



# WOOLWICH TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN SPD

April 2012

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ROYAL borough of  
GREENWICH



ROYAL ARSENAL GATEHOUSE



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Masterplan boundary shown in yellow

# 01 INTRODUCTION

Woolwich is a famous historic town and has tremendous potential to once again become a thriving centre. Woolwich has an exceptional setting on the Thames with a stunning historic legacy of high quality buildings. Woolwich is also benefitting from major new transport infrastructure including the Docklands Light Railway and Crossrail which bring Docklands, the City and the West End within easy reach.

Woolwich is poised for major change.

The challenge of this masterplan is to create a framework which will guide the release of this potential. This masterplan is a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and forms part of the Royal Borough's Local Development Framework (LDF). The masterplan's status as an SPD means that, whilst not adopted Council policy, it can be used as a material consideration when assessing planning applications.

The Woolwich Town Centre Masterplan SPD aims to:

- Create a flexible strategy which responds to the many development schemes and infrastructure initiatives coming forward in Woolwich

- Town Centre;
- Repair the erosion of the area's historic and townscape character;
- Enhance and consolidate Woolwich Town Centre's character;
- Identify opportunity sites for new development;
- Clarify areas of particular townscape or historic interest; and
- Establish a masterplan framework for the future.

Woolwich is an extraordinary place. It is a cliché to talk about London as a collection of villages. Woolwich is more than this. It is a town within a city. It is a town with its own history and distinctive character. It fronts onto the river Thames and is close to relatively prosperous local suburbs and the urban green spaces of south-east London. It has a strong topography and important historical buildings. Yet Woolwich has a tough and gritty character that reflects its industrial past and military associations.

There are significant drivers already beginning to regenerate the town centre. The development of the Royal Arsenal and the Warren is starting to create a new residential led area on the river front. This historic area, along with the visitor

attraction 'Firepower' gives the town centre a powerful identity. It is an area of national historical and architectural significance linked to central London by the Thames Clipper, national rail and the DLR yet it is still relatively unknown to Londoners and tourists, unlike Greenwich.

Woolwich town centre is strangely isolated. It is physically cut off from the river by the A206 and the Royal Arsenal. The ferry terminal is not physically well connected with other transport and the riverside walkway links to the east and west are under utilised as a result of its isolation. To the south the residential suburbs do not easily connect to the town centre partially due to barriers caused by the barracks, the road network and a ring of 1960's public housing estates which form a "collar" around the central retail and civic core.

However, Woolwich is changing. The renewal of General Gordon Square, Beresford Square, Wellington Street and the new Council offices together with the DLR and Crossrail, as well as ongoing development at the Royal Arsenal and Love Lane, constitute the most significant set of development and infrastructure



The recently completed library at The Woolwich Centre

proposals for Woolwich in the last 40 years. Together, this level of access and development will catapult Woolwich from a secondary location to one of London's most well-connected and sought-after historic riverside hubs.

One unknown concerns the long term future of the Woolwich ferry. TfL has proposals for a new ferry crossing at Gallions Reach possibly as a measure prior to a longer term bridge or tunnel crossing. Although there is currently no budget or programme, a new ferry could be in place around 2016 –17. If this occurs, it would create an option to close or downgrade the existing Woolwich ferry. Such a proposal would release valuable riverside land and would allow for reappraisal of the strategic road network in Woolwich Town Centre. This could bring very significant advantages through addressing the barrier to pedestrian movement and connections to the town centre that the strategic road network currently represents. However, any relocation of the ferry would represent a major change for Woolwich. Not only is the ferry a significant piece of transport infrastructure, its presence is entwined in the history of Woolwich. It dates back to at least the 14th century and the service in its current form has operated since

1889. Therefore, serious consideration will need to be given to any proposal to move the ferry from its present location or to downgrade it in any way.

Woolwich's stunning architectural heritage and its proud military history should weave together with the new development initiatives to create a community rich in culture and eager for new encounters with the future. The fine collection of historic buildings in the Arsenal and within the town centre create a uniqueness in London which forms a powerful setting for new development and the transformation of Woolwich's community.

The Woolwich Town Centre masterplan SPD has been produced by Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners and the Royal Borough of Greenwich.

This masterplan is subject to assessment of its strategic impact on transport and other infrastructure, achieved as appropriate through the masterplan process. In addition, individual planning applications should, as per local and London Plan policy, be accompanied by a transport assessment.





Photographs showing the distinct character of Woolwich



# **VISION AND MASTERPLAN**

## 02 VISION

Woolwich Town Centre will be revitalised through an enhanced retail offering, and a wider range of uses including culture, leisure, community, offices and housing. A mix of uses will be encouraged throughout the day and into the evening with improved quality active frontages, and development will be delivered on major sites within the town centre in line with these principles.

Woolwich will be a town centre that is easy to access and easy to walk around. It will capitalise on its heritage, structure and its riverside location, and accessibility to both the riverside and the surrounding residential areas will be improved.

It will also increase in importance as a transport hub, building on its current DLR connections and with a Crossrail station to be provided by 2018. A riverside transit route is also planned to run through the town centre, linking with Thamesmead and Abbey Wood to the east and North Greenwich and beyond to the west further improving its accessibility. It is hoped that the proposed crossings at Silvertown and Gallions Reach will see the riverside transit grow to a sub-regional service

operating on a circular route on both sides of the Thames.

By maximising the benefits that new transport infrastructure will bring to Woolwich, the town will be able to benefit from an unprecedented wave of development to become a premier town centre. Woolwich will become a metropolitan centre for London with an expanded retail, cultural, leisure and residential offer. This will increase its importance as an investment location encouraging further positive developments in the town.

The exceptional historic fabric both at the Royal Arsenal and in the heart of the historic market town will continue to be transformed by complementary new development.

Several underused blocks and areas within the town centre will see intensification which will bring new life and activity to the town centre during the day and in the evening.

The activity along the river will be intensified with new mixed-use

development and improved connections between it and the rest of the town. Woolwich will also become an increasingly fashionable destination for Londoners to visit and spend leisure time.

The housing estate areas which create a collar of weakly defined urban fabric to the south and south west of the centre will gradually be redeveloped. This will enable new linkages to be made between these areas and the town centre for the first time in recent memory.

Woolwich will become a fantastic place to live in, shop in, work in and visit.



Model of Woolwich Town Centre Masterplan

## 03 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this SPD is to provide a framework that will facilitate the regeneration of Woolwich Town Centre. It is a flexible framework, capable of adapting to changing market conditions and able to respond rapidly to seize the opportunities that are likely to arise from the completion of Crossrail in 2018 and any changes to the status of the Woolwich Ferry.

The principle objectives are:

- Expand the offer of the town to grow into a metropolitan centre
  - Designate a site for anchor retail at the western end of Powis Street to build on the provision of a Travelodge in the listed Co-Op building that is under construction, the new Deichmann shoe shop and the refurbished Primark in order to provide a draw to this part of the town centre
  - Improve links to the riverside from the town centre
  - Animate the riverside through active uses and enhanced public spaces
  - Identify areas for leisure, community and cultural uses within the town centre
- Identify opportunities to improve links and accessibility to the surrounding residential areas, particularly across the A206 and A205
  - Establish development sites that can deliver further retail within the town centre
  - Identify sites for residential use within the town centre
  - Protect and enhance the historic core of the town centre and maintain its fine grain urbanism



The recently completed Woolwich Arsenal DLR

# 04 TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN

## LAND USE PRINCIPLES

### **Retail**

Retail uses will be intensified within the town centre's core. A number of sites within the town centre have been identified for retail use. These are located on or in the streets surrounding Powis Street and will be expected to provide a mix of uses, with active retail frontages featuring on the ground floor.

A site for a retail anchor has been identified at the western end of Powis Street and it is intended that the majority of core retail should be located between here and the eastern end of Powis Street, next to the DLR station.

The existing outdoor market is an important feature of the town which should be supported and enhanced.

### **Residential**

Residential uses will be provided within mixed use schemes within the core of the town centre, as well as the ongoing implementation of the Royal Arsenal and The Warren proposals, which will also further bind the historic Arsenal area to the town centre. Additional residential

use should also be provided on sites along the riverside and within the Bathway Quarter, with its rich historic character.

### **Leisure, culture and community**

There will be a shift away from retail at the eastern end of the town centre, towards a strong leisure and community function, widening the attraction of this part of the town centre and helping to increase activity onto General Gordon Square. This will have a strong link to the transport infrastructure within the town and widen the attraction of the town centre. Similarly, towards the western end of Powis Street it will be leisure and community uses that help to drive change in this area.

In the Bathway Quarter, a range of smaller scale cultural uses should be promoted, making the most of this areas' historical assets and ensuring that this area becomes a distinctive and high quality urban quarter, with a range of activities and uses on offer.

In the long term, a new primary school could be provided to the east of the Crossrail station, to reflect the growing





Principles / concept plan

population of Woolwich and to further encourage development in this part of the town centre. This should be complemented by a range of employment uses, responding to the increased intensity of use that the Crossrail station will bring.

### **Open Spaces**

The recently improved General Gordon Square provides an important open space at the eastern end of Powis Street and begins a key link to the riverside, through the Royal Arsenal. Future developments should take account of this important open space within the town centre and ensure that its potential is maximised.

## **MOVEMENT PRINCIPLES**

Routes for improved links to the riverside have been identified and these principles should be incorporated into any new development that takes place. This includes improved links across the roundabout at the junction of the A206 and the A205 to the river, as well as to the residential hinterland. As a key entrance to the town centre, this has been identified as an important location for streetscape improvements. Hare Street should also be

continued down to the river to provide a further key link, and this will be defined by new development replacing the ageing leisure centre. There may also be further opportunity to open up the riverside if the ferry relocates.

Opportunities for streetscape improvements along the A205 and A206 have also been identified, in order to improve accessibility and links to the surrounding residential areas. Active frontages should be encouraged in these areas and an improved pedestrian environment and crossing points should be considered.

The implementation of a riverside transit route running through the town centre should be supported. Intensification of the areas surrounding the proposed Crossrail station should also be encouraged.

## **DESIGN AND HERITAGE**

The protection of the town centre's important heritage value should continue. This will be enhanced by the refurbishment and bringing back into use of historic buildings within the Bathway Quarter. This area should also be given

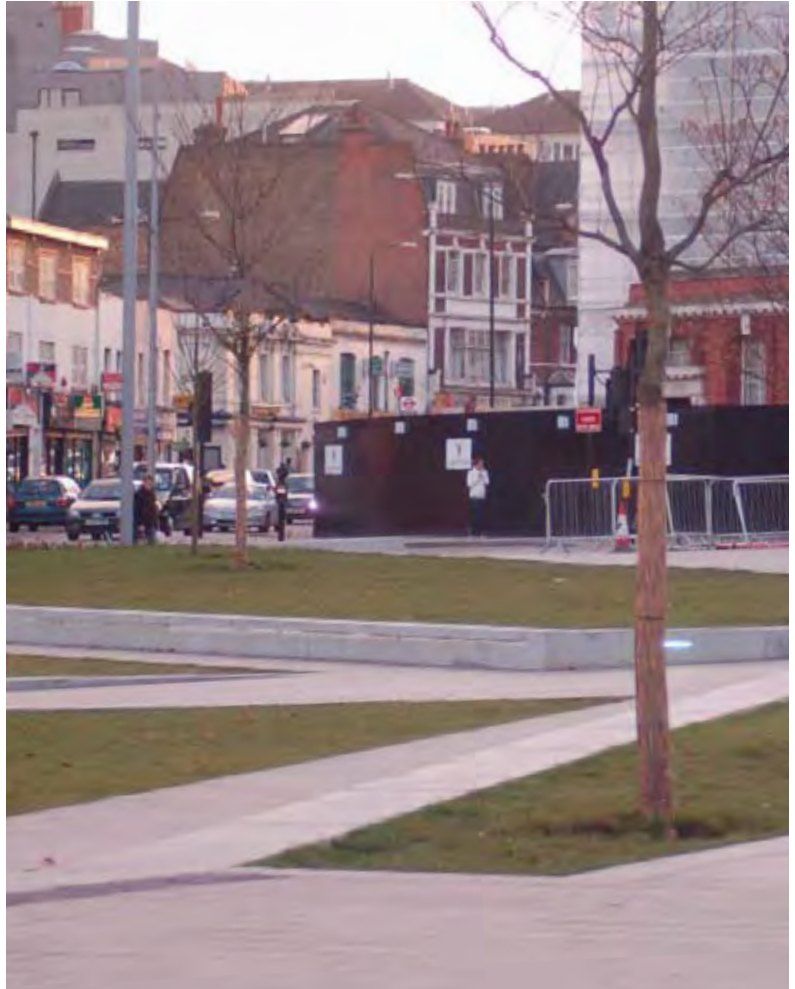
additional heritage protection to conserve its distinct character, as should Powis Street and Hare Street.

The refurbishment of the Calderwood Street and Monk Street car parks, opposite the Bathway Quarter, will provide an important streetscape improvement in this part of the town, with potential for new residential development above.

The extension of public realm improvements from the recently improved Woolwich Squares area along Powis Street, Hare Street and through the Royal Arsenal to the waterfront will help to enhance this part of the town centre and increase its vitality. These should also continue through the Bathway Quarter and permeate to other parts of the town.

Additionally, the redevelopment of outdated buildings on Beresford Street will dramatically improve frontage to the street and positively link to the Royal Arsenal redevelopment and the riverside.

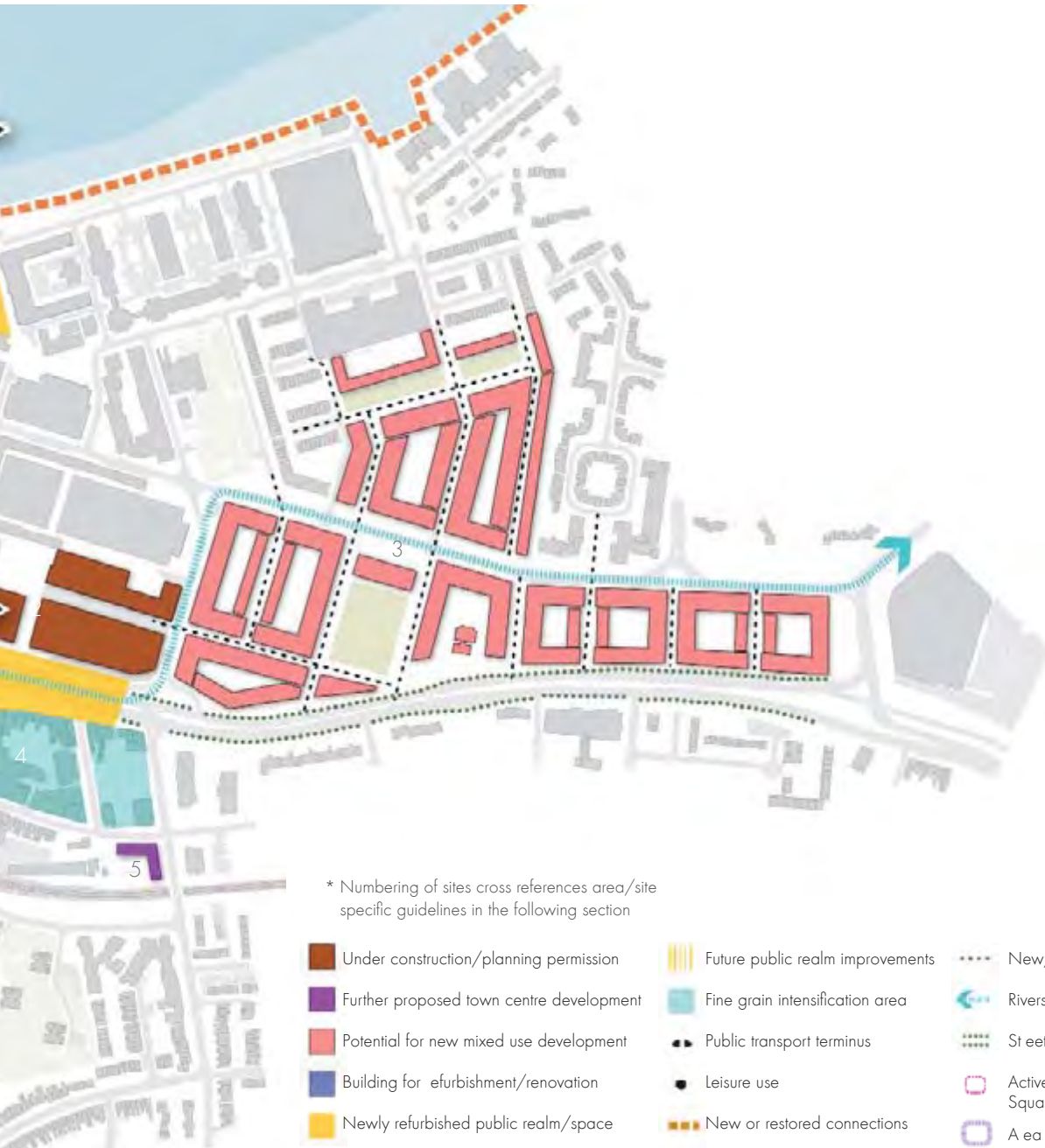
Fundamental to any future development will be the Council's requirement for the highest possible design quality to improve the attractiveness of the town and help attract further investment.
















Recently refurbished General Gordon Square



**Woolwich  
masterplan  
framework plan**



\* Numbering of sites cross references area/site specific guidelines in the following section

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  Under construction/planning permission   |  Future public realm improvements |  New/improved walking link                |
|  Further proposed town centre development |  Fine grain intensification area  |  Riverside transit indicative route       |
|  Potential for new mixed use development  |  Public transport terminus        |  Streetscape and crossing improvements    |
|  Building for refurbishment/renovation    |  Leisure use                      |  Active frontage to General Gordon Square |
|  Newly refurbished public realm/space     |  New or restored connections      |  Area for further heritage protection     |



Model of Woolwich Town Centre Masterplan



## 05 AREA/SITE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES



### Site 1 - Glass Yard

The leisure centre that is currently located on this site should move to a more central location in the town centre close to the existing public squares. New development on this site should follow a number of principles:

- Create new mixed use development with active frontage to either side of the extended Hare Street;
- Extend Hare Street to the waterfront edge;
- Provide a shared surface across Woolwich High Street to provide easy pedestrian access to the town centre;
- Celebrate the Woolwich Foot Tunnel entrance within a high quality public space; and
- Animate the river edge including public space and new cafés and restaurants and re-open the view of the River from Hare Street.





Newly revealed route between Hare Street and the Thames



## Site 2 - Crossrail

The plans for the new Crossrail station form part of the Warren masterplan. The station will be located in the Royal Arsenal and is currently being constructed. There is a need to intensify the uses surrounding the Crossrail station and specifically there is an opportunity for major mixed-use development over the station, which should be pursued in order to begin the intensification process. The station locality will become a key driver for change for Woolwich. In addition, the areas in close proximity to the station will form a major focus for redevelopment.





### Site 3 - Arsenal Way

This is currently a well occupied and important employment area and these uses will remain important to Woolwich and the wider area. It is recognised however that the increased accessibility that the arrival of Crossrail will bring will likely increase the development pressure for a range of uses in the future including residential and educational uses. Existing businesses will be prioritised for protection and fully consulted as part of any more detailed proposals in the future.

Any future redevelopment of the area should be subject to a more detailed masterplan, building upon this one, which includes links to the Royal Arsenal redevelopment and is comparable in importance to the Warren. Key eastwest connections to the Crossrail station will be important as will north-south connectivity to the river and across Plumstead Road. Features of the area with heritage value

should be retained where possible and assessed during more detailed masterplan proposals.





## Site 4 - Spray Street Quarter

A mixed use refurbishment and redevelopment scheme should be brought forward and could include new retail, a supermarket and residential development for this important but under-utilised area.

An assessment of important historic buildings on the site should be undertaken and a fine grain approach promoted. This will be a very prominent site, located opposite the Crossrail station, forming a first impression of the town. There is therefore an opportunity to significantly intensify the use of this site.



## Site 5 - Lower Spray Street

This site contains the DLR station box and would benefit from landscape and environmental improvements. Infill residential development at a density appropriate for its location will be encouraged where it is compatible with DLR operational requirements.

The Woolwich Interchange Site Brief (2002) should be referred to for further detail on this site.



## Site 6 - Wellington Street

The site presents opportunity for refurbishment and redevelopment to present a more active frontage to General Gordon Square. Any redevelopment should feature a mix of uses and could help to provide a link from the square to the Bathway Quarter. The locally listed terraces at 1-5 Thomas Street should be protected, providing additional character in this part of the town centre.

This should help to improve the frontage around the square and provide potential for uses to spill out into the new high quality environment which lends itself to leisure uses.





## Site 7 - Bathway Quarter

This area has a rich character which should be preserved through sensitive residential-led refurbishment with active uses at ground floor to create a distinct urban quarter. This area has the potential to be a high quality, high-specification, loft-style place with bars, galleries and artists' studios together with other uses such as a jazz club and creative industries such as architect's studios.

Public realm improvements in this area will also be encouraged.



## Site 8 - Monk Street

The existing Calderwood Street and Monk Street car parks should be refurbished. Calderwood Street car park should feature a new and improved cladding system, in order to make it a positive feature of the town. The design should be high quality and should respect the surrounding historic buildings within the Bathway Quarter.

There is potential to provide residential development above the Calderwood Street car park, in order to improve the financial viability of the proposals.



Cladding treatment of car park at St Pauls Place Sheffield - a possible precedent for enhancements



### Site 9 - 114 to 120 Powis Street

This key corner building at the junction of Powis Street and Hare Street should be refurbished and used for a new anchor retail store. Together with the new Travelodge Hotel on Powis Street and the recently refurbished Primark on Hare Street, this constitutes a further boost to the vitality of the western end of Powis Street and will act as a strong and important anchor to lead people from the transport hub at the eastern end of the street, through to this part of the town centre.

Any development should also relate to Hare Street and its future improved links to the riverside.



## Site 10 - Art-deco Co-op building

This important historic, locally listed building should be converted to high specification residential development, with complementary active uses on the ground floor. Smaller scale retail, cafés and restaurants are appropriate towards this end of the town centre, as the nature of the town centre gradually changes from the retail core, to what is the retail fringe, with a wider range of uses including leisure, community and culture.



## Site 11 - Former Gala Bingo site and Mortgramit Square

The former Gala Bingo site acts as a major gateway to the town centre and should be refurbished to its original use as a cinema or other suitable leisure/entertainment use to anchor the future evening economy of the town centre, including the new residential population at the Royal Arsenal.

Development of this site should be considered in conjunction with the redevelopment of Mortgramit Square, as it is likely that this additional space would be needed in order to deliver the development proposed. Additionally, this infill development site could accommodate new residential uses and should present a positive frontage to Woolwich High Street, providing improved linkages to the riverside and reducing the impact of the A206 on this entrance point to the town centre.



## Site 12 - Beresford Street

These sites should be developed for a mix of uses. Design should be of a high quality and should take its influence from the Warren masterplan area, whilst ensuring it forms an appropriate entrance point to the town centre. Connections between the Royal Arsenal and Powis Street should be improved through active frontages, reduction in the impact of the A206 and ensuring that due recognition is given to the vicinity of the riverside. An alternative location for the Woolwich Market Pound would be needed before any redevelopment of this part of the site was allowed.

Comprehensive refurbishment options for existing buildings should be investigated with infill development on under-utilised area.



## **Bathway Quarter and Powis/ Hare Street Conservation Areas**

The Bathway Quarter and Powis and Hare Street should be designated as Conservation Areas. Guidelines should be developed on how the special character of these areas can be protected and enhanced.





## A205/A206 streetscape improvements

A range of small scale improvements should be made to the existing A205 and A206 in order to reduce its impact on the surrounding environment and provide better integration between the town centre, the riverside and the residential hinterland.

This should involve:

- New and improved pedestrian crossings
- Tree planting
- Removal of barriers to pedestrian movement
- Improved paving and road surfaces
- Traffic calming measures where appropriate

Precedent is provided by the recently improved public realm at Beresford Street linking Beresford Square to the Royal Arsenal.



## Site 13 - Warren/Royal Arsenal Masterplan

### HAS PLANNING PERMISSION

A masterplan exists for this area which is being built in phases over the next twenty years.

The mixed use development comprising 3,711 new residential dwellings as well as retail (Use Class A1, A3, A4), commercial 130 room hotel, community uses and a new Crossrail station (see site two for more detail).



Illustrative material taken from the Warren Masterplan



## Site 14 - DLR over-station scheme

### HAS PLANNING PERMISSION

This proposal, which is a joint venture between Transport for London and Oakmayne (Woolwich) Ltd has planning permission, and forms the overstation development. It comprises of a seven storey, 96 room hotel and a 16 storey tower containing 53 residential units. Two ground floor retail units complete the development.



DLR over-station scheme design (Allies and Morrison Architects)



## Site 15 - The Woolwich Centre

RECENTLY CONSTRUCTED

This new office and library complex has recently opened to replace the former Peggy Middleton House.



## Site 16 - Love Lane

### UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Mixed use development to provide a 12,200 square metres Tesco store and 960 new homes, as well as retail and community uses. This will be Tesco's largest development in Europe. The Tesco's store is due to be completed in November 2012 followed by 259 residential units in 2013 as part of Phase 2 of a 4 phase development.





## Site 17 - New Travelodge Hotel

### UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Planning permission and listed building consent was granted in June 2011 for the demolition of extensions to the Co-op and Bakery Building, internal and external works in association with the proposed change of use to a 120 bed hotel and retail use, installation of mechanical plant and new shop fronts.

This represents a major opportunity to increase activity along the western end Powis Street which has long been an objective. Opportunities to create further built frontage to Powis Street adjacent to the refurbished Co-op Building should be investigated. The hotel use will help to reframe the potential of Powis Street for other related uses.





Refurbished former Co-op building to include a new Travelodge Hotel

## 06 DELIVERY

In order to deliver this SPD, there are a number of future key factors that will need to be achieved. These include:

1. Assemble riverside sites by reducing highway land requirements and incorporate Royal Borough Greenwich land including the Waterfront Leisure Centre. This would be the “revenue generator”. Capital receipts would be utilised to provide a new leisure centre/pool and investment in the public realm. Possible other uses include; residential with ground floor riverside cafés and restaurants. The riverside walk should be enhanced.
2. A205 John Wilson Street, A206 Beresford Street/Plumstead Road:
  - Reappraise the status, capacity and configuration of both of these roads that create severance between the town centre and the residential hinterland to the west and the wider Royal Arsenal site to the north. Design solutions should be sought that address this severance and that strengthen linkages to the town centre.
  - Produce simple design codes to guide development fronting onto the roads in order to create scale and enclosure to boulevards designed to human scale that present more pedestrian friendly environments.
3. Enter into discussion with Berkeley Homes, Firepower and Thames Clippers to improve the attractiveness of the Royal Arsenal site to visitors. Encourage more restaurants, bars and café uses and consider options for a new visitor attraction. (For example, the children’s experience centre, Eureka, in Halifax are looking for a London base.)
4. Designate Powis Street and Hare Street as Conservation Areas, in order to give them enhanced heritage protection
5. Carry out a townscape study and public realm improvements in the Town Centre (West) area. Introduce measures with English Heritage to strengthen the area’s historic character.
6. Complete public space links between The Woolwich Barracks and The

Thames through the town centre (General Gordon, Beresford and Dial Arch Squares). Extend and link up with the East London Green Grid.

7. Examine land ownerships around the eastern part of the town centre and identify development opportunities in association with the Crossrail station. The Crossrail station and TfL landholdings next to the DLR represent major drivers for change here.
8. Examine other potential development opportunities around the edges of the town centre. The objectives would be to improve connectivity into the town centre from its residential hinterland.
9. Identify opportunities for multiple small scale interventions around tree planting, landscaping, signage, removal of banners and improvements to lighting. These could be turned into a phased implementation plan commencing in 2012.
10. Discover and enhance new pedestrian and cycle routes to improve connectivity both within the town centre and its surrounding areas. Consider opportunities for further links into the East London Green Grid.

11. Develop a branding and marketing strategy for Woolwich that complements the “Discover Greenwich” brand with partners including Visit London, English Heritage and others.

The Royal Borough of Greenwich has a key role to play in the implementation of the SPD as the Local Planning Authority. The Royal Borough will need to work with others to ensure that there is clear responsibility for each of the proposals identified and will need to liaise with potential funders and partners to make these projects happen.

The Woolwich Regeneration Board will also play an important role in the future relating to bringing these proposals forward and in their implementation. They will have a close working relationship with landowners and businesses in the area, which will be important in the plan's delivery.

## PHASING

Three phases of development are outlined. These indicate the order in which development will be encouraged with the three phases covering a 15 to 20 year period.

### Phase 1

Phase 1 of the plan's delivery will include the completion of a number of development schemes, which are currently underway, including the Tesco development at Love Lane, the development of a Travelodge hotel at the western end of Powis Street, the over-station DLR development and the completion of the public realm enhancements at General Gordon Square. Development will also continue at the Royal Arsenal and the Warren. Vacant sites on Beresford Street will be redeveloped improving frontage onto the A206.

Together, these developments will help to drive change within the town centre and to encourage further investment. It is likely that smaller scale improvements will come about first, such as the delivery

of a retail anchor at the corner of Powis and Hare Streets, bringing the Co-op building in this part of town back into use, improvements to the Wellington Street site, delivering new uses into the ex-Gala Bingo site and delivering design improvement to the buildings on Beresford Street.

Calderwood and Monk Street car parks will be enhanced to help further improve the image of the town.

Improvements will also be seen in the surrounding residential hinterland, creating the opportunity for future improvements to links between these areas and the town centre itself. Larger scale change will also begin in the Bathway Quarter, with buildings being brought back into use and new uses encouraged.



Phase one

## Phase 2

Small scale change in the town centre will help to drive larger scale change. The opening of the Crossrail station will also be a significant driver in this phase. Development will also continue at the Royal Arsenal and the Warren.

Development around the Crossrail station will begin to be delivered. Both this and the previous change in the town centre will create an appropriate time to move the leisure centre from its riverside location to a central location in the town centre.

In turn, development will increase along the riverside as the town centre begins to further flourish. Development will also continue at the Bathway Quarter. Redevelopment will begin to take place on the Spray Street sites and land assembly will begin, as the impact of Crossrail permeates across the rest of the town.

As development continues within the town centre and on its edges, a number

of opportunities will be created to deliver improvement to the A205 and A206 and reduce the barrier that these routes create. This will be related to the delivery of the new riverside transit system, running through the town centre.

Further sites on Beresford Street will be redeveloped taking precedent from development achieved in The Warren.



Phase two

### **Phase 3**

In this phase, development will continue at the Spray Street sites and will be nearing completion at the Royal Arsenal and the Warren.

The riverside transit system will be fully delivered, further increasing connectivity and encouraging further investment. Any further improvements to the town, streetscape and public realm will be completed, once the large scale change has been successfully delivered.





Phase three



## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

# 07 POLICY CONTEXT

## National Policy

National planning policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in April 2012. The NPPF states that Local Planning authorities should plan positively for new development and includes a set of core land use planning principles to underpin plan making and development management.

SPDs do not form part of the statutory development plan but provide further detail on the implementation of particular policies and proposals contained in the Development Plan. SPDs must relate to policies or proposals in the Development Plan and can not be used to set out new policies or to allocate or re-designate land for specific purposes.

## Regional Policy

### The London Plan (2011)

The London Plan (2011) is the overall strategic plan for London and forms part

of Royal Greenwich's development plan. Woolwich is identified as an Opportunity Area within the London Plan. Opportunity Areas are the capital's major reservoir of brownfield land with significant capacity to accommodate new housing, commercial and other development linked to existing or potential improvements to public transport accessibility.

Annex 1 of the London Plan provides more detail on each of the Opportunity Areas. For Woolwich, it provides an indicative employment capacity of 5,000 jobs and an indicative figure of 5,000 new homes. It is anticipated that Woolwich could evolve into a Metropolitan Centre over the plan period, given the current regeneration that is taking place, through development such as the Royal Arsenal and existing and proposed transport infrastructure improvements. It states that attractive links have been completed between the Arsenal and the town centre and should be complemented by further high-quality design and environmental improvement across the town and the A206 corridor,

including General Gordon and Beresford Squares. There is potential to improve links with the South East London Green Chain and neighbourhoods to the south.

Woolwich Town Centre is also identified for public realm enhancements in the medium term.

## Local Policy

### Core Strategy

Royal Greenwich's Core Strategy, including development management policies, is currently in preparation, following on from a consultation at the end of 2010 and a further consultation due on a submission version at the start of 2012. The draft Core Strategy states that Woolwich will see significant growth over the plan period and will establish itself as a metropolitan centre. The spatial strategy itself states that Woolwich will be transformed into 'a vibrant, successful town centre with new retail, office, hotel, culture and

*housing development.*' The spatial strategy also recognises the impact that the development of Crossrail will provide, as well as the regeneration of the Woolwich estates and any new river crossings.

Woolwich Town Centre is identified as a Strategic Development Location in the draft Core Strategy. The text to support this designation states that:

*'The strategy for Woolwich Town Centre aims to capitalise on its strengths as well as the centre's heritage and riverside location. The Town Centre will be revitalised through additional retail floorspace, new office, leisure and entertainment facilities, a new civic centre, as well as new culture and tourism uses. The amount of housing within the town centre will also increase, including a new mixed use development at the Royal Arsenal site, which is already under construction. Redevelopment around Love Lane will also provide housing in the town centre.'*

*The environment of the Town Centre will be improved, with public realm enhancements and a redesign of Beresford and General Gordon's Squares already underway. There will also be improved links between the Town Centre, the Royal Arsenal and the riverside and the market will be retained and enhanced.*

*The successful enhancement of Woolwich Town Centre will see a claw back of trade recently lost to neighbouring Boroughs and beyond and will withstand the impact of new proposed developments in centres such as Bexleyheath and Stratford City. It is intended that Woolwich will complement town centres in other parts of the Borough and other boroughs in the region.*

*Land in Woolwich Town Centre off Love Lane and the Royal Arsenal masterplan area are important sites in this plan, which already have planning permission as detailed below.'*

The draft Core Strategy also states that Woolwich Town Centre may have potential for tall buildings. It also supports the upgrading of the Woolwich ferry in the short-term, and a new ferry service at Gallions Reach in the medium term, either in addition to the Woolwich ferry service or to replace it.

Policy IM3 supports public transport infrastructure that is critical to the Borough's development, including improvements along the waterfront area between Thamesmead and Abbey Wood through Charlton Riverside to the Peninsula.

### **Site Allocations DPD**

A Site Allocations document, to support the Core Strategy, is in its initial stages of preparation and will incorporate more detail on any specific sites identified within Woolwich Town Centre.

## **Unitary Development Plan**

Royal Greenwich's UDP is the existing adopted policy for the Royal Borough, adopted in July 2006. Although this does not state a specific aspiration for the growth of Woolwich into a Metropolitan centre, it does support its revitalisation as the Royal Borough's primary shopping centre (policy TC2) and developments in tourism, culture, leisure, the evening economy and town centre living that contribute to its diversity, vitality and viability (policy TC3). It also seeks to ensure that the former Greenwich University/Calderwood Street site in the Town Centre is developed for a mix of uses to include activity generating town centre uses.

A number of specific sites are identified for development within the UDP, and these are predominantly identified for mixed use development. More detail can be found within the site proposal schedules of the UDP.

The UDP is in the process of being replaced by the Core Strategy, to reflect the London Plan and update the aspirations for the area.

## **Environment Designations**

Given its location on the River Thames, there is some risk of flooding within Woolwich Town Centre. The majority of the town centre is located in Flood Zones 1 and 2, with the Royal Arsenal area to the north east predominantly located within Flood Zone 3. Although the whole of the town centre is protected by the Thames tidal defences, there is a risk of these defences being breached. This needs to be considered for those parts of the centre located within flood zone 3 and that have a high or medium residual risk, and development must be made safe in case of flooding. 'More vulnerable' development such as residential and education uses should be directed to Flood Zones 1 and 2 where possible, and should otherwise demonstrate that the Exception Test

criteria can be passed. There is also some risk of surface water and groundwater flooding on the site.

General Gordon Square is designated as community open space, as is the riverside park next to the Waterfront Leisure Centre. There are no other specific environmental designations for Woolwich Town Centre.

### **Heritage Designations**

The Royal Arsenal area, at the east of the town centre, is designated as a Conservation Area within the Royal Borough's UDP. Additionally, there are a number of statutory and locally listed buildings within the town centre.

Woolwich is located on the Thames in the north of the Royal Borough and encompasses the town centre of Woolwich, the largest in the Borough and designated as a Major Centre in the London Plan, as well as the industrial riverside areas adjacent to this. South of the town centre, Woolwich is a largely residential area,

featuring a variety of housing styles and encompassing the green open spaces of Woolwich Common. The 1960s/70s Council built housing estates also tend to dominate this area.

This is a mixed and diverse neighbourhood, including a high proportion of residents from Black and Minority Ethnic groups, particularly Black Africans, as well as a high proportion of under-fives and lone parent households. This area has some of the highest





The Royal Arsenal

## 08 AREA CONTEXT

deprivation in the Borough, particularly in the north.

The location of the Royal Arsenal and the Royal Barracks, and previously home to the Royal Military Academy and Royal Artillery, Woolwich has much historical significance. This military presence has been maintained with the arrival of the King's Troop in 2011. However, its history as a military and industrial town has not been able to avert its more recent decline and it now features some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in London, particularly towards the riverside. Communities in Woolwich have historically grown in association with the river and riverside industries but significant economic change has been experienced here in recent years as local industry and employers have closed and relocated, thus changing the demographics and economy of this centre significantly. Woolwich Town Centre is under-performing compared to other major centres and remains vulnerable to competition, such as from Bexleyheath

and Bluewater in Kent.

### **Transport**

Woolwich's connections to the rest of London have been improved in recent years, with the opening of Woolwich Arsenal DLR station in 2009 and a planned Crossrail station by 2018. Woolwich Town Centre is also a hub for bus travel within the area and also features a river bus service to central London, making the PTAL either 6a or 6b for most of the area. These public transport connections are particularly important in Woolwich as around half of the population in this area do not own a car 2001 Census. The Woolwich foot tunnel and the Woolwich ferry connect the area to North Woolwich on the northside of the Thames. The Woolwich ferry is the only crossing capable of taking full height HGVs between Tower Bridge and the Dartford Crossing. This currently results in traffic congestion in Woolwich Town Centre.

### **Retail**



Strategic transport connections

A range of national multiple retailers are located in Woolwich, but these are generally lower end and mid-market retailers such as Peacocks, Primark, Marks and Spencer Outlet, Clarks Factory Shop and Poundland. Woolwich has a reasonable convenience offer; the main foodstores are currently Sainsbury's, Marks and Spencer's foodhall and a Lidl store.

Woolwich's retail offer is complemented by a market selling a range of food and non-food goods, operating everyday with the exception of Sunday, on Beresford Square. There is also a covered market hall on Plumstead Road selling mainly low quality comparison goods. Woolwich also benefits from a range of other town centre uses including The Royal Borough of Greenwich Offices and the Waterfront Leisure Centre.

Although Woolwich currently lacks a large modern convenience superstore, this will be addressed by the new Tesco scheme on Love Lane. Once this scheme opens Woolwich will need to consolidate its convenience and comparison goods offer

and go through a settling down period. The introduction of this store may result in the closure of some of the smaller and poorer performing convenience stores in the centre. Greenwich's Retail Capacity Study (2008, GVA Grimley) states that, whilst there is no overriding need for additional convenience goods floorspace over and above the Tesco store, there could be scope to widen the convenience goods offer over time to meet the needs of new residents, for example with the introduction of more quality food retailers.

On the basis of current market share there is little scope for additional comparison goods floorspace in Woolwich. However, the infrastructure improvements with both the DLR and Crossrail and the new development already taking place have the potential to increase the market share of the centre and the inflow of trade from beyond the current catchment area. Therefore, if significant uplift in market share can be achieved it would result in capacity to support significant amounts of new comparison goods floorspace in the

longer term.



Primark, Woolwich

## 09 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Woolwich's stunning architectural heritage and its proud military history should weave together with the new development initiatives to create a community rich in culture and eager for new encounters with the future. The fine collection of historic buildings in the Arsenal and within the town centre create a uniqueness in London which forms a powerful setting for new development and the transformation of Woolwich's community. Woolwich was and still is a garrison town with a connection to the military that extends beyond the Arsenal.

This section provides a summary of the Woolwich Town Centre Historical Assessment and Character Report produced by Jonathan Clarke of English Heritage and also draws on The Warren Royal Arsenal Design and Access Statement by Allies and Morrison (March 2009). These studies have formed an important basis for understanding the elements of Woolwich's heritage.

### Timeline

- Medieval Period: Important river crossing point and fishing port
- Early 1500s: Henry VIII established a Royal Dockyard

- 1670s: South side of High Street completed
- 1700s: Dockyards and Arsenal were driving forces behind development
- 1780s: military established barracks, pulling town centre southwards. Current town centre solidified and prosperous
- 1869: dockyard closed
- 1917: Arsenal peaks in size
- 1967: Royal Ordnance factory closes, triggering period of decline

### History

The history of Woolwich is strongly connected to the incredible growth of the Royal Arsenal throughout the twentieth century. Traces of an early settlement unearthed in Royal Arsenal Gardens next to the Royal Arsenal provide the earliest evidence of human settlement at the site. A reference to a settlement "Wlewic" is recorded in the Domesday survey. The name Woolwich may have its origin in the Saxon word 'Hulviz' which means 'the dwelling on the river'.

The Woolwich ferry service dates back to the 14th century when it connected



1869

Woolwich (then a small fishing village) on the north shore and Warren Lane on the south shore. The earliest references to the ferry can be found in the official papers of 1308, when the waterman who ran it, William de Wicton, sold his business and house to William atte Halle, for £10.00.

The military occupation of the Royal Arsenal began in the 16th century when it was known as Woolwich 'Warren', due to the numbers of rabbits on the site. Records clearly show ordnance stores on the site, which would have supplied guns, cannon balls and gun carriages to the ships that were being constructed in the docks of Greenwich, Woolwich and Deptford.

During the 17th Century, the site's potential for military use increased. In addition to naval stores, a new building 'The Royal Rope Yard' was constructed and remained in operation up to 1671 on what is known today as the 'Tear Drop Site'. An additional development commissioned by General Blake and his ordnance officers, a 'Proof Butts' for the testing and commissioning of cannons was also completed on this part of the site.

After the Restoration the site's strategic importance was reinforced when in

1667 Prince Rupert commissioned the construction of a cannon battery. It was at this time that the site was also deemed to be essential for the defence of the Thames estuary from attack by the then formidable Dutch navy. This coincided with the expansion of the Arsenal, brought about by The Crown's purchase of Tower Place from Sir William Pritchard in 1671 which included a Tudor manor house and a 12.5 hectare (31 acre) estate located at what is today the western end of the site. The significance of this development is reflected in the remodelling of the manor house, thought to be by the architect Sir John Vanbrugh, for conversion to the official residence for the Lieutenant General of Ordnance (now known as Building 40: the Royal Military Academy).

Soon afterwards, two buildings were built that enabled experimentation and manufacture of what was then the cutting edge of military technology: gun powder and cannons. They were 'The Royal Laboratories, relocated from Greenwich in 1696. This was followed by the formation of the Royal Brass Foundry on site in 1717, which followed a devastating explosion in 1716 at the Moorfields foundry in the City of London, during the re-melting of a French Cannon.





Woolwich 1870 urban fabric superimposed on current blocks



Woolwich 1870 urban fabric with key differences in built form between 1870 and 2006 highlighted

The military academy was established in 1720. A building called 'the old royal military academy' was finished in 1741.

In 1764 a sundial was erected in the central square, which led to the name 'Dial Square'.

Following the American War of Independence (1776-1783), the shortage of reliable cannon suppliers gave rise to The Crown taking charge of cannon and undercarriage manufacture in Great Britain, and the site area grew to 42 hectares (103 acres).

In 1805, following a visit by George III, the site was given its designation as "The Royal Arsenal" and over the course of that century, there was further expansion.

The land enclosed by its walls grew to approximately 56 hectares (139 acres), including the tracts of land required for storage, and the workforce reached ten thousand people employed for both manufacturing and research of armaments.

Another development was the excavation of a shipping canal that separated the main works from the land to the east, which was designated a 'danger area'

and used for bunker storage of the gunpowder chemicals.

In the period from the Crimean War to the First World War the number of employees rose from ten thousand men and boys to eighty thousand with a large proportion being women. The Beresford Gate was erected in 1829 along with a wall surrounding the 1,300 acre 'Secret City'. Plumstead railway station was completed in 1857.

By the outbreak of World War I, the site's facilities had evolved to their maximum industrialized capacity. As a factory, it had become one of the foremost centres of wartime production for the British Empire. It was here that most artillery needs were catered for including: field cannons, shells and bullets.

Woolwich Town Centre grew with the Royal Arsenal. By the mid nineteenth century, Woolwich was spilling over into the neighbouring parishes of Plumstead and Charlton. In 1886 some of the Arsenal workers established an amateur football club known as the Dial Arch Football club. After five years they changed their name to Woolwich Arsenal when they started to make an impact in the Football League.



Powis Street

The club played locally until it moved to Highbury, north London, in 1913. Although “Woolwich” was later dropped from the name, the cannon logo remains as a reference to the club’s origins.

The number of employees on the site decreased after the First World War and the outbreak of World War II marked the beginning of the end of the site’s military occupancy. London’s vulnerability to air attack during the Blitz, and the proximity of the Royal Docks made Woolwich a notable target and prompted Churchill’s wartime government to disburse armament production to a number of different factories around the nation. This clever strategic move for the wartime initiative ultimately undermined the Royal Arsenal’s national importance as the principle manufacturer of arms and munitions.

The site decreased in size from 1956 when 118 acres were sold on, and redeveloped as a trading estate. The Royal Ordnance Factory closed in 1967. By then, all production of ordnance had ceased on site and it was at this time that 500 acres of surplus land on the eastern boundary were transferred to the Greater London Council

(GLC). At that time there was a pressing need for more social housing, and some of this land was developed as part of the governments ‘new town’ strategy to create Thamesmead. The Ministry of Defence continued to scale back its operations and finally closed the site in 1994. Since that time, ownership has been transferred between successive government bodies, including London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC), English Partnerships (EP) and the London Development Agency (LDA).



The Co-op building on Powis Street

## Woolwich Town Centre: Principal Historic Character Areas

### High Street and Riverside

Extent: Woolwich High Street east of the New Ferry Approach Roundabout as far as the north part of Beresford Street and the riverfront area to the north.

Character: Woolwich High Street is the historic hub of Woolwich. Until the mid 1800s this area was characterised by yards, alleyways, timber-framed houses, inns and public houses serving artisans, labourers and mariners. The later part of the 19th century saw a change in character as large scale industry became prominent in the area; large swathes of land were cleared to make way for a ferry approach road and other similar infrastructure. The most prominent changes have taken place over the last 30 years. The Victorian ferry terminus has been relocated upriver and an extensive leisure centre has been developed. Hare Street has lost both its views to the river and its role as a major axis linking Powis Street to the riverfront and Ferry Terminal.

Historically this area was characterised by narrow, subrectangular plots; small densely-packed houses and inns and a curving, narrow High Street with glimpses and access to the river. Some of this character remains, creating a somewhat untidy, dog-eared nature which is unmistakably 'maritime' and can be witnessed in other river suburbs such as Greenwich, Deptford and waterside towns in Kent such as Chatham and Gravesend.

Few of the historical river points of access remain today; Bell Water Gate retains its water stairs and fulfils an important function regarding waterfront permeability. Other remainders of this area's working past are more obscure and the Glass Yard remains in name only. The scale and grain of this character area is a juxtaposition of intimate pre-20th century Woolwich next to the large scale 20th century additions.



Beresford Square

## **Beresford Square**

*Extent:* Beresford Square and the buildings within and on all sides of it.

*Character:* The character of this area is informed by its location between military and civilian old Woolwich, it is a mixture of planned and unplanned and formal and informal. The square emerged during the 17th or 18th century as a triangular-shaped area formed at the intersection of the Ropeyard, Plumstead Road and Cholic Lane (later Woolwich New Road), however this space became formalised as Beresford Square in the early-mid 1800s with the creation of a new main entrance to the Arsenal. The square provided eateries, shops and houses for soldiers and Arsenal workers as well as providing a home for market traders, circuses, menageries and waxwork shows. Today the square is the location for Woolwich Street Market which harks back to its historic sense of vitality and tradition.

Despite enclosure by tightly grouped buildings Beresford Square preserves a sense of openness and 'air space' because its corners open out on to streets with their own distinctive character. The

square is a node linking Beresford Street/ Plumstead Road, Powis Street, Greens End, Woolwich New Road and Spray Street. Links to the Arsenal have been eroded, and it is now separated from the site by a dual carriageway albeit with improved crossing. Beresford Gate has become an isolated icon that is disconnected from the old Arsenal.

On the southern and eastern sides of the newly refurbished square many of the late Victorian buildings have survived. The Italianate block which houses the Ordnance Arms is noteworthy and has historical links to the Arsenal through the public house and surrounding buildings which provided clothing and uniforms to the civilian and military population





Beresford Square

## **Plumstead Road**

Extent: South side of Plumstead  
Road between Beresford Square and  
Burrage Road.

Character: Plumstead Road is the historic Highway connecting Woolwich and Plumstead. Until the 19th century this was a country lane with a few cottages scattered along its length. Its importance grew with the creation of Woolwich New Road in 1790 and further in 1829 with the new entrance to the Arsenal in Beresford Square. Following the development of this new entrance, the southern side of the Road was intensively developed to provide housing for Arsenal workers.

Much of this housing has survived and has been adapted to form retail units, many of which are in poor condition. There is lack of architectural cohesion, which was exacerbated by the widening of Plumstead Road in the 1980s in which the properties on the south side of the road lost their unity with the Arsenal. The covered market adds interest to the area with its wide-span roof structure which is an early example of the 'Lamella System'.



Powis Street

## **General Gordon Square**

Extent: General Gordon Square and buildings facing it along Greens End, Woolwich New Road and General Gordon Place.

Character: General Gordon Square is formed by the confluence of a number of roads. Its present form and appearance did not begin to appear until the late 20th century with the covering of the railway cutting on the north side and the erection of the Equitable Building in the 1930's. The public space within the area is a late 20th century creation, recently refurbished; previous to this the island largely comprised Victorian and Edwardian residential dwelling and commercial units.

This area is more formal than Beresford Square due in part to the sobriety of the architecture (including the Edwardian former Tram Shed).

The Equitable Building gives the square an air of commercial authority, however this is compromised by less accomplished buildings.



Woolwich's Equitable Building, General Gordon Place

## **Powis Street and Hare Street**

Extent: Powis Street, extending from Greens End/ Beresford Square westward to John Wilson Street and Hare Street.

Character: Powis Street and Hare Street formed in the late 18th century and widened and rebuilt in the late 19th century, formed the primary shopping district in Woolwich. Its character by the Edwardian era was similar to the fashionable parades seen in the more prosperous London Suburbs such as Muswell Hill. Powis Street comprises of a range of style, fabric and scale of building which is testament to its 150-year history of buildings and rebuilding.

The eastern two-thirds of Powis Street comprises modestly-sized mid to late Victorian shops and offices with lively frontages creating retail character. The Shakespeare's Head is a building of notable architectural merit, forming an exciting finishing point to the eastwards vista. Another such building is Kent House, built as a department store for Messrs Garrett & Co Ltd in the late 1800s. The character of the street changes with its western progression as modern

buildings dominate the skyline, including the former Odeon (Coronet) cinema and Granada cinema both of which opened in the late 1930s form an eye-catching part of the townscape.

The views of the river from Hare Street have been obscured by the Waterfront Leisure Centre, as has its function as a thoroughfare connecting the commercial heart of Woolwich with the ferry terminal. This has resulted in economic decline, and the lower end of Hare Street, near Woolwich High Street is occupied by smaller, independent businesses such as cafés and pawnbrokers. It is this part of the character area that bears testament to the area's former heritage as a retail centre; however the Victorian shops are undermined by an array of gaudy modern fascias. The north end of Hare Street has been extensively re-developed and as a result has a very different appearance to the southern end.



Powis Street

**Wellington Street, Polytechnic Street, Market Street, Calderwood Street, Thomas Street**

Extent: The area bounded by Market Street, Calderwood Street, Thomas Street and Wellington Street.

Character: The area to the south of Powis Street, bounded by Wellington Street, Market Street, Calderwood Street and Thomas Street is Woolwich's municipal educational quarter and is home to the Edwardian Town Hall. The unified, concentrated cluster of civic and technical educational buildings which span the Victorian, Edwardian and inter-war periods are a source of great pride.

Wellington Street dates from the early 19th Century when the military widened and straightened an existing thoroughfare linking the Common and Greens End. The street still preserved fragments of the Victorian and Edwardian streetscape, including the town hall which functions as a magisterial landmark. The south side of Calderwood Street (formally William Street) provides one of the richest and most architecturally diverse streetscapes within the town and is the location for

the former Town Hall, the Public Library, the Magistrates Court and the former Polytechnic Buildings. The variation in massing, styles and use of facing materials provide the street with vitality and distinction.

Market Street was created in 1808 and its name signifies a failed attempt by the Woolwich Board of Commissioners to relocate the market near the riverfront. Previous to the construction of the town hall on the corner of Wellington Street / Market Street the street was largely used for housing. A terrace of workers housing, listed Grade II, survives on the west side.

The Town Hall buildings together with the police station and Magistrates Court creates an Edwardian municipal quarter. Bathway is characterised by its late Victorian/ Edwardian municipal panorama with the exception of modern street furniture and 1930s or 1950s cream-coloured tiles.





Powis Street

## **Woolwich by 1870**

The plan reflects a solidified town centre with strong streets.

- John Wilson Street, Beresford Street and Powis Street all have a continuous, active frontage;
- The junction of John Wilson Street and Beresford Street is intimate;
- The Barracks have a strong presence on the current Love Lane site; and
- General Gordon Square is a developed block forming part of the built fabric.

## **Woolwich by 1914**

The plan reflects the addition of strong civic buildings, including Bathway and the Town Hall. The block structure has been partially eroded between Beresford Street and Powis Street. The Arsenal peaks in its size at this time.

## **Woolwich by 1958**

The plan reflects the continued architectural legacy of Woolwich. The addition of strong Art Deco buildings on Powis Street can clearly be seen, including the Bingo Hall and Co-op Building.



Woolwich in 1866



Woolwich by 1914

- Buildings Existing in 1866
- Buildings Built from 1866 to 1894
- 1894 to 1907
- 1907 to 1914

## Woolwich 1958

The plan reflects changes that increased the barriers between the town centre and the riverfront:

- The A206 is developed as a dual carriageway;
- The free ferry is established in Woolwich, bringing an increase of HGV lorries travelling through Woolwich Town Centre;
- The Woolwich leisure centre is built on the north side of the A206, blocking views of, and access to the river from Hare Street;
- Peggy Middleton House is constructed for Greenwich Council offices; and
- The redevelopment of the Arsenal site for new residential and cultural uses is started.

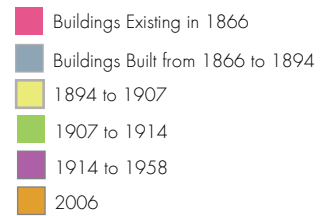
This review demonstrates a clear need for the Masterplan to be highly sensitive to the very rich historic context and to seek to ensure that new development compliments and reinforces the unique local character of Woolwich.



Woolwich by 1958



Woolwich in 2011



# 10 KEY FEATURES OF WOOLWICH

## Introduction

Woolwich Town Centre is characterised by a number of features which have a key influence on the masterplanning process. These may be summarised as follows.

- A fine setting upon the River Thames which has not been maximised in terms of access, leisure, setting or development.
- A complex but intrinsically characterful topography which offers fine views and landscape potential.
- A historic centre which is affected by a legacy of poorly designed housing areas and insensitive buildings and infrastructure.
- An increasingly well connected location.
- A good ferry service to North Woolwich and the Royal Docks which has resulted in large scale traffic infrastructure and transport congestion which in the past has severed the centre from the river.
- A number of available development sites which however has created a sense of blight.

## Topography

Woolwich Town Centre is dramatically impacted by the area's changes to the landform. The topographical drawing indicates a downward slope toward the north east to the River Thames.

There is a drop of almost ten metres between the Town Hall and the Woolwich Arsenal National Rail station. This slope creates a complex topography in key places such as General Gordon Square.

There is a change of approximately 25 metres (or eight storeys) between the south west end of Love Lane and the river's edge.



Topography in Woolwich

## Moving around Woolwich

The Woolwich Foot Tunnel links the town centre with North Woolwich. It is currently poorly linked with the town due to the location of the Waterfront Leisure Centre which acts as a barrier between the waterfront and the street.

There is scope to continue to improve the pedestrian environments within Woolwich. Woolwich is located on the strategic cycle network, with significant opportunities for improvement. The Woolwich Ferry is currently an important river crossing for tall vehicles which cannot use the Blackwall Tunnel, however it impacts upon the volume of traffic using the A206. The commuter ferry is a valuable service, however it currently operates a limited timetable.

The A206 severs the town centre from the River Thames and the Arsenal, creating a challenge for pedestrian movements. The town is reasonably well connected by rail, DLR and bus services and strategic connectivity will be enhanced by Crossrail. A major bus interchange is located at General Gordon Square. The area of Plumstead Road, in front of

the covered market also serves as a bus interchange.

Visitors by car predominantly park at the Sainsbury's car park. The proposed Gallions Reach Ferry and Bridge will potentially lessen the need for the Woolwich Ferry and therefore reduce traffic on the A206.

The recent works to General Gordon Square have helped to better integrate the station into the town centre which will benefit areas such as the Island Site and Powis Street. In addition the DLR which is in a very central location has helped to bring activity into the centre of the town. In the future Crossrail will obviously enhance accessibility and have an impact on movement patterns.

The current refurbishment of Co-Op building at the western end of Powis Street for hotel use and plans for a retail anchor in this part of town will act as a strong draw to this part of the centre which is a little remote but needs to become an important part of the movement circuit.





Woolwich Crossrail on site December 2011

## Experiencing Woolwich

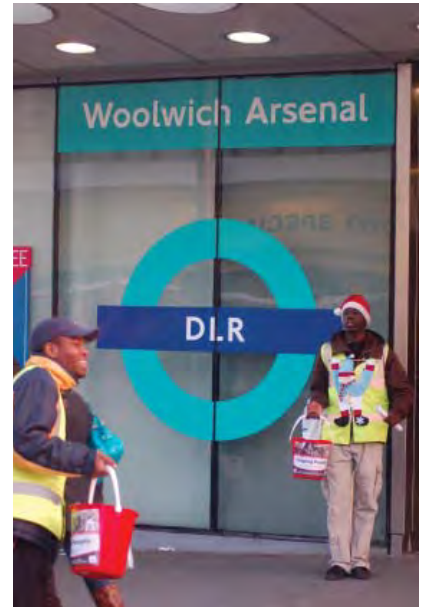
The A206 is a major barrier for north-south movement and separates the town centre from the Arsenal and the waterfront. Powis Street and Beresford Square are key pedestrian areas linking the railway and DLR stations with other modes of transport. There are a number of key transport nodes which are poorly connected, and there is a lack of signage and information points in the town. However, the Clipper service at Woolwich Arsenal is a welcome addition to the town.

General Gordon Square and Beresford Square were underused and have recently been vastly improved as part of the Woolwich public spaces project.

Key buildings which act as orientation points include the Town Hall, the Woolwich Equitable Building and the Bingo Hall on Powis Street.



New public realm in Woolwich



New DLR link and station



New public realm in Woolwich

## Designated heritage assets

Woolwich has many listed and locally listed buildings covering a diverse range of historic periods and styles. The plan on the facing page gives an indication of the town centre's heritage assets.

The Royal Arsenal naturally contains a large cluster of listed buildings, whilst the Island Site and the adjacent block to the south form another cluster; the most notable building being the Town Hall and clock tower.

Powis Street and Hare Street are two of the most significant streets, retaining predominantly fine grain historic fabric, despite containing only four locally listed and two listed buildings.



Woolwich built heritage conservation

## Relationship of buildings to streets and spaces

Building patterns in Woolwich have been heavily influenced by the impact of the railway and the A206, with street patterns generally varying on either side of these features.

The town centre, focused on Powis Street and Hare Street, is finer grain in character than other parts of the town. The area has a clearly defined urban pattern, comprised of robust urban blocks with continuous frontage and a number of very prominent landmark buildings. Buildings at the Royal Arsenal are of a coarser grain in places and larger in scale and recently infilled plots have reduced the fragmentation of the Arsenal. Peripheral parts of the town centre have a more fragmented urban form.

The area between Thomas Street and Polytechnic Street, known as the Island Site, has buildings internal to the block, creating the potential for a series of interesting courtyard spaces.

Along the waterfront, the building density

is at its lowest, with large expanses of space between buildings. The area to the east of New Road is typified by small scale buildings forming perimeter blocks.

The perimeters of John Wilson Street and the A206 have discontinuous street frontages.

The centre of Woolwich has a robust block structure. This breaks down towards the A206 and along the waterfront. Creation of stronger perimeter blocks at these edges would benefit development, access, visibility and arrival



Relationship of building to space and clearly defined urban area

# 11 DEVELOPMENT PIPELINE

## A place in transition

As noted previously Woolwich is undergoing significant change with extensive transformation either complete, underway or planned.

Current development projects are summarised here.

## General Gordon Square

Status: Public realm enhancement

General Gordon square has been comprehensively refurbished as part of the recently completed Woolwich Public spaces project. The redesigned square will become the setting for new development on Love Lane and will set the standard for future development on its south east side.





## Beresford Square

Status: Public realm enhancement

Beresford square was, with General Gordon Square, designed by Gustafson Porter as part of the first phase of enhancement of Woolwich's public spaces. The square is the urban heart of the town and the focal point of an improved pedestrian realm that is intended eventually to stretch from the waterfront to Woolwich Common.



## LB Greenwich Civic Centre / Library

Status: Recently completed development

Many of Woolwich's civic functions have been relocated to a new civic building opposite the old town hall. A library occupies the lower floors and council offices above. The scheme is a major part of the wider redevelopment of the Love Lane triangle.



### Love Lane

Status: Outline Planning Permission  
January 2007

Mixed use development to provide 12,200 square metres Tesco store and 960 new homes, as well as retail and community uses. This will be Tesco's largest development in Europe. The Tesco's store is due to completed in November 2012 followed by 259 residential units in 2013 as part of Phase 2 of a 4 phase development.



### Travelodge, Powis Street

Status: On site

Planning permission and listed building consent was granted in June 2011 for the demolition of extensions to Bakery Building, internal and external works in association with the proposed change of use to a 120 bed hotel and retail use, installation of mechanical plant and new shop fronts.



## Royal Arsenal/Warren Lane

Status: Development site with detailed site layouts

The Masterplan area comprises two separate areas of land; part of the walled Royal Arsenal site; and the Warren Lane site (also known as the 'Teardrop' site). The mixed use development comprising 3711 new residential dwellings as well as retail (Use Class A1, A3, A4), commercial 130 room hotel, community uses and a new Crossrail station.

This is a major development project to be phased over a twenty-year period and will bring significant regenerative benefits to Woolwich, Greenwich and wider Thames Gateway region.



## Crossrail

The Royal Borough has successfully lobbied Central Government for a Crossrail station in Woolwich which will provide improved transport links between the Royal Borough and Greater London. This will be provided within the Royal Arsenal and will be partly funded from monies secured via S106 Agreements.

Crossrail is the new high frequency, convenient and accessible railway for London and the south east. From 2017, Crossrail will travel from Maidenhead and Heathrow in the west to Shenfield and Abbey Wood in the east via new twin tunnels under central London. It will link Heathrow Airport, the West End, the City of London and Canary Wharf.

Work has begun in the Royal Greenwich with the initial preparations for the worksites at Plumstead and for the Woolwich Station box in the Royal Arsenal.



## Woolwich DLR Overstation Development

Status: Resolution to grant November 2010

The Woolwich DLR Overstation development is a mixed use development consisting of 51 residential units and a 96 bedroom hotel with 364 square metres of retail floor space. The proposal consists of two adjoining buildings with the 7 storey hotel fronting Woolwich New Road and the residential tower of sixteen storeys behind with access from Spray Street.



## Library

Status: Completed

The library occupies the lower floors of the new Civic Centre. The scheme is a major part of the wider redevelopment of the Love Lane triangle.





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