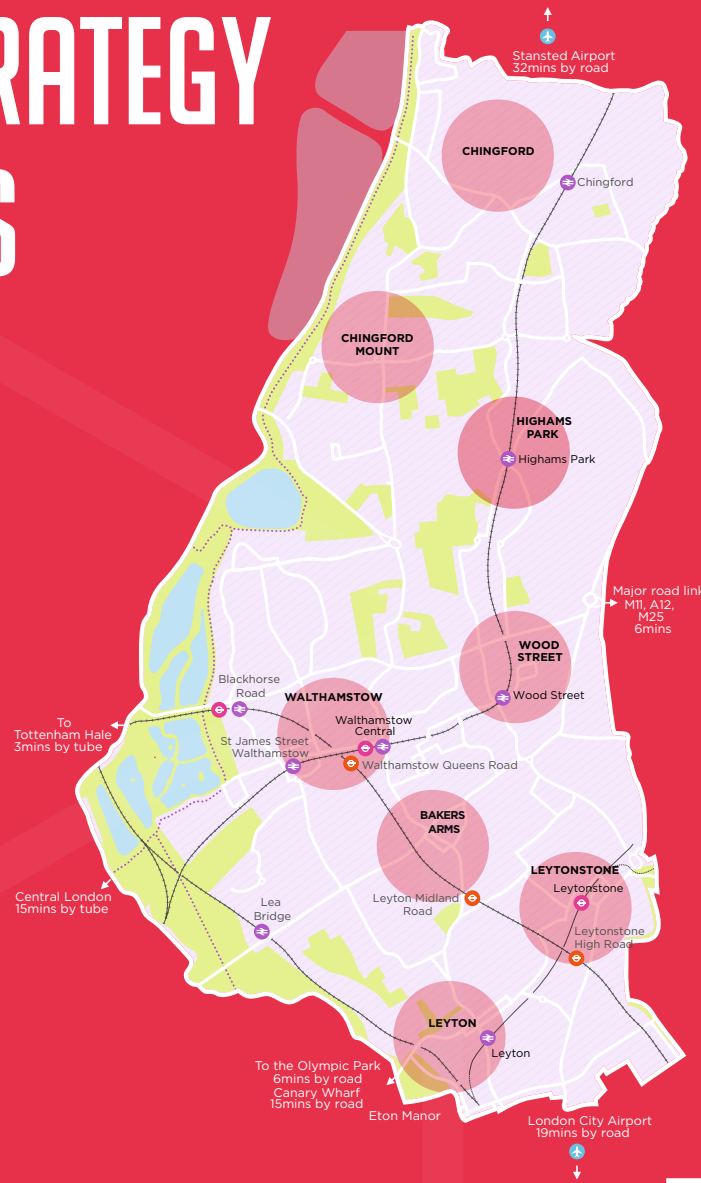


TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY & DELIVERY PLANS

2016-2020



THE CREATIVE CHOICE
WALTHAM FOREST | EAST LONDON.



Waltham Forest

1. FOREWORD FROM CLLR COGHILL, LEAD MEMBER FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND HIGH STREETS



Our borough has transformed over the past six years and is continuing to experience unprecedented levels of growth. With this change we have seen significant increases in the number of jobs and businesses in the borough and thriving arts and creative industries which have contributed to our unique cultural identity and the transformation of our town centres.

The Council has ambitious plans to build on this success and deliver further economic growth for the borough, which is set out in the Council's Economic Growth Strategy 2016–2020.

The Town Centre Strategy document forms one of the five themes in the Economic Growth Strategy. It sets out how we plan to achieve growth in our eight largest town centres to make them even better places to live, work and have fun. Our town centres are fantastic, vibrant and distinct places and the individual delivery plans describe the set of actions we propose to address the unique issues and opportunities each centre faces over the next few years.

We will continue to work closely with businesses in our town centres to give them the support they need to prosper. We are committed to promoting and investing in our town centres to keep wealth in the borough and give residents access to high quality employment and the quality and mix of shopping and services that they

expect. From setting up business networks and improving shop fronts in Leyton and Bakers Arms to facilitating the creation of new workspaces in Blackhorse Lane, we are working with our town centres to deliver new and cultural hubs such as the Central Parade creative space, bakery and café in Walthamstow.

Many exciting developments around the public realm have launched in the last few years such as The Scene and the Heritage Lottery Fund historic building conservation project in St James Street. Several others are in the pipeline, for example, re-opening the EMD theatre in Walthamstow, delivering new and cultural spaces in Leytonstone, investing in our vibrant street markets and evening leisure offer and creating more public and green spaces in town centres. The Council has been working on the development of major sites in Blackhorse Lane and master planning for Leyton and Lea Bridge which will result in the emergence of two new town centres in the borough.

The Council has also set out ambitious plans to see 12,000 affordable homes built in the borough by 2020, while ensuring that the infrastructure is provided to give all residents access to the services they need such as schools, GP services and good public transport. We are also clear about our ambition to put residents at the heart of decision making about investment in town centres and will develop ways to engage local people in our plans.

We are confident that our strategy will enable Waltham Forest to be resilient and continue to progress and deliver our ambitious plans growth in our town centres. These are exciting times for Waltham Forest and we look forward to working closely with our partners and residents to deliver on our vision.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clare Coghill'.

Cllr Clare Coghill

Cabinet Lead Portfolio Member –
Economic Growth and High Streets

2. PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document sets out the Council's vision for the borough's town centres and describes the actions the Council will take with its partners to support investment and growth in these locations. Our aim is to support and promote retail, business, cultural, leisure and residential investment in the borough's town centres that recognises their unique identities and invests in their futures.

This is intended to be a practical, delivery-focused document which will result in visible improvements to the borough's eight largest town centres.

The **measures of success** we will use are:

1. reduction in retail vacancy rates
2. improvement in business satisfaction surveys
3. increased resident use of town centres and improved satisfaction surveys
4. increased business survival rate
5. increased average pay of jobs in Waltham Forest

The strategy cannot be delivered by the Council alone and is dependent on close collaboration with key partners such as the Greater London Authority (GLA) and Transport for London (TfL). It also requires local business, where appropriate, to contribute to improvements in their premises, business practices and in the wider town centre environment.

The **vision and overall town centre strategy** is described, followed by individual standalone **Delivery Plans**, which address the specific opportunities and challenges in each town centre.

The strategy and delivery plans build on the **Economic Growth Strategy 2016-2020** which was approved by the Council's Cabinet in June 2016 and is available on the Council's website.

3. ECONOMIC GROWTH STRATEGY – OUR VISION FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH IN WALTHAM FOREST

The Economic Growth strategy outlines how the Council will use its powers and influence to guide economic growth and how the Council will work together with partners to realise the economic opportunities for the borough to ensure prosperity and a good quality of life for residents and businesses.

The Economic Growth Strategy sets out the Council's vision for economic growth:

“WE WILL MAXIMISE THE OPPORTUNITY OF WALTHAM FOREST'S UNIQUE PLACE IN LONDON TO HELP OUR ECONOMY GROW AND THRIVE, ENABLING RESIDENTS TO ENJOY SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY AND AN IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE”

The Strategy sets out the Council's role in supporting growth under five key themes which are fundamental to delivering economic growth in the borough:

- **Business** – we will “keep, seed and grow” businesses in the borough to ensure Waltham Forest’s economy thrives and overall productivity increases
- **Town Centres** – we will support and promote retail, business, cultural, leisure and residential investment in our town centres that recognises their unique identities and invests in their future
- **Homes** – we will aim to build 12,000 new homes by 2020, including 50% affordable homes, creating great places to live
- **Employment and skills** – we will make sure local people have the skills and ability to access high-quality employment in the borough and across London
- **Infrastructure** – we will ensure that growth supports the delivery of new facilities and infrastructure across the borough

4. SNAPSHOT – HOW ARE THE BOROUGH’S TOWN CENTRES PERFORMING?

Recent business and retail studies (Waltham Forest Business Survey, 2015 and Retail Needs Study, 2016) have shown that none of the borough’s main town centres are particularly struggling, with all centres meeting day-to-day convenience and local shopping needs for their residents.

The studies identified that there is significant capacity for more convenience (day-to-day shopping) and comparison (more expensive, infrequent purchases), predominantly in the south of the borough.

Waltham Forest’s town centres in total account for 22% of borough wide employment and accommodate 18% of the borough’s businesses. Town centres contain around 1,200 businesses and 13,700 jobs. The largest of these is Walthamstow with 380 businesses and around 3,070 jobs.

Waltham Forest’s town centres are growing employment hubs and residents continue to demand more of our town centres in terms of choice and quality of retail provision and a broader cultural and leisure offer.

Walthamstow is the major town centre in the borough in terms of economic performance, floorspace and number of retail units. The strategy and delivery

plans focus on **Walthamstow**, alongside the borough’s seven District Centres: **Leytonstone, Leyton, Chingford, Chingford Mount, Bakers Arms, Wood Street, and Highams Park.**

There are several important **smaller centres** and **neighbourhood shopping parades** in the borough, including:

- South Leytonstone High Road
- Francis Road, Leyton
- South Chingford (Old Church Road)
- Markhouse Corner, Lea Bridge Road
- Billet Road, Higham Hill

The Council will assess where specific action and investment plans are required for these smaller centres and parades with the greatest need alongside the town centres covered in this strategy.



5. RECENT INVESTMENT IN TOWN CENTRES

In the last few years, the Council and its partners have invested in several town centre programmes to create new housing, shopping and commercial areas including:

- Walthamstow's award-winning Scene, Empire cinema development and high street improvements
- Shop front, public realm improvements and street art programmes in Leyton, Leytonstone, Wood Street, Francis Road, Chingford Mount and Blackhorse Road
- A £2.9m major restoration and high street improvement programme in St James Street with Heritage Lottery Funding which will be completed in summer 2017
- Development of major new sites for housing and workspaces in Blackhorse Lane and Lea Bridge

There are now exciting opportunities to continue to grow and diversify the borough's residential, shopping, leisure, arts and cultural offers to make Waltham Forest's town centres great places to live, work, do business and access leisure and culture.



6. OBJECTIVES: WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

This section sets out the framework for achieving our vision for the borough's town centres from 2016 to 2020, through a clear set of actions which address the specific needs of each of the eight town centres.

A. MEET THE DEMAND FOR NEW HIGH STREET BUSINESSES

The borough's town centres represent major opportunities for continued growth, investment, employment, economic diversification and development of local supply chains. There is demand and capacity in town centres for large chains, independent retail space, pop-up shops and creative workspace. The largest proposal is Capital & Regional's plan to redevelop The Mall in Walthamstow, with the potential to create an additional 8,000m² of space for shops, cafes, restaurants and bars. Recent retail studies also suggest that many of the borough's town centres could benefit from an increase in their café, restaurant and evening offer.

B. STRENGTHEN THE STREET MARKETS

Waltham Forest's town centres are an established location for street markets, most famously in Walthamstow. As the borough's economy diversifies and new residents move in, there is growing interest in establishing new markets, providing food, drink and high quality arts and crafts. Markets are also a realistic entry point for small new businesses which can support local entrepreneurs.

C. GROWTH IN THE CREATIVE AND CULTURAL SECTORS

The borough has established itself as a location for creative and cultural activity and is experiencing growth in employment and demand for creative and cultural industry workspace. These sectors have a vital role in supporting the borough's town centres, bringing innovation and interest to the borough's high streets and strengthening the evening leisure and entertainment offer.

There is relatively little in terms of a high-end cultural offer in the borough (theatres, galleries, venues etc.), but there are opportunities to refurbish existing buildings or create new spaces, including the proposed 1,000 seat auditorium at the former EMD Granada Cinema in Walthamstow, the re-opening of the Regal Cinema in Highams Park and replacement of an established music venue at The Standard in Blackhorse Lane.

D. STIMULATING THE LEISURE AND EVENING ECONOMIES

Waltham Forest's town centres currently have a limited evening economy offer.

However, clusters of activity are developing in Walthamstow, Leyton and Leytonstone, with food, drink, culture and entertainment. The borough's leisure offer could be expanded, including developing existing facilities in Lea Bridge. Gaps in the offer remain, with local demand for additional facilities such as a bowling alley. The introduction of the night tube in August 2016 strengthens the offer in Walthamstow, Leyton and Leytonstone town centres, as well as at Blackhorse Lane, as all are now served by regular underground services throughout Friday and Saturday nights.

E. PROMOTING TOWN CENTRES AND CREATING A DESTINATION

The Council will play its part in promoting and marketing town centres, raising their profile as destinations for visitors, shoppers and investors. Part of this programme will be creating welcoming gateways into town centres, through clear way-finding and attractive routes from arrival points to key shopping areas and visitor attractions. This will involve close working with partners such as Transport for London and existing businesses.

F. INCREASED TOWN CENTRE HOUSING

The Council has a target of 12,000 new homes to be built or under construction in the borough by 2020. This includes designated Housing Zones at Blackhorse, Lea Bridge and Leyton where 5,000 new homes are planned, as well as major growth in Walthamstow town centre which has potential for over 2,000 new homes. The Council will also provide a mix of new housing on its own sites, such as Central Parade and Juniper House in Walthamstow town centre and the SCORE Centre in Leyton. The Council wants to ensure that town centres are great places to live; a mix of new housing, shopping and leisure uses bring opportunities for existing and new residents to benefit from new facilities and new employment opportunities. It also presents challenges, for example in balancing residents' needs with an expansion in the evening economy.

G. INCREASING LOCAL EMPLOYMENT

One of the key reasons the Council is supporting growth in the town centres is that it will generate employment and training opportunities. The Council will particularly welcome growth in key sectors such as creative, cultural, digital, technical and urban services which can generate high quality jobs and will make sure local residents are able to access these opportunities, which will contribute to tackling poverty.

H. CREATING NEW CENTRES

The Council is leading plans, working with the GLA, developers and stakeholders, to create two new centres at Blackhorse Lane and Lea Bridge. The area immediately around Blackhorse Road station is being transformed with a mix of housing, commercial and community space, with a strong focus on independent shops, cultural and creative industry space, supporting the wider Creative Enterprise Zone initiative. With the re-opening of Lea Bridge station

in May 2016, the Council is drawing up plans to create a new centre, introducing residential, community and leisure facilities – including on sites in its ownership – alongside the area's established businesses. Separate delivery plans will be drawn up for these two new centres, building on the adopted [Area Action Plan for Blackhorse Lane](#) (available on the Council's website) and the emerging Masterplan for Lea Bridge and Leyton.



7. INVOLVING LOCAL RESIDENTS, BUSINESSES AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

As the borough changes, it is critical that local people are involved in the ambitious plans for growth. The Council has started comprehensive engagement, with borough-wide analysis, specific area-based engagement and consultation. This has shown that residents genuinely enjoy living in Waltham Forest and there is evidence of real loyalty to the borough. The borough's high streets are well used and appreciated during the day time and residents enjoy a range of local leisure and entertainment activities for which there are good facilities. However, there is a growing need to develop the evening economy and expand the cultural offer, as well as ensure there is sufficient social infrastructure to cope with the increased demand generated by growth (*Shaping Growth Research by Bright Blue, January 2016*).

The Council will also continue to work closely with key London-wide stakeholders such as the Greater London Authority (GLA) and Transport for London (TfL), local business partnerships, traders associations, development trusts, landowners, developers and investors to co-ordinate and focus growth and ensure that the local community benefits of growth are maximised.

It is important that stakeholders – including businesses and property owners – also contribute to maintaining and improving the borough's town centres. The Council can facilitate this partnership, but cannot do this alone.



8. THE COUNCIL'S ROLE

The Council has multiple roles to play and tools at its disposal in continuing to support and enhance the borough's town centres:

A. TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT: the Council undertakes a range of services across the borough's town centres, coordinating with other public services, to ensure they remain safe, clean and inclusive places for residents, businesses and visitors. This strategy sets out how these services will be coordinated, including formal partnerships with businesses that could be introduced.

B. PLANNING AUTHORITY: planning policy provides the Council with a robust framework for determining planning applications in support of the growth of the borough's town centres. It also allows the Council to assess where a town centre's offer could be diversified, such as introducing more food, drink, workspace, leisure or housing uses.

C. ENFORCEMENT: the Council will focus enforcement action on businesses which are in breach of planning regulations, environmental health, licencing laws, which fail to meet trading standards or which are a persistent cause of nuisance or anti-social behaviour in town centres. It will consider implementing appropriate campaigns or programmes such as 'Scores on the Doors'

to encourage the highest standards of business practice.

D. INFRASTRUCTURE PROVIDER: the Council works with partners such as Transport for London, the NHS and utility companies to provide services and facilities for residents. This strategy will allow investment to be coordinated, and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and section 106 funding to be focused on new infrastructure, including Council-led initiatives such as creating free-to-access WiFi networks.

E. BUSINESS SUPPORT: the Council has developed business support projects such as shop front improvement schemes, pop up shop opportunities and business advice and training. The Economic Growth Strategy sets out a wider programme of investment and support the Council will be providing to existing businesses as well as new businesses looking to locate in the borough.

F. LANDOWNER AND DEVELOPER: the Council owns a range of property across the borough's town centres. Plans are being developed for key sites, with opportunities under consideration,

building on the Council's lead in delivering the award-winning Scene development in Walthamstow which has delivered a cinema, restaurants and new housing in a prominent town centre location.

G. INVESTOR: the Council has invested heavily in improvements to the borough's town centres in the last five years and this will continue. Direct investment sits alongside the Council's role coordinating spend of section 106 funding, Community Infrastructure Levy and the potential for targeted use of business rates revenue. The Council also has a strong track record of securing funding for investing in its town centres including from the GLA, TfL and Heritage Lottery Fund.

H. PROMOTER: the Council is well-placed to promote the offers and opportunities of the borough's town centres. The Council has launched the 'Shaping Waltham Forest' and 'Creative Choice' campaign and the 'Invest Waltham Forest' programme, all geared up to showcase the borough and its major centres.

9. TOWN CENTRE DELIVERY PLANS

This section describes activity which is common to all eight town centres, followed by stand-alone customised delivery plans for each town centre.

DELIVERY PLAN: ALL TOWN CENTRES

ACTIVITY	PURPOSE	TIMINGS	COUNCIL RESOURCE	PARTNERS
1 Town Centre Promotion: launch Waltham Forest Business Offer and Top 20 Business Forum	To support growth and investment in our unique town centres and to work with larger businesses on their corporate social responsibility programmes	2016 onwards	Regeneration, Neighbourhood Management/Street Trading, Business Team	Local businesses
2 Offer business support in key growth sectors	To support small businesses particularly in the creative and cultural industries, urban services, food & drink, independent retail and the evening economy, including maximising the impact of the night tube from August 2016	2016 onwards	Business Team, Communications	Local businesses
3 Invest funding and resources where it is most needed and can have the greatest impact for residents and businesses	To secure community benefits and deliver improvement programmes in parts of the town centre that need investment, e.g. through business contributions, Section 106 (planning gain) funding, external funding applications, town centre grants or crowd funding	2016 onwards	Regeneration, Business Team, Highways	Local businesses, Community groups
4 Town Centre Management	To establish a town centre management programme to co-ordinate developments and business support activity, specifically in Walthamstow during the period of regeneration, but potentially rolling out to other town centres, to ensure town centres are safe, clean and inclusive	2017 onwards	Regeneration, Neighbourhood Management/Street Trading, Business Team	Local businesses, community groups, property owners
5 Protecting and expanding employment uses in town centres	To ensure that commercial and workspaces are made available which are flexible enough to meet the future needs of business	2016 onwards	Planning Policy, Development Management and Regeneration through Town Centre Programme Boards	Developers, businesses, utilities and transport providers

DELIVERY PLAN: ALL TOWN CENTRES (CONTINUED)

ACTIVITY	PURPOSE	TIMINGS	COUNCIL RESOURCE	PARTNERS
6 Co-ordination of infrastructure delivery and increased capacity to support growth	To deliver public infrastructure, e.g. transport, utilities, open spaces, broadband, new leisure facilities and other improvements to town centres	2016 onwards	Planning Policy, Development Management and Regeneration	Utilities and transport providers
7 Better utilisation of third party assets	To make better use of land and assets owned by third parties such as Network Rail, Transport for London – including vacant, underused land and railway arches – for commercial, community, town centre and residential development	2016 onwards	Regeneration, Property	Landowners

