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BISHOPSGATEWAY TO THE GREEN GRID

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The current vision for the development of Bishopsgate Goods Yard, jointly put forth by Hackney, Tower Hamlets and the Greater London Authority, envisions development solely within the boundaries of the site. It also emphasises the site's relationship with the City of London to the west. This form of development risks failing to benefit local communities in one of the most deprived local areas in the country.

We have taken several key decisions in response to such proposals for the site.

- 1 We have chosen to look beyond the immediate site to focus on engagement with more residual or 'forgotten' areas within such neighbourhoods.
- 2 We have chosen to pursue a development strategy which utilises planning obligations for redistribution to the wider community. As such, we have devoted the western portion of the Goods Yard to high-rise development in order to invest in a green infrastructure which engages with areas further towards the east.
- 3 The Gateway to the Green Grid aims to ameliorate the quality of public realm on the fringe of the dense city centre, while complementing local strengths and character. The project includes the creation of an elevated park on top of the Braithwaite Viaduct, and of a green walkway which navigates a series of pre-existing and newly planned open spaces.

The Gateway to the Green Grid will stimulate new ways of experiencing a complex and unique area of London for residents and visitors alike.

1 Making a Gateway: infrastructure extends east from the Bishopsgate site



INTRODUCTION

The Site

Bishopsgate Goods Yard occupies a 4.6 hectare space at the intersection of several historic, political and cultural boundaries at the fringe of central London.

Straddling the boroughs of Hackney and Tower Hamlets the Goods Yard is located on a site which once operated as one of eleven gateways into the medieval city of London (Davis 2008). In the mid 1800s, it was developed as a passenger terminus for trains arriving from eastern parts of the country, before its final conversion to a Goods Yard at the end of the nineteenth century, bringing fish, produce and other goods from the country into central London (Davis, 2008). The Goods Yard remained in operation until the 1960s, when a fire decimated the uninsured building and created the barren space we see today, which has remained intact despite heavily contested proposals for demolition.



Vision

We wish to see the Bishopsgate Goods Yard restored to its prior role of gateway, both into, and out of, the city. Our design privileges the pedestrian and cyclist experience.

The Gateway to the Green Grid will see the transformation of the unused viaduct of Bishopsgate Goods Yard into an elevated park and walkway, extending from the border of the City at Bishopsgate eastward. The Gateway will function as the strategic link between a series of public spaces of varying size and character.

It will complement, rather than compete with, pre-existing East End destinations such as the markets, boutiques, pubs and curry houses of Brick Lane and Spitalfields. Drawing upon the energy of the area the Gateway will provide a safe, alternative route which raises the pedestrian above the tangled streets to unobstructed views of the city to the north and south.



In addition to providing an elevated route for daily commuting to work and school, we envision the Gateway as providing a non-consumer space for both local residents and visitors to the area. Above all, the Gateway to the Green Grid is a spatial intervention intended for the amelioration of the local public realm. Our intervention focuses on improving quality and accessibility in the local environment through the realisation of a better connected, strategic green link.

ANALYSIS

Responding to local conditions

Our initial analysis was greatly shaped by experiential reactions and observations from time spent on and around the site itself. We were struck by the sheer variety of character embodied in the spaces around Bishopsgate and along the length of its viaduct. In addition to the diminishing heights and building footprints experienced as one travelled west to east, there were disparities in the maintenance of roads, signage, lighting and public spaces. The preserved Georgian housing stock of Spitalfields sat cheek by jowl with council estates. Narrow alleyways off Brick Lane opened to the parking lot cum public square at Truman Brewery.

Cutting perpendicular to Brick Lane were a series of residual spaces, such as Allen Gardens, a simple field accessed through an alley-way littered with refuse and graffiti. Further along towards Weavers Fields the creative buzz of Spitalfields and Brick Lane gave way to silence along the arches of the viaduct.

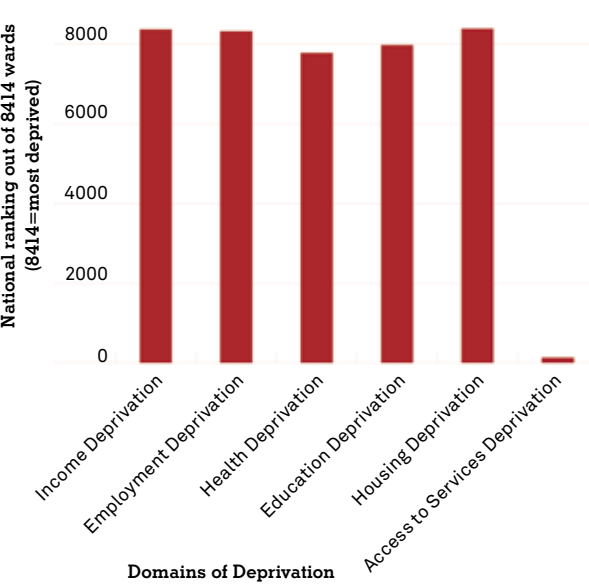
A first step in evaluating these initial impressions was to collect information on these local neighbourhoods, particularly to ascertain resources in which these wards were most deprived. A useful tool for accomplishing this was the Index of Multiple Deprivation, put together by the Department of Communities and Local Government. The index consists of a series of indicators, covering a range of economic, social and housing issues, which can be separately measured and applied to individuals, or combined and applied to wider areas at the ward and borough levels.

The majority of the Bishopsgate site and viaduct is located in the borough of Tower Hamlets, which is ranked among the top fifty most deprived local authorities at a national level, according to the IMD. Tower Hamlets is particularly deprived with regard to income, housing, services, and living environment. Of 8,414 national wards, Weavers ward, across which the viaduct stretches, suffers acutely in housing, income and child poverty deprivation with respective national rankings of 18, 33, and 48, with 1 being the most deprived.

We have gone on to analyse in more depth the most relevant aspects concerning spatial deprivation around our site, namely: employment, housing, traffic, pedestrian conditions and green space.

2 Domains of Deprivation

Relative National Deprivation Ranking – Weavers Ward



Bishopsgateway to the Green Grid

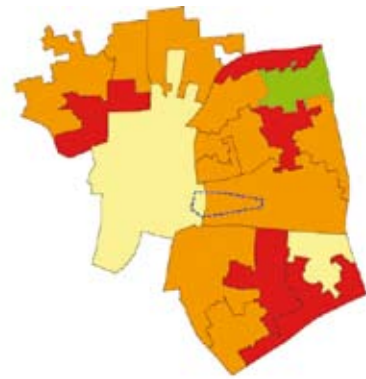
Local Economy

The geography of employment within the wards neighbouring our site is remarkably complex. There is a divide between the areas south-west of our site, where the proportion of residents with jobs in the financial and real estate domains is significantly higher than the London profile, and the rest of our areas, where a high proportion of residents are employed in hospitality services and manufacturing.

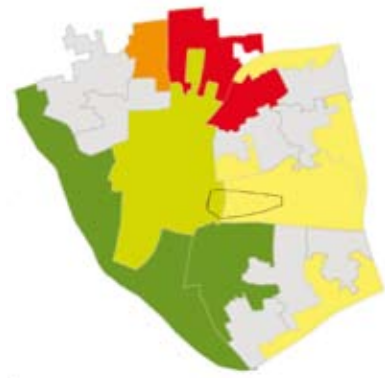
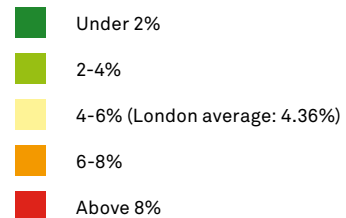
In addition we observed a pattern of division by business activity, with financial services dominating to the south-west of the site, giving way to the markets and night-time economy of the Brick Lane area to the south. Further east the area becomes characterised by light industrial premises in the arches under Bishopsgate Viaduct.

This division is further reflected in the quality and character of the local environment. To the west of Bishopsgate we noticed the predominance of privatised 'public' space. Examples of such developments include the Broadgate Centre, Devonshire Square, Exchange Square and Bishops Square.

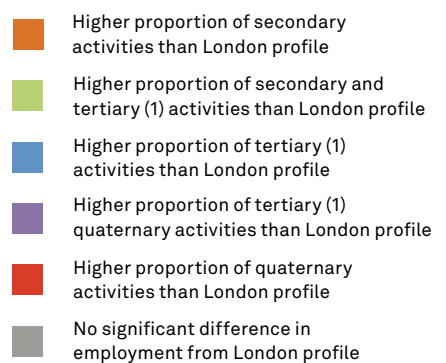
The Broadgate development, for instance, consists of a 'groundscaper', or covered walkway running alongside, and elevated from, Broadgate sidewalk. Devonshire Square and Exchange Square both consist of privately owned and managed 'courtyard' style spaces, enclosed by office buildings. These spaces with their immaculate greenery and benches that are not meant to be sat on form a sharp contrast with the friendly chaos of Brick Lane or the gritty urbanity of the areas further east.



3 Employment rate



4 Employment profile



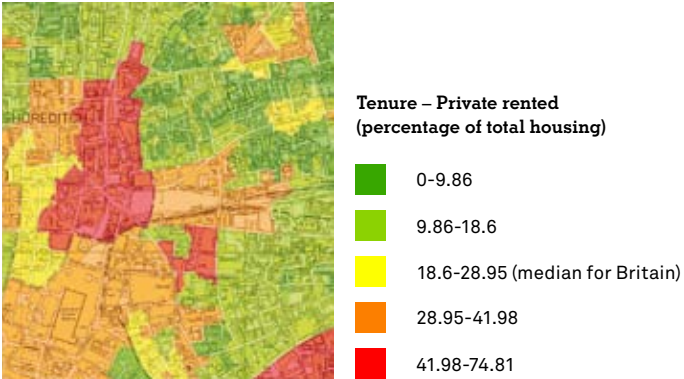
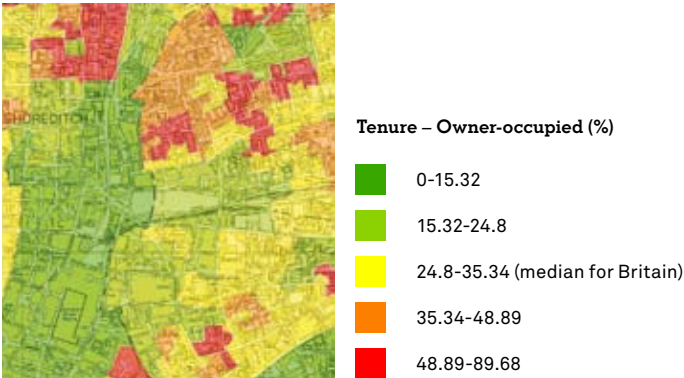
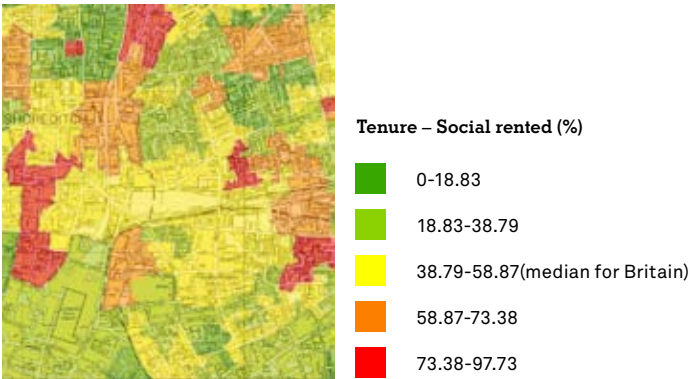




Housing

A variety of housing typologies and conditions exist in Weavers ward and Spitalfields and Banglatown, from preserved Georgian housing stock to first floor apartments in rooms above Brick Lane. We were particularly attentive to social housing in areas which both lacked public space and were situated in ill-connected areas along the railway line. Pedley and Cheshire Streets were two areas we identified as suffering from poor housing conditions, as partments were built against the viaduct, with light industrial uses blocking north to south passage through the arches.

6 Housing tenure



Traffic

The quality of the local environment immediately surrounding Bishopsgate Goods Yard is highly influenced by the presence of arterial roads and high volumes of vehicular traffic passing through them. These have an impact on pedestrian safety, air quality and quality of life for local residents, particularly families with young children.

Traffic volumes

The Bishopsgate Goods Yard site is bounded by a number of major arterial roads that link the City with East London. The lack of underground services in East London increases traffic above ground. Traffic volume of buses and coaches adjacent to Bishopsgate Goods Yard is high compared to the rest of London.

Air quality

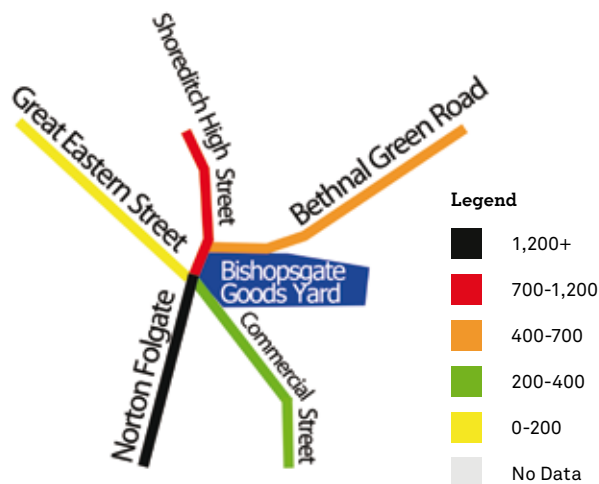
Air quality in London continues to breach EU and national health-based targets. According to the GLA, air pollution in London was predicted to cause 1,000 premature deaths in 2005 and has led to 1,000 hospital admissions annually.

Noise

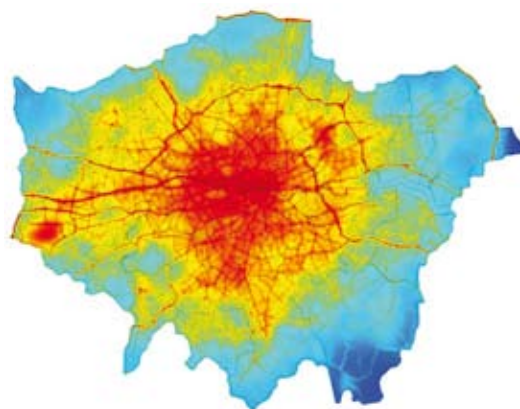
Arteries adjacent to the site are exposed to noise mainly from traffic which is greater than the standard 65 decibels decreed by the Mayor's (2007) The State of the Environment report.

Pedestrians and cyclists

Cyclist casualties in Hackney and Tower Hamlets increased from 2006-2007, while pedestrian casualties have decreased in Tower Hamlets and increased in Hackney over the last year.



7 Air pollution – annual mean nitrogen dioxide concentration



8 Traffic volumes – annual average daily flow of bus and coach vehicles



9 Air quality – day/evening/night average noise map (or Lden noise map)



10 Pedestrians take on the arterial road system

A Sea of Concrete

There is little relief from the concrete, brick and asphalt that dominate the local environment. The lack of green public space in East London has been a recognised issue from as early as the 1830s, and, despite the creation of Victoria Park in 1839, it remains one of the least green areas in London. Tower Hamlets parks are at a ratio of 1.2 hectares per 1000 population and 75% of parks are smaller than a football pitch. The vast majority of dwellings in Tower Hamlets are in flats, maisonettes, or apartments. As such, the lack of green space in Tower Hamlets is a real concern, since these housing typologies do not generally support private gardens or yards.

Existing parks and gardens are ill-maintained and poorly frequented, suffering on account of their small size, poor accessibility, ill-lit entry points and passageways, and the absence of the pedestrian 'gaze.'

The entrance to Allen Gardens off Brick Lane, for instance, is narrow, without signage, heavily littered and easily missed. A number of green spaces in Weavers ward, particularly those abutting council estates, are actually inaccessible, completely enclosed by fences.



11 Distribution of Green Space (red line indicates walking distance from site)



12a-c Access to Allen Gardens from Brick Lane is via a narrow, dimly lit alley with poor sightlines to the park...



...at the opposite end of the Alley you're greeted by local tramps enjoying the peace and quiet and a tree covered in trainers...



...and when you get there, there's no there there.



13 Weavers Fields is the largest local green space



14 Fenced fragment of open space at Pedley Street

By foot or by bike

The major roads and railway lines which connect the City and outer London fragment the area to the east of Bishopsgate Goods Yard and create a challenging landscape for the pedestrian and the cyclist to navigate.

The relatively small number of open arches in the mainline railway viaduct limits north-south permeability.

There are currently no dedicated cycle routes through the local area, forcing cyclists to share the busy roads with cars, buses and lorries.

There is an absence of clear and unified signage to direct visitors to local amenities like Allen Gardens or Spitalfields City Farm, or to indicate possible routes through the maze of dead end streets, footbridges and tunnels that characterise the area.

The construction of the East London line will further compromise local permeability by severing Pedley Street and Weaver Street.

15b



15a-d This journey across the railway viaduct from Cheshire street to Pedley street involves walking through a dark tunnel (c), up two flights of steps (d) across a footbridge and back down into a narrow alleyway.

15c



15a



15d



Distinctive Local Economy

Activities associated with the areas immediately surrounding Bishopsgate Goods Yard contribute to an unusually strong and distinctive local economy. Brick Lane is a dominant pedestrian artery, attracting both locals and international tourists to the curry houses which span its length while also hosting a weekly market, which sprawls on to secondary streets and operates at various levels of formality. The market at Brick Lane is but one of many in the area, all within walking distance from the Goods Yard. These include Spitalfields, Petticoat Lane, the markets at Truman Brewery and Columbia Road market further afield.

The Truman Brewery is a particularly powerful node in the area, acting as multi-functional hub by lending its various spaces to offices, bars, a weekend car park and venue for the annual East London Fashion Week. The Tea Building, and RichMix are also two local creative hubs (in cinema and cultural events) which, in conjunction with a number of music venues, contribute to the youthful and creative reputation of the area.

These attractions are features for which the area is popularly known. They bring money to the local economy and generate interest in the area, which contributes to the intensity of its use. The completion of the East London line in 2010 will see a further intensification of the area, as it becomes better connected in north-south directions.

Residual spaces

Our interest in the area focuses on the intersection between these popular attractions and the less known, residual spaces that equally characterise the Weavers ward. These include hidden 'pockets' such as Spitalfields City Farm, a 1.3 acre barnyard and set of allotments. The farm is situated on paths running from east to west, along a fragmented footpath which abuts the railway lines to the north.

Our interest also lies in the spaces around the viaduct itself, many arches of which are used for taxi garages, salvage shops and wholesale dealers, or are derelict.



Existing Proposals for the Site

The existing consensus on the principles of city design for the Bishopsgate Goods Yard is represented by the Draft Interim Planning Guidance, a document prepared for public consultation by the GLA, the London Boroughs of Hackney and Tower Hamlets, in partnership with the urban design firm Farrells.

The complexity of constraints (infrastructure, conservation and protected view corridors) on the site's development is highlighted by the Interim Planning Guidance. The document also contains a series of valuable principles that informed our approach:

- The development of tall buildings to the western edge of the site, set back on a podium designed to relate to existing buildings through height and materials
- The strengthening of public spaces through the creation of an elevated park on the Braithwaite Viaduct, two civic squares, one between the tall buildings and the elevated park, and the other on Brick Lane, and a welcoming entrance to Shoreditch station
- Mixed use development of between 4 and 8 storeys along the northern border of the elevated park and overlooking the East London Line railway
- Residential development of between 6 and 8 storeys, with a taller development of up to 25 storeys running along Bethnal Green Road
- A cycling path which connects Liverpool Street to Bethnal Green Road

While we share certain concerns with the Interim Planning Guidance for increased permeability, improved public realms, utilising vital historic structures and attention to building mass and height, we do not think it goes far enough in seeking to redistribute development benefits to local residents further east.

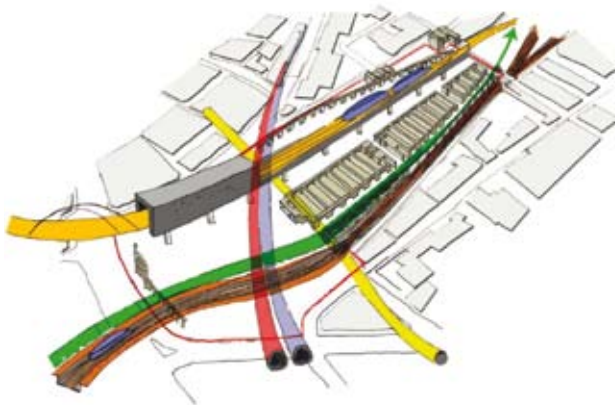
The vision, strategic concept plan and principles outlined in the Draft Interim Planning Guidance all indicate that the Bishopsgate Goods Yard is seen as an isolated site.

The Draft Interim Planning Guidance is influenced by the GLA's City Fringe Opportunity Area Framework, LB Hackney's South Shoreditch Supplementary Planning Documents and LBTH's City Fringe Area Action Plan interim planning guidance. These documents all stress a westward orientation for the site by highlighting its proximity to the city as a particular asset.

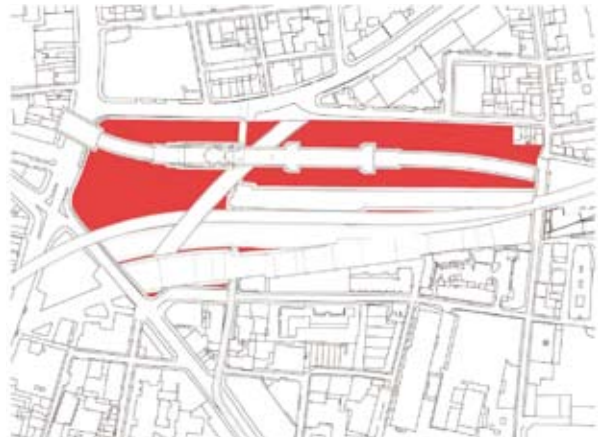
Our proposal is very much oriented toward improving quality in the built environment for local residents. We believe that a network of high quality civic spaces must be extended further eastward if they are to benefit local residents in a meaningful way. Our proposed cycle route is also situated in such a way as to activate a little-used road and provide a more connected route from east to west.



16 Masterplan from Hackney and Tower Hamlets
Interim Planning Guidance



17 Infrastructural Constraints



18 Developable Area (Foundation Constraints)



DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

From our empirical analysis and interpretive response to the local area we have developed the following principles that have informed our intervention:

Focus on Public Realm

We have based our intervention on the improvement of spaces for public use. The Gateway will bring quality public realm to highly populated areas, providing a non-consumer space for enjoying a wilder type of green in central London.



Embracing Residual Spaces

We view neglected land as an asset, rather than a liability. We recognise an inherent value in the historical structure of the Braithwaite Viaduct. It provides us with the opportunity to intervene in an area that has been underused for some time, stimulating local engagement with the structure and surrounding areas.

Complement Existing Uses

We advocate the retention of light industrial uses along the base of the viaduct, as these industries require the cheap rental and central location of the arches for their survival. More significantly, we feel that the light industrial uses, such as garages, wholesale and reclamation yards, represent the traditional east-end character of the area. We believe that park users will benefit from this juxtaposition.



Landscape Character

The aesthetic of the Gateway responds to the industrial landscapes of the Green Grid and the rough ecology of the abandoned viaducts, rather than the corporate spaces which are encroaching upon Spitalfields from the west. As such, we hope to see wild grasses, shrubs and native species following organic patterns rather than tightly controlled and manicured beds.



Inclusive management structure

The management structure of the project should encourage the participation of local organisations including non-profits, training programmes, and community horticultural projects.

CONCEPT

The Gateway to the Green Grid

Our intervention seeks to situate the development of the Bishopsgate Goods Yard site within wider spatial networks at a series of scales, from regional to local.

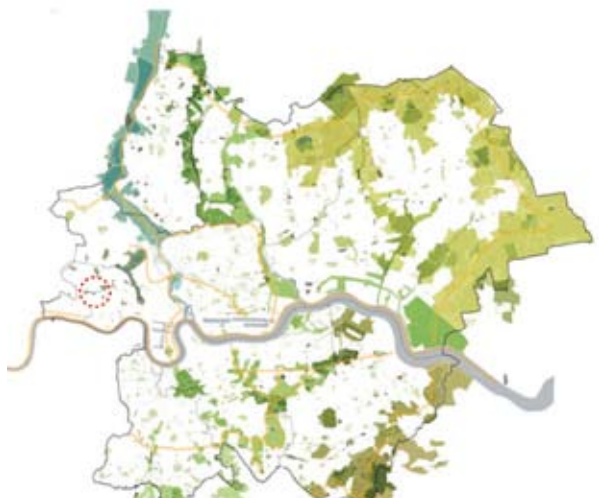
The Goods Yard site has historically had significance beyond its locality as a terminus for freight trains arriving from the east. By re-conceiving the disused Bishopsgate Viaduct as a linear park the Goods Yard would become, in effect, the terminus for the East London Green Grid, allowing some of the rugged beauty of East London's industrial landscape to penetrate into the heart of the city.

At a sub-regional scale a linear park could support the aims of the Tower Hamlets Open Space Strategy by linking a series of small neighbourhood open spaces and creating a strategic link for pedestrians and cyclists.

At a local scale our proposal looks beyond the site boundary of the Goods Yard to conceive the development as a catalyst for the improvement of the local environment, creating an interconnected network of hard and soft public spaces.

Regional Scale

The Gateway to the Green Grid will also serve as a strategic link to a pre-existing network of walkways through green and open spaces throughout the whole of East London. This network is known as the East London Green Grid. Promoted by the Department for Communities and Local Government, the ELGG is an interconnected system of long distance walks and bike paths, weaving in and out of countryside and busy urban centres. These pathways connect to parks and open spaces of varying scale and character. The principle aim of the ELGG is facilitate exploration for residents of London beyond their immediate locales.



Sub-Regional Scale

The Gateway to the Green Grid would help address deficiency in green space within Tower Hamlets and act as a catalyst for the revitalisation of a string of underused and neglected parks between Bishopsgate and Mile End.

Mile End Park connects the Gateway with the Green Grid and the Regent's Canal, adding further value to these strategic networks.

In tandem with the creation of the elevated park a co-ordinated program of ground level public realm improvements would provide a continuous off-road cycle link and increase north-south permeability by creating new pedestrian routes through the viaduct.

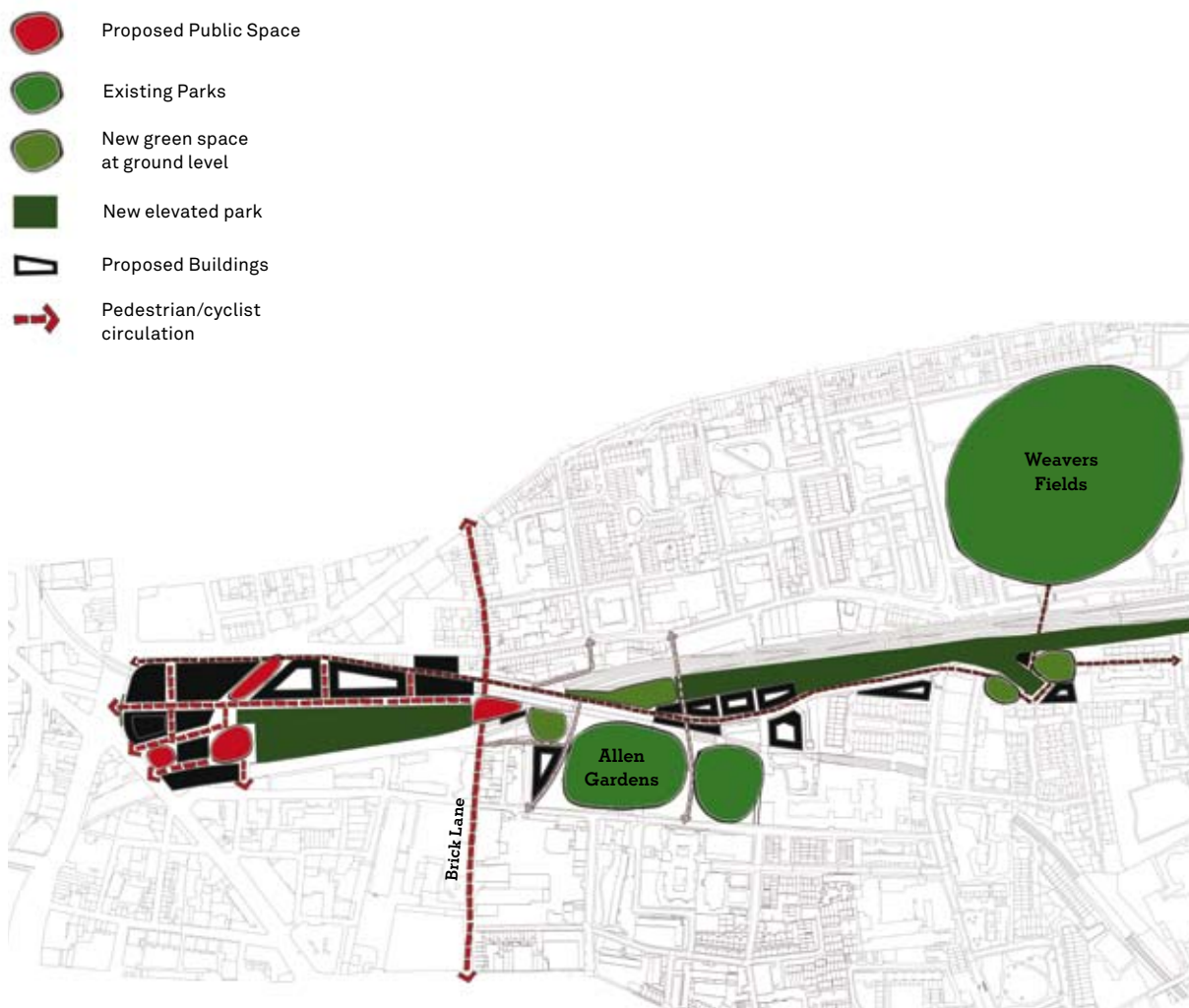
Local Scale

We have tested our concept by developing it further at the local scale, between Bishopsgate and Weavers Fields.

We have developed strategies at this scale that address access, circulation, surveillance, spatial character and funding.

These strategies could be applied in principle to further stages of the 'Gateway' project linking Weavers Fields and Mile End Park.

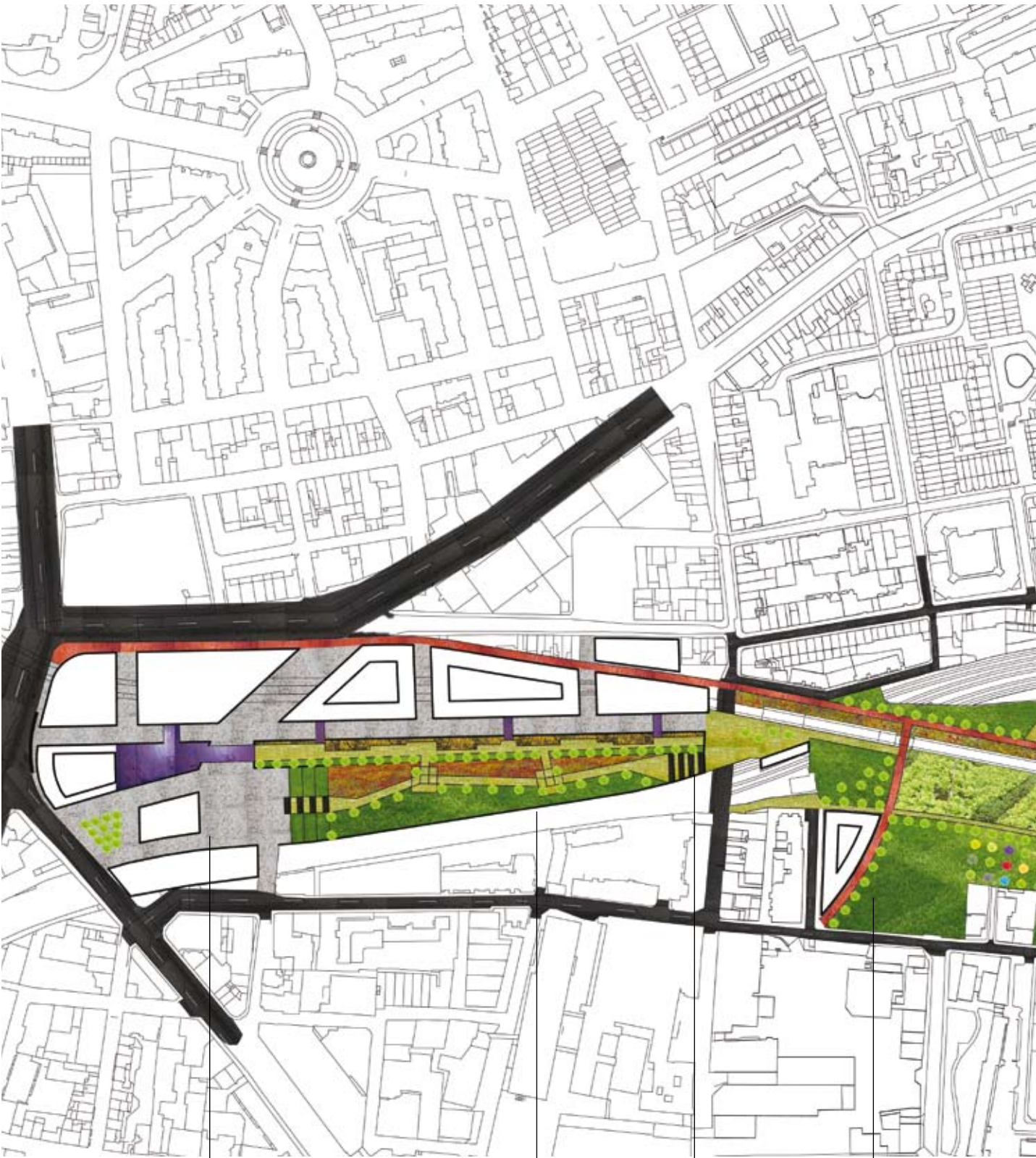
20 Concept: The Gateway to the Green Grid



21 Linking green spaces along the Grid



MASTERPLAN



Civic square at Shoreditch station

Park on top of the Braithwaite Viaduct

Improvements to Allen Gardens

New public space on Brick Lane

New connection to Weavers
Fields through opened arches

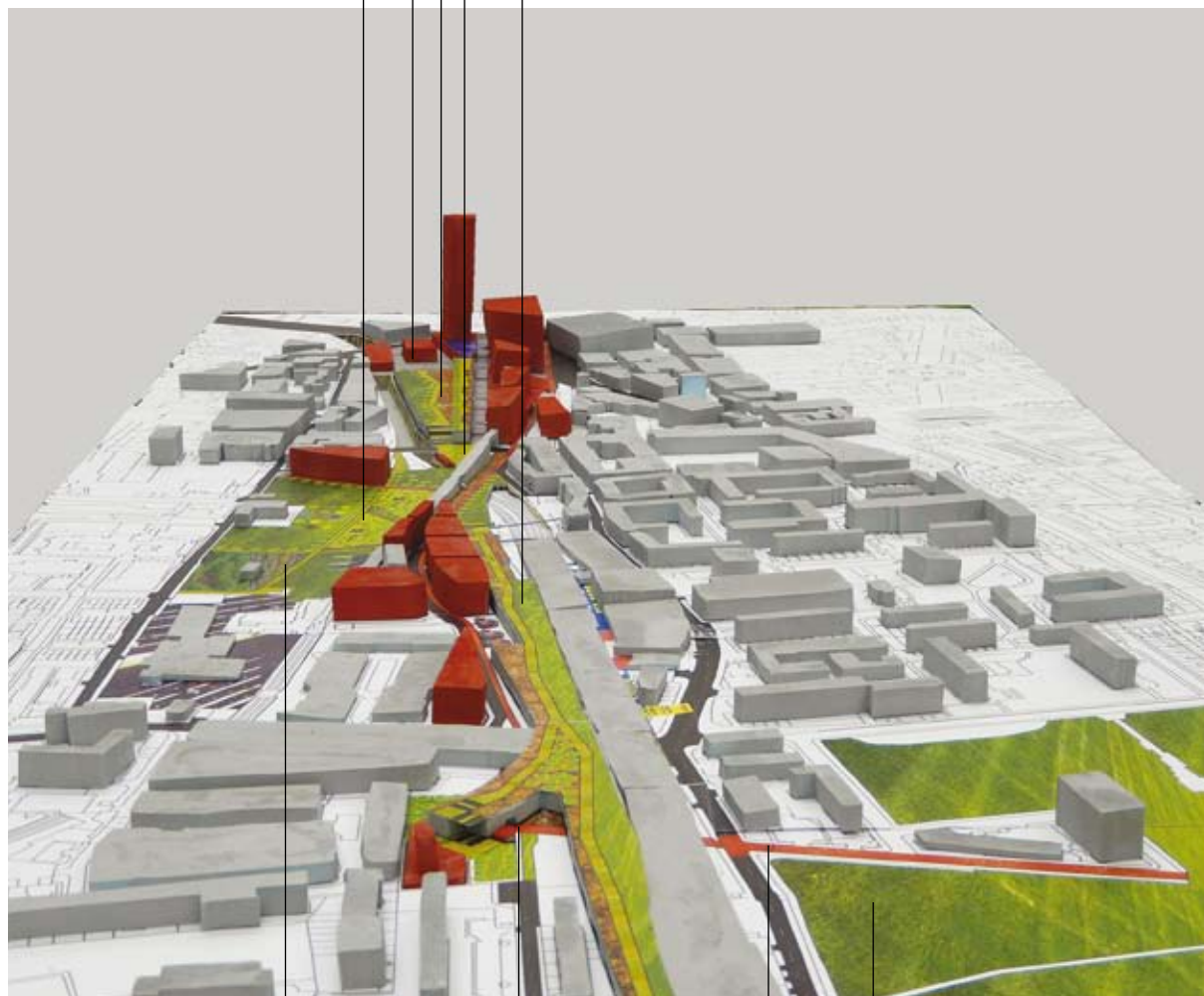
New elevated park on
Braithwaite Viaduct

New public space on Brick Lane

Civic square and
Shoreditch Station

New elevated park on
the Bishopsgate Viaduct

Allen Gardens



Spitalfields City Farm

New pocket park at Tent Street
+ access to Bishopsgate Viaduct

Weavers Fields

New cycle route at ground level
from Bishopsgate to Weavers Fields

Development Strategy

We have taken special consideration of issues such as massing, access to sunlight, and creating a sense of enclosure and protection from buildings. The development presents a transition in scale and building height across the site from west to east, so that they relate to the scale of the existing buildings (tall in the west, low-rise around Brick Lane). All buildings taller than five floors will be set back on podiums, designed to relate to existing buildings through height and materials. Street widths relate to podium heights, in order to create a sense of openness and to prevent the tower from having an overbearing impact on public routes and spaces.

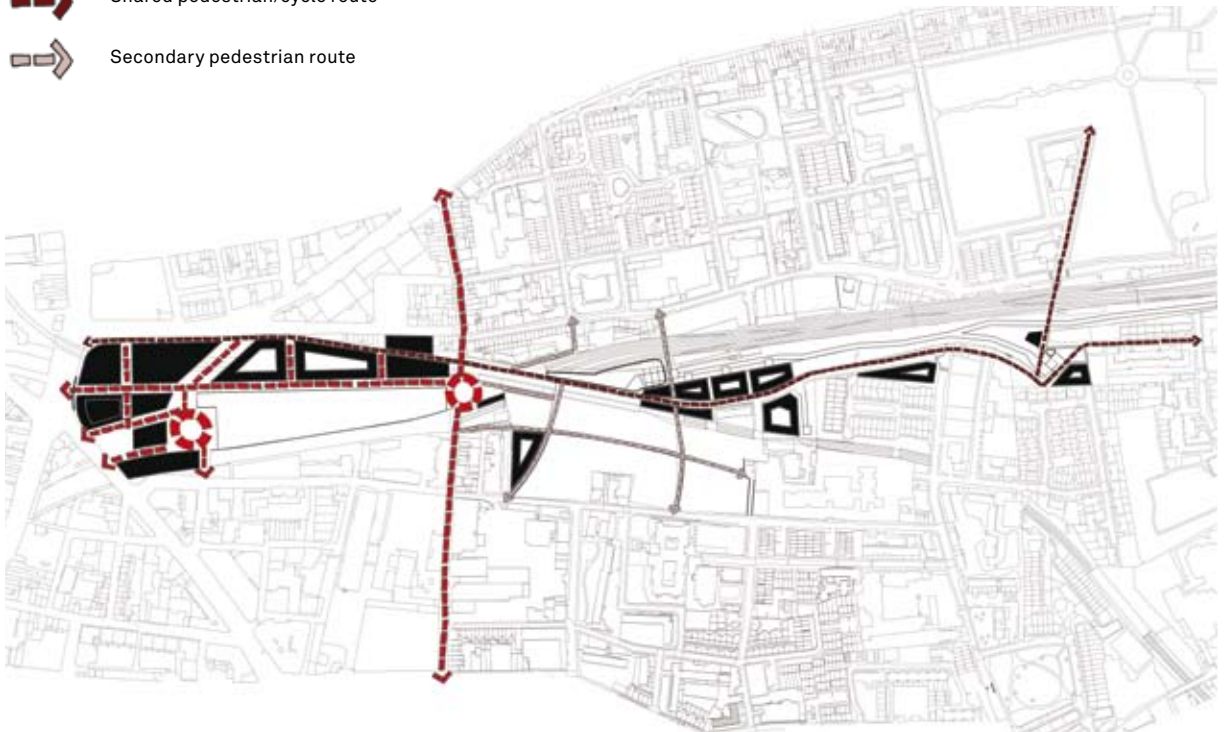
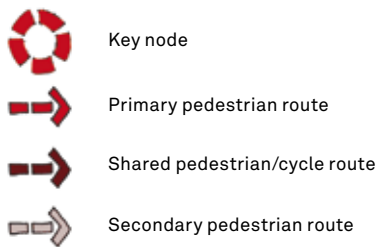
For the buildings on the site itself, uses will be mixed, with both commercial and residential spaces. All ground floors will be retail spaces, while upper floors will consist of a succession of office spaces in the lower floors and residential spaces in the upper floors. The proportion of office floors will be higher towards the contact with the city and will decrease towards Brick Lane, to ensure continuity of character of the area.

Connectivity Strategy

In tandem with the creation of elevated parks on Bishopsgate and Broadgate Viaducts we are proposing a new network of pedestrian and cyclist routes at ground level, structured around the key nodes of our civic space at Shoreditch Station and the new public space on Brick Lane.

An off-road cycle route will connect Bishopsgate with Bethnal Green via Weavers Fields.

22 Connectivity strategy: pedestrian and cycle routes



Access Strategy

Designing the interface between ground level and the elevated parks on Braithwaite and Bishopsgate Viaducts presents both challenges and opportunities.

The difference in level allows the creation of generous flights of steps (alternative seating) and broad terraces (for play and sunbathing) that will complement the spaces they overlook. As an unusual spatial typology it has the potential to become a real asset to the development.

An alternative to steps is required in places to allow access for parents with prams, the elderly and less physically able. The difference in level between ground and viaduct is approximately 8m, meaning ramps are only practical where there is a substantial amount of space to accommodate them.

For this reason we propose drawing on the precedent of the Manhattan Highline and using elevators or lifts at a few strategic points to ensure the Gateway is accessible to all.



Surveillance Strategy

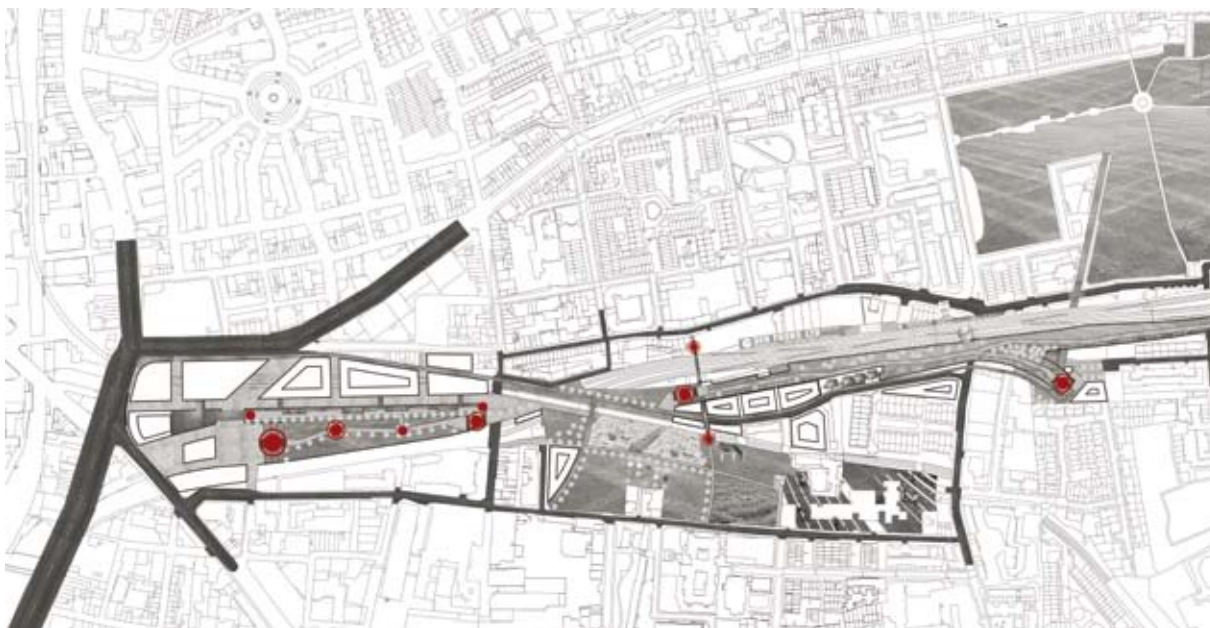
Spaces that are not well observed (Jacobs, 1961) tend to be unpopular and can feel unsafe.

Braithwaite Viaduct doesn't pose a problem in this respect – it will be well overlooked by adjacent residential blocks. It is likely to be a busy well-used space thanks to its central location and links with Brick Lane, Shoreditch Station and the commercial premises occupying the arches beneath the park.



The Bishopsgate Viaduct will benefit from some level of surveillance from the diverse range of businesses based in the arches below, but requires some additional views overlooking the park to provide passive surveillance. This will be achieved through the construction of residential buildings on the additional development sites identified in the masterplan.

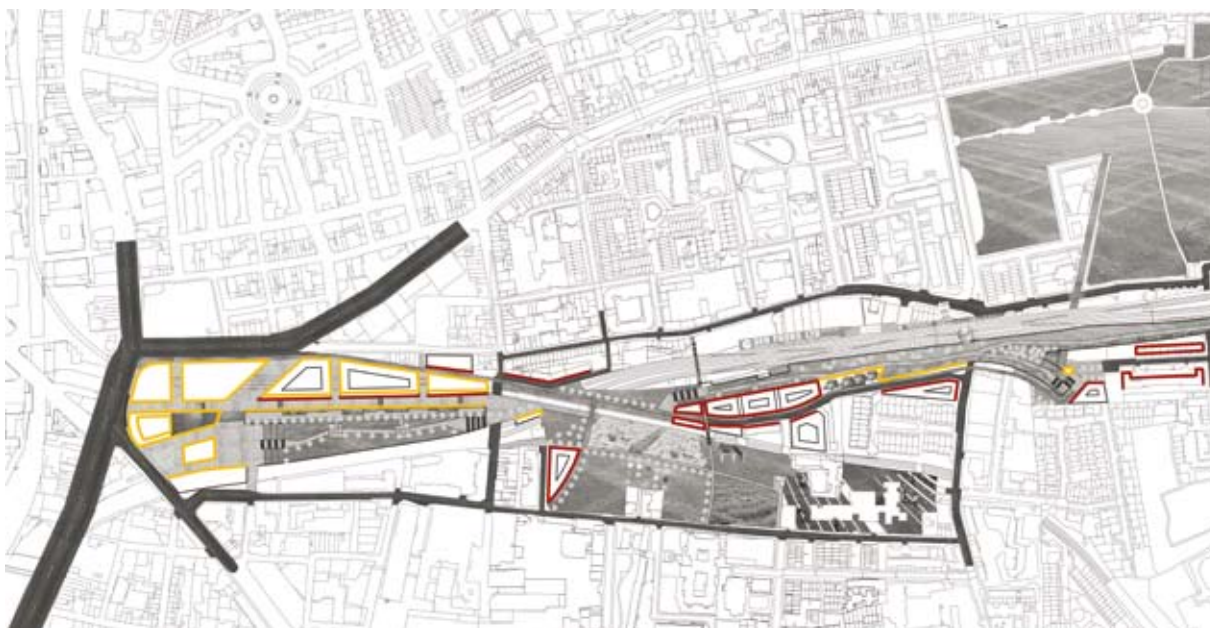
23 Access strategy

-  Terraced steps
-  Disabled access via lift or ramp



24 Surveillance strategy

-  Passive surveillance
-  Active surveillance



A JOURNEY THROUGH THE GATEWAY

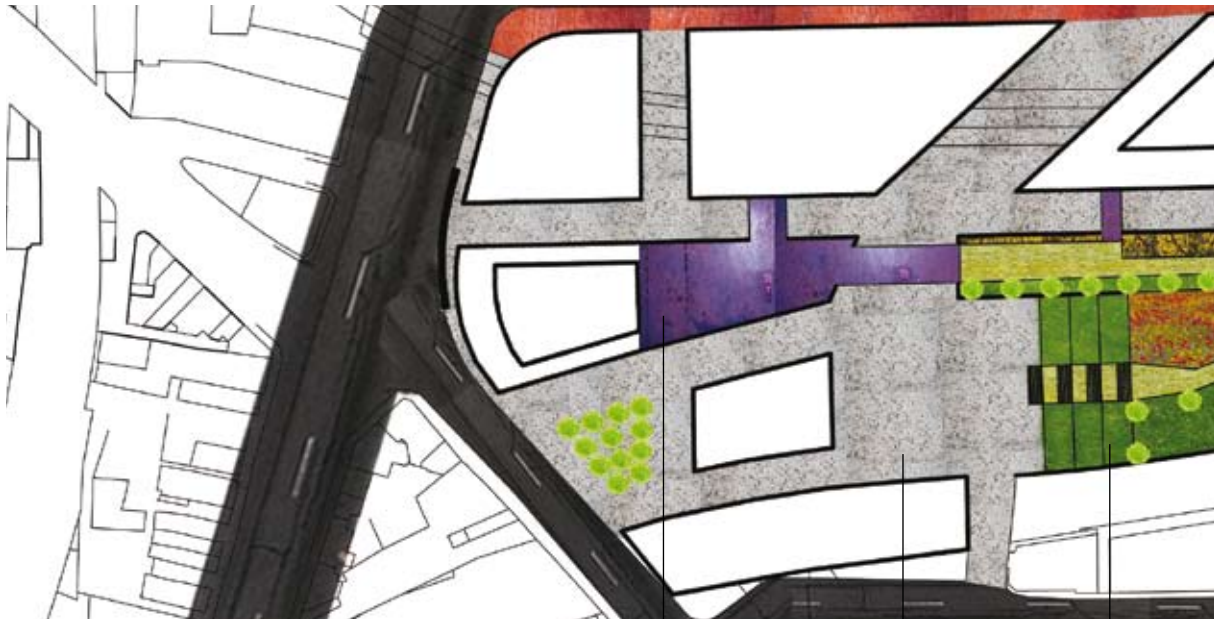
Civic Square

Exiting from the Shoreditch High Street Station or coming from Liverpool Street, Spitalfields, Hoxton or Bethnal Green, the pedestrian encounters an ample civic square. Its vibrancy is ensured by flows of people coming from all directions. Overlooking the square are terraced steps leading to the elevated park on Braithwaite Viaduct – a place to sit, chat, socialise or simply people-watch.

From Shoreditch High Street station one has the option of walking to the park via a suspended pathway, allowing easy access for disabled users. Through these dual access points we create two levels of circulation flows and two layers of public space.



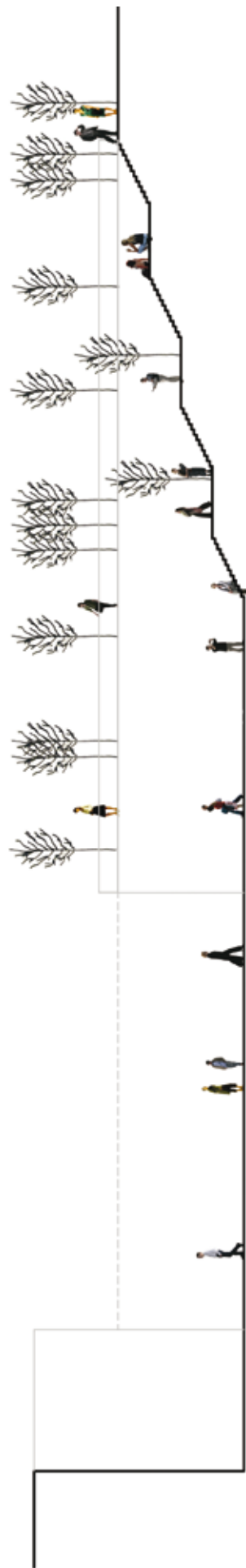
25 Civic Square: plan



Terrace bar on the podium of the new high rise tower

Generous simple civic space to accommodate high volumes of movement

Steps and terraces to Braithwaite park provide a space for people watching



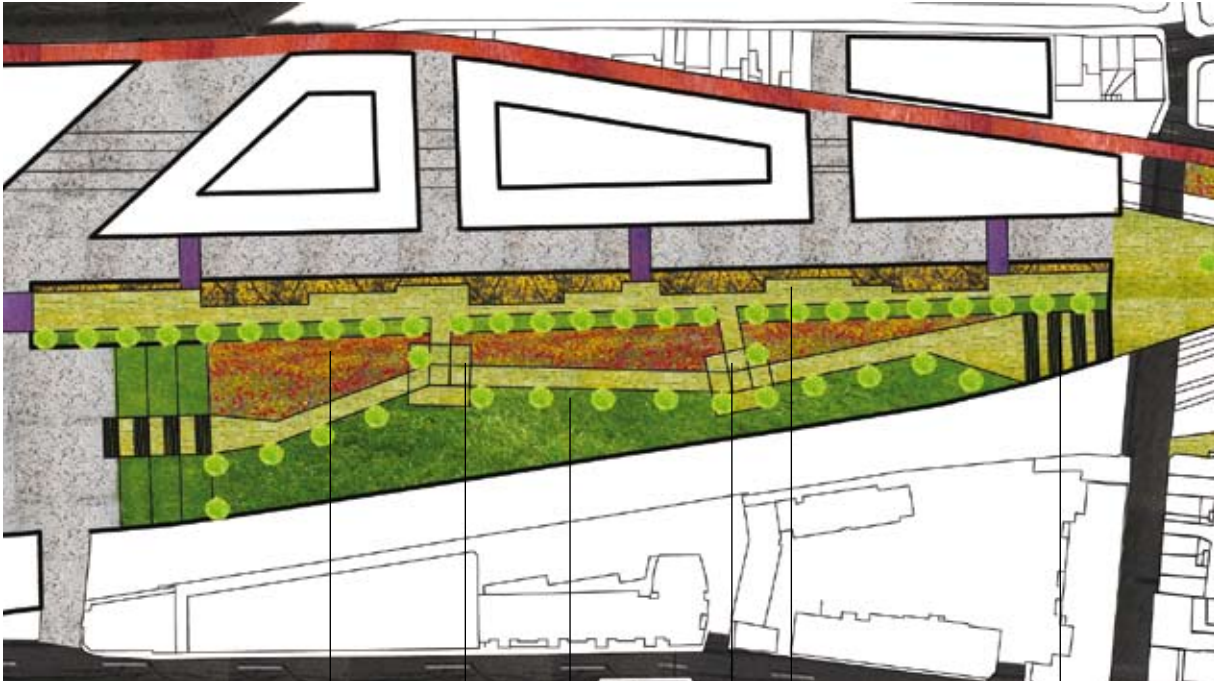
Braithwaite Park

Braithwaite Park, as the terminus of our Gateway to the Green Grid, will allow an element of the derelict site’s rugged ecology to survive as an antidote to the sanitising influence of high-rise commercial development. As a defining element of the Goods Yard site’s character the park will signal that the development is a truly democratic space, open to all.

The park is envisaged as a flexible space – a place for locals to relax and children to play, for visitors to enjoy the views, for workers to eat their lunch-time sandwich and revellers to drink their beer while watching the lights of the night-time skyline.



27 Braithwaite Park: plan



Bridge allows direct level access from Shoreditch station

Flowering plants and weeds, railway ecology

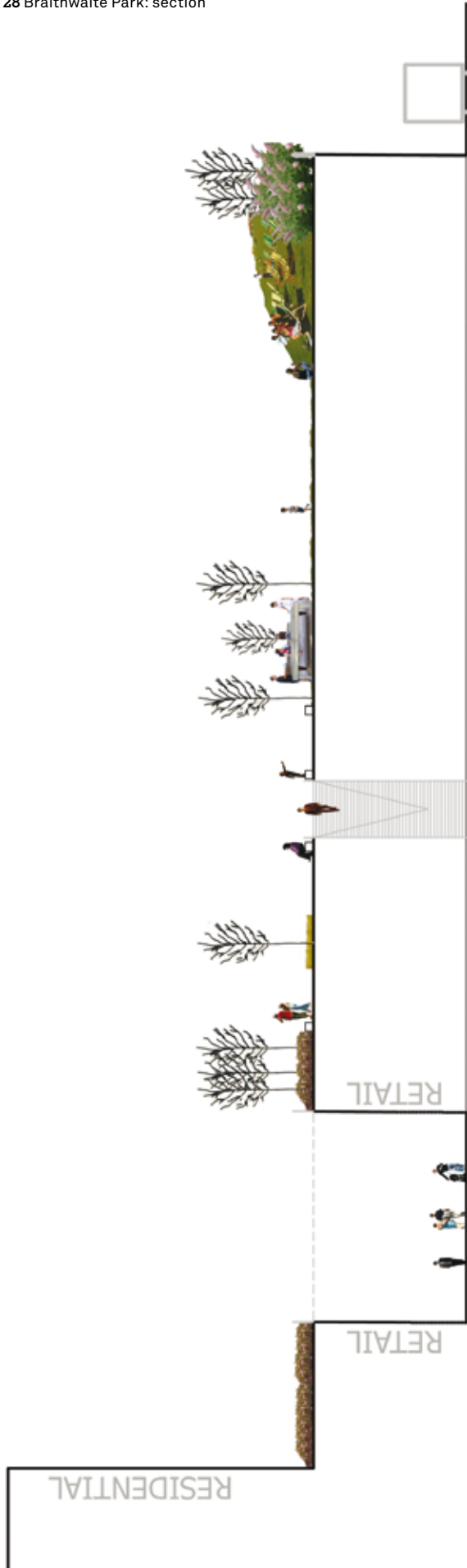
Rough grass for picnics or informal play

Sheltered alcoves create more reflective spaces amongst Birch, Buddleja and Witch Hazel

Steps to Brick Lane

Access via stairs to commercial premises below

Access via stairs to commercial premises below





29 Truman Brewery Carpark



30 Sundays on Brick Lane



31 Brick Lane: site furniture?



32 The market as street life and public space

Brick Lane/Allen Gardens

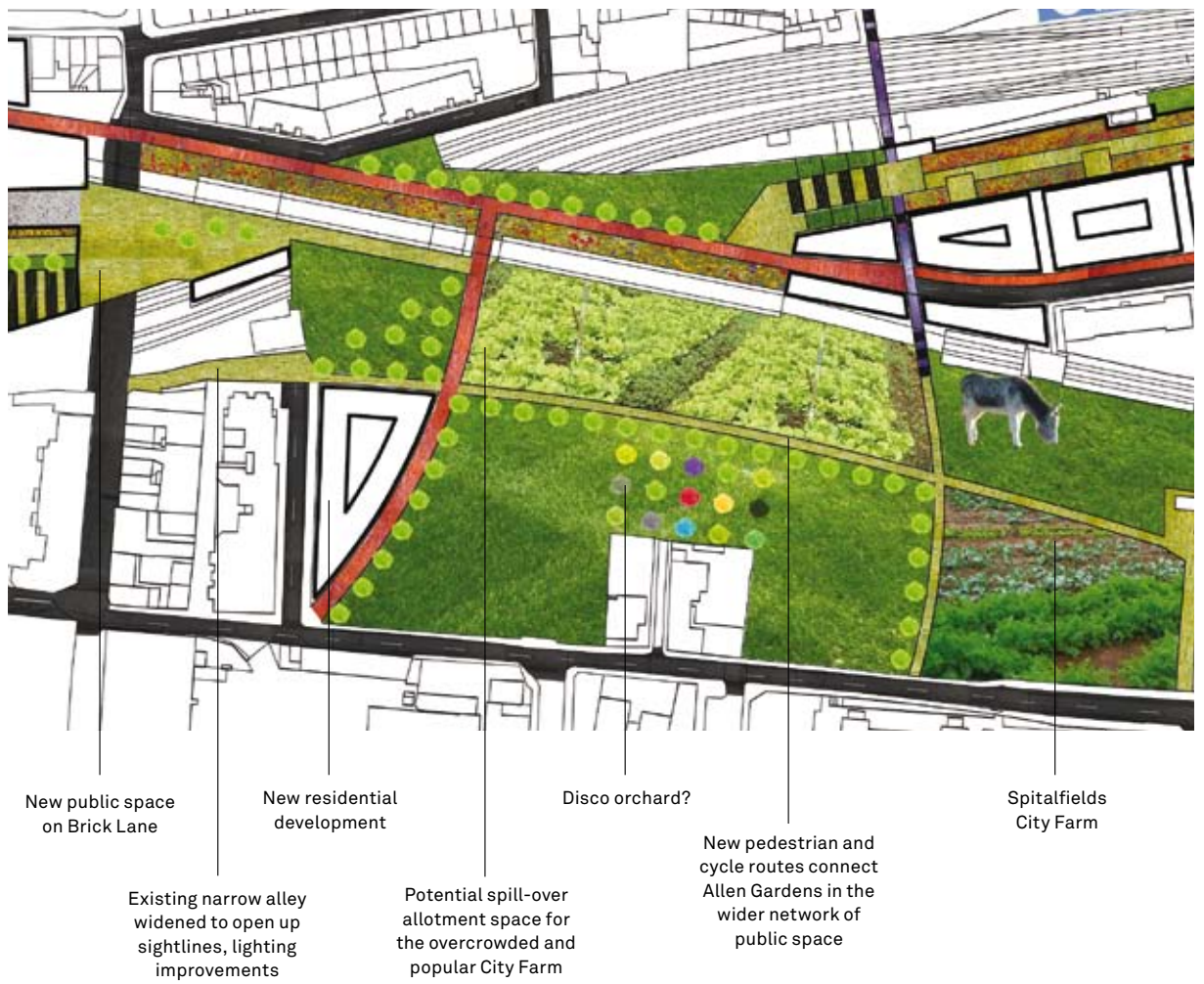
Our journey continues to Brick Lane, one of the most packed streets in London. The excitement generated by the crowds transforms even a mundane area like the Truman Brewery car park into a vibrant public space.

We propose giving Brick Lane a high quality public space for its traders and crowds to experience. The triangular form of the space is defined on one side by the truss bridge of the East London Line, on the other by a proposed row of kiosks and on the third by the end elevation of the Braithwaite Viaduct.

The space forms the epicentre of our local network of spaces, the point at which the Goods Yard meets Brick Lane and Allen Gardens. It is also the point where elevated park meets ground level and the point of termination for a number of important axial views, through the Goods Yard site and from the Bishopsgate Viaduct.

The design of this space will be minimal, using a high quality brick surface and no clutter. Interest will be added by its inhabitants.

Allen Gardens is currently shockingly underused given the dense throng of Brick Lane. We propose to remedy this by opening up views and making the park visible from the street. A new network of paths invites people into the park and towards Spitalfields City Farm and the Bishopsgate Viaduct.



33 Brick Lane/Allen Gardens: plan

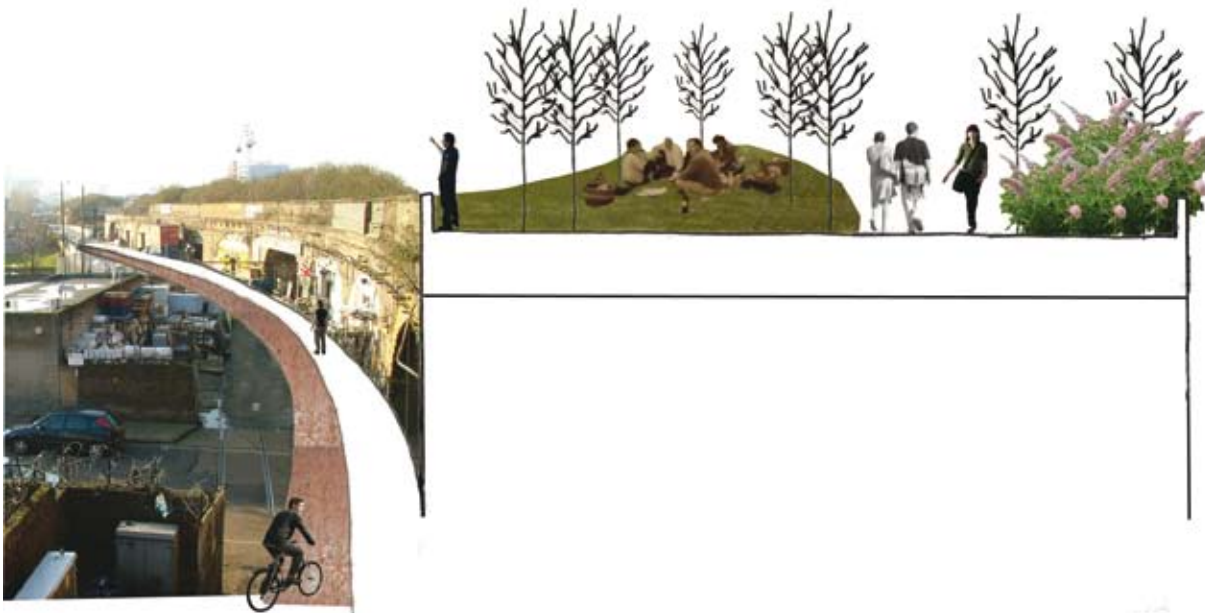
Bishopsgate Viaduct

The Bishopsgate Viaduct, re-imagined as a linear park, will offer a new type of landscape experience to the residents of East London, transforming what was previously an obstacle to pedestrian movement into an elevated route that lifts them above the traffic.

Many of East London's neighbourhood parks were the product of slum clearance. The elevated park on the Bishopsgate Viaduct requires no demolition and will co-exist with the diversity of businesses that inhabit its arches.

It draws its character from the ecology of railway sidings and the bushes that grow out of cracks in the brickwork along its length

At ground level a new off-road cycle route tracks the line of the viaduct, connecting into Weavers Fields and the wider TfL cycle network.





New footbridge connecting Cheshire Street with Pedley Street and Buxton Street links into the elevated park

Proposed developments along Pedley Street improve passive surveillance

A dedicated cycle route at ground level links Bishopsgate and Bethnal Green (via Weavers Fields)



36a-d Before: abandoned spaces under the viaduct

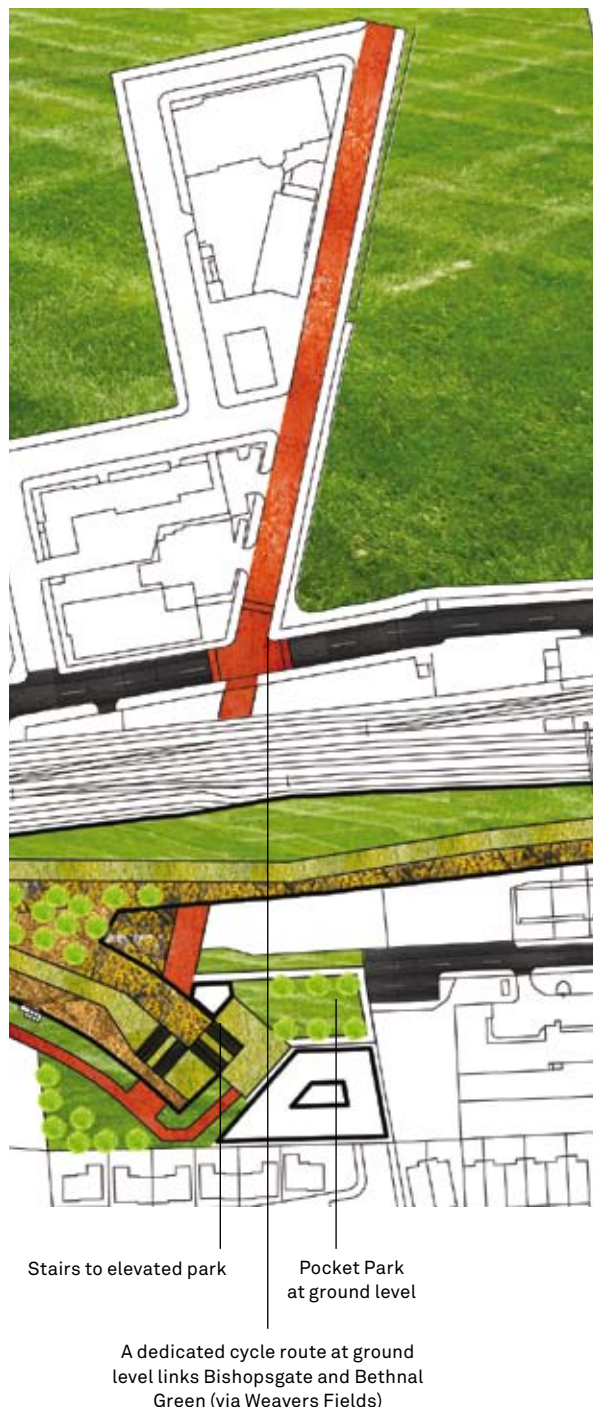


37 After: a new cycle route to Weavers Fields

Tent Street/Weavers Fields

This first stage of the Gateway to the Green Grid ends at Tent Street, but the viaduct continues on towards Mile End. Tent Street is currently a cul de sac of post-war council flats terminating in a derelict site, a residual space formed by the railway viaducts. Of all the spaces in and under the Bishopsgate Viaduct that we explored this was the one with the most inherent potential.

We propose the transformation of the derelict site into a pocket park for the residents of Tent Street. By opening up some of the disused arches it is possible to create a new route to Weavers Fields. The pocket park would also connect with the elevated park on the Bishopsgate Viaduct above (via stairs) and to the proposed Bishopsgate-Bethnal Green cycle route.



38 Tent Street/Weavers Fields: plan

FUNDING

Funding the Gateway

CABE’s document Paying for Parks (2006) made us aware that funding can come in a variety of forms – from taxation initiatives, to bonds or endowments, or through the creation of public-private partnerships. Our own funding strategy is a combination of several strategies. We will utilise planning and development opportunities, in the form of Section 106, while working to increase the parks budget of Tower Hamlets local authority.

Section 106 is a mechanism that enables local planning authorities to extract money from developers to mitigate against the impacts of their development. Also known as planning obligations, Section 106 is a development tax, negotiated between local authorities and private developers, diverting a portion of the developer’s funds into public projects or infrastructure in an area directly affected by the planned development. Non-monetary examples of Section 106 contributions include the provision of amenities such as parks, schools, or professional training programmes.

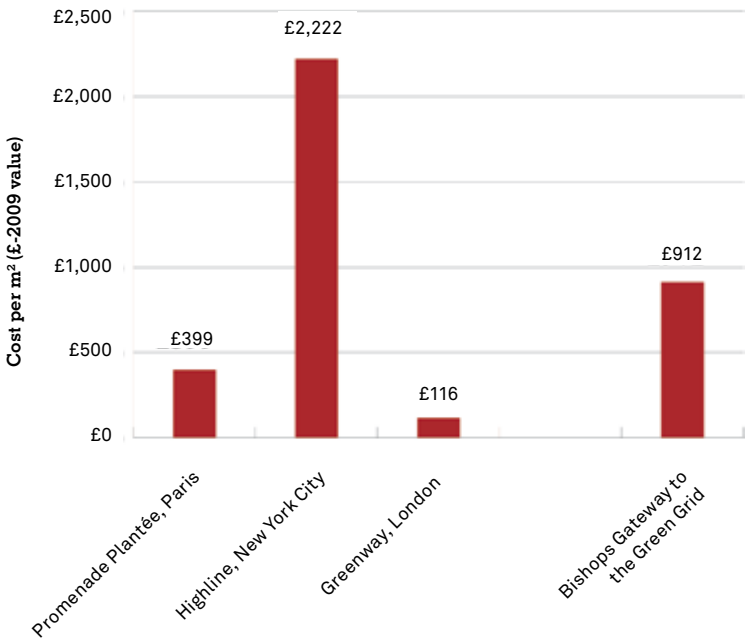
Although the global crisis of 2008-2009 affected the general development culture of the City of London, the planning system has not changed and we are envisioning our funding sources with regards to the existing frameworks. Furthermore, we keep in mind that the global economy is cyclical and our project does span over a number of years.

Calculating cost

The use of three precedents have helped to determine potential costs of the Gateway: the Promenade Plantée in Paris, the Highline in New York City and the Greenway in the London Borough of Newham. The difference in the average cost per square metre in the three cases can be attributed to the different types of landscaping employed as well as the specific local economic contexts. The total cost for our Gateway to the Green Grid becomes then 24.28 million pounds.

We estimated potential Section 106 contributions using figures employed for past City Fringe projects. A planning officer for Tower Hamlets was also able to provide us with levies that Tower Hamlets expected to charge in this case, which equalled £100 per m² for non-residential floor space and £10,000 per residential unit.

The development of the Goods Yard will provide funds for the park, while development of strategic sites along the viaduct will contribute funding towards the completion of the Green Grid up to Weavers Fields. The rationale is that the park is a very important public space for both the new office workers and residents of the developments on the Goods Yard, while the Green Grid east of Brick Lane is a crucial connector to the transport hub that is the new Shoreditch High Street East London Line station, and therefore both are community benefits to be paid for partially by Section 106.

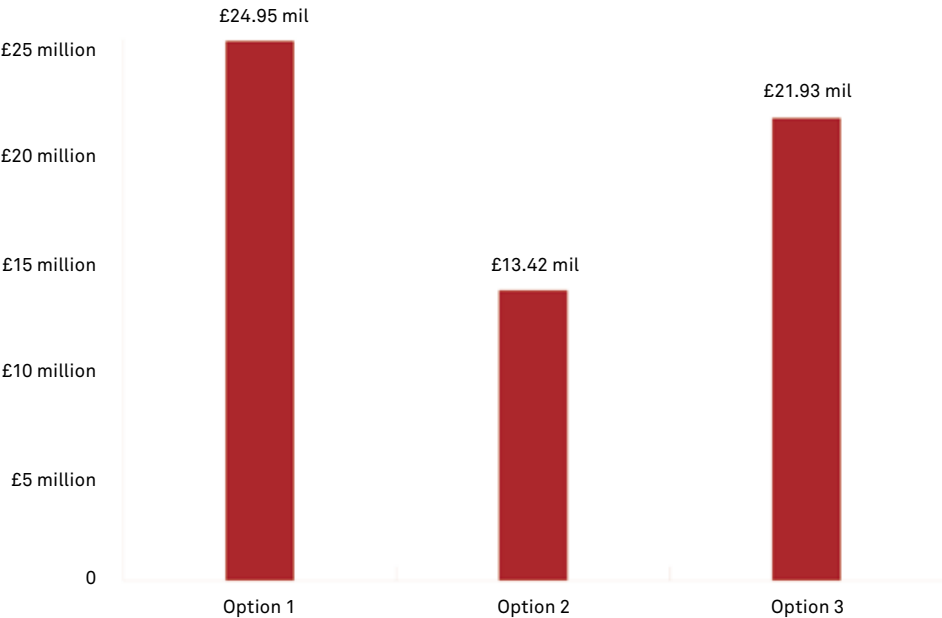


Development Options

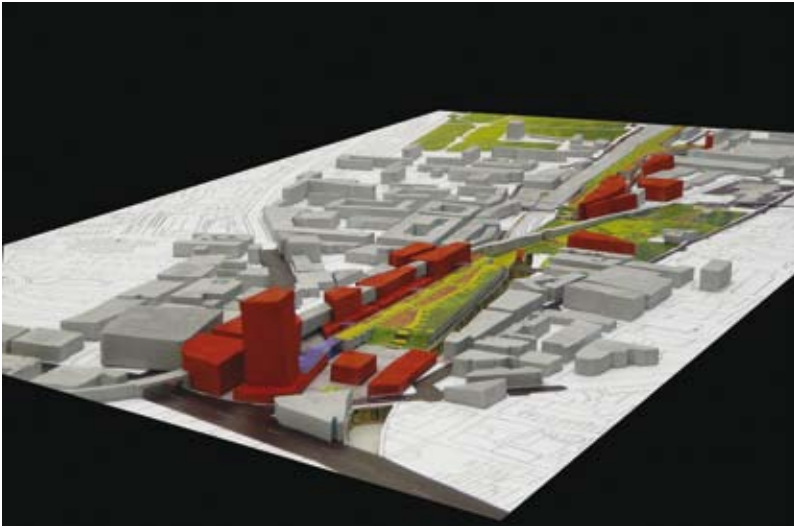
We have produced three options for development of the Bishopsgate Goods Yard, which would allow us to achieve an elevated walkway terminating at Weavers Fields. All three options adhere to our design principles, with attention to quality, massing, access to sunlight and creating a sense of enclosure and protection from the buildings.

The development options are differentiated by the floor space they produce, which has an impact on Section 106 contributions. Scenarios for all three options were developed with consideration of the principles set out in the masterplan.

40 Comparative Development Options

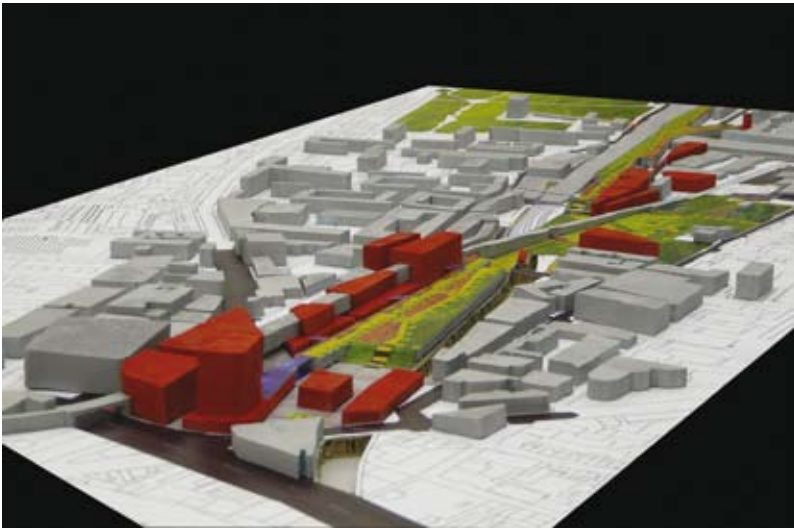


	Draft Interim Planning-Guidance Recommendation (Bishopsgate only)	Option A	Option B	Option C
Number of new homes	1,000-2,000	1,205	525	1,080
Non-residential floor area (m²)	75,000-150,000	128,992	81,692	105,931
Community Benefits from Section 106 (million pounds)	N/A	24.9	13.4	21.4



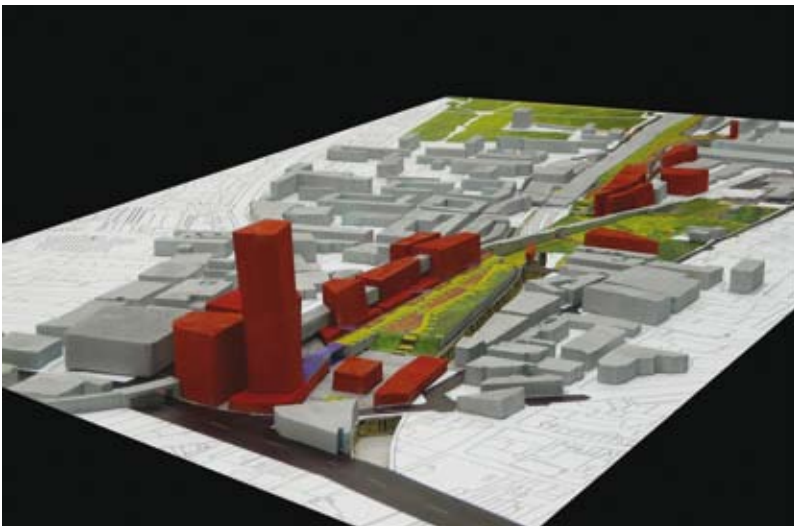
41 Option 1

This concept behind this option is the maximisation of benefits that we get from development of residential and commercial uses to fund a high-quality design BishopsGateway Project. This option would provide enough money (almost £25 million) to cover the project without the need to revert to other funding sources. In terms of design, it entails a taller development with buildings reaching 15 floors in the north-west of our site, and 8 floors north of the park, and 6-7 floors over the rest of development. These are the maximum heights recommended by the Draft Interim Planning Guidance.



42 Option 2

The concept behind this option is to keep the buildings at the minimum height recommended by the Draft Interim Planning Guidance. The resulting Section 106 contribution is significantly lower than for the first option, with only £13.4 million.



43 Option 3

The concept behind this option is to maximise benefits from the development on the Goods Yard, while keeping the scale of the buildings towards the east to a minimum. This choice is informed by the fact that the Goods Yard represents the interface to the City and a gradual increase in height would harmoniously integrate our development both to the surrounding areas and to the City. Furthermore, we would ensure that the residential areas towards the east of our site have a low enough height to be highly desirable. As the funding obtained is close to the costs of the project (£21.4 million) and we can extract money from other sources, we decided on this option, as the concept that both expresses our vision and is feasible financially.

Additional sources of funding:

While Section 106 can provide a significant part of funding for our project, it is only one financing strategy. Additional funding is needed. The ideas behind Gateway to the Green Grid are supported by national, regional and local policy, making it an attractive option for capital investment. Through increased support from government bodies, we hope to supplement the parks budget of Tower Hamlets.

At the national level, the Gateway supports the goals of the Department of Communities and Local Government, which draws attention to spatial planning and the importance of green spaces to mental and physical health. In Place Matters, CLG (2007) recognises that deprived neighborhoods are the most likely to have poor quality environments and advocates for better public services, stronger public realms and perhaps most significantly greater local autonomy in shaping solutions to such issues. Funding might therefore be levered via CLG.

In addition to statutory funding the Gateway to the Green Grid is eligible for National Lottery Funding, in partnership with the third sector. The Big Lottery

Fund (BIG) delivers millions of pounds of grants each year in areas relevant to education, environment and community. It also delivers a variety of grants in support of local community initiatives for neighborhood improvement.

The Heritage Lottery Fund also provides millions of pounds of funding towards conservation projects, delivering £220 million this year alone. Given the industrial history of Bishopsgate Goods Yard and the Braithwaite Viaduct, it is eligible for such funding.

The Greater London Authority aims to “lead a revolution in cycling and walking in London: facilitating a step change increase in number of people traveling by these most environmentally friendly and health enhancing modes” (GLA, 2008: 4).

The GLA (via TfL) is to award £34 million investment in walking between 2009/2010, including a pilot for Legible London (to enhance support and improve, pavings, crossings, signage).

LDA programme for quality public realm and green space budget for 2009-2010 is £15.6 million and for 2010-11, £9.8 million.

44 Potential additional funding sources

Body	Policy/Programme	Policy/Programme	Funding Available
	Urban Task Force “Green Places Better Places” PSA 8 on Liveability “Creating sustainable communities: Greening the Gateway”	(2002) (2004)	n/a
	Mayors Transport Strategy Mayors Draft Air Quality Strategy Mayors Draft Energy Strategy Mayors Draft Culture Strategy The London Plan Legible London (pilot)	(2001) (2002) (2003) (2003) (2004) (2009)	£34m (via TfL)
	Walking Plan for London cycling road safety	(2004)	£2m £5m £8m
	Quality Public Realm and Green Space	(2010)	£15.6m
	Tower Hamlets Open Space Strategy	(2006)	n/a
	Community Spaces Programme National Heritage Lottery		£50m annually £220m annually

PHASING

Phasing Strategy

In the current uncertain economic climate it is hard to make predictions about the time scale for implementation of any large scale development project. Flexibility is therefore key.

Our local scale proposal can be divided into three broad categories – the Bishopsgate Goods Yard site (the development of which could take 15-20 years to fully realise), improvements to Brick Lane/Allen Gardens, and the Bishopsgate Viaduct.

Constraints to Implementation

The development rights to the Bishopsgate Goods Yard site are held by Hammersons. Should they decide to delay development of the site until the beginning of the next economic cycle it would prevent the realisation of Braithwaite Park and the Civic Square. Improvements to Brick Lane/Allen Gardens/ Pedley Street are more straightforward. These works could commence as soon as TfL completes its work on the section of East London Line track between Brick Lane and Shoreditch High Street, the only constraint being funding.

The implementation of the elevated park on the Bishopsgate Viaduct (from Pedley Street to Tent Street) is dependent on the development of the residential sites identified in our masterplan. These sites must be developed in co-ordination with the implementation of the park both to provide funding for its construction (through planning obligations), to allow the access point at Tent Street to be constructed (on what is currently a Council depot) and to ensure that there is an adequate amount of residential development overlooking the park to provide passive surveillance.

Tentative Phasing Sequence

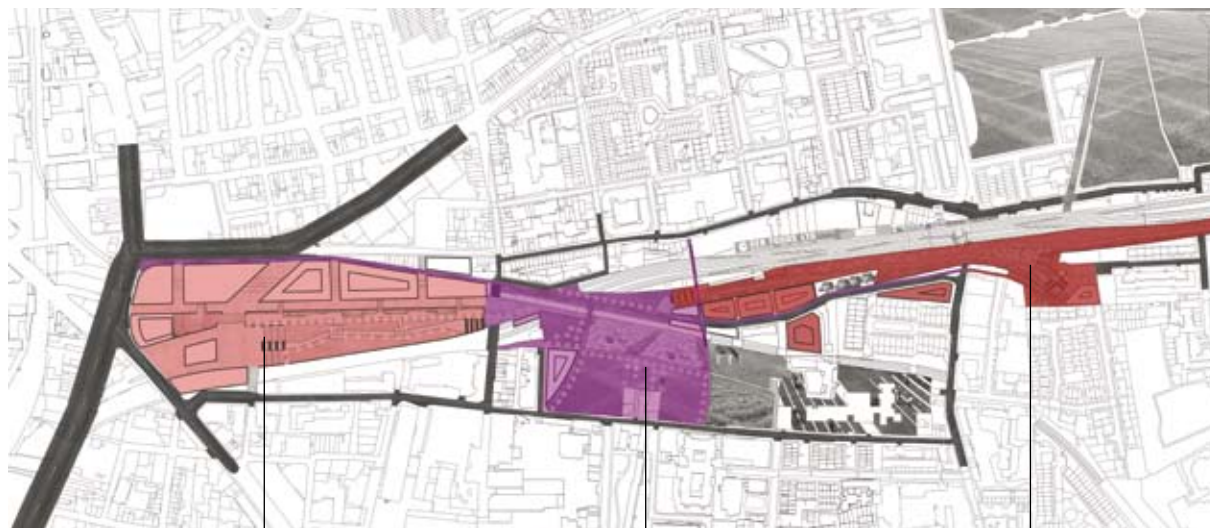
Given the relatively low cost/high benefit of the improvements to Brick Lane/Allen Gardens and the relative lack of constraints to their implementation it is likely that they will constitute the first phase of works.

Development of the Braithwaite Park and the Civic Square is dependent on Hammersons, but a delay in the implementation of this phase of the works would not hold up the wider Gateway to the Green Grid project.

When the Goods Yard is developed it is imperative that the park and civic square be developed in the early stages of the project and we would suggest that this be a condition of the planning permission.

Our funding model has been calculated on the basis that the Braithwaite Park and Civic Square are funded through S106 monies from the Goods Yard site. Works to Brick Lane/Allen Gardens and Bishopsgate Viaduct are funded through a combination of S106 contributions from the additional development sites identified in our masterplan and funding from governmental organisations – allowing them to be implemented independently of the Goods Yard site.

45 Local-scale proposals



Civic Square/Braithwaite Park/
Goods Yard development

Brick Lane/Allen Gardens
Improvements

Bishopsgate Viaduct

Maintenance and Management

We believe that a key strategy for maintaining interest and social investment in the Gateway is to elicit the participation of local communities and organisations in its maintenance. We also believe that the Gateway must remain open and flexible to local needs. There is scope for partnership with a variety of local organisations which will ensure both steady funding as well as use.

The Bankside Open Spaces Trust can potentially act as a model for this type of partnership. An independent trust established to manage, consult and plan urban green spaces throughout the borough of Southwark, BOST is comprised of a number of community organisations and volunteers and receives funding from private businesses as well as the London Borough of Southwark. It has been a key actor in regeneration projects in Borough, Bankside and Bermondsey. Other organisations to consult throughout this process include the Civic Trust, Federation of City Farm and Community Gardens, Green Space, Wildlife Trusts and Groundwork UK.

The Gateway to the Green Grid could establish a registered trust in conjunction with the Parks Administration of Tower Hamlets, currently in charge of maintenance and management of open spaces in the borough. The Gateway to the Green Grid could provide a space for horticultural and youth training activities. A trust managing it could play an active role in eliciting local participation and coordinate links between a variety of interested local organisations. We have identified the following organisations as potential partners for the trust:

Centrepont

Centrepont is a registered charity and social landlord providing shelter for 825 young people. Its Life Wise programme aims to equip the young and homeless with practical skills in horticulture. Centrepont also runs a horticultural apprentice scheme in partnership with LandAid.

Crisis

Crisis is a registered charity for single homeless people providing education, employment and housing services. Crisis currently has a green site in East London, a garden for homeless people as well as members of the local community. Supported by London Borough of Tower Hamlets, the Crisis Skylight garden project carried out planing of new trees and flowers, and provides its members with a centre for learning horticultural skills.

Spitalfields City Farm

In addition to large community allotments, the Spitalfields City Farm hosts community action training in horticultural skills as well as management and events planning involving the farm and local residents.

46 All the additional sites we have identified for development are in public ownership: Tower Hamlets (red), TfL (orange) and Network Rail (yellow)



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