

2 THE BLACKHORSE LANE AREA

2.1 Description of the area

Blackhorse Lane is located in the western portion of the London Borough of Waltham Forest, on the borders with the London Borough of Haringey. The study area is loosely defined as Tottenham Marshes to the West, Forest Road (A503) to the South, the North Circular Road (A406) to the north and Walthamstow to the East (see Figure 3). The area forms the gateway to Waltham Forest from Tottenham Hale to the West.

The area houses a young and diverse population of nearly 16,000 people in a

range of housing from traditional terraced houses to modern high rise blocks. Around 40% of residents are from Black and Minority Ethnic communities.

Blackhorse Lane forms part of an industrial location of regional importance, the Upper Lee Valley. It is estimated that companies based in Blackhorse Lane's industrial estates employ over 4,000 people largely in industrial / warehousing / distribution sectors.⁵ However, there are also pockets of poor quality, derelict and underused industrial accommodation that contribute to a poor working and living environment for local residents.

Figure 3. The Blackhorse Lane area



The area has a major transport hub at Blackhorse Road Station, providing access to the London Underground Victoria Line and the mainline Barking to Gospel Oak service. There is easy access to the strategic road network including the A10 to the City and the North Circular Road (A406) leading to the M11.

Blackhorse Lane is in close proximity to the Borough's largest shopping centre, Walthamstow Town Centre (approximately half a mile). The Town Centre, identified in the London Plan as a Major Town Centre, is the subject of significant investment and a range of integrated regeneration projects that will improve the public transport infrastructure, the High Street, make environmental improvements and create new jobs and homes.

The Blackhorse Lane area is directly adjacent on its Western side to the Lee Valley Regional Park, including the ecologically valuable open waters of Walthamstow Reservoirs, the attractive Lee River and towpath and the green open spaces of Tottenham Marshes.

The site is located within the Upper Lee Valley Opportunity Area and is in close proximity to a number of regeneration areas which will be undergoing major change in the near future, including the Lower Lea Valley and the site of the Olympic Park and Tottenham Hale.

2.2 Strategic context

This planning framework sits within and seeks to support a range of relevant national, regional and local policies as set out below.

2.2.1 Sustainable Communities Plan

The Sustainable Communities Plan (2004) sets out the government's overarching approach to planning, regeneration and renewal. The key themes within the Plan include:

- Addressing the housing shortage, including measures to accelerate the provision of housing, funding for the provision of affordable and key worker housing, and tackling homelessness;
- Addressing low demand and abandonment;

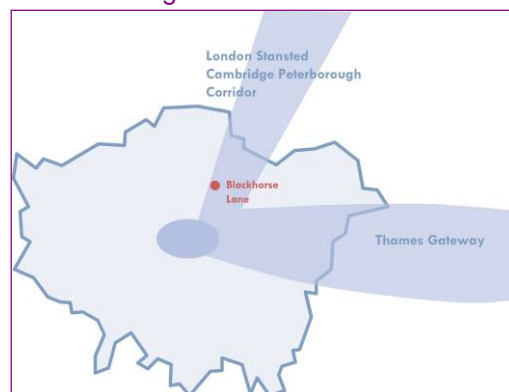
- Investing in social housing to ensure that all properties comply with 'decent homes' standards; and
- Meeting the livability agenda through the intensification of efforts to improve the local environment of all communities.

The Plan sets out a number of key requirements that contribute to the creation of a sustainable community. In London, these priorities aim to generate communities that:

- are prosperous;
- have decent homes for sale or rent at a price people can afford;
- safeguard green and open space;
- enjoy well-designed, accessible and pleasant living;
- provide a good working environment; and
- are effectively and fairly governed, with a strong sense of community.

In terms of London and the South East, the Plan emphasises the need to manage and accommodate population growth, and identifies four growth areas (Thames Gateway; Ashford; Milton Keynes - South Midlands; and London- Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough) that will be expected to accommodate the bulk of an additional 200,000 homes.

Figure 4. Blackhorse Lane in relation to growth corridors



Blackhorse Lane is located in the London - Stansted - Cambridge - Peterborough Growth Area, a corridor of land roughly following the route of the M11 motorway. This corridor has experienced substantial economic growth over the last decade and

the Government has identified a need to carefully manage this growth in the future. The Blackhorse Lane area has been identified as a priority investment area within the corridor, and Central Government has allocated a number of grants to the council and other public agencies to bring forward new homes and jobs, improve transport infrastructure and improve green space.

2.2.2. London Plan

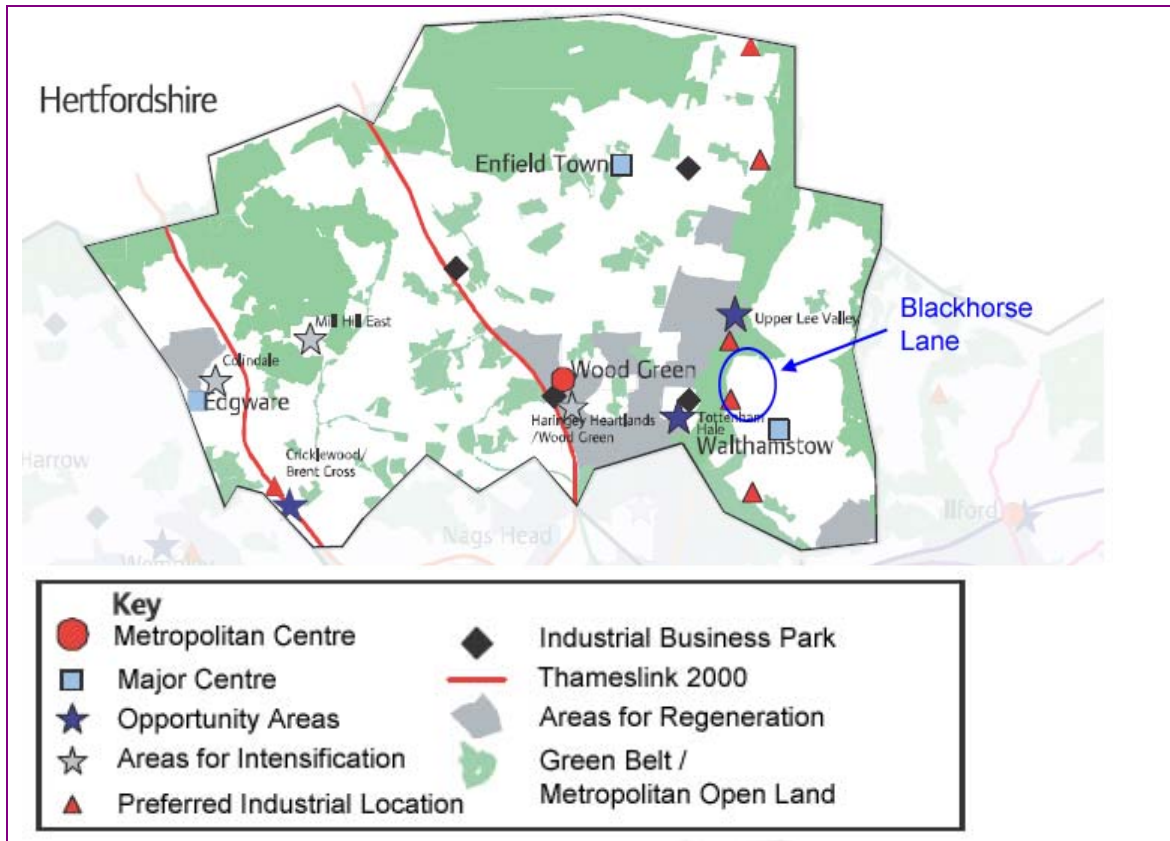
The London Plan (2004) is the regional spatial strategy for London. The Plan aims to accommodate substantial population growth in London with an emphasis on high quality urban design, redevelopment of brownfield sites and increased densities around transport nodes and in town centres. Waltham Forest is located in the North London Sub-region and forms part of the Upper Lee Valley Opportunity Area. Opportunity Areas are identified for their capacity to accommodate substantial new jobs and/or homes along with provision of

other uses such as local shops, leisure facilities and schools.

The London Plan states that North London should accommodate a minimum of 47,000 additional homes by 2016. The Plan allocates Waltham Forest a target of creating 9,140 new homes between 1997 and 2016 (an average of 460 per year). Subsequently, the Mayor has published a new Housing Capacity Study⁶ that will inform the forthcoming review of the London Plan. The study identifies capacity significantly above the London Plan targets, including an annual capacity for Waltham Forest of 600 homes per year, a 30% increase on the London Plan target.

The London Plan also estimates that the North London sub-region as a whole will accommodate 26,000 new jobs by 2016, although the Greater London Authority is in the process of revising the employment projections in the light of new data and interim results suggest more modest growth of perhaps around 9,000.⁷

Figure 5. North London Sub Region (from London Plan) showing Blackhorse Lane



Paragraph 5.121 of the London Plan (2004) states *"The Upper Lee Valley is a six-mile corridor extending north from Tottenham Hale to the M25, focused around a regional park. Together with the Blackhorse Lane and Leyton 'industrial villages' in Waltham Forest, it comprises one of the largest clusters of manufacturing and technology-led industrial estates in London... These help broaden London's economy and provide employment for nearby, often deprived communities..."*

Paragraph 5.122 notes that *"there are several development sites within the area, with the main requirement [being] high quality renewal, including modernising estates and improving transport. This will enable retention of key anchor firms and encourage new business growth."* It also states that: *"The Lee Valley Regional Park Authority and water utilities should collaborate with the boroughs in relating industrial renewal to the environmental assets of the Lee Valley Park and the green belt"*.

Annex 2 of the London Plan lists Blackhorse Lane as a 'Preferred Industrial Location', which relates to part of the area's designation as a 'Strategic Employment Location' (Policy 3B.5).

A Sub Regional Development Framework for North London has been published to provide guidance on the implementation of policies in the London Plan within the sub region.⁸ In addition, the Greater London Authority is in the process of preparing an Opportunity Area Planning Framework for the Upper Lee Valley to provide a further level of detail to the London Plan and Sub Regional Development Framework. The Sub Regional Development Framework and Opportunity Area Planning Framework (once adopted) will both be material in determining planning applications.

2.2.3. Unitary Development Plan

As discussed in Section 1.2, the Waltham Forest Unitary Development Plan: First Review (March 2006) remains the statutory spatial plan for the Blackhorse Lane area. The plan contains a wide range of policies relevant to Blackhorse Lane that will be referred to at appropriate points in this document.

In general, this Interim Planning Policy Framework seeks to build on the policies in the UDP, in particular:

- Support for new housing schemes that are well designed and make a contribution to promoting urban renaissance and quality of life.
- An active approach to the management of industrial land, clearly identifying areas to protect for employment use while permitting the release of some employment land (particularly areas suffering from lack of investment) for other uses such as housing and mixed-use development.
- Protecting nature conservation areas such as Walthamstow Reservoirs and Tottenham Marshes and green spaces such as Higham Hill Recreation Ground and Cheney Row Open Space and seeking to enhance their value in terms of ecology, leisure and amenity.

2.2.4. Community Strategy

The Waltham Forest Community Strategy aims to address the priorities of local residents by setting out a shared vision of "a safer, cleaner and healthier borough, benefiting from its wealth of diversity, where everyone is able to reach their potential."⁹ Figure 6 shows how the policies contained in this document will help achieve the five priorities of the Community Strategy.

2.3 Local issues

In addition to addressing the aims of the national, regional and local strategies, this framework seeks to address issues for local residents and businesses identified through consultations and analysis of the area:

- Despite being immediately adjacent to Walthamstow Reservoirs and Tottenham Marshes, access to the Lee Valley Regional Park from the Blackhorse Lane area is extremely poor, partly because the Blackhorse Lane Industrial Area acts as a barrier between the residential areas/transport node and the Park, cutting off views and restricting access.
- Housing deprivation (e.g. overcrowding, unfit homes)¹⁰ and lack of affordable housing to rent or buy.
- Local services, retail and leisure facilities are limited and generally of poor quality.

Figure 6. Links to Waltham Forest Community Strategy

Community Strategy Priority	Blackhorse Lane Planning Framework Policies / sections contributing to this priority
Decrease crime and improve the safety and quality of the environment	<p>Section 7.3 & 7.5 – more green spaces, planting and environmental features</p> <p>Section 8.3 – high quality design of new developments will improve the environment and community safety</p> <p>Section 10.5 – improving community safety</p> <p>Policy BHL12 – a safer environment around Blackhorse Road Station</p>
Improve the health and well-being of local people	<p>Policy BHL3 – increasing access to the recreation opportunities of the Lee Valley Regional Park</p> <p>Policy BHL5 – a new waterfront park offering healthy recreation opportunities</p> <p>Section 7.4 – new outdoor leisure and recreation facilities</p> <p>Section 10.3 – improving access to quality healthcare through a new health centre</p> <p>Policy BHL14 and Policy BHL16 – improved conditions for pedestrians and cyclists</p>
Improve learning opportunities to help individuals achieve their potential	<p>Section 9.7 – working with partners to target employment and skills initiatives on identified growth sectors and renewal zones</p> <p>Section 10.2 – new Children’s Centre, rebuilt schools and Extended Schools to improve educational attainment and develop learning and skills for all age groups.</p>
Improve the local economy and infrastructure	<p>Policy BHL1 and Policy BHL6 – meeting housing need through new high quality housing including a high proportion of affordable homes</p> <p>Policy BHL2 – improving retail provision through a new Neighbourhood Centre</p> <p>Section 9.6 and Policy BHL7– improving economic opportunities through a reconfigured Blackhorse Lane Strategic Employment Location better able to attract firms in growth employment sectors</p> <p>Policy BHL8 – requiring renewal of business premises to accommodate growth sectors</p> <p>Policy BHL13 and Section 11.3.4 – improving public transport to improve access to services and employment opportunities</p> <p>Policy BHL15 – new road to improve access to industrial areas and functioning of transport hub</p>
Increase community understanding and participation	<p>Policy BHL10 – planning services to meet the needs of both existing and new residents and improve quality of life for local people</p> <p>Policy BHL11 – better coordination of existing community facilities and emphasis on the needs of young people</p>

- Although a significant employment area, business growth is hampered in much of the area by a lack of high quality fit-for-purpose business premises, inadequate access arrangements and the poor image and environment of the area.
- Blackhorse Road Station offers good public transport connections but it is not fulfilling its potential as a transport node due to low density development immediately around the station, slow (staggered) pedestrian crossings to/from the station and limited cycle parking. High levels of traffic on Blackhorse Lane, Billet Road and through some smaller residential streets impact on road safety. Traffic congestion and parking are sometimes problematic.
- The area around the station offers a poor first impression to visitors to the area and to local residents due to its poor environment and streetscape.