantum and distribution of land use within the area. The Draft Replacement London Plan stresses the importance of Olympic legacy and states that the Olympic Legacy SPG will set out how the areas around the Olympic Park can benefit from emerging legacy proposals, including through promoting the release of appropriate industrial sites for mixed use development in areas such as Hackney Wick. Whilst the AAP acknowledges this (at paragraph 4.4.3), it is not considered for the reasons set out below that the proposed approach in the AAP will in practice be sufficiently flexible to promote genuine mixed development.
- 5.3 The Area Action Plan reflects the land use distribution shown on the Core Strategy Proposals Map whereby a large proportion of Hackney Wick to the north of the station (both east and west of the Hackney Cut) is designated as 'Other Industrial Area' with the area to the north and east of this (on the east site of the Canal) retained as a Strategic Industrial Location (SIL). Within the 'Other Industrial Area' designation, the AAP states that the Council will support the introduction of a wider range of uses, provided existing floorspace is re-provided. LTGDC officers consider that this is restrictive and may constrain regeneration and have therefore suggested to Hackney that the policy should be based on a requirement to provide the necessary floorspace to generate an employment density which is at least equivalent to the existing uses. LTGDC raised similar concerns with the Core Strategy policy for Hackney Wick as set out in a report to Planning Committee in January 2010 (Agenda Item 5).
- 5.4 The Area Action Plan also refers to the proposed re-designation of the areas of Hackney Wick to be retained as SIL from 'Preferred Industrial Local' (PIL) to 'Industrial Business Park (IBP)'. The London Plan states that IBPs are suitable for activities that need better quality surroundings such

as research and development, light industrial and higher value general industrial. LTGDC officers support this, which is clearly aligned with the wider objectives of creating an environment which is compatible with residential uses and developing a creative and cultural industry (CCI) quarter focused on the IBC/MPC legacy. However, it would be helpful if the AAP set out more explicitly the rationale for, and implications of, this change in emphasis.

- 5.5 LTGDC officers support the objective of protecting and growing the CCI sector in Hackney Wick. It is noted that existing data on businesses currently located in the area is not considered to be reliable due to the impact of Olympic relocations. It is considered that in order to develop a strategy for protecting existing businesses as appropriate and encouraging future growth, it is necessary to have an up to date detailed understanding of the types of existing businesses and employers in the area. It is therefore recommended that a study is undertaken to inform the next stage of the Area Action Plan. LTGDC officers will explore this in further detail with Hackney.

Land Use – Residential Development

- 5.6 It is considered that the AAP should give stronger support for residential development as part of mixed use schemes. The AAP directs residential development primarily to the Hub and Hackney North and paragraph 4.4.10 recognises the need to generate a critical mass of people to support new local services and facilities. However, the vision for the Hub is very clearly employment led, though residential opportunities are acknowledged. The AAP refers to the Core Strategy target of 500 and indicates that this can be achieved and exceeded.
- 5.7 LTGDC officers have previously raised concerns that the target of 500 homes is too low. Although this has now been amended to 620, the basis for this as a target is not clear. Given the uncertainties around the level of release of industrial land use and the extent of change in the area, it is considered that any target should be expressed as a minimum.

Land Use – Retail

- 5.8 The issue of the level of residential development and therefore the likely future resident population is strongly linked to the development of Hackney Wick as a local centre. The Area Action Plan acknowledges the need to create a critical mass of population to support services. However, the future role of the centre should also be considered in the context of the needs of the existing population, the future needs of an expanded local working population and wider regeneration and change in the area (including in particular Fish Island within London Borough of Tower Hamlets) which is likely to result in more densely populated areas within walking distance of Hackney Wick.

- 5.9 It is considered that a particular focus of the next stages of work should be the role and function of Hackney Wick as a local centre, based on an assessment of the likely future needs arising from regeneration and change. It will be important to consider the likely extent of change and regeneration in the wider area as a result of Olympic Legacy and how this might determine the future role of Hackney Wick local centre. The next version of the Area Action Plan should include a clear policy on the role and function of Hackney Wick within the town centre hierarchy as well as the quantum and type of retail and services that should be encouraged. As the strategy for the Hub is developed further, this should include identification of streets and specific areas which will become the primary focus and 'retail frontages' within the local centre.
- 5.10 It is considered that this needs to be undertaken in conjunction with the work now being progressed by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets to prepare the Fish Island Area Action Plan to ensure that both areas are planned in an integrated way. The Area Action Plan should set the Hackney Wick area and the Hub in particular, more clearly within the wider area, highlighting links with Fish Island in particular.

Heritage and Conservation

- 5.11 The next version of the Area Action Plan should include a clear statement on the recently designated Hackney Wick Conservation Area, including the area it covers, its key attributes and characteristics and how future development proposals should reflect these. It is recognised that the conservation area designation will give the Council the means to protect non-listed buildings of heritage interest in the area. However, there is also a concern that, if it is not managed in a positive way, the designation may have a negative impact on the potential for growth. Clear guidance should therefore be given on the need for positive change and enhancement, as well as preservation where appropriate, in both the AAP and any Conservation Area Character Statement to be produced. Consultation on the designation runs from 1st February to 15th March and the views of the LTGDC have been sought so officers will be able to highlight the need for positive interventions.
- 5.12 The principles for scale and grain of development are supported. However, LTGDC officers would question the logic of promoting higher buildings along the canal (up to 10 storeys) than adjacent to the station (6-8 storeys), given the context of elevated railway compared with relatively low and open vistas along the canal. The rationale for this approach requires further explanation.

Transport and Connectivity

- 5.13 LTGDC officers support the strategy for improving connections and the interventions identified to improve walking and cycling connections.

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- 5.14 However, although the AAP recognises the need to improve bus routes in the area, most of which currently terminate on the edge of the area or pass down the western side, no specific proposals are yet set out. It is considered that further detail should be given of the specific public transport improvements necessary to support growth. In particular, the AAP should include proposals for specific bus route improvements such as to the Homerton area and Hackney Central. It is recognised that further information is provided in the Hackney Wick – Review of Access Issues and Opportunities study which is currently in draft but will inform the next stage of AAP preparation.

Phasing and Delivery

- 5.15 The table of proposed projects (pg 59) should be developed into a comprehensive delivery plan. This should identify all the interventions in transport and connections, utilities, open space and community infrastructure necessary to support the strategy set out in the AAP. For each of these, responsibilities, timescales and funding sources should be identified where feasible. It is proposed that LTGDC officers will work with Hackney to develop this.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 The Committee is asked to 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.

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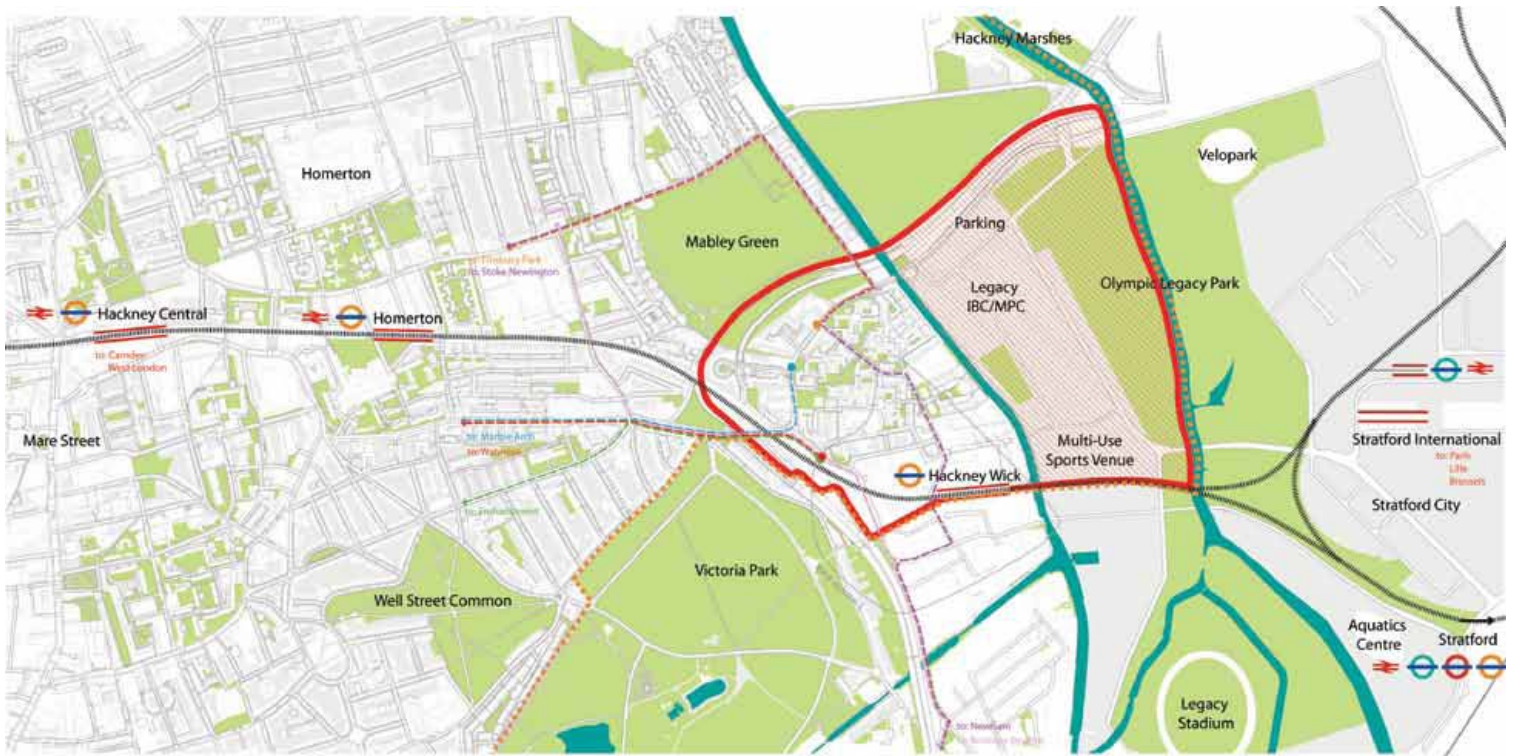
Figure 1: Hackney Wick Study Area and Strategic Accessibility



Hackney Wick Study Area and Strategic Accessibility

- Study area
- Olympic and Legacy Development within Study Area
- - - - Borough Boundary
- Parklands
- London Underground, Overground, DLR and National Rail
- Railway Station
- Bus Routes

Figure 10: Enhancing Connectivity



Hackney Wick Study Area and Strategic Accessibility

- Study area
- Olympic and Legacy Development within Study Area
- - - - Borough Boundary
- Parklands
- London Underground, Overground, DLR and National Rail
- Railway Station
- Bus Routes

Figure 15: Land Use



Figure 16: Areas of Change

