

AINA CASE STUDY

PLACE MAKING AND SHAPING

Lower Lea Valley Waterspace Strategy



Illustration showing future animated waterspace at Three Mills in the Lower Lea Valley

Planning for the Olympic legacy

In 2010 consultants were commissioned by British Waterways to prepare a Waterspace Strategy and associated Delivery Plan for the Lower Lea Valley, aimed at complementing and adding value to the proposed regeneration plans for the area. Underpinning the strategy was the need to realise the full value of the waterways - recognising their strategic role in bringing forward development proposals whilst enhancing the value of historic assets, cultural heritage and fostering the green economy.

The strategy will assist in prioritising projects to, particularly in relation to the Olympics legacy, and will help make the business case required to support investment in waterspace. The key objectives of the study were to:

- Place the waterways in the context of the Lower Lea Valley
- Create a strong sense of place for the waterways
- Ensure that the 'added value' of waterspace was fully explored
- Respect the function of the waterways for flood storage and attenuation
- Promote the waterways of East London as important wildlife corridors
- Encourage and facilitate traditional and modern boating uses

In addition, the work aimed to show how the use and appearance of different areas of waterspace could affect both built form and the public realm. The early stages of the study involved a detailed review of planning proposals, supplemented by site visits, to identify key land use, waterscape character, and landscape and ecological quality. Technical constraints and opportunities were also identified, enabling development of a framework based on four key themes:

- Placemaking
- Open space
- Green economy
- Natural and cultural heritage

Proposals for a 'Water City' were presented in a series of plans which reflected differing character areas. In delivering the vision, it was stressed that investment should not focus simply on delivering high quality waterfront development, but also the facilitation and creation of new water-based communities with supporting services and facilities.

Key proposals included the creation of 'honeypot' sites to attract towpath users, access improvements, educational and arts schemes and activities such as canoeing, angling and even punting.