

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR MAYORAL DECISION – MD3369

Pontoon Dock Docklands Light Railway station upgrades

Executive summary:

Pontoon Dock Docklands Light Railway (DLR) station upgrades, and the need for the installation of six escalators, are driven by both the existing population and the uplift in demand expected from new development in the Royal Docks and Beckton Riverside Opportunity Area. Introducing escalators, to complement the two existing lifts, will create a more accessible and attractive hub.

The station upgrade is directly linked to the Silvertown Quays development by way of a particular planning condition. Under this condition, no more than 500 residential homes, or 50,000 square metres of non-residential floorspace, can be occupied until a contract has been let for the works to upgrade Pontoon Dock DLR station.

Transport for London (TfL) needs certainty around the availability of funding, to progress and enter into the documentation associated with the design and build contract for these works. To provide this certainty, the GLA proposes awarding TfL up to £21 million of grant funding from the Homes for Londoners Land Fund programme.

Under section 120 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999, and the guidelines on Mayoral decision-making in the GLA, the decision to award such grants must normally be taken by the Mayor.

Decision:

That the Mayor:

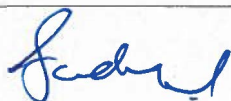
1. approves the GLA spending up to £21 million of capital grant funding, under section 120(1) of the GLA Act, from the Homes for Londoners Land Fund to TfL
2. delegates authority to the Executive Director, Housing and Land, to approve the terms and documentation associated with the grant set out in this Mayoral Decision.

Mayor of London

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision and take the decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for elected Members of the Authority.

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Date:

8/5/25

PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE MAYOR

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. MD2396 (27 November 2018) approved receipt of £486 million of government funding to help unlock and accelerate housing delivery in London, through land assembly, infrastructure investment and the provision of gap funding. This funding, and further funding approved under MD2207, are together referred to as the Homes for Londoners Land Fund. Awarding TfL up to £21 million of grant funding supports the Homes for Londoners Land Fund objectives by boosting housing supply in London. Investing in infrastructure will assist in increasing the pace of housing delivery of surrounding housing sites, a key objective of the fund. Without Pontoon Dock DLR station upgrades many of these homes cannot come forward. In accordance with the Treasury Green Book appraisal methodology and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government requirement of the Homes for Londoners Land Fund programme the project achieves a benefit cost ratio of at least 1.5.
- 1.2. MD2396 delegated authority to the Executive Director of Housing and Land to approve, via a director decision form, Land Fund investments. However, under the guidelines on Mayoral decision-making in the GLA, where capital grants are to be paid to TfL under section 120 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 (the GLA Act), the decision to award such grants must normally be taken by the Mayor.
- 1.3. TfL proposes to upgrade the Pontoon Dock DLR station, to create a more accessible and attractive hub that can:
 - support the surrounding communities
 - accommodate growth from recent and proposed developments in the Royal Docks and Beckton Riverside Opportunity Area
 - cope with surging passenger numbers.
- 1.4. The station upgrade will directly unlock homes at the Silvertown Quays development, which cannot be delivered without completing the station upgrade works.
- 1.5. Pontoon Dock DLR station was constructed in 2005, in the London Borough of Newham. The station has two elevated platforms well above street level (by approximately 13 metres, or 80 steps). Access to the platform is restricted to the two lifts, or the eight flights of stairs. Currently, 51 per cent of passengers using the station use the lifts to access the platforms. The station is currently used by around 2.8 million passengers each year. It already faces significant challenges around accessibility, as people use the lifts rather the stairs. This reduces availability of lifts for those that need them most, resulting in queuing and longer journey times during peak hours.
- 1.6. The proposed Pontoon Dock DLR station upgrades will improve connectivity from ground level; and increase the station's capacity for vertical movement. This will help the station to meet current and future passenger demand. Adding six escalators will improve connectivity between ground level, and the existing station mezzanine and platforms. The station's public realm works will be integrated with the London Borough of Newham's planned improvements to the Royal Docks corridor – comprising wide pavements; separate cycle lanes; crossings to North Woolwich Road; and more public planting.
- 1.7. The Pontoon Dock DLR station upgrade is directly linked to the Silvertown Quays development, by way of a planning condition on the outline planning permission (14/01605/OUT) granted in 2016. The outline planning permission is for 2,900 new homes, including 30 per cent affordable housing and 154,670 square metres of employment floorspace. If the Pontoon Dock DLR station upgrade works are not delivered, only 500 homes and 50,000 square metres of employment floorspace in the consented scheme at Silvertown Quays can be occupied. This means that most of the development

(including employment floorspace) will not progress until a contract has been let for the works to upgrade Pontoon Dock DLR station. Planning condition T8 limits the number of homes that can be occupied until a contract is in place to upgrade the station.

Condition T8: Pontoon Dock (vertical Passenger Circulation Upgrades (14/01605/OUT-DECISION_NOTICE-681994):

“No more than 500 residential units or 50,000 square metres (GEA) of non-residential floorspace of the Development shall be Occupied unless and until a contract has been let for the works to upgrade Pontoon Dock DLR Station.”

- 1.8. A new hybrid planning application (22/02855/OUT) was resubmitted in October 2023, with proposals for up to 7,176 homes and over 154,670 square metres of employment floorspace at the Silvertown Quays development. It is expected that any new planning decision for the revised Silvertown Quays development would also be subject to planning conditions limiting the number of homes that can be occupied unless the works upgrades to Pontoon Dock DLR station proceed. As such, until a contract has been let for the works to upgrade Pontoon Dock DLR station, the majority of housing and employment floorspace will not progress as the homes and employment premises cannot be occupied.
- 1.9. The current known and available funding sources to support the project is set out below:

Amount	Description
£1.5m	Past expenditure from the Royal Docks Enterprise Zone
£10m	TfL's sustainable housing and accessibility fund
£4.6m	Private developer planning contributions
£12m	Homes England's Brownfield Infrastructure Land fund
Total: £28.1m	

- 1.10. The high-end estimate to complete the station upgrade works is c£44.5 million. TfL needs certainty around the availability of funding, to progress and enter into the documentation associated with the design and build contract for these works. To provide this certainty, accommodate a contingency and cost overrun allowance, the GLA proposes awarding TfL up to £21 million of grant funding from the Homes for Londoners Land Fund programme. This will allow TfL to complete the procurement of a design and build contractor and enter into the contract to deliver the station upgrade works. Furthermore, a condition to the funding from the Homes England's Brownfield Infrastructure Land fund is that £3.6 million of the funding is spent by 31 March 2026. Awarding TfL up to £21 million of grant funding from the Homes for Londoners Land Fund programme ensures this condition can be satisfied and safeguards Homes England's investment in the project, allowing the necessary infrastructure works to commence within the required timeframe.
- 1.11. Given the time lag between when the station upgrade works must commence and the availability of other potential funding contributions which may become accessible to TfL such as business rates from the Royal Docks Enterprise Zone, the GLA will provide the forward funding required. Importantly, it will be a condition of the GLA grant funding that it will not be used to relieve any private developer of any of the costs for which it would otherwise have been responsible under a planning condition. Additionally, if any of the £21 million of grant funding is not used, this will be reallocated to other Land Fund projects.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1. The Royal Docks is one of London's largest regeneration and investment opportunities, at the centre of an expanding East London region; it is London's only Enterprise Zone. The Royal Docks Delivery Plan (2024-29) sets out a vision for unlocking the Royal Docks' full potential. The Plan has three strategic objectives:

- prosperity, growth and investment

- sustainability and wellbeing
 - culture and community.
- 2.2. The recently adopted Royal Docks and Beckton Riverside Opportunity Area Planning Framework identifies significant growth potential, forecasting up to 36,000 new homes and 55,000 new jobs.
- 2.3. The Silvertown Quays development is north of the station, and one of six waterside neighbourhoods in the Royal Docks and Beckton Riverside Opportunity area. At the Silvertown Quays development, 6,676 homes (the number of homes above planning condition T8) will be directly unlocked by the Pontoon Dock DLR station upgrade.
- 2.4. The £21 million of grant funding from the Homes for Londoners Land Fund will specifically be used to support the following homes at Silvertown Quays and UNEX-Thames Road Industrial Estate (these are currently outside of any other public sector partners programmes, including Homes England's Brownfield Infrastructure Land Fund):

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	Total
Housing start on site	326	835	0	250	0	1,411
Housing practical completion	0	106	0	326	835	1,267(*)

(*) remainder of 144 homes complete beyond March 2030 and the Land Fund programme period.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, functions of the GLA, exercisable by the Mayor, are subject to a public-sector equality duty and must have 'due regard' to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
 - foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 3.2. Protected characteristics under section 149 of the Equality Act are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and marriage or civil partnership status.
- 3.3. Completion of the Pontoon Dock DLR station upgrade works will also unlock Silvertown Quay's significant affordable homes provision; and contribute positively towards addressing the London Borough of Newham's housing need. The borough is ranked 12th most deprived, out of 317 local authority districts. The area's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) Report 2022 estimates that there are 19,154 households living in unsuitable housing, and unable to afford their own housing. Newham's Housing Register (February 2022) has over 28,000 applicants and is the largest in London, with an average waiting time of 13 years for suitable accommodation. According to the SHMA Report 2022, 4,691 households are: housed outside the borough in temporary accommodation; homeless; or concealed (living in shared accommodation). This highlights the importance of unlocking homes in the area.
- 3.4. Overall, the supply of new housing will benefit Londoners by providing much-needed housing when housebuilding is declining. The increased supply of new affordable homes will bring significant equalities benefits to Londoners in housing need. These Londoners are more likely to be negatively

impacted by poverty and higher housing costs. The following groups disproportionately make up those who are in housing need:

- households that contain children, including households where one member has the protected characteristic of pregnancy and maternity
- Deaf and disabled households
- Black and minority ethnic households
- older and younger Londoners.

3.5. The proposed Pontoon Dock DLR station upgrade means the station can also accommodate more users (especially at peak times), by means of an escalator to complement the two existing lifts. The proposed station improvements will enable people to move up to the platforms more quickly and easily. This will make the station more likely to be used, and free up the lifts for those who most need them (including those with a relevant protected characteristic). TfL has undertaken an Equalities Impact Assessment; and engagement with TfL's Independent Disability Advisory Group was undertaken in January 2025.

4. Other considerations

Key risks and issues

- 4.1. The £21 million of grant funding from the Homes for Londoners Land Fund programme provides the certainty TfL needs around availability of funding to progress and enter into the documentation associated with the design and build contract for the Pontoon Dock DLR station upgrade works. The funding package for the project (c£44.5 million) represents the highest estimate to complete these works. Nevertheless, a key risk relates to cost escalation.
- 4.2. Procurement of a design and build contractor is under way. To ensure cost certainty, TfL has opted for a two-stage tendering process (design then build). The TfL call-off contract involves a two-stage process. Stage one involves early contractor engagement covering pre-construction detailed design. Stage two covers the construction phase, with notice to proceed. A staged approach will help TfL to identify opportunities to refine costs before committing to the main construction works.
- 4.3. The project has a complex set of funding arrangements from several sources. In addition, it is a condition to the funding from the Homes England's Brownfield Infrastructure Land fund that £3.6 million of the funding is spent by 31 March 2026. As such, the TfL call-off contract enables the contractor to bring forward activities from stage two to optimise the spend profile. Furthermore, the Pontoon Dock DLR station upgrade works programme enables stage two to be instructed by 30 June 2026.

Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

- 4.4. Tackling London's housing crisis is a key priority for the Mayor. The Mayor's 2021 London Plan sets a target for 52,000 new homes to be built in the capital per year over the next 10 years. The London Plan also sets a strategic target for making half of these homes genuinely affordable. In addition, the London Housing Strategy outlines the Mayor's key priority to increase housing supply in London, particularly affordable housing, through his Affordable Homes Programme. The Pontoon Dock DLR station upgrade works contributes to new housing supply by helping to unlock the delivery of 6,676 homes at the Silvertown Quays development.
- 4.5. The Pontoon Dock Station upgrade will contribute to all three pillars of the Mayor's Transport strategy by directly supporting the following:

- New homes and jobs: the capacity upgrade will support the local economy, and enable more people to travel to and from the area for work.
- Improving public transport accessibility and customer experience at the station: passengers will experience higher levels of comfort and smoother journeys through the station.
- Alignment with wider healthy streets improvements: led by the London Borough of Newham along the adjacent North Woolwich Road. Increasing capacity will attract more passengers to use the station. This will encourage the mode shift away from cars, to help achieve the target of 80 per cent of journeys in London being made by walking, cycling or public transport by 2041.

Consultation

- 4.6. GLA officers have consulted with TfL and Homes England throughout the development of this proposal. It is not considered necessary or appropriate to consult with any other persons or bodies.

Conflicts of interest

- 4.7. There are no conflicts of interest to note from any of those involved in the drafting or clearance of this decision form.

Other considerations

- 4.8. TfL and the GLA Royal Docks team will make use of existing governance and reporting processes to input into and provide regular updates on progress of the station works and delivery of the housing. This engagement will dovetail with the requirements of the Homes England Brownfield Infrastructure Land fund.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. The decision is seeking approval for the GLA to provide funding of up to £21 million towards the upgrade of the Pontoon Dock DLR station, be delivered by TfL. The upgrade will be funded from several sources, as set out in paragraph 1.9, above. This will be funded from the MHCLG Land Fund.
- 5.2. The station upgrade is a planning condition on the outline planning permission for the Silvertown Quays development. Therefore, the station upgrade is required to complete the delivery of 6,676 homes at the Silvertown Quays development. It will meet current and future demand from new developments in the Royal Docks and Beckton Riverside Opportunity Area. The upgrade will include the installation of six escalators, which will make the station more accessible; improve access to platforms; and support growth in the area from new developments.
- 5.3. Risks and mitigation strategies are outlined in section 4, above. A key risk identified is cost escalation. To mitigate against this risk, the project has adopted the highest cost estimate for the project. Also, the procurement approach adopted by TfL will provide opportunities to refine costs at each stage of the procurement process.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1. The foregoing sections of this report indicate that the decision requested of the Mayor in relation to the £21 million capital grant falls within the statutory power of the GLA under section 120 of the GLA Act to “pay grants towards meeting capital expenditure incurred or to be incurred by a functional body for the purposes of, or in connection with, the discharge of the functions of that body”. In this case, it is proposed that up to £21 million of capital grant is to be used by TfL in relation to its transport functions.
- 6.2. Section 120(3) of the GLA Act states: “A grant under this section must not be made subject to any limitation in respect of the capital expenditure which it may be applied towards meeting.”

- 6.3. If the Mayor is minded to approve the recommendations in respect of which a decision is sought, officers must ensure that the GLA enters into suitable arrangements with TfL to document the availability of the grant funding as a contribution towards TfL's capital costs in the related discharge of its functions.
- 6.4. Section 38 of the GLA Act provides that any function exercisable on behalf of the GLA by the Mayor shall also be exercisable by, amongst others, any member of staff of the GLA, if or to the extent that the Mayor authorises and subject to any conditions imposed by the Mayor. The Mayor may make the delegations proposed in this paper.
- 6.5. In taking the decisions requested of him, the Mayor must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. Reference should be made to section 3 above in this respect.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

- 7.1. The table below sets out the next steps and timescales.

Activity	Timeline
Design and build contractor procurement completed	March 2025
Commencement of main Pontoon Dock DLR station upgrade works	July 2026
Practical completion of main Pontoon Dock DLR station upgrade works	December 2028
First housing starts on sites	March 2026
Last housing practical completions	March 2030

Appendices and supporting papers:

None.

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will be published either within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 – Deferral

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? YES

If YES, for what reason: Publication should be deferred until design and build contract is entered into. This is because it contains commercially sensitive information, the disclosure of which might prejudice the commercial and business interest of GLA and/or third parties.

Until what date: April 2026.

Part 2 – Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under the FoIA should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form – NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to confirm the following (✓)

Drafting officer:

Amy Cook has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Sponsoring Director:

Tim Steer has reviewed the request and is satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

✓

Mayoral Adviser:

Tom Copley has been consulted about the proposal and agrees the recommendations.

✓

Advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal.

✓

Mayoral Delivery Board

This decision was agreed by the Mayoral Delivery Board on 6 May 2025.

✓

CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature:

Fay Hammond

Date:

06/05/2025

CHIEF OF STAFF:

I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Mayor.

Signature:

D. Bellamy

Date:

06/05/2025