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London Borough of Waltham Forest
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Dear Lucy

Lea Valley Eastside – draft Vision

Thank you for consulting with Lee Valley Regional Park Authority on the proposed draft Vision for the above. The Authority recognises the importance of this document to create a new geography for this part of east London in line with your Council's commitments to its regeneration and its location within the Housing Zone. If adopted it will establish a direction of travel to inform the review of Local Plan policies.

The Authority acknowledges the recognition that the Vision places on the importance of the Regional Park and its intrinsic value as a place for recreation and leisure. It seeks to address issues of connectivity and access with some broad statements, which are broadly in line with the Authority's adopted policies and proposals.

The development of large scale venues which cater for regional demand is a characteristic of the Regional Park and the identification of the existing site of the ice centre as a new 'twin pad' (two rinks) is consistent with the Authority's statutory purpose. The existing venue can't meet the current levels of demand, is nearing the end of its economic life and needs replacing. Although the site lies on Metropolitan Open Land it is considered that a good case can be made to allow an 'exception' to this designation to support the redevelopment of this existing well-loved local facility. A new centre would be capable of significantly extending the capacity of the existing building which has over 350,000 visits per annum through an extensive programme of public skating and events. The new centre could make a significant contribution to the provision of 'ice' nationally and be a major leisure destination within the borough linked to your Council's regeneration priorities. It would complement your Council's proposals for housing and the proposed new district centre located around Lea Bridge station.

Of more significance are the proposals which would involve the release of land at the WaterWorks Centre for residential development. Extending southwards from Walthamstow Wetlands through the Marshes to Hackney Marshes this area of the Regional Park comprises approximately 500 acres of parklands. The suggested release of approximately 5 acres is a relatively small area of land. Although the release of this land would be contrary to adopted policy almost 60% of the identified site is covered by car park and the building; this is 'previously developed land' as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework (2012). The Authority broadly supports these proposals but intends when more detailed work is carried out to restrict the actual land used for

residential development to the current “built footprint” of the building and surrounding car park area. We will retain the rest of the site as public open space.

The Vision document initiates opportunity for the release of this site for housing to secure financial capital to fund the proposed ice centre. Although not mentioned in the Vision report the Authority sees a clear link between the proposed centre and the proposed residential site. The Authority considers that the only feasible way of securing sufficient capital funding for the new twin pad would be the release of this site for housing.

The Authority understands the sensitivities involved in these proposals but this has to be considered both within its physical context, as above, and also in terms of the Authority’s statutory remit to deliver recreation, leisure, sport and nature reserves. The release of capital from the sale of this site could be directed to additional investment in the ice centre resulting in a much improved facility which would better serve the community and be of sufficient capacity to serve as a destination for events. It would represent a considerable investment in the Regional Park, a landmark building in contrast to the present ageing building.

The Authority welcomes opportunities to work with the Council and other stakeholders on schemes designed to open up the Regional Park and to improve accessibility in line with our adopted proposals. Furthermore, part of the monies from the sale of this site could be invested in the surrounding parkland to improve landscaping enabling additional outdoor activities and improve the environment for informal recreation with additional investment in the local nature reserves. The whole of this area could in turn provide a better visitor offer than the proposed community gardens suggested for the part of the former golf course. In addition, work would have to be completed by the Authority’s consultant team to articulate these benefits for these areas in advance of the submission of any application(s) for planning permission.

The proposals for the Thames Water site are unclear but this site clearly has some opportunities for regeneration. Whilst the Authority recognises that ownership of this site has changed since its area proposals were adopted in October 2011 some form of new development could allow the Authority to achieve the delivery of its adopted proposals for this site which include encouraging public access, safeguarding the route of the Black Path and the creation of a broad landscape corridor across the eastern half of the site. There is also opportunity to open up public access on the east side of the River Lee to improve accessibility in this area.

The Authority supports the strategic proposals identified for the Leyton area regarding the potential for a new station at Ruckholt Road and a new pedestrian bridge. These are in line with the spirit of the Authority’s proposals to improve access. These proposals could complement its emerging proposals for the Lee Valley Hockey and Tennis Centre at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park which involve the potential for new investment. The Authority will develop a masterplan shortly to articulate these ideas.

The Authority looks forward to a constructive relationship in delivering on the key aspects of this Vision subject to its comments above.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shaun Dawson', written in a cursive style.

Shaun Dawson
Chief Executive