

# LONDON BOROUGH OF WALTHAM FOREST

Consultation response to  
A City for All Londoners

THE CREATIVE CHOICE  
WALTHAM FOREST | EAST LONDON.



## INTRODUCTION

London Borough of Waltham Forest epitomises the vision for a City for all Londoners and we're well on our way to delivering the Mayor's priorities. Waltham Forest is a borough of opportunities, where growth, entrepreneurial spirit and culture play an important role. We share the Mayor of London's vision of fair growth, and are working to ensure no one is left behind. We particularly support the commitment to balanced growth, through mixed developments of homes and employment, exemplified through the Lea Valley Eastside vision and master-plan. We hope the Mayor will work with us to support the delivery of our designated Housing Zone, the densification of our SIL areas and help provide the transport needed to unlock this growth.

In Waltham Forest we passionately believe that, alongside sports facilities and green space, arts and culture are integral to a quality of life for residents. We are continually investing in our arts and culture programme, including the award-winning William Morris Gallery and our events programme. Our workspace initiatives, such as Blackhorse Workshops and Central Parade ensure we are the creative choice for business as well as residents. We have the track record, the community commitment and ambition for the future to become London's first Borough of Culture 2019.

A City for All Londoners outlines the vision for Sadiq Khan's term in office. This document outlines how Waltham Forest is already delivering on many of the Mayor's ambitions: from intensifying employment land to investing in cycling infrastructure; from build to rent sites to our world class sports facilities. We are pleased to outline the synergies in our work, but have also outlined our key asks to ensure we can continue to deliver a city for all Londoners.



**Chris Robbins**

Leader of the  
Council



**Cllr Clare Coghill**

Cabinet Lead –  
Economic Growth  
and High Streets



## HOUSING

Rising rents and house prices mean that affordability is a particular problem in Waltham Forest, but we are committed to supplying affordable housing. From 2012 to 2016, 50.4% of homes completed were affordable. Our target is to build 12,000 new homes in the borough by 2020, including 2000 Council homes.

Our priority is to work closely with TfL and the GLA to bring forward their sites in Blackhorse Lane: the TfL car park on Forest Road and the former Webbs Site on Sutherland Road. These sites will deliver new homes at 50% affordable housing with a mix of workspace and community uses. As other sites come forward in this key growth area it is vital that the GLA is proactive in ensuring both sites are developed.

The challenges with delivering affordable housing continue to be with viability. It is noted that the Mayor intends to introduce a more consistent, London-wide approach to viability - we strongly support this.

Waltham Forest welcomes the establishment of the London Living Rent, but would hope to see it extended beyond the build-to-rent product. Waltham Forest has recently awarded planning permission to Legal and General for a 440 unit build to rent site in Blackhorse Lane. We support this product as providing high quality rented accommodation.

The borough has around 32,000 privately rented properties and we have a borough-wide licensing scheme enabling us to crackdown on rogue landlords. We've issued 20,000 licenses and prosecuted 40 landlords. We would be happy to share licensing good practice as part of the Mayor's plan to support the introduction of similar schemes across London.

There is a growing homelessness problem in Waltham Forest. The Council supports the introduction of the No Nights Sleeping Rough Taskforce and looks forward to it being rolled out across London. Despite success in homelessness prevention (3.1 per 1000 households compared to the London rate of 8.4), in 2015/16 the borough accepted 1028 households as homeless and 54% of these were evicted from assured shorthold tenancies. Last year, we spent £28m (gross) on temporary accommodation, and are therefore keen to continue developing the pan-London approach to procuring temporary accommodation.

### Waltham Forest offer

- ✓ Building affordable housing
- ✓ Supporting Mayor's plans for London-wide approach to viability
- ✓ Supporting pan-London procurement of temporary accommodation
- ✓ Delivering PRS initiatives: licensing and build to rent site

### Key asks

- Bring forward GLA sites in Blackhorse Lane area





## ECONOMY

Between 2009 and 2014 Waltham Forest saw the fastest employment growth in London, with digital and creative industries representing the most significant growth, followed by construction and professional and urban services. We are keen to work with the Mayor to protect and enhance our employment areas, to widen the business base and support the London economy. Businesses will locate and grow in Lea Valley Eastside, alongside residential and leisure facilities. We are providing a vibrant location for inner London businesses seeking a more affordable location and expanding employment opportunities in outer London will support the Mayor's ambitions for reverse commuting.

The Creative Enterprise Zone (CEZ) strategy is implementing Waltham Forest's vision for Blackhorse Lane including part of our housing zone, by supporting artists and the wider creative industries. Building on our London Regeneration Fund project, we are exploring other assets, publicly and privately owned, which can support creatives to start-up and scale-up in the CEZ.

The importance the Mayor has placed on vibrant high streets and small scale housing developments around transport hubs is encouraging. We are committed to investing in our town centres, from Walthamstow to Chingford Mount to award-winning Wood Street. Wood Street's Urbanism Award is an exemplar of our approach to town centres – investing in physical fabric, supporting independent shops and community empowerment. This investment keeps wealth in the borough and gives residents access to employment and shopping, as well as our cultural and leisure offer. The night tube has unlocked economic opportunities in our town centres, including through night markets and the potential for a new 1000 seat comedy venue at the former EMD in Walthamstow. The lack of broadband in Waltham Forest's town centres and commercial areas continues to be a barrier to economic growth. A further round of the broadband voucher scheme would be welcome.

Lastly, we welcome the Mayor's focus on fair growth. In Waltham Forest, we are developing talent by ensuring our residents' skills match the needs of our growth sectors such as creative and digital industries, to ensure that everyone is able to benefit from new jobs being created in the borough. We also share the Mayor's understanding of the importance of ESOL classes, and we have set up an ESOL conversations club which trains volunteers then matches them with people wanting to improve their language skills.

### **Waltham Forest offer**

- ✓ Delivering mixed developments of housing and employment
- ✓ Vibrant town centres
- ✓ Focus on fair growth through ESOL and developing creative and digital skills

### **Key asks**

- A further round of broadband connection vouchers



## ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT AND PUBLIC SPACE

Waltham Forest has the 13<sup>th</sup> highest level of mortality attributed to long-term exposure to PM2.5 in London, and 7.3% of mortality is attributable to air quality. The Council therefore fully supports the Mayor's measures to tackle air quality and is implementing its own initiatives. Following a successful bid to TfL, the Council is currently implementing the 'Enjoy Waltham Forest' programme: radically improving the borough's cycling infrastructure and supporting a transport modal shift. This aligns with the Healthy Streets initiative, by improving road conditions for pedestrians and cyclists.

The Council is leading delivery of the £8.7m, 211 hectare Walthamstow Wetlands; a major environmental resource for London as the largest fishery in the city and a water supply to millions. Opening in 2017, it will provide free access to wildlife, cycling and walking. The GLA has supported this project, and we want to build on this to ensure London's Nature Reserve is promoted as a free to access resource for all Londoners.

We believe that London boroughs should play a greater role in bus route planning, particularly in our key growth areas. We are already working with TfL to bring forward major capacity increases on the Central and Victoria Lines. This includes an upgrading of Leyton Underground station with a larger concourse and gateline, and wider staircases. An additional entrance to Walthamstow Central is under consideration and the Council is working closely with TfL to determine how this can be aligned with the delivery of the Mayor's development opportunities for town centres. Step-free access to our underground stations is essential to ensure travel is accessible for our disabled residents. The schemes proposed for Leyton and Walthamstow station will provide this access, but we need TfL and GLA support to deliver it.

The Leyton A12 is a significant driver of London air pollution and we would like TfL to consider this road for arterial decking. TfL's road decking study suggests this could provide up to 2000 homes at a cost of £67m, and would facilitate station improvements at Leyton Underground station.

Waltham Forest supports the Mayor's aspirations for suburban commuter services and welcomes plans for frequency and capacity improvements. Waltham Forest Council played a leading role in the reopening of Lea Bridge station and we are carrying out feasibility work on a possible new Ruckholt Road station to serve Lea Valley Eastside.

### Waltham Forest offer

- ✓ Tackling air quality through cycling infrastructure and green space
- ✓ Supporting and encouraging transport modal shift
- ✓ Delivering 211 hectares of urban wetland, supporting green space and biodiversity

### Key asks

- Support delivery of step-free access at Walthamstow and Leyton stations
- Greater Council involvement in bus route planning
- Consider decking of Leyton A12



## ACCOMMODATING GROWTH

Our objective is to deliver 12,000 new homes in our borough by 2020, with an ambition that 6,000 of these will be affordable. It is not just about numbers: we want to create communities, by ensuring our focus on delivering housing is coupled with the need to intensify employment land. Our master-plan for Lea Valley Eastside will create circa 4,500 new homes as well as 300,000m<sup>2</sup> of commercial space, generating thousands of jobs.

Balancing housing growth with workspace will be a key challenge for the borough. We welcome the Mayor's growth locations and consider ourselves a viable strategic location for business. As a borough with excellent transport links, we are well situated to create places of work that encourage local employment and reduce impact on transport hubs by supporting reverse commuting. Blackhorse Lane and the Lea Valley Eastside will continue to be invested in as key locations for business growth in London, from small creative industries through to larger light industrial, food and urban service industries.

The Council supports the Mayor's aspiration for well-designed higher-density development. While this does not necessarily mean high rise, we are mindful of the many small brownfield sites for redevelopment in Waltham Forest, where the only way to accommodate higher numbers is to build upwards. The recently established Waltham Forest Design Advice Panel provides independent expertise through CABE on key proposals to ensure we achieve high quality development in appropriate locations.

In general, the Council does not support inappropriate developments on the green belt or MOL, but the challenge is to make use of vacant or underused brownfield land. While noting the Mayor's aspirations to protect these areas, we believe opportunities for limited releases and some rationalisation of existing uses, where justified, will be key to enabling our wider vision for Lea Valley Eastside to be delivered.

It is noted that the Mayor intends to produce a cultural infrastructure plan for London and intends to introduce policies to protect creative workshops, heritage and night time economy uses. The Council welcomes this initiative, recognising the importance of culture in supporting good growth. Our assets are highly valued and our strategic interventions to bring more venues to fill gaps in our offer, such as revitalising the former EMD cinema in Walthamstow into a 1000 seat performance space, is part of our strategy for culture and the night-time economy.

### Waltham Forest offer

- ✓ Supporting plans for higher density development
- ✓ Supporting cultural infrastructure plan
- ✓ Key growth locations

### Key asks

- Limited release and rationalisation of green belt and metropolitan open land





## A CITY FOR ALL LONDONERS

London Borough of Waltham Forest is committed to the development of both sports facilities and cultural provision as a means to fostering integration and cohesion. Walthamstow Garden Party is just one of our free annual festivals. Since its inception in 2014, almost 100,000 local people have enjoyed the festival's world-class music, theatre, dance, film, spoken word, arts and crafts, family activity and food delivered in partnership with local organisations.

The borough's distinctive cultural offer is demonstrated through our successful first round bid to the Great Place Fund, and our ambition to become the Mayor's Borough of Culture. William Morris Gallery and Vestry House Museum set us apart from other London Boroughs, and the reinvention of both the Standard Music venue at Blackhorse Lane and the 1000 seat EMD in Walthamstow provide a unique outer-London offer.

The investment in the £26m Waltham Forest Feel Good Centre, underwrites our support for health improvements and social cohesion. Our ambition is to be the premier sporting borough for competing, participating and spectating. This is achievable with our beautiful Lloyd Park, the £8.7m investment in 114 hectare Walthamstow Wetlands and excellent facilities such as Ridgeway Park tennis hub.

Mirroring the Mayor's views, Waltham Forest Council recognises the importance of transport in improving accessibility and connecting our residents, demonstrated through our extensive work to reopen Lea Bridge Station and our ambition to ensure our stations have step-free access.

The Council is currently refreshing its approach to the voluntary sector, and attempting to increase volunteering rates. The borough has very low rates of volunteering and is keen to work with the Mayor to improve this important element of social cohesion.

Waltham Forest is seen as a leader within the sector for its work on Prevent and anti-radicalisation, but we need further support to ensure that these efforts are working across borough boundaries. Similarly, our innovative programme to tackle and prevent gangs has created a safer and more united community.

### **Waltham Forest offer**

- ✓ Nurturing cohesion through culture and sport investment
- ✓ Supporting Mayor's priority for inclusive transport
- ✓ Community safety through gangs programme and Prevent

### **Key asks**

- Support to develop our volunteering rates



## CONCLUSION

London Borough of Waltham Forest supports the Mayoral agenda, as documented in a City for All Londoners. The Council is already delivering on a number of key priority areas. This can be demonstrated through the achievements of the **Enjoy Waltham Forest** programme in encouraging modal shift from cars to cycling and walking and **Walthamstow Wetlands** in providing green open space. The Mayor's ambition to deliver quality, affordable homes and sustainable communities is exemplified in our approach to **Lea Valley Eastside** and our **build-to-rent** site. Our commitment to developing a local economy of the creative industries and urban services shows the vital role that Waltham Forest will continue to play in the London economy. And lastly, Waltham Forest Council's investment in culture and sport as a means of fostering social cohesion, will contribute to the inclusive city Sadiq Khan aims to achieve.

### Key asks

Waltham Forest is keen to continue protecting Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land, but would support a more nuanced approach which releases land for development in certain circumstances. We think there is value in pursuing a **London-wide approach to viability for new developments**, and would appreciate GLA taking a coordination role. Similarly, we are supportive of the idea of developing a **pan-London approach to procuring temporary accommodation**. We urge TfL to bring forward the **car park site in Blackhorse Lane** and the GLA to make progress in securing a development partner for Webbs and adjacent sites in **Sutherland Road**. We would like to see a more active role for local authorities in **bus route planning**, and look forward working with TfL to deliver **step-free access** at Walthamstow and Leyton. Lastly, we would welcome any support from the Mayor in raising **volunteering rates** in the borough.

