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Welcome to the Lea River Park

London Thames Gateway Development Corporation with the
Lee Valley Regional Park Authority and Design for London

Foreword

This brochure sets out the principles of delivering a fantastic new park in the Lower Lea Valley, in the heart of east London.

The extension of the existing Lee Valley Regional Park southwards from the Olympic Park at Stratford to the River Thames at East India Dock Basin has long formed an integral part of the long-term plans for the valley. LTGDC's commitment to regenerating the Lower Lea Valley, combined with the imperative for an Olympic Park means we have the perfect opportunity to create a new urban park of regional importance: an exciting and varied new public space we've named the LEA RIVER PARK.

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Peter Andrews, CEO
London Thames Gateway
Development Corporation

The park will unlock valuable new green space and leisure facilities in an area that suffers from high levels of deprivation and a lack of public amenities. It will provide an improved environment that will in turn encourage high-quality business and residential redevelopment, resulting in the creation of new homes and new jobs. It will promote health benefits and vastly enhance what's currently an underused and unloved natural environment.

In short, the park is at the heart of the broader regeneration of the Lower Lea Valley, shaping future development, encompassing and promoting the notion of landscape urbanism, where the park and landscape together establish the skeleton of the built environment.

The opportunity is being grabbed by London Thames Gateway Development Corporation, the Greater London Authority and the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority and this is our plan.

Welcome to the Lea River Park – a new park for London

The London Thames Gateway Development Corporation has been working hard with partners; the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (LVRPA), Design for London, the London Development Agency (LDA), the Environment Agency, the Olympic Delivery Authority and the local boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Newham. We have established a design framework that sets out our vision for the Lea River Park and identifies the essential projects and plans for its delivery.

Urban designers 5th Studio's work on this vision will guide the transformation of the area, while respecting and preserving its heritage for the future.

The Lower Lea Valley already has a fine network of waterways, exotic ecology, beautiful historic structures, an impressive industrial and provisioning heritage and fantastic views creating a profound sense of place. The Lea River Park will embrace these special qualities, providing a link between the past and the future of the area that is both celebratory and forward-looking.

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In practical terms, the park will use the Lea River and a new linear parkway called the Fatwalk to unite six individual park areas, each with its own distinct character. Some of the parks comprise existing but underused open spaces, while others are entirely new and require major works including the decommissioning of 'live' gas holders, the creation of new bridges, cycling and pedestrian links, and public access to underused private land.

The design framework identifies major new parks at Three Mills and Twelve Trees Crescent near Bromley by Bow, and Leven Road, just west of Canning Town. Existing routes will be improved and widened with additional routes and bridges provided where necessary to enable the Fatwalk to link each of the six sites. Access to the river and all park areas will be upgraded and renewed.

First phase projects and their funding have been confirmed and work has begun on the early delivery of this exciting new vision.

Image: Entrance to the East India Dock Basin



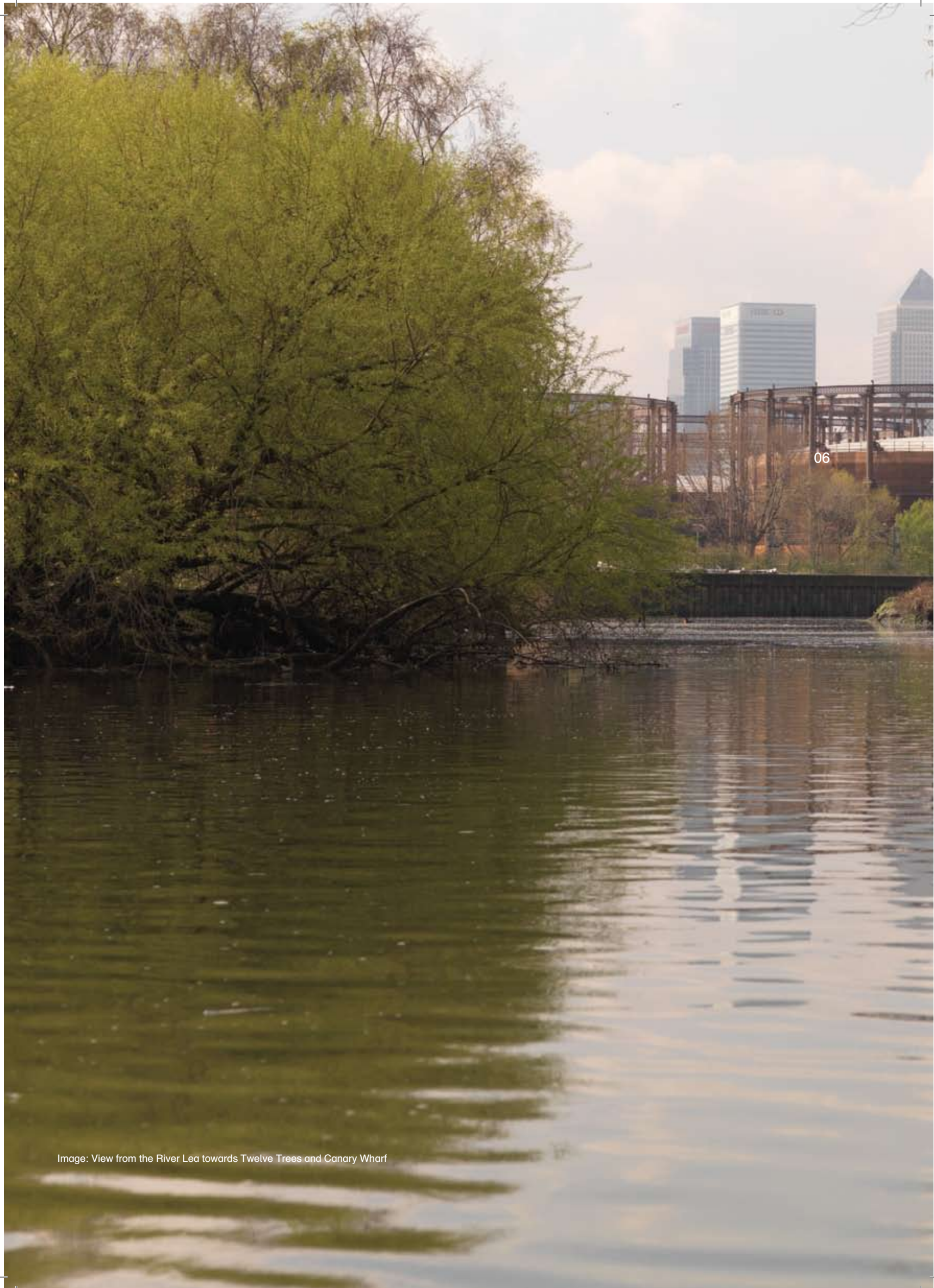


Image: View from the River Lea towards Twelve Trees and Canary Wharf

A scenic view of a river with a bridge and trees. The river is in the foreground, reflecting the surrounding greenery. The bridge is in the middle ground, and a tall building is visible in the background. The trees are lush and green, with some branches hanging over the water. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

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Connecting the valley

The Lea River Park will create a new two-mile parkland for east London and complete the final stretch of the Lee Valley Regional Park, creating a continuous 26-mile area of varied parkland from the Thames north into Hertfordshire, taking in the Olympic Park and contributing to 235 hectares of new and improved public open space planned for the Lower Lea Valley.

It will be a catalyst for regeneration in the lower part of the Lea Valley, transforming what is currently a neglected hinterland into a vibrant east London location, improving the quality of life for residents and businesses and offering a compelling leisure proposition for visitors from the wider area.

Perhaps most importantly, it provides the opportunity to forge really effective links across the southern part of the valley, which will connect communities on either side and make the extraordinary landscapes of the Lower Lea Valley accessible to all.

Locations

1. East India Dock Basin
2. Exotic Wild
3. Poplar River Park
4. Twelve Trees
5. Mills Meads & Abbey Mills
6. Three Mills Green

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Main image: Overview of the Lea River Park
Top image: Lea Valley walk and Twelve Trees
Bottom image: Lea River and the DLR



History in the making

As the River Lea enters the final leg of its southward journey towards its union with the Thames, it tracks a remarkable passage through a landscape tattooed with the indelible marks of its diverse industrial heritage.

The history of the Lower Lea Valley is intimately and inextricably linked with the historical provisioning of London; for centuries, food, water, power and manufactured goods have surged from the valley into the capital, while its waste was transported back along the Lea to be processed alongside chemical, glue and paint factories. From this intense industry grew a unique culture of innovation, the vestiges of which – factories, warehouses, railways, bridges, gas storage towers – remain today.

Not surprisingly, the Lea Valley landscape has been sculpted and scarred by the passage of time, its boroughs and communities increasingly fragmented and severed by the effects of successive waves of industrialisation and in the aftermath of World War II. But for all this, the Lower Lea is a place of unseen treasures, a forgotten valley that still provides valuable services to London's residents, yet for many is a sleeping beauty concealed behind a veil of neglect.

The Lea River Park will breathe new life into this forgotten region, at the same time retaining a real sense of its history and heritage; preserving its industrial legacy for everyone to experience and enjoy.

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Main image: Barrels of wine being unloaded at London Docks in 1952, which specialised in luxury goods such as spices, ivory, wine and liquor.

Top image: Labourers work on the redevelopment of East India Docks in 1923 to widen the entrance passage between the basin and the dock.

Bottom image: Children in Poplar using a water cart to have a paddle in 1925.

Diane Peters
Streets of Growth
Local Community Programme

“I’ve got high hopes that the new park will act as a catalyst to bring people from the different communities together, to share in the creation and enjoyment of what promises to be an amazing recreational resource.”

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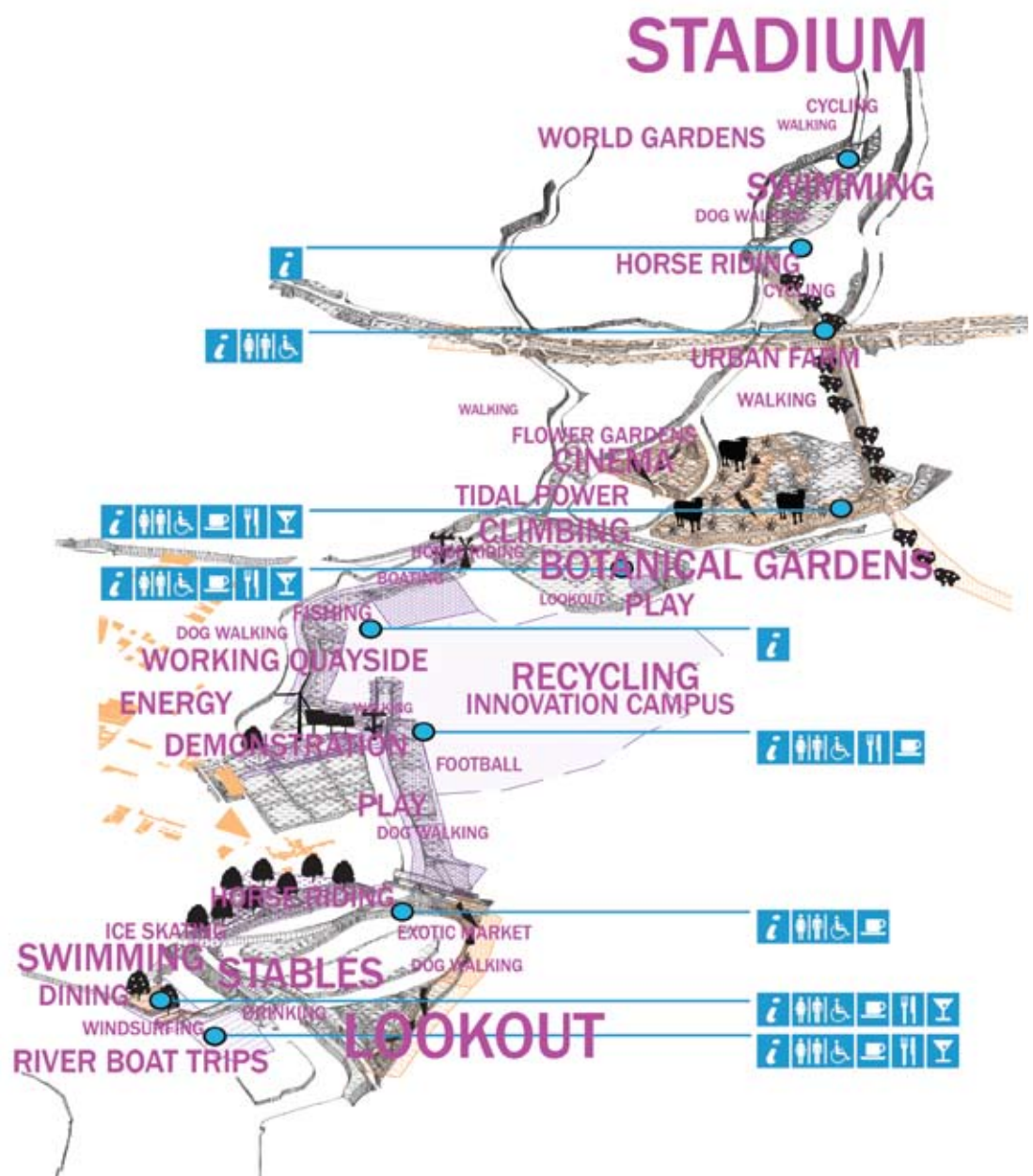


The people's park

The park will draw visitors from near and far, attracted by a range of activities designed to appeal to a wide audience, as well as spaces for leisure and relaxation. We'll be creating popular destinations that encourage locals and people from further afield to come to the park and to enjoy the experiences on offer.

Plans include: playgrounds; orchards; woodland; sustainable energy projects; ecological preservation; enhancement of natural habitats; botanical, community and flower gardens; an urban farm; sports pitches; boating; water sports; cinema and event space; an urban beach and summer lido; climbing and fishing areas; plus markets and restaurants.

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A natural habitat

The park is designed to be sustainable, preserving and improving the valley's ecology, maximising the biodiversity potential of the river valley and making spaces for species of fauna and flora in tidal, intertidal and riverine habitats. We're proposing the creation of an energy park – an exciting public laboratory and showcase for sustainable technologies in energy production. The two gasholder sites at Twelve Trees Crescent and Leven Road will be decommissioned and the land cleaned of the pollution from its previous uses.



The Lower Lea supports a unique ecology – the result of centuries of urbanisation plus a long history of trade which has introduced plants and other species from far and wide. At its lower reaches, the river is semi-tidal and rich in fish such as pike, perch and bream; at low tide exposed mud and shingle provide a feeding ground for waders and waterfowl. On the banks and towpaths myriad plants, birds and insects are found while herons, coots and moorhens roam among the flag irises, trefoils and fennel pondweed. Aquatic plants are also abundant here.

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At the mouth of Bow Creek LTGDC has already part-funded improvement works to the Bow Creek Ecology Park with LVRPA. Once prized for its abundant flora, extensive clearance meant that only a fraction of the most botanically diverse area remained. The site has recently been reclassified and the work undertaken has helped to restore it with new planting, coppicing and the creation of wetland habitats.

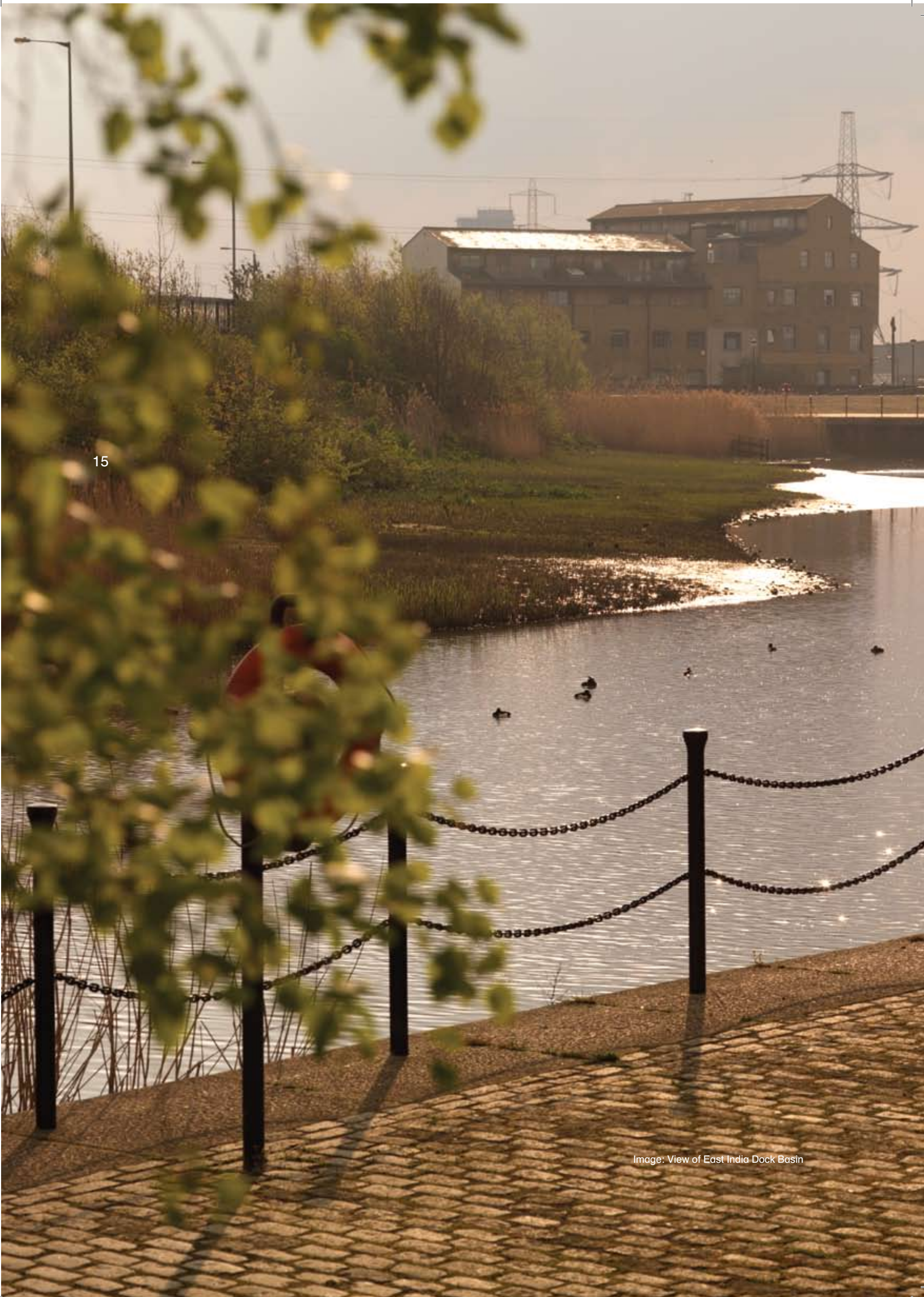


Image: View of East India Dock Basin

Design proposals

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Three Mills Green

This will be an intensively used local park with play areas, community orchards and gardens, sports pitches, outdoor events and an open-air cinema.

Three Mills Green currently comprises an attractive area of open land within walking distance of Bromley-by-Bow tube station, but it's tucked away and underused. In relation to a vital park setting and the 're-wilding' of Mill Meads, the green could provide a more intensively used public open space, providing a much-needed garden and recreational area for the existing and emerging communities that surround it.

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Image: Looking north across Three Mills Green, with Abbey Mills visible in the background



The Fatwalk

The backbone of the Lea River Park. A continuous route from the Thames at East India Dock north to the Olympic Park that not only connects all the new park areas, but is a destination in itself.

The Fatwalk is multi-functional; as it zig-zags up the Lower Lea Valley it will connect key points of access into the park as well as providing parkland space for play, rest and refreshment along its route.

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Top image: Working River – the Fatwalk along the River Lea, animated by water transport and working quaysides

Middle & above image: View from the Fatwalk to the park area at Leven Road

Bottom image: The Fatwalk enters the Twelve Trees site

Main image: Canning Town Riverside. A section of the Fatwalk, looking south to Leamouth Peninsula

Mill Meads & Abbey Mills

Work here will open up the extraordinary landscapes of Mill Meads and the Abbey Mills estate to the public. Today the majority of Mill Meads and Abbey Mills is an operational site for Thames Water, incorporating some of London's strategic pumping stations, and is not accessible to the public.

It's proposed that the open spaces and disused listed buildings on the site become publicly accessible and form an important new park space – a strategic ambition identified in the Greater London Authority's Lower Lea Valley Opportunity Area Planning Framework.

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The operational area of the site would be reduced to enable restoration of the landscape to create an ecologically rich water meadow that also provides flood relief capacity.

Allotments and a quayside will form strong boundaries to the water meadow. New public access to the non-operational parts of the spectacular listed Abbey Mills buildings will create a new public destination along the Fatwalk.

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Top image: A bird's eye view showing Three Mills Green, Mill Meads, Abbey Mills and Twelve Trees
Below image: The Fatwalk passing through a forecourt to re-used listed buildings at Abbey Mills
Main image: A view of Mill Meads returned to water meadow, with softened edges to the Prescott Channel. Allotment gardens surround the pumping station





Twelve Trees

A major new visitor destination for London that reuses the frames of the listed gasholders, Twelve Trees presents a remarkable opportunity for transformation.

Situated close to, and directly between, Bromley-by-Bow and West Ham tube stations, this park will be a key point of entry for the broader park and has the potential to sustain a major destination attraction that engages with, and creatively transforms, existing industrial heritage. It will also be one of the single largest sites within the park.

The seven gasholders on the site are Grade-II-listed cast-iron Victorian structures built between 1872 and 1878 (one completed in each of these years). English Heritage recognises this rare collection as a magnificent example of industrial architecture that is visible across wide areas of east London.

Decommissioning of the gas storage facility and the retention of the holders provides the opportunity for ambitious new uses for the structures, which include botanical collections (arboretums, hot houses or vertical gardens), a butterfly farm, a skateboarding park, an event drum, an adventure playground, a water basin and a climbers' jungle.

23 **Images:** The frames of the gasholders at Twelve Trees will be retained and used to accommodate a range of possible uses, from botanical gardens to performance spaces



Poplar River Park

Designed to combine a local district park and an 'Energy Park' – an exciting public laboratory and showcase for experimental technologies in sustainable energy production – this site currently includes operational gasholders. The decommissioning of these allows for a balanced development that's confirmed in planning policy and allows for new homes, a school and community facilities that relate to the park.

Even though unlisted it's proposed to keep the largest gasholder frame in situ to act as a much-needed method of wayfinding within the new park and to frame the entrance to this important new amenity space.

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The park will front onto the River Lea just west of Canning Town and provide formal and informal recreation space, plus sports and play facilities, together with a park programme that draws on the site's connection with power creation to animate the landscape.

New connections across the river will enable access to this park and link it to the Fatwalk. Adjacent to these new areas of housing and connecting back to the existing communities currently cut off from the river by the gas works, the park will have a community focus – a place for learning, sport and recreation.

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Top image: The gasholder & Canary Wharf
Below image: Poplar River Park viewed from the river. The largest gasholder could be retained and used to orientate visitors to the valley – a 'vertical garden'
Main image: Looking into Poplar River Park; the park will be animated by renewable energy production and will also provide sporting and play space



Exotic Wild

An area of wild nature stretching south from Canning Town centre in the lower reaches of the River Lea creates a collection of unusual landscapes. The estuarine stretch of the river contains some genuinely wild areas and some colossal potential habitats in the form of flyovers and bridges, which offer shelter to bats, birds, insects and plantlife.

Exotic Wild is a key site for the larger park and as its name suggests is more naturalised, with important existing and new habitats for flora and fauna and less formal landscaping. The park has further potential to address its themes with greater ambition and at a scale to match the surrounding landscape with increased visitor facilities and programmed activities.

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A wet wood of Black Poplars is proposed as a unifying element on the western side of the river, and also as a significant conservation project given the dwindling numbers of this tree species. The wood will also create avenues to define the Fatwalk as it begins its journey north.

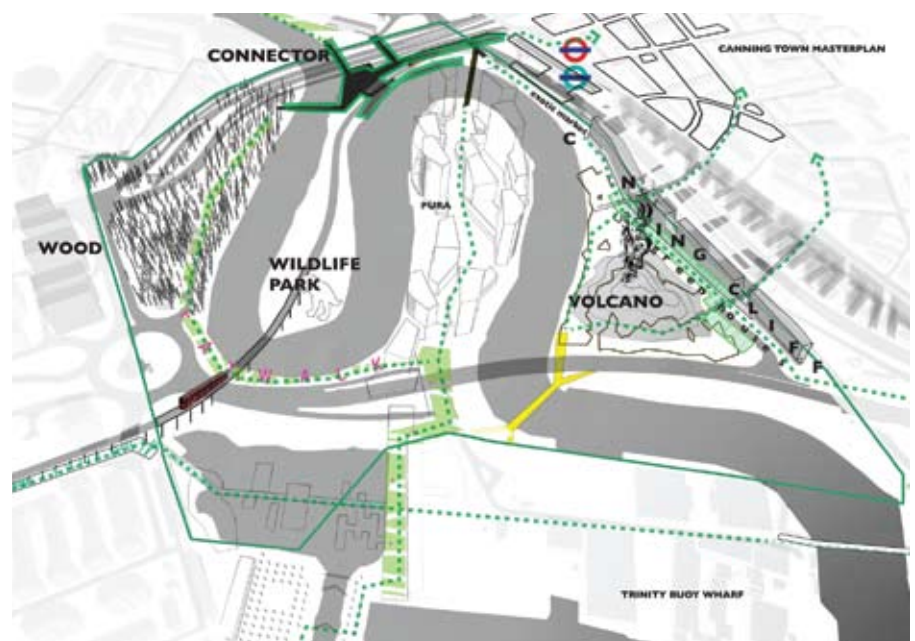
The site off Silvertown Way in Canning Town (known as the Limmo site) is an important area of wild ground for the park and is one of the few locations where softening of the river edge is practical.

Engineering work on the new Crossrail network will require permanent shaft access and ventilation and we're proposing that spoil from the tunnel excavation is used to create a new raised landscape, in the tradition of Parliament Hill or Primrose Hill. This will allow a southwest-facing lookout and orientation point, offering views up the valley and along the Thames.

The Greater London Authority's Lower Lea Valley Opportunity Area Planning Framework identifies new residential development on the edge of the park and this could both reinforce and provide additional natural surveillance.

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Main image: A proposal for the underside of the DLR viaduct – building up the ecology park on the Leamouth Peninsular to provide bird habitats
Right image: Plan view of Exotic Wild



East India Dock Basin

Revitalising the historic dock basin will create a popular and lively destination on the Thames, and will form the primary gateway to the Lea River Park.

East India Dock Basin is a spectacular location which will be transformed into a new city destination for park users and local communities – a busy and lively place to meet, eat and drink, hire a bicycle, and attend outdoor events.

The site has the perfect orientation for views across the Thames, the wider London landscape and the O₂ Arena.

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Main image: A view of the Thames edge of East India Dock Basin – this will be a vibrant 'pleasure garden'; a place to enjoy the river and views across London and a gateway into the park with refreshments and activities.

Right image: The view from the DLR, looking south into East India Dock Basin. The back of the basin will be wild – an enhanced nature reserve. The Thames edge will be a pleasure garden for London.

Far right image: A floating lido which is one idea of how the dock basin could be reused.



The southern part of the dock has great potential to host events, many of which can be based on floating pontoons and structures.

The project involves balancing the protection of an important ecological resource with cultural uses, restoring much of the dock as operational while enhancing the salt marsh that has been built up through the dock's lack of operation.

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A vision realised

It's hard to over-estimate the potential impact of the Lea River Park project on the landscape and communities of the Lower Lea Valley. For centuries, this hard-working region has seen its green spaces diminish as the city has continued to reap the rewards of its industry.

The completion of this long-awaited park will not only open a unique, historic green route through the Lower Lea Valley and enhance beyond measure the quality of life in its locality, but it will also herald the regeneration of this part of east London.

It will bring fresh prosperity and renewed commercial vigour to an area that's ready for change. The real challenges lie ahead. We're determined to introduce improvements that not only take account of the legacy of the past, but that preserve and celebrate it, while breathing new life into the communities that are already looking to the future.

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It's time we started.

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Image: Riverbank near Three Mills