

SUMMARY

Waltham Forest Council has adopted a new planning framework intended to support and encourage the transformation of the Blackhorse Lane area in North East London over the next 10 years.

Blackhorse Lane is located in the western portion of the London Borough of Waltham Forest, to the north west of Walthamstow Town Centre. It benefits from 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 North Circular Road leading to the M11 and M25.

The site forms part of the Government's London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough Growth Corridor, 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, site of the Olympic Park and Tottenham Hale.

This new planning framework outlines a clear vision for the future of the area that is not only supported by the Council but also enjoys widespread support from other statutory agencies, landowners and the local community. The plans were developed over a period of nearly two years with the input of over 1,200 people through three major consultation exercises.

The policies in the planning framework are capable of being 'material considerations' when determining planning applications alongside the Council's Unitary Development Plan and the London Plan.

Blackhorse Lane: fulfilling the potential

The Blackhorse Lane area has great potential for improvement. It has a unique location right on the edge of the Lea Valley Park, a strong small business base and a young population. Blackhorse Road Station also offers good rail and tube connections. By making the most of these assets Blackhorse Lane will become a thriving, more attractive place for both residents and businesses.

The key diagram on Page 16 shows the overall strategy for the development of the Blackhorse Lane area over the coming 10 years.

Objective 1: A new centre around the station

Local people have clearly expressed a desire for a wider range of local shops and eating and drinking establishments.

The Council will support the creation of a new Neighbourhood Centre for the area directly opposite Blackhorse Road Station (blue dot on the Key Diagram), including a small number of shops, cafes/bars/restaurants and small-scale leisure facilities with homes above around a new public square.

The centre will serve existing and new residents of the Blackhorse Lane area, the growing local workforce and users of Blackhorse Road Station.

The existing shops opposite the station on Blackhorse Lane will be retained as part of the new centre and will benefit from the higher profile of the area and the increasing number of people living and working locally.

The exact types of shops and services will depend on what the developers of the site propose, but they will be encouraged to meet the demand for higher quality convenience shops, a post office, bank and/or cash machine and cafes / bars / restaurants that are family friendly and open in the evening as well as during the day.

The Standard is a local music venue popular with residents and visitors from outside the area. It makes a valuable contribution to the evening economy of the Blackhorse Lane area. The plans recognise this and encourage the provision of a similar venue within the new development.

Objective 2: Bringing the country into the city

The Blackhorse Lane area is surrounded by the reservoirs, waterways and marshes of the Lee Valley Regional Park but access to the Park is extremely poor.

We will create new and improved pedestrian and cycle routes to the Park (see green arrows on Key Diagram) that are safe, welcoming and well sign posted. We will also create more views of Walthamstow Reservoirs and Tottenham Marshes, including from publicly accessible locations.

The Council will work to develop a new linear waterfront park next to the reservoirs (marked dark green on the Key Diagram). The park will offer excellent views over the Lee Valley, wildlife habitats and a pedestrian and cycle path linking with Tottenham Marshes to the North.

We will also encourage the development of new and improved leisure and recreational facilities making full use of the landscape. Opportunities (marked as green stars on the Key Diagram) include:

- Improved walking routes and wildlife activities on Tottenham Marshes.
- Further development of water-connected activities at Stonebridge Lock.
- Reintroduction of water sports on Banbury Reservoir.
- Improved access to High Maynard Reservoir for walking, fishing and bird watching.
- Informal recreational opportunities for young people on Cheney Row Open Space.
- Better community access to improved sports facilities at Douglas Eyre Playing Fields.

Finally we will aim to raise funding from developers and other sources to create public green spaces within developments and to improve the streetscape, including more greenery, focused on the main roads marked in yellow on the Key Diagram.

Objective 3: Meeting housing need

London is facing a severe housing shortage. In Waltham Forest, lack of affordable housing is a particular problem.

The Council will support the development of housing in the three 'main growth areas' marked on the Key Diagram:

- Around Blackhorse Road Station, housing developments will be permitted on the old goods site behind the station, on the current site of Willowfield School (subject to the school moving to a new site behind the station – see Objective 5) and around and above the proposed new shops and cafes / bars / restaurants opposite the station, including waterfront housing overlooking the proposed linear park.
- In Sutherland Road, approximately half a mile north of the station, some of the current industrial premises which contribute to a poor environment will be released for housing as part of a comprehensive renewal of the area.
- Billet Works and Kimberley Industrial Estate in the north of the area will be converted from industrial use to housing with commercial frontages providing new workspace along Billet Road.

By encouraging developments on these sites, we are aiming to achieve around 2000 new homes in the area over the next 10 years. Around half will be affordable housing, including council or housing association homes, key worker housing (for nurses, teachers, etc.), low-cost home ownership and shared ownership.

The planning framework includes detailed guidance to ensure that housing developments not only offer high quality living for new residents but also improve the quality of life of existing residents through excellent design and by contributing to the delivery of an improved environment, new shops, services, leisure opportunities and commercial premises.

Objective 4: A 21st century business area

Blackhorse Lane's industrial estates employ around 4,000 people. However, employment in the area is declining compared with the rest of London and manufacturing firms are being replaced by warehousing and service industries.

Research on employment in Blackhorse Lane suggests that regeneration of the area (including new homes, shops, restaurants and waterfront) could attract new businesses looking for a location with a high quality working environment, growing local market and excellent transport links. Around 1,000 more jobs could be created over the next 10 years.

At the same time, the market demand for industrial and warehousing land in London is falling and the Mayor of London is encouraging the release of some of this land for other uses, particularly housing.

The Council will work with local landowners and businesses to create a 21st Century business area capable of attracting and retaining firms in growth sectors, such as print and design, food processing and business services. We will:

- Release some employment land for housing and mixed-use developments while consolidating and strongly protecting the remaining employment areas.
- Develop and promote a clear vision for the Blackhorse Lane business area.
- Encourage the provision of a wider range of business premises including the replacement of run down industrial buildings with two new business parks (marked in purple on the Key Diagram).
- Deal with problems of access on the estates by requiring the construction of two new roads (marked in black on the Key Diagram) as part of new developments.
- Work with partners such as Jobcentre Plus and training providers to assist local residents into jobs in the identified growth sectors.

Objective 5: New horizons for local people

The Council will work with partners to enable the development of schools, health centres and community facilities to meet the needs of both existing and new residents. In particular, we will seek to ensure that there are enough services for the growing and changing population. Developers will be required to contribute financially to the expansion of services where required.

The following locations (marked with red stars on the Key Diagram) have the potential to accommodate new or improved services:

- A major new **Joint Service Centre** is planned on the corner of Blackhorse Lane and Billet Road. It is expected to include a Children's Centre, a new health centre, business support, training, youth work and community space.
- It is proposed to move **Willowfield School** to a new site just south of Blackhorse Road Station, adjacent to (and including part of) the Douglas Eyre Playing Fields. The purpose built school would offer more space and direct access to outdoor sports facilities. A new school for the local community, **Walthamstow Academy** is being built on the site of the former McEntee School on Billet Road. Both new schools will also offer the wider community access to much-enhanced sports, leisure and other community facilities.
- **William Morris School**, just off Billet Road, has expressed an interest in offering community learning and leisure facilities. The school has substantial facilities including a large hall, two IT suites and an outside playground and field.

A study into community centres and halls identified at least 19 buildings in the Blackhorse Lane area with space for community use and concluded that the main need is for better coordination of existing provision and more concentration on the needs of young people, both of which the Council will support.

Crime and anti-social behaviour are areas of concerns for local residents and businesses. All new development proposals will be required to demonstrate that they will incorporate measures to 'design out crime', for example by increasing natural surveillance of public spaces and improving lighting.

Objective 6: Managing traffic and encouraging sustainable transport

A lot of local people have raised concerns about traffic congestion, road safety, public transport (particularly bus services) and parking.

A Blackhorse Lane transport study looked at the impact of creating up to 2,000 new homes and bringing new jobs to the area. It concluded that the road network and public transport would be able to cope with all the extra journeys (particularly as the Victoria Line is due to be upgraded in 2011) with the exception of the 'Standard Junction' outside the station which would become more congested in the rush hour making it even harder for pedestrians to get to the station.

To address these issues, the Council will seek to:

- Support the construction of two new roads (shown as black arrows on the Key Diagram):
 - A new industrial access road linking Blackhorse Lane directly with business premises in Sutherland Road to alleviate congestion and remove industrial traffic from residential areas.
 - A road linking Forest Road west of Blackhorse Road Station with Blackhorse Lane to service the new homes and shops opposite the station, improve access for vans and lorries to the business areas west of Blackhorse Lane and reduce traffic flows through the Standard Junction, enabling improvements to pedestrian crossings at the junction.
- Implement improved speed enforcement and pedestrian priority along Blackhorse Road and Billet Road and on residential streets.
- Improve local bus services including improvements to bus stops, bus priority measures and enhanced service levels.
- Develop new pedestrian and cycle routes and a new secure cycle park at Blackhorse Road Station.
- Manage parking by setting strict parking standards for new developments and bringing forward proposals for further Controlled Parking Zones as and when required. The existing station car park should be replaced with a multi-story car park offering fewer park and ride spaces and more short stay parking.

Design and Development Principles

The planning framework contains detailed design and development principles for each of the three main growth areas and the Council is publishing planning and design briefs for some of the key sites.

The Council expects excellent design in housing and mixed use developments. Proposals for high density housing must demonstrate how high quality design and management arrangements will ensure that social or management problems are not created. Key issues to be addressed are internal space, amenity space, security, noise, privacy, integration of tenures and access to services and facilities.

In order to achieve the design and development principles, the Council is seeking proposals that would secure the comprehensive redevelopment of large sites, which in most cases will require site assembly.

Developers will be expected to follow best practice in terms of inclusive design principles to ensure that new developments and facilities are fully accessible to all sections of the community including disabled people. 10% of new housing will be designed to be wheelchair accessible.

All development proposals should aim to achieve the aims and incorporate principles of the 'Secured By Design' scheme, which provides police guidance on ways of 'designing out crime'. Key issues to be addressed include door entry systems, fencing of gardens, car park security, planting, lighting, seating, CCTV and natural surveillance of paths and public spaces.

All new development should be energy efficient, should use at least 10% renewable energy and should incorporate new publicly accessible green spaces and environmental features such as green or 'living' roofs, bird nesting boxes and native planting.

Parts of the Blackhorse Lane area are at risk of flooding. Developers must demonstrate that proposals would not result in an unacceptable increase in the risk of flooding to people, property and essential service provision and should utilise sustainable drainage techniques wherever practicable.