



# Park Development Framework

Area 2 Proposals

The Three Marshes:  
Walthamstow, Leyton  
and Hackney

October 2011



## Area 2 Proposals

### The Three Marshes: Walthamstow, Leyton and Hackney

The focus of this document is Area 2 stretching between Ruckholt Road in the south and Coppermill Lane in the north. It should be read alongside the Authority's *Vision Aims Principles* document and the adopted *Thematic Proposals* both of which relate to the whole Regional Park area and which set the framework for the more detailed proposals presented here.

#### Context to Area 2

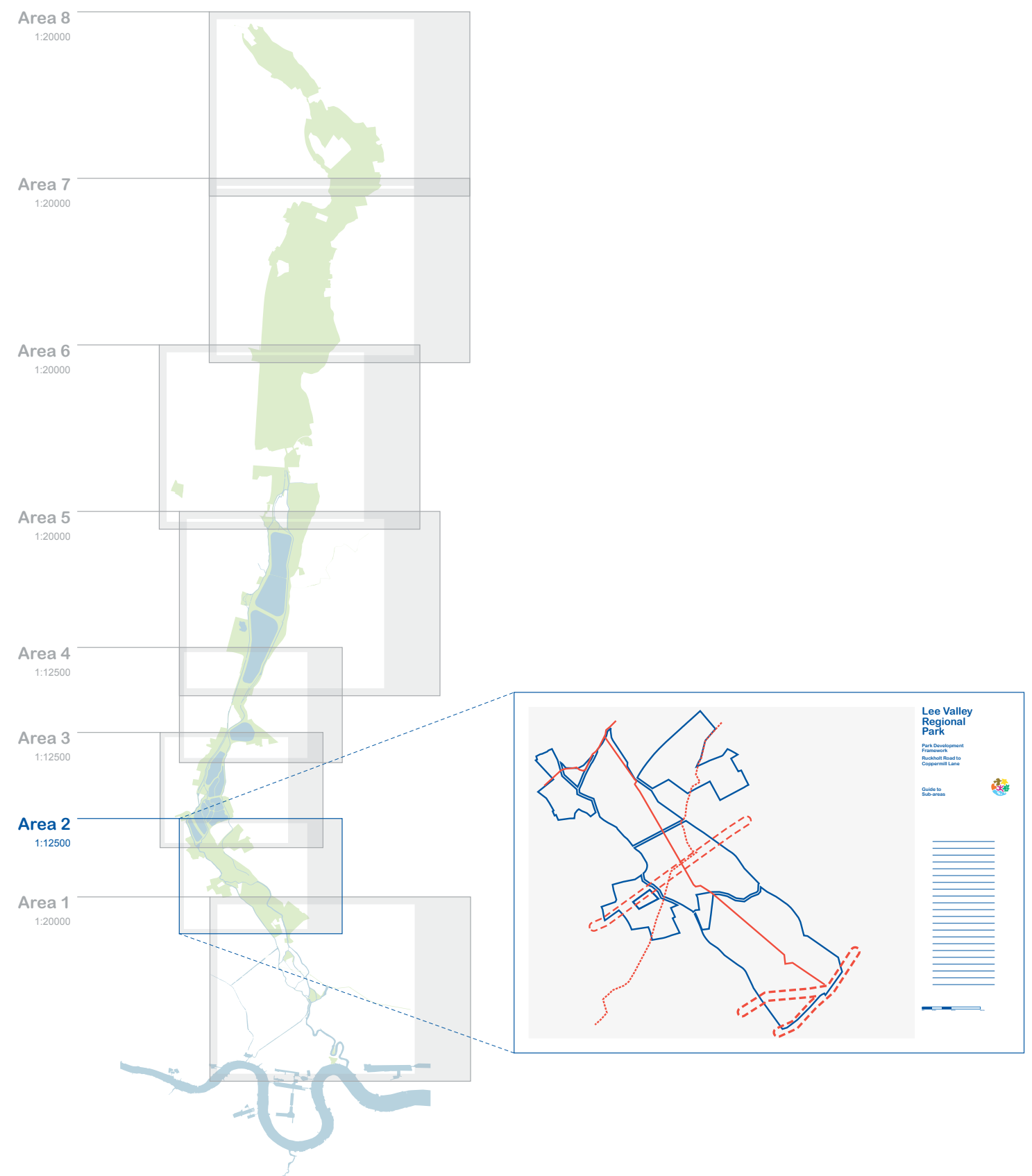
##### The Three Marshes: Walthamstow, Leyton and Hackney

The defining feature of this area is the broad expanse of marshlands. These provide the context for a diverse range of habitats and a wide range of leisure facilities. The marshes which include Walthamstow, Leyton and Hackney Marshes occupy a broad sweep of the valley floor and form a continuous inter-related open area for leisure and recreation that links through to the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park further south.

The landscape has an industrial heritage containing railways, electricity pylons, redundant water filtration structures and infrastructure to prevent flooding.

The valley's edges comprise intensively developed residential and industrial areas which date from the nineteenth century and which were the subject of redevelopment during the late twentieth century. Along the eastern edge of the valley some of these industrial areas are included within the Park; e.g. Rigg Approach. One industrial site, the Thames Water Depot is located in the heart of the Park and is designated Metropolitan Open Land (MOL).

The area is well used with a diverse range of recreational and educational activities, indoor and outdoor sports, events and biodiversity and wildlife interest. The Authority's facilities at the Ice centre, Riding Centre and





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the Waterworks Centre attract more than half a million visitors each year. The waterways of the Lee Navigation and the River Lea enhance the leisure and wildlife spaces and provide further opportunities for water sports, habitat creation and informal recreation.

### Key Resources and Special Features

The large open spaces have high ecological values. Walthamstow Marsh is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a nature reserve with ecological and heritage interest. This natural open space together with the mature parkland at Springfield Park, the Lee Navigation and Springfield Marina define the landscape character of this northern part of the Area. The waterways are also recognised as key wildlife habitats with green corridors supporting access. These are features which the Authority's proposals aim to protect and enhance.

Both the Essex and Middlesex filter beds date from the mid nineteenth century. Over the last 15 years the Authority has worked to combine this heritage interest with biodiversity. At Essex Filter Beds remnants of the water industry have been safeguarded and interpreted and wetland habitat created to demonstrate a range of succession planting. The central filter beds have been adapted as one of London's largest bird hides. The Middlesex

filter beds are a Nature Reserve and the whole site is identified as a site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation. This combination of heritage and wetland habitats has provided a strong theme around which to base visitor and educational attractions accessed via the Waterworks Centre. Proposals seek to extend this offer.

The large areas of marshlands contrast with several more formal parks. These include Springfield Park, St James Park and Millfields. These provide play facilities including football, tennis and space for informal recreation. Millfields provides a strong focus for a range of community activities which includes a community orchard and a variety of cultural events. These spaces contribute to the areas open character and its ecological values. The proposals aim to enhance the ecology of these areas where possible and improve access. It is important that new development is not used to cut them off from the large open spaces which define this area's essential character.

Further south, the predominant land use within the Regional Park is the vast, flat, open area of Hackney Marsh. Comprised of numerous sports pitches, this is a resource which complements the sporting legacy of the Olympic Park. Embraced by the River Lea to the east and the Lee Navigation along its western edge, with belts of mature poplar trees, the surrounding



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industrial and urban development is well screened from the central areas of the Marsh. The adopted Hackney Marshes masterplan includes landscape enhancement of Hackney Marshes with new habitat creation along its river edges. Other measures will consolidate the role of this area in providing for sporting activity and casual recreation.

### Opportunities for Visitor Enjoyment

North-south access through the area is good with the Lee Valley pathway and several other cycling routes and pathways through the marshes. There are difficulties in east-west access through the area. The street pattern, industrial estates and rail lines prevent good access from the east. Proposals such as that for the Black Path will, in part, address this issue. Whilst visitors can access this area by several bus routes the Authority is keen to support London Borough Waltham Forest in its work to re-open Lea Bridge Road station. This could provide public transport from a wider catchment directly to this part of the Regional Park.

This area is open for public recreation and this forms the predominant land use throughout. The built facilities cater for and are used intensively for a variety of activities from, for example, ice skating to horse ball competitions, outdoor events to nature study and walking. Open spaces and facilities are popular with community

groups and volunteers who invest considerable time and energy in the area enhancing the range of activities available, improving biodiversity and managing innovative projects such as the Hackney Community Tree Nursery and Edible Forest Garden. There are a number of leisure centres, such as the Lee Valley Riding Centre, Lee Valley Ice Centre and the Waterworks Nature Reserve and Golf Centre at Lea Bridge Road. These facilities are now complemented by the new visitor centre on Hackney Marshes. Facilities at Springhill, Springfield Marina and the rowing and canoe clubs on the Navigation provide for water sports and recreation. Proposals identify scope for new water based facilities at sites such as Essex and Eastwood wharves and the Thames Water depot. These facilities within the Regional Park are complemented by a range of pubs and waterside cafes which lie just outside the Park.

The Authority accepts that there are some sites, included within the Park's boundaries, which are not compatible with its statutory purpose. These can have an adverse effect on the Park's environment and on the provision of high quality facilities at variance with its adopted Vision. In these circumstances where these sites lie on the Park's edge and are not covered by statutory designations, which could support their future use for park related purposes, the Authority will seek to limit the extent of the impact of new development.

Measures could include landscaping or their designation as MOL or as Major developed sites in the Green Belt<sup>1</sup>. For other developed sites including those which by reason of their location are currently designated as either MOL or Green Belt, the Authority will resist their redevelopment for non park related uses.

Our proposals for new and enhanced visitor facilities along Lea Bridge Road include opportunities for new visitor accommodation in the form of hostel accommodation and or chalets or pods. The Waterworks centre and Essex Wharf are ideally suited to serve this purpose. These would support the development of the area as a visitor base for trips to the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and the wider Regional Park.

Proposals support the development of a key gateway access into the Olympic Park from Hackney Marshes and new pedestrian and cycle access links between the two areas.

### Proposals

The Authority's proposals are designed to address the issues identified above and are based on the Authority's adopted (July 2010) guiding principles for the future development and management of the Regional Park. These are:

- Partnership work - recognising that many of the proposals can only be delivered through the collective efforts of a range of partners, stakeholders and landowners
- Regional Value - assessing the range of benefits that any particular facility or activity within the Park delivers to the people of Essex, Hertfordshire and London
- Multi-function and synergy - developing proposals which can be used to harness competing demands
- Flexibility - the design and management of facilities and open spaces of the park in a way which responds to changing needs and demands

- Environmental Sustainability - recognising that the ongoing planning, design and management of the Park must be underpinned by principles of sustainable management and development and take full account of the need to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change
- Engagement - engagement with a wide range of organisations, user groups and community groups is fundamental to the successful management and development of the Park.

1. Major Developed Site in the Green Belt defined under Annex 2 of PPS 2 Green Belts – DETR 2001

# This Document

Area 2 has been divided into seven sub-areas, 2.A.1 to 2.A.7, together with 5 route based proposals; these sub divisions are shown on the map *Guide to Sub-areas* page 13.

The sub divisions largely reflect existing and potential visitor use and landownership, current and future management and important national and local designations e.g. Walthamstow Marshes SSSI and nature reserve. The Route Proposals highlight the significance and opportunities presented by routes that cross the Park, be they historic pathways, rail lines or roads.

One inset proposal 2.A.6.1 features the site of the Thames Water Depot, an industrial use located on Metropolitan Open Land within the heart of the Park. The Authority considers this to be a key site, currently in a non Park compatible use and has set out a clear statement of uses it considers the site should be developed for and a clear statement of those which should be resisted.

The Park wide Adopted Thematic Proposals have been translated onto six area based maps, one representing each theme. These provide a graphical interpretation of the relevant area wide proposals as they apply within Area 2. These should be read alongside the sub-area proposals.

Incorporated within these Area 2 Proposals are those proposals from the Park Plan Part Two which are still considered to be relevant.

Proposals have also drawn upon and been informed by other relevant studies that the Authority has commissioned with partners, including the Upper Lee Valley Landscape Strategy and the draft Walthamstow Marshes Landscape Design Framework.

## Relationship between Park Development Framework and Local Development Framework

The Park Act 1966 requires the Riparian planning authorities to include the Authority's proposals that relate to their areas within their own relevant planning strategies and policies. Proposals within Area 2 lie within the plan making areas of the London Boroughs of Hackney and Waltham Forest. The Authority is working with both boroughs to ensure that these proposals are included within the relevant planning documents of the local planning authorities in compliance with Section 14 (2) of the Park Act.

## This Document

Area Proposals May 2011

