

PLANNING CONSULTATION BY LONDON BOROUGH OF WALTHAM FOREST

A PHASED DEVELOPMENT COMPRISING DEMOLITION OF EXISTING BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES, AND ERECTION OF BUILDINGS TO PROVIDE A MIXED USE SCHEME RESIDENTIAL UNITS (USE CLASS C3), FLEXIBLE RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES AND COMMERCIAL USES (USE CLASSES E AND F2), TOGETHER WITH PUBLIC OPEN SPACE; PUBLIC REALM WORKS AND LANDSCAPING; CAR AND CYCLE PARKING; SERVICING ARRANGEMENTS; ENERGY MEASURES; FORMATION OF NEW PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE ACCESS ONTO CLEMENTINA ROAD; FORMATION OF NEW PEDESTRIAN, CYCLE AND VEHICULAR ACCESS ONTO ORIENT WAY; MEANS OF ACCESS AND CIRCULATION. THIS APPLICATION IS ACCOMPANIED WITH AN ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT. AT LEA BRIDGE GAS WORKS, 78 PERTH ROAD, LEYTON, LONDON, E10 7PB

Presented by Head of Planning

SUMMARY

The application site is located to the south east of Lea Bridge Road, situated outside the Regional Park and separated from its open spaces and venues by an industrial estate, Orient Way and the railway line/sidings. The Marsh Lane footbridge facilitates pedestrian and cycle access from the western edge of the application site over the road and railway and into the WaterWorks Centre Nature Reserve and Field.

The principle of redeveloping the Gas Works site for a mixed use residential led scheme has already been established via the grant of the planning consent issued July 2021. This allows for a phased redevelopment of the site for a mixed use scheme consisting of 573 new residential units and commercial uses. The Authority was not consulted on this original application.

The proposed development is substantially the same as the 2021 proposal, with an increase of 79 units, spread across the majority of the 10 residential blocks. Accommodating the additional units within the current scheme has resulted in a moderate increase in height so that the development will appear slightly more visible and obvious in views out from the Park than the Consented Scheme. The impacts on the visual amenity of the Park visitor however are considered to be minimal given heights already accepted under the consented scheme.

Despite the provision of on-site recreational space and the availability of the adjacent Leyton Jubilee Park the Shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) undertaken by the applicant has identified the promotion and enhancement of alternative areas of open space in the locality as part of the mitigation proposed to avoid adverse recreational impacts on Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) when considered in combination with other plans and projects. Reference is made to “extensive areas of open space to the west of the application site” accessible from Leyton Jubilee Park via the Marsh Lane footbridge. It concludes that new residents are more likely to use informal recreation open spaces within the development, at Leyton Jubilee Park or within other areas of accessible space in the vicinity of the site than make a specific journey to Epping Forest SAC.

The capacity of the sites within the Park to accommodate the uplift in visitor numbers therefore needs to be considered. The London Borough of Waltham Forest (LBWF's) Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace strategy (SANGS) has established that sites within the Park will need to be enhanced to cope with the uplift in visitor numbers in order to help avoid and mitigate adverse effects upon Epping Forest SAC and indeed contributions for enhancements to the Park were previously secured under the SANGS mechanism as part of the Section 106 contributions in relation to the Lea Bridge Station Sites development. Further contributions should therefore be sought to ensure the combined visitor uplift can be achieved without undermining the quality and integrity of open spaces and habitats within the Park in line with the agreed SANGS Strategy, in particular for the Waterworks site (including the Nature Reserve and Field), and Officers are liaising with LBWF on this matter.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Members Approve:
- (1) that the London Borough of Waltham Forest be informed that the Authority recognises the principle of residential development on the Lea Bridge Gas Works site and does not object to the current application providing that:
 - a) Contributions can be agreed via Community Infrastructure Levy or a Section 106 towards the delivery of the open space enhancements, habitat works and access improvements within the Regional Park in accordance with the Council's Suitable Alternative Nature Greenspace Strategy in order to maintain the quality and integrity of open spaces and habitats within the Regional Park, given the likely increase in visitor use. The enhancement works will need to build upon those already approved in relation to the Lea Bridge Station Sites development in order to take account of the combined visitor uplift;
 - b) Officers have an input into the proposed “information pack” which the Shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment recommends should be supplied to new residents. This will enable an explanation of the ecological features and open spaces within the Park and their purpose and value particularly in relation to the Regional Park,

and its nationally important Site of Special Scientific Interest at Walthamstow Marshes and the regionally important WaterWorks Nature Reserve; and

- (2) That the London Borough of Waltham Forest be informed that the Authority wishes to be consulted on the above details in due course.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND PLANNING HISTORY

- 1 The Lea Bridge Gasworks site, a former utility site consisting of 2.64 hectares (6.5 acres) is located outside the Regional Park to the east of Lee Valley Waterworks Centre, Nature Reserve and Field and south of Lea Bridge Road. It is separated from the Park by the railway line, Orient Way and the Golden Business Park, part of the Orient Way Industrial Estate, which sits adjacent to the western boundary of the application site. Its southern and eastern boundary lies adjacent to Leyton Jubilee Park and playing fields and the northern boundary is formed by Clementina Road residential estate. Please refer to the Plans at Appendix A and B to this report.
- 2 The three gas holders formally on site were decommissioned by National Grid in 2012 ending gas storage on site and the above ground gas holders demolished in 2019. Currently, the site comprises redundant former gas infrastructure, including extant hardstanding and concrete roadways, a Celnex telecommunications mast on the western boundary and a Cadent Gas compound with operational gas equipment known as a Pressure Reduction Station or "PRS". The PRS is not included in the red line boundary and the mast is to be relocated as part of the current proposals. A number of gas mains run across the site and these have no build easements so buildings are not permitted but car parking, landscaping, play equipment and roads are typically allowed.
- 3 The surrounding area consists of a variety of land uses including the Orient Way Industrial Estate adjacent to the application site which is allocated as Strategic Industrial Land (SIL) and comprises a range of warehouse units. A number of high density residential mixed use developments are present in the area or are soon to be developed. For example to the northwest of the site lies the 'Motion' development which was completed in 2019 and provides 300 units, varying in height from 12 to 18 storeys. Development on three Council owned sites at Lea Bridge Station was recently granted permission (February 2023). This will provide 345 new homes and a mix of cultural and commercial uses with building heights varying from 11 to 26 storeys. (The Authority was consulted on this application Ref: 212685, Paper RP/55/21).
- 4 The application sites benefits from reasonable transport links. Lea Bridge Station (served by the Greater Anglia London to Cambridge line with services into Stratford and Tottenham Hale), is located 0.5miles north west of the site and the nearest bus stops are located on Lea Bridge Road to the north and Church Street to the east all within 5 to 10 mins walk from the site. Cycle and pedestrian routes run east west along Lea Bridge Rd (including Cycle Superhighway 23) part of the Mini Holland network, and north south, including through the Regional Park. The existing Marsh Lane footbridge, close to the southern end of the industrial estate provides a connection between Orient Way and the Regional Park passing over the road and the railway, landing onto the footpath alongside WaterWorks Field. This is a permissive footpath and not therefore maintained by the Council.

Officers from the Authority and LBWF have been in discussions about improvements to this bridge link given it only currently provides stepped access.

- 5 The nearby open spaces of the Regional Park offer a wide range of informal recreational opportunities, distinctive landscapes and nationally recognised sites of ecological importance. These include Walthamstow Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Nature Reserve, a rare example of semi-natural wetland in Greater London, the open space at Leyton Marsh, the Waterworks Nature Reserve centred on Essex Filter Beds, a key resource in terms of access to nature, both for recreation and learning and the WaterWorks Field an important area of informal recreational space. A variety of pedestrian and cycle routes connect these areas into the wider Regional Park and Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (QEOP) and to the surrounding residential and business communities.
- 6 The Authority's visitor figures show there was a substantial increase in visitor numbers to these areas in particular to Walthamstow Marshes, the WaterWorks Centre, Nature Reserve and Field and Middlesex Filter Beds (MFB) during the Covid-19 lockdown period, please refer to the table below. Numbers reduced over the following years but visitor numbers still exceed pre-Covid levels. More recently the numbers at the WaterWorks (WW) site have returned to their previous levels. The rebuilding of the Ice Centre will have affected visitor numbers in the Lea Bridge Rd end of Walthamstow Marshes. To mitigate this the figures below include an estimate of the number of visitors at this point using a 3 year average of previous data.

2023/24	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4- annual total
Walthamstow Marsh	343,340	632,181	860,109	
WaterWorks	105,425	188,173	250,883	
MFB (also included in WW figure)	34,121	66,137	93,336	

2022/23	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4- annual total
Walthamstow Marsh	397,526	695,404	888,413	1,139,512
WaterWorks	99,072	188,276	258,051	345,098
MFB (also included in WW figure)	33,301	68,500	98,204	131,864

2021/22	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4- annual total
Walthamstow Marsh	537,269	849,546	1,141,908	1,511,866
WaterWorks	99,638	183,447	257,241	360,190
MFB (also included in WW figure)	18,102	36,304	60,724	97,147

2020/21	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4- annual total

Walthamstow Marsh	739,160	1,235,720	1,616,117	2,023,867
WaterWorks	302,235	435,451	551,438	715,466
MFB (also included in WW figure)	62,583	93,887	132,917	189,092

2019/2020	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4-annual total
Walthamstow Marsh	184,043	383,427	488,469	759,852
WaterWorks	100,651	186,008	240,987	324,107
MFB (also included in WW figure)	18,102	36,304	53,439	79,472

7 Planning History

The application site benefits from an extant planning permission dated 9th July 2021 (Ref 201329). This allows for the a phased redevelopment of the former Gasworks site for a mixed use scheme consisting of 573 new residential units (35% affordable) in 10 buildings ranging from 2 to 18 storeys, 582sqm flexible residential facilities and commercial uses (including a nursery) together with public open space, public realm works and landscaping, car and cycle parking, new access arrangements and site preparation works. This original consent included contributions towards a package of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGS) measures to be carried out in Leyton Jubilee Park to mitigate the impact of the development on the Epping Forest SAC.

- 8 It is understood that since the 2021 Permission the financial viability of the Consented Scheme has been affected by very high inflation, impacting the costs of materials and labour. This together with the change in fire safety measures, including the need for a second internal staircase in buildings over 30m tall has resulted in the applicant reviewing the scheme and deciding to submit the current revised proposal. The applicant makes the case that the current proposed development is substantially the same as the 2021 development with a minimal increase of 79 units.

POLICY BACKGROUND

- 9 National planning policy that planning policies and decisions should give *“substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs and support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict contaminated or unstable land”* (NPPF now under Chapter 11 Making Effective Use of Land paragraph 124 c)). The application sites fall within the Lee Valley Opportunity Area, an area identified for significant change, regeneration and growth in the London Plan 2021 (Policy SD1 Opportunity Areas). The London Plan recognises that *“the Lee Valley occupies a strategic position in the London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough growth corridor and provides a range of development opportunities for higher density development”* including growth at Lea Bridge and Leyton. (para 2.1.29). The sites are also located within the Northern Olympic Fringe Housing Zone.
- 10 The adopted development plan for Waltham Forest consists of the Core Strategy 2012 and the Development Management Policies (2013). Policy CS15

'Well Designed Buildings, Places and Spaces' directs tall buildings (10+ storeys) to the key growth areas such as the Northern Olympic Fringe. Policy DM31 'Tall Buildings' seeks to ensure tall buildings are carefully located and designed and identifies a number of provisions for consideration including the quality of design and architecture, impact on local and strategic views, and relationship to surrounding land form.

- 11 Policy DM12 Open Space, Sport and Recreation sub section H 'The Lee Valley Regional Park and Epping Forest' states that "*Development proposals affecting the Lee Valley Regional Park ...must not contribute to adverse impacts on amenity, ecological integrity or visitor enjoyment; and will be expected to deliver enhancements where possible*". It offers support for the Park Authority's Park Development Framework.
- 12 The London Borough of Waltham Forest's new Local Plan 'Shaping the Borough LP1', (LP1) has recently been found 'sound' following examination and arrangements are being made for the Council to consider the adoption of the new Local Plan in light of the Inspectors' report. In LP1 the application site forms part of the Lea Bridge strategic location and is identified as a Strategic Site Allocation for transformation under Ref: SA05 'Lea Bridge Gasholders' (draft Local Plan Part 2). It is considered to have an indicative development capacity for 573 residential units and 600sqm of commercial floorspace. The 'Placemaking Plan' for the draft Site Allocation identifies 'potential for height' at the southern part of the site overlooking Leyton Jubilee Park.
- 13 Policy identifies the application site as a potentially suitable location for tall buildings (defined as any building of 10 storeys or more, or any building that measures 30m or more from ground level, Policy 57) although other considerations such as visual, environmental, functional and cumulative impacts will need to be considered. Policy 57 B states that "*In general, the appropriate range of heights for new tall buildings is between 10 and 17 storeys in height. On some Transformation sites however, there may be the opportunity to exceed this and, subject to contextual analysis, a robust place making strategy, and assessment against all relevant policy tests, buildings of 18 storeys or more may be acceptable.*" An indicative ranges of potentially acceptable heights for these sites is to be provided in Local Plan 2 - Site Allocations.
- 14 The LP1 Strategic Policies also contains Policy 84 'The Lee Valley Regional Park'. This states that Proposals, which affect the Regional Park, will need to be sensitive and proportionate and deliver enhancements where possible, including improved access and links to the Park, and "*must not contribute to adverse impacts on ecological integrity, amenity or visitor enjoyment.*" The policy also states that development that affects the Lee Valley Special Protection Area (SPA) will need to contribute to the mitigation of adverse effects on the SPA. In September 2022 the Council adopted a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGs) Strategy as the first part of a wider Waltham Forest Green Spaces and Places SPD. This relates to Policy 83 'Epping Forest and the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation' which seeks to ensure that development proposals contribute to the avoidance and mitigation of adverse recreational and urban effects on the SAC by contributing to the delivery of "*the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces (SANGs), in most cases via Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding secured to make the necessary investment in open space*".
- 15 Park Development Framework Area proposals are focused on protecting,

restoring and managing the mix of habitats within the Park at Walthamstow Marsh Nature Reserve and SSSI and the WaterWorks nature reserve to enhance their ecological value, and contribution to the biodiversity and encourage further opportunities to improve public access for nature conservation. Emphasis is on the need to improve the quality and accessibility of pedestrian and cycle routes into the Marshes and the Waterworks site and the network of paths between sites and venues, including improvements to crossing points on Lea Bridge Road. Proposals highlight the need to establish a Park Gateway or entrance at the eastern boundary to the Park, with landscape and signage improvements, particularly along boundaries with the existing industrial sites.

- 16 The Lee Valley Regional Park Landscape Strategy Guidelines seek to protect the open character of the landscape in this section of the Park, highlighting the need to protect areas where open skylines predominate particularly given their sensitivity to development which may alter the skyline (LCA C3, and E2.). The Guidelines recognise the need for development adjacent to the Park to enhance the existing landscape framework so that it can integrate physically and visually with the open and marshland character. The harsh and visually intrusive development edges to the east and around Lea Bridge should be improved.
- 17 The Authority's Strategic Policies also provide guidance on major new development adjacent to the Park. Policy D3 states that the Authority will *"D3: Work in partnership with riparian councils to ensure that the design and layout of new development on sites both within the Regional Park and adjacent to its boundary:*
- a) *enhances the Park avoiding detrimental impact on its ecological and heritage assets; and*
 - b) *provides sufficient open space to cater for the informal recreational needs arising from the development, including areas for play and for dog walking."*
 - c)

Policy E2 is also relevant. It states that *"Development proposed on sites either within or outside the Park which could adversely impact on its amenity will be resisted or planning obligations sought in line with other policies within this Plan."*

DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

18 Layout and Appearance

The proposed development comprises 652 residential units across 10 blocks (A to H), 35% of which will be affordable. This is an uplift of 79 units compared to the consented scheme (2021) and according to documentation submitted with the application and the accommodation schedule equates to approximately 1,400 new residents overall.

- 19 The unit mix ranges in size from studio through to 3-bedroomed apartments and on the basis of this accommodation schedule it is anticipated that the development would lead to approximately 1,150 new residents. The apartment blocks range in height from 2-4 storeys (blocks A and H closest to the existing residential area) through to 10-20 and 10-21 storeys (blocks D and E at the southern-most part of the site overlooking the Leyton Jubilee Park (please refer to the Plan at Appendix C to this report, showing General Arrangement). The increase in units has resulted in an increase to the massing of the proposed

development with additional height added to all but 3 of the blocks and an increase in the tallest buildings D and E from 7-18 to 10-20 storeys and 7-17 to 10-21 storeys respectively. The applicant proposes to provide the same amount of non-residential floorspace (flexible residential facilities and commercial uses, (Use Classes E and F2)) as the 2021 permission with the addition of new proposed community floor space located within block H. Block B will contain a resident's gym, whilst block G includes a nursery with capacity for 50 children.

- 20 The Design and Access Statement (DAS) provides a detailed account of the pre-app and consultation process for the revised scheme and the changes made as a result of discussions with LBWF officers and the Greater London Authority (GLA), particularly in terms of distributing the additional units across the 10 blocks. As in the Consented Scheme, the design approach for the proposed development is centred on enhancing the site's connectivity, specifically by establishing a direct pedestrian link from the northern residential areas grouped around 'Clementina Square', a community focused public amenity space, through to Leyton Jubilee Park in the south. Blocks A to G are positioned in two rows north to south facing onto the landscaped pedestrian spine. Blocks H to J lie to the east, on the other side of the PRS, facing on to another pedestrian route linking through into the existing park.
- 21 The design and appearance of the development has sought to draw on local architecture, character and materials palette. As with the Consented Scheme, all the buildings that form part of the Development will have the majority of their façade in brick. The colour range for the brick includes light toned white, cream, red and buff; mid-toned buff, brown and red/brown; and dark grey brick at the base of Blocks B to G. The façades will also incorporate small elements of complimentary materials including precast panels and metal. Metal work is typically light-coloured grey -bronze or dark coloured grey bronze, with dark grey coloured metal work again at the base of Blocks B to G. It is considered that this materials palette reflects the surrounding urban context.
- 22 The application includes a range of public open space, amenity space and public realm across the site totalling 10,314sqm with in addition 4,236sqm of private amenity space (balconies and terraces) and 1,033sqm of private communal garden/courtyard space. Playspace provision includes 1,508sqm for under 5, 1,049sqm local playspace for 5-11 age group and approximately 520sqm for the 12+ age group. It is anticipated that children aged 12 and over will use public parks and open space within the 800m recommended travel distance from the development and it is proposed with Neighbourhood Playspace to be provided off-site at Leyton Jubilee Park.
- 23 **Landscaping and Green Infrastructure**
The landscaping plan seeks to deliver 5 distinct character areas within the development:
- Clementina Square – a shared green space incorporating pedestrian and cycle links, play space with wildflower meadow planting and street trees along the northern boundary.
 - Lower Valley – the linear park through the development connecting Clementina Square with Leyton Jubilee Park in the south. This will provide play space, woodland style planting and SUDs features such as swales.
 - Mid Valley – described as an outdoor room and located in the northern

part of the site adjacent to Clementina Square this will function as a communal garden space for new and existing residents with gently sloping lawn. Playspace for ages 5 to 11 is to be included.

- Upper Valley – largely positioned between blocks I and J this will be a multi levelled garden space combining sloped lawns and woodland planting with provision for doorstep play. It will connect through to Leyton Jubilee Park.
- Leyton Jubilee Park Gateway – here seating areas and casual play zones are proposed together with meadow grassland to establish a connection to the more informal grassy spaces within Leyton Jubilee Park.

Throughout a variety of tree and planting species are proposed, with new green roofs on all the blocks and soft landscaping providing new species-rich habitats. Three of the Blocks will also provide accessible roof terraces for residents with the remainder designed as biodiverse roofs or biodiverse roofs with PVs. New insect hotels, bird and bat boxes and pollinator friendly planting also proposed.

24 Ecology, Designated Sites and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

The Ecological Assessment has found that subject to the implementation of standard engineering protocols and best practice during construction (set out within a CEMP), and the implementation of enhancements in respect of adjoining open space at Leyton Jubilee Park, any potential direct adverse effects on statutory and non-statutory designated sites in the local area will be fully mitigated.

- 25 An assessment of potential effects arising on international / European designated sites is outlined in the 'Shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment'. The Lee Valley Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site is located approximately 1.8km to the north-west of the application site in a straight line (2.7km walking distance) and the nearest component of this international/European designated site is Walthamstow Reservoirs SSSI. Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is located approximately 2.8km north-east of the application site. The Assessment concludes that in light of the mitigation and avoidance measures which form an integral part of the proposals, the development will not result in any adverse effects on the integrity of Lee Valley SPA / Ramsar site or Epping Forest SAC alone or in combination. The mitigation and avoidance comprise three elements:

- financial contributions to mitigation at the Epping Forest SAC (SAMB contribution).
- provision of on-site measures, including the delivery of attractive open space within the site and cycle provision.
- Promotion and enhancement of alternative areas of open space in the locality (including Leyton Jubilee Park). (ref para 6.55)

- 26 The ecological surveys show that the majority of the habitats within the application site hold limited ecological value, with the application site primarily comprising hardstanding and bare ground. All habitats within the application site are to be lost prior to development works on the site, due to the requirement for site wide remediation associated with its previous use as a gasworks.

- 27 The ecological assessment considers however that losses will be fully mitigated through the provision of a range of habitats and significant new areas of planting

as part of the proposed development including, new tree and shrub/herbaceous planting, and areas of meadow and wet grassland sown with species rich native seed mixtures. These together with the green roofs and the creation of new green corridors passing through the development will, subject to appropriate ongoing management provide an overall enhancement in the long-term quality of the habitats present within the application site. The new planting including trees, scrub and grassland will provide improved opportunities for foraging and commuting bats, and foraging and nesting birds, albeit within the urban context of the local area. The ecological assessment also recommends that a sympathetic lighting regime is adopted. This should minimise light spillage to retained and newly provided habitats (such as the treeline adjacent to Leyton Jubilee Park), directing light only to where it is required and maintaining dark corridors. The proposed development will result in a BNG of 87.10% which significantly exceeds the 10% figure set out in the Environment Act 2021.

28 Access and Parking

Access to the site will be provided at three points. The primary access and the only access for vehicles will be from a new priority junction on Orient Way (constructed in 2021). The two secondary pedestrian and cycle accesses will be from Clementina Road in the north. The main pedestrian route will run north-south through the site from Clementina Square, connecting Clementina Road and Leyton Jubilee Park. This runs separately to the main access route along the western boundary. The proposed development is a car free scheme with the exception of 30 car parking spaces of which 28 are for wheelchair access as well as 2 car club spaces. 20% (or 6) of these are to be active electrical charging spaces with the remaining provided as passive. Circa 1,140 long stay and short stay cycle parking spaces are proposed, including 16 residential visitor spaces and 12 commercial spaces.

29 Drainage and Flood Risk

Details are included with the application to show that the development has been designed to operate safely and without significantly increasing flood risk elsewhere. It is proposed that surface water runoff from the Site be restricted greenfield runoff rates in-line with policy. This has been calculated for the 1 in 100 year plus 30% and 70% climate change scenario. This discharge rate would be achieved through the incorporation of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), including brown roofs, swales and permeable paving. In addition, below ground crates will be used to store the water prior to discharge in a controlled manner as informed by the Flood Risk Assessment.

PLANNING APPRAISAL

30 Principle of Development

The application site is located outside the Regional Park within an opportunity area identified for significant, transformational change and as such the proposed scheme is in accordance with these policies. It also benefits from an extant planning permission dated 9th July 2021 (Ref 201329) which is substantially the same as the current proposal other than the changes proposed to the design and massing of the scheme to accommodate the increase of 79 units. The principle of a mixed use residential led scheme on the former gas works site has therefore been established and it is not intended to dwell on the details of the scheme but rather to focus on what impacts the development might have on the recreational use and visual amenity of nearby areas of the Regional Park, in particular the impact on ecology and landscape due to additional visitor pressure. These impacts relate to the design layout,

and height of the development, the adequacy of open space provision within the development and the functions this can perform, and the potential recreational effects on sites of importance for biodiversity and areas of open space where an increase in visitor numbers is likely to occur on a regular and sustained basis.

31 Visual Impacts and Amenity

Impacts on the visual amenity of visitors to the Park due to the additional height and revised massing of the proposed development are moderated to a large extent by the distance of the application site from the Park boundary and the intervening land uses – industrial estate, main road and railway infrastructure, particularly as the matter for consideration here is the additional height proposed over the consented scheme.

32 The Lea Bridge Gasworks Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment (TVIA) includes within its assessment a number of representative viewpoints from within the Regional Park; e.g. from Hackney Marshes and Leyton/Walthamstow Marshes to the west, from the River Lea Navigation towpath and from a position behind the WaterWorks Centre. These show that in views across the Park from within Hackney Marshes (viewpoint 10, 1km away) and the Waterworks Centre/Field (viewpoint 14, 330m to the north) the upper storeys of the tallest blocks D and E would be visible above the tree line. The mature trees along the boundary of the WaterWorks Centre, Nature Reserve and Field and Hackney Marshes will help to screen the majority of the development although in winter a limited glimpsed view would be gained to some of the other Blocks (B, I and J,) behind the trees.

33 The varied height and articulation of the blocks ensures that gaps of sky are provided between the taller Blocks D and E which helps to reduce their bulk to some extent from these two viewpoints. The light tone brick of the visible section of the Development's buildings would appear recessive within the view. The TVIA concludes that the Development would provide visual interest to the view and result in a beneficial effect. The trees that frame the Regional Park also help to screen the development in views across the Park from the Leyton Marsh/Walthamstow Marshes location and the towpath.

34 In conclusion accommodating the additional units in the current scheme has resulted in the majority of the Blocks increasing in height when compared to the consented scheme by 1, 2 and 3 storeys with the tallest, Block E receiving an extra 4 storeys. These increases are moderate, and will ensure the development is slightly more visible and obvious in views out from the Park than the Consented Scheme. Whether this adds interest to the view as suggested by the TVIA is subjective but the impacts on the visual amenity of the Park visitor are likely to be minimal given heights already accepted under the consented scheme. Ultimately this development will present as one of a number of high density schemes outside the Park boundary, (the 'Motion' and the Lea Bridge Station developments for example) which gradually and cumulatively are altering the open character of the skyline as viewed from within the Park.

35 Impacts on Recreational Open Space, and Biodiversity

The proposed development incorporates significant amounts of open landscaped space (in total approx. 15,583sqm compared to 14,796m² in the Consented Scheme) providing a mix of publicly available, semi-private, and private space. The open space is designed to accommodate amenity uses such

as informal seating and play space, doorstep play features, paths, and lawns or terraces. Most of this space will be available to the general public, and there is intended to be a link created between the Development and Leyton Jubilee Park. The Environmental Statement finds that the dedicated play spaces for the different age groups proposed, meets (and exceeds) the projected requirement for play space on-Site. The new link to Leyton Jubilee Park will provide access from the Site to equipped and informal play and recreation opportunities within the Park for the 12+ age group.

- 36 This level of on-site provision combined with the availability of the adjacent Leyton Jubilee Park and the distance between the application site and the Regional Park should help reduce potential impacts on the Park arising from additional and sustained recreational pressure from new residents. However the Waterworks Centre, Nature Reserve and Field are close to the application site and the Marsh Lane footbridge provides direct access between the two areas – and although only at a very early design stage, future improvements to this access link are proposed by LBWF. From this access point wider areas of the Park are also in range including Leyton Marsh and Walthamstow Marshes SSSI, particularly for cyclists and those on longer circular walks.
- 37 Indeed Officers note that the Shadow HRA has identified the promotion and enhancement of alternative areas of open space in the locality (including Leyton Jubilee Park) for informal recreation, as one of the mitigation measures that has enabled any adverse effects from recreational pressure at Epping Forest SAC as a result of the development (when considered ‘in combination’ with other plans and projects) to be ruled out. It refers to “extensive areas of open space to the west of the application site” which are described as accessible from Leyton Jubilee Park via the Marsh Lane footbridge over Orient Way and the adjoining railway sidings. In other words the availability of the Park and its promotion to new residents for informal recreation is part of the mitigation proposed to avoid adverse recreational impacts on Epping Forest SAC.
- 38 The Shadow HRA states; *“These areas support a wide range of habitat types and features, from more formal playing fields (e.g. Hackney Marsh Recreation Grounds) to habitats within the Lee Valley Park including footpaths adjacent to the River Lea. Considered holistically, these provide a wealth of opportunities for informal recreation which can be easily accessed by new residents.”* The report concludes that new residents are more likely to use informal recreation open spaces within the development, at Leyton Jubilee Park or within other areas of accessible space in the vicinity of the site than make a specific journey to Epping Forest SAC. It states that all new residents will be supplied with an information pack upon first occupation which will include both a map and guide to local walking routes to raise awareness of local opportunities to divert visitors away from the designated site.
- 39 Guidance on the strategic approach towards the avoidance and mitigation of adverse effects upon Epping Forest SAC in Waltham Forest is outlined in the Council’s Green Spaces and Places SPD Part 1: Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGS), September 2022. Officers of the Authority were consulted on the content of this document by LBWF as it includes sites within the Park. The SPD includes both Leyton Jubilee Park and the Waterworks as sites that could provide alternative locations for Epping Forest visitors, identifying proposals to make them more attractive to visitors and therefore suitable as SANGs. Proposals for sites within the Park are based on the PDF Proposals and the Authority’s project list, and for the Waterworks site these are

focused on enhancing access and entrance points to and within the Park and improving biodiversity with the detail to be agreed at a later stage. The SPD states that multiple funding sources will be used to deliver the SANGS Strategy although the CIL will be a primary source.

- 40 It is clear therefore that areas of open recreational space and sites of biodiversity interest within the Park will play a role in mitigating the potential adverse recreational impacts on the Epping Forest SAC arising from the proposed development, in combination with other proposals. The detail of the Park's role is not discussed in the planning documents and the potential impacts of the development in this regard is outside the scope of the HRA, although the benefit of the proximity of these green spaces is recognised in terms of recreational facilities available to new residents. As has been discussed previously the Park Authority welcomes visitors to its open spaces but needs to manage access to and around/through sites to maintain and enhance the key biodiversity features and ensure increased and sustained visitor pressure does not degrade the landscape and important recreational spaces. The proposed development is within a 10 to 15min walking distance from the Park via the Marsh Lane footbridge (along which access is to be improved by LBWF) with potential for a regular and sustained increase in the footfall to its open spaces.
- 41 The reference to 'in combination' effects is particularly relevant when considering the amount of development coming forward in the Lea Bridge Strategic Location adjacent to the Park. Consideration should be given to the capacity of the sites within the Park to accommodate the uplift in visitor numbers in accordance with the LBWF's SANGS strategy. SANGS contributions were secured for enhancements to the Park area adjoining the Lea Bridge Road including Waterworks Centre, Nature Reserve and Field and Walthamstow Marshes as part of the Section 106 contributions secured in relation to the Lea Bridge Station Sites development (345 residential units approx. 707 residents). The outline schedule of projects agreed in 2022 as mitigation has yet to be actioned due to delays with the development and amendments to the original application.
- 42 Contributions should therefore be sought in line with the agreed SANGS Strategy, in particular for the Waterworks Centre site (including the Nature Reserve and Field) to enhance the Park area, and deliver access and habitat improvements. This matter has been raised with the Case Officer and discussions are ongoing. It is understood that the majority of investment in SANGS across the borough will be paid for through CIL.
- 43 Any enhancements proposed in respect of the current application will need to consider and build upon the previously agreed projects particularly in terms of visitor infrastructure such as paths and access to nature projects. Officers are reviewing the schedule of projects previously agreed and will identify additional requirements, revisit costs given the delay with the Station Sites proposal and will liaise with LBWF accordingly.
- 44 It is also important that officers have an input into the proposed "information pack" which the Shadow HRA recommends should be supplied to new residents and which will "include both a map and guide to local walking routes" in order to raise awareness of local opportunities in preference to habitats within Epping Forest SAC and thereby divert visitors away from the designated site. This will enable an explanation of the ecological and open space features within

the Park and their purpose and value particularly in relation to the Regional Park, and its nationally important SSSI at Walthamstow Marshes and the regionally important WaterWorks Nature Reserve.

45 Conclusion

The principle of a residential led redevelopment of the Gas Works site has already been established. The development will be visible from within the Park but the impacts on the visual amenity are considered to be minimal given heights already accepted under the consented scheme.

The Park will however play a role in mitigating the potential adverse recreational impacts on the Epping Forest SAC arising from the proposed development, in combination with other development proposals within the Lea Bridge Strategic Location. Contributions are therefore required in accordance with the LBWF's SANGS Strategy for works to strengthen habitats, enhance open spaces, and associated access routes and improve their resilience to increased use and disturbance. Works to be funded must build upon the existing schedule of projects previously agreed as part of the Lea Bridge Station Site planning permission. These matters are under discussion with LBWF as any contributions would need to be secured as part of the planning consent.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

46 These are addressed in the body of the report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

47 There are no financial implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

48 Planning applications referred to this Authority are submitted under the consultative arrangements of Section 14 (4-7) of the Lee Valley Regional Park Act 1966. The Act requires a local planning authority to consult with the Authority on any planning application for development, whether within the designated area of the Park or not, which might affect any part of the Park.

49 The Park Act enables the Authority to make representations to the local planning authority which they shall take into account when determining the planning application.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

50 There are no risk management implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

51 There are no equality implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

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BACKGROUND REPORTS

Application Papers 23.120

December 2023

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE REPORTS

Regeneration Planning Committee	& RP/55/21	Planning Consultation by London Borough of Waltham Forest. Demolition of existing structures and redevelopment of three land parcels to delivery 345 residential units and community floorspace in buildings of up to 26 storeys. At Lea Bridge Road.	18/11/21
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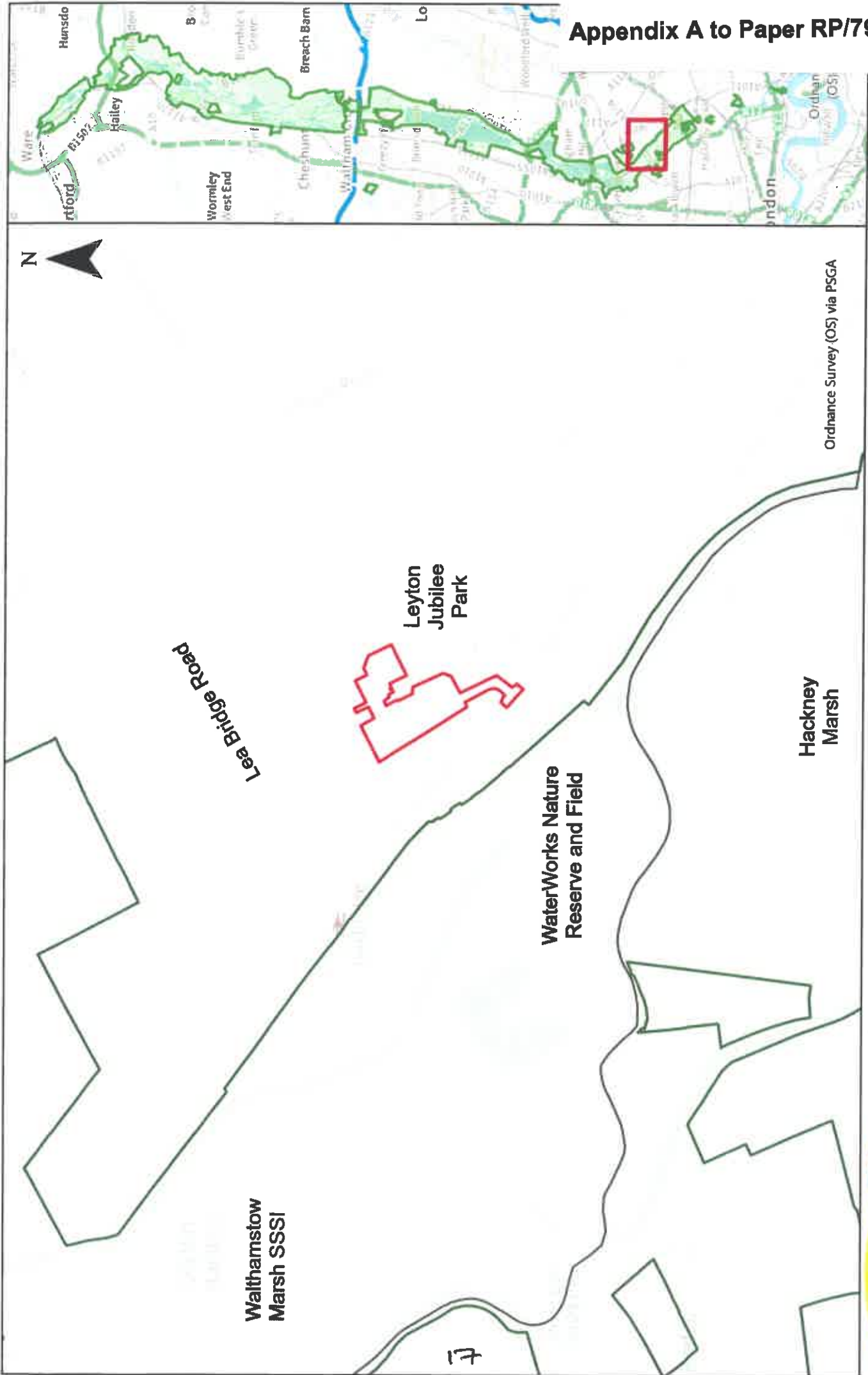
APPENDICES ATTACHED

Appendix A	Location Plan of application site
Appendix B	Application site context plan
Appendix C	General Arrangement, Views and Masterplan taken from DAS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DAS	Design and Access Statement
HRA	Habitats Regulations Assessment
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
LBWF	London Borough of Waltham Forest
SANGS	Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy
PRS	Pressure Reduction Station
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SIL	Strategic Industrial Land
QEOP	Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park
MFB	Middlesex Filter Bed
WW	WaterWorks
SPA	Special Protection Area
GLA	Greater London Authority
BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
SAMM	Strategic Access Management Monitoring
SUDS	Sustainable Drainage Systems
TVIA	Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment

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Context plan for use of former Lea Bridge Gas Works site for residential and commercial development
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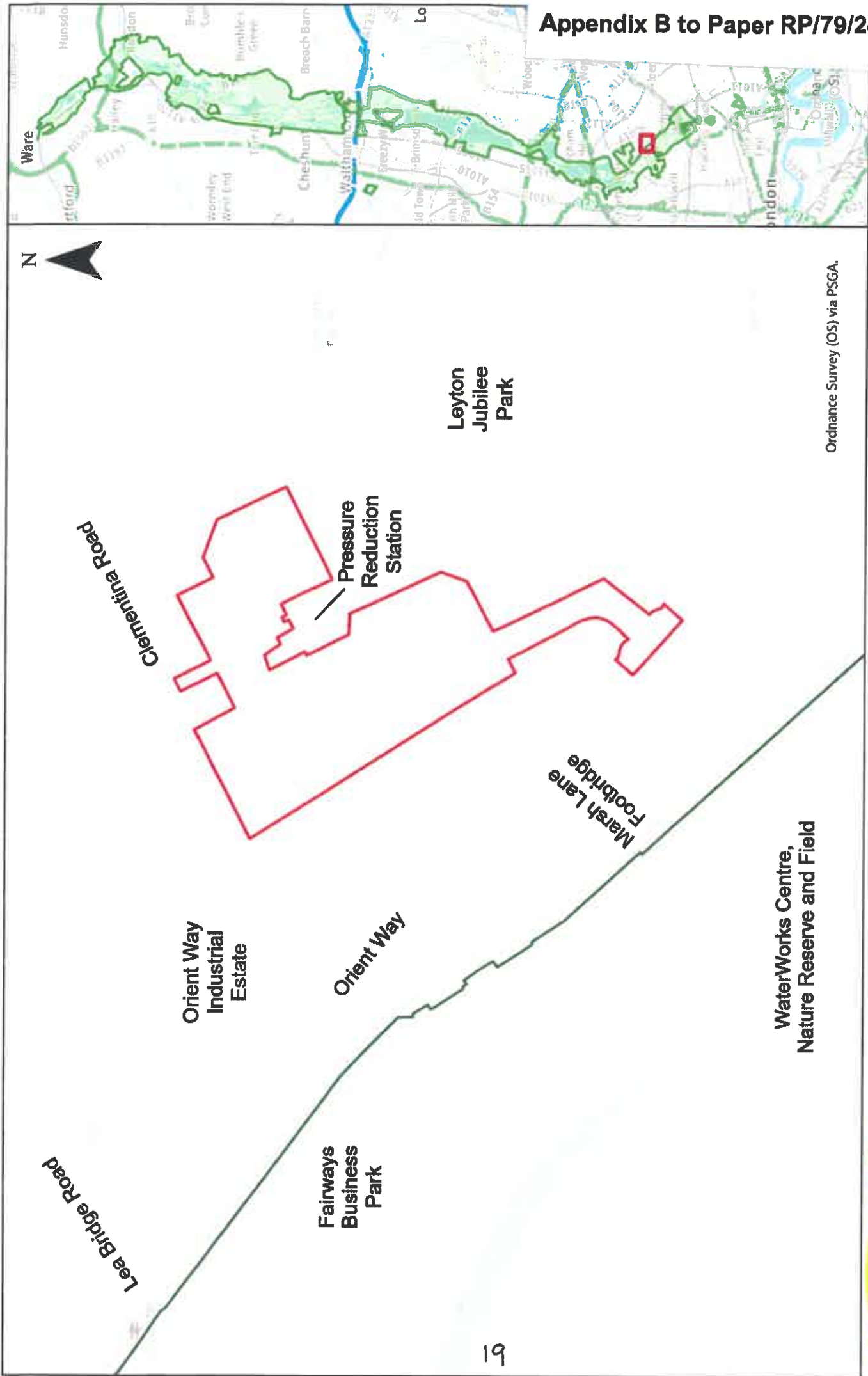
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 Application Site
 Park



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Proposed residential and commercial development on former Lea Bridge

Application Site

Park Boundary

Gas Works site
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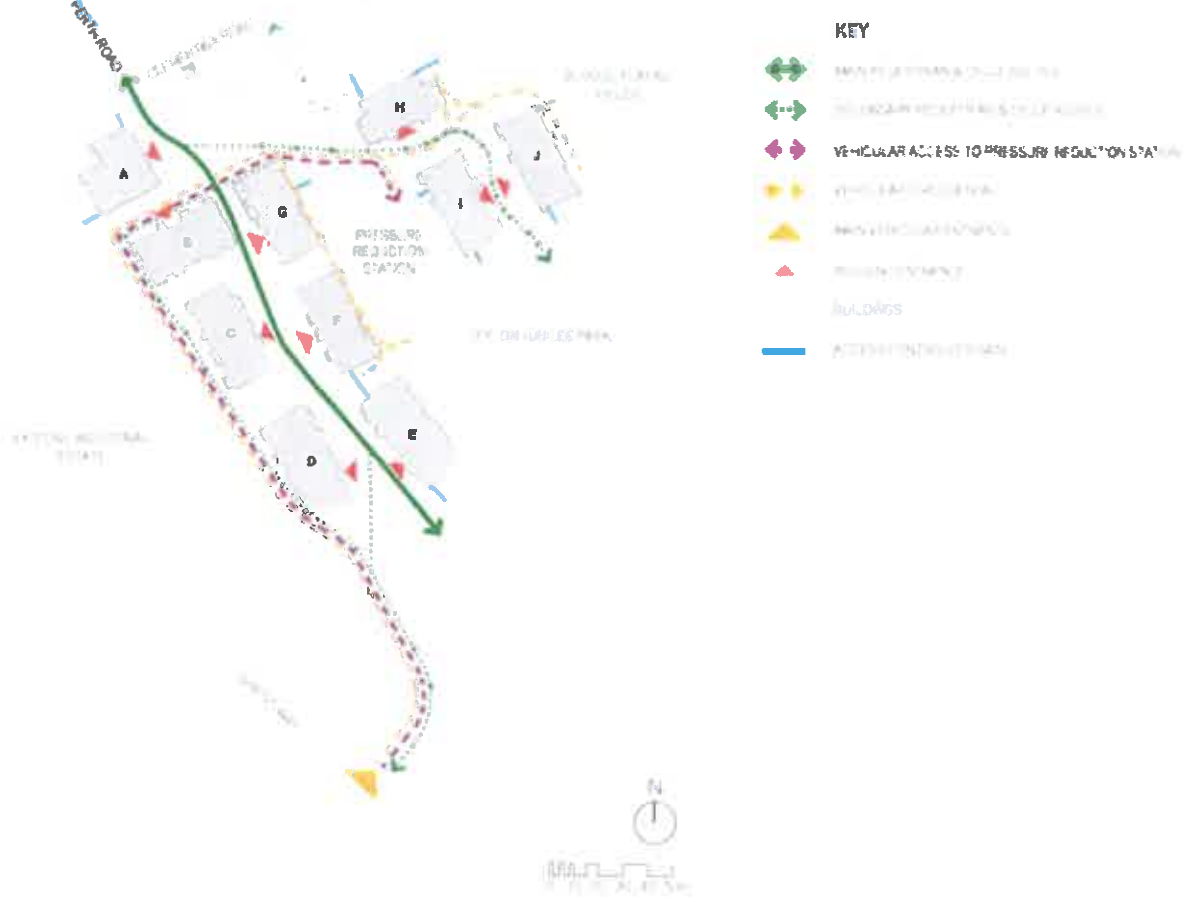
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Appendix C General Arrangement, Views and Landscape Masterplan

Figure 6.2 – General Arrangement



Proposed view from Leyton Jubilee Park



Landscape Masterplan extract from DAS

