

Written Statement for the London Plan Examination in Public – Matter 86

Transport for London (1170) March 2019

M86. a) Does the Plan contain justified and effective policies to promote and encourage the use of the River Thames and other waterways for the provision of passenger transport services and freight?

b.) Are all of the requirements of policies S114 to S117 necessary to address the strategic priorities of London, or do they extend to detailed matters that would be more appropriately dealt with through local plans or neighbourhood plans?

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Yes, policies S114 to S117 and T7, taken together, should be effective in promoting use of London's waterways for passengers and freight. The rivers and canals network in London provide opportunities to promote and encourage a mode shift from road to water based passenger transport and freight. These modes—with their supporting infrastructure, namely passenger piers, boatyards, and Safeguarded Wharves for freight—are safer, often cleaner and help minimise impact on the road network and street environment. River services play an important role in delivering aims set out in the Mayor's Transport Strategy (MTS) and draft London Plan, and in supporting a shift towards more sustainable travel modes.

2. ROLE OF PASSENGER SERVICES

2.1 Passenger services on London's waterways, principally the River Thames, play an important role in London's strategic wider transport network. In 2018 there were 9.8 million passengers carried on the city's river services and there is potential for further growth in the number of people using river services. The Port of London Authority (PLA) have set the ambitious aim of achieving 20 million annual trips on the river by 2035, which is a target supported by both the MTS and London Plan. To achieve this it is important to ensure that river services are well connected and integrated into the wider transport network. Work has been undertaken to improve these connections in recent years, including raising the profile of a number of key central London piers and highlighting connections, for example, between piers and London Underground stations to improve awareness of the potential to interchange and access river services.

2.2 River services will particularly play a role in supporting London's growth in east London, capitalising on opportunities to integrate river services into new riverside developments. Riparian east London contains seven London Plan designated Opportunity Areas. Significant residential growth will take place along the Thames in east London with an estimated potential for 350,000 new homes and 370,000 new jobs over the next 25 years. River services have the potential to become an important public transport mode in serving developments such as Barking Riverside, supporting a shift away from car travel. Proposed new piers to accommodate passenger services in east and south east London include New Providence Wharf, Royal Wharf, Barking Riverside, Thamesmead and Bexley Riverside.

2.3 Capitalising on the potential for London's waterways to increase passenger transport is supported by both the MTS and draft Plan. Policy 17 in the MTS seeks to unlock the full potential of the Thames to integrate river services with the public transport system.¹ Policies S114 to S117 in the draft Plan promote, support and encourage the growth of passenger transport on London's waterways, including canals. Increasing passenger travel on the waterways relies upon protecting and improving existing piers, as well as the development of new passenger pier terminals. To enable this, policy S114 encourages development plans to support the benefits of water based passenger transport, and Policy S115 sets out a clear approach to unlock the growth of passenger transport services on London's waterways, protecting key infrastructure such as passenger piers and boatyards.

3. IMPORTANCE OF WATER SERVICES AND FREIGHT IN LONDON

3.1 The Thames is the most used inland waterway for freight movement in the UK, with the vast majority moving to or from terminals within London. The PLA estimates that water freight already represents the equivalent of 265,000 HGV movements each year, demonstrating that waterways present an important source of freight capacity in London. Furthermore, a recent Safeguarded Wharves review conducted by the GLA identified that demand is expected to add two million tonnes to current levels on the Thames by 2041.² The PLA estimates that achieving four million tonnes a year of intra-wharf freight will carry an estimated 400,000 HGV trips' worth of material. The review also sets out to reactivate at least five safeguarded wharf facilities and bring them back into operation by 2025. Work to investigate the potential and opportunities from this is currently under way.

3.2 In order to capitalise on opportunities to shift freight from road to water based transport, we commissioned a study that identified several barriers that need to be addressed to support more widespread use of water.³ These included insufficient wharf availability, lack of awareness, unenforced Construction Logistic Plans, perceived high costs and operational issues such as cargo 'double handling'. To address these barriers and unlock the potential for a mode shift, a new working group of the Thames and Waterways Forum will be established to focus specifically on water freight, which is supported by Policies S114 and S115 in the draft London Plan. The group will support the implementation of the MTS and draft Plan by bringing together key stakeholders involved in the use or management of London's waterways, maximising the benefits of water freight and securing the reactivation of currently unavailable safeguarded wharves by:

- Promoting the use of water freight through the Water Freight Toolkit and expand it to include railheads and Construction Consolidation Centres. This will become a comprehensive Freight Infrastructure in London Toolkit (FIILT)
- Supporting the PLA reactivation of five wharves

¹ Mayor of London, Mayor's Transport Strategy, March 2018, Page 199

² Ocean Shipping Consultants (2016) Forecasting London's Freight Demand and Wharf Capacity on the Thames 2015-2041

³ Steer, Davies, Gleeve (2017) Investigating the barriers to transporting bulk construction materials and waste by river and rail

- Working with the boroughs, the PLA and the Canal River Trust to facilitate using London's waterways in the construction and operational phases of new developments
- Identifying and developing opportunities to increase 'light freight', last-mile deliveries and cargoes by water

3.3 Policies S114 to S117 address the strategic, commercial and environmental value that the Thames and waterways provide for water freight. The movement of water freight relies upon the strategic location of wharves and supporting infrastructure, and protection of their ongoing use to ensure viability. Policy S115 sets out a clear approach that will enable the growth of freight movement on the Thames and waterways and specifically addresses the use and development of Safeguarded Wharves, which may only be used for waterborne freight handling use. This is a pan-London Policy that ensures the movement of freight by waterway remains viable throughout the Thames and waterways network. Furthermore, Policy T7 I states that development proposals must consider the use of water for the transportation of material. This is further supported by section 10.7.4 which sets out that TfL freight tools should be used when delivering a site's freight strategy where water freight facilities are available.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1. The policies set out in the MTS and draft Plan are effective and justified in their support for the use of the River Thames and other waterways for passenger transport services and freight. They enable waterways to play a greater role in transporting people and freight and ensure that water is considered as a source of transport capacity as the city develops.