

**The Policy Context for Cultural Services: An Update to the Cultural Strategy for
Tower Hamlets**

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1 BACKGROUND

Since the adoption of the Cultural Strategy in 2003, the policy context for the delivery of cultural services has changed substantially, not least with London winning the bidding process to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Local Authorities are no longer required to produce Cultural Strategies. However, under the Key Lines of Enquiries (KLOE) assessment framework, they are still expected to deliver their services within a local strategic policy framework.

This update paper on the policy context within which Cultural Services operate is part of a suite of documents, which will form the *Strategic Policy Framework for Culture in Tower Hamlets*. The update paper should be read in conjunction with the original Cultural Strategy (2003), and in particular Chapter 2: Setting the Scene.

The additional documents within the *Framework* will be:

1. Guide to the Strategic Policy Framework for Culture in Tower Hamlets (2007)
2. Cultural Strategy (2003)
3. Interim Strategic Action Plan for Culture (2007)
4. Open Space Strategy (2006)
5. Idea Stores Strategy (last updated 2002)
6. Sport & Physical Activity Strategy: Seizing the Moment (1999)
7. Playing Pitch Strategy (to be developed)
8. Arts and Events Strategy (to be developed)
9. Public Art Policy (to be developed)
10. Tower Hamlets 2012 Olympic & Paralympic Strategy and Programme (2006)

2 NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 THE WIDER NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

Before moving on to define the policy context for cultural provision in Tower Hamlets, it is important to consider briefly the national and regional context which shapes the environment in which that provision now operates. That wider context could in itself be the subject of a lengthy study, but is limited here to drawing attention to a few key trends and influences.

At the broadest level the increasing pace of social change, characterised by different patterns of work and of living, the rapid turnover in many communities and the increased diversity in their make-up, sets a challenging agenda. Rapid advances in communication and technology, perhaps most significantly the impact of the internet bringing with it increasing globalisation, create not only opportunities but also increase expectations, including the demand for greater sophistication. Inevitably whilst many benefit, there are others who are increasingly marginalized, and as the financial pressure upon services providing health, social care and welfare becomes critical, there is a growing need to find new ways to create cohesive and inclusive

communities.

Amidst this increasing complexity the range of government agendas and initiatives also becomes almost broader. Important strands are represented by:

Every Child Matters, a radical programme of reform of children's services taking shape under the **Children Act 2004**.

Youth Matters, the Green Paper on young people published in 2005 and **Next Steps** the recent government response to the consultation on it.

Independence, Well-being and Choice, a vision for the future social care of adults.

Choosing Health the Government's Public Health White Paper which sets out priorities for achieving better health

Sustainable Communities – People, Places and Prosperity, a five-year strategy setting out the Government's vision for sustainable communities, with a focus on vibrant local leadership, resident engagement and participation, and improved service delivery and performance. This strategy includes a programme of action that aims to focus the attention and co-ordinate the efforts of all levels of Government and stakeholders in bringing about development that meets the economic, social and environmental needs of future generations as well as succeeding now.

In the public sector there is ever increasing emphasis on efficiency led by the **Gershon Review**, which identified scope for efficiency savings of 7.5% in public sector organisations by 2008, releasing additional resources for front-line services.

Underpinning central and local government planning are the **National and Local Government Shared Priorities**¹, agreed in 2002 by the Government and the Local Government Association. These seven priorities, which form the basis for the Government's **Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)** by which the performance of every local council is now monitored, are reflected in the adoption by local authorities of local priorities aligned with national priorities. Each area also now has in place a **Community Plan**, produced under the leadership of a **Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)**, which includes representatives of local councils, public bodies such as health and the police, community representatives and other stakeholders.

A further recent strand in local community planning is the introduction of **Local Area Agreements (LAA's)**, which set out the priorities for a local area agreed between central government and a local area (the local authority and Local Strategic Partnership) and other key partners at the local level. The intention is that they will simplify some central funding, help join up public services more effectively and allow greater flexibility for local solutions to local circumstances.

Since 2003 there has been increasing emphasis not just on community planning, but also on planning **sustainable communities**. The Government defines sustainable communities as "places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all." (ODPM).

¹ National and Local Government Shared Priorities. ODPM and LGA. 2002

Most recently, in October 2006, the Communities and Local Government Department (CLG) has published Strong and **Prosperous Communities - The Local Government White Paper**². Key proposals in the white paper are:

- *A new performance framework* that will cut the number of national performance indicators to 200, and targets to around 50 and replace Comprehensive Performance Assessment with new assessment arrangements with a reduced and risk-based role for inspection.
- *An enhanced role for councils as strategic leaders and place-shapers* through stronger Local Strategic Partnerships and next-generation Local Area Agreements with wider scope and importance, and a duty to cooperate between councils and local partners.
- *Stronger cities, strategic regions*, reforming Passenger Transport Authorities and the development of LAA's into sub-regional Multi-Area Agreements.
- *Stronger political leadership* by requiring all councils to opt for a directly-elected mayor, directly-elected executive or indirectly-elected leader for a four-year term.
- *A strengthened role for front-line councillors* including powers to respond to community calls for action on local issues and greater freedom to speak up on planning and licensing issues affecting their wards.
- *A wider and stronger role for scrutiny* including the power to require evidence from all local service providers and a duty on them to have regard to scrutiny recommendations.
- *Devolution* of powers, including removing the requirement for Secretary of State's consent to bye-laws and the creation of parish councils.
- *Community cohesion* – councils encouraged to put integration and cohesion at the heart of community strategies and LAA's.

It will immediately be seen that many of these themes could have a significant impact on the role and focus of local authorities, and in turn directly on the cultural agenda. The proposals for a new performance framework will clearly affect all service blocks. The proposal for 'An enhanced role for councils as strategic leaders and place-shapers through stronger Local Strategic Partnerships and next-generation Local Area Agreements', and the development of LAA's into sub-regional Multi-Area Agreements, will have a profound effect. However this heightened community leadership role, and the expectation that councils will put integration and cohesion at the heart of community strategies and LAA's, offers a significant opportunity to cultural services to come to the fore and play a leading role.

The increased emphasis in the Local Government White Paper on the 'localisation' agenda underlines the need for local authorities to have clear over-arching policy frameworks that are at the same time capable of being interpreted and delivered locally.

² 'Strong and Prosperous Communities - The Local Government White Paper'. DCLG. 26 October 2006

2.2 THE NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT FOR ALL CULTURAL SERVICES

The wider context outlined in the previous section sets a scene in which ‘culture’ can step in and take centre stage. Whilst each of the activities that makes up cultural provision has an intrinsic value in itself – art, music, sports, play, parks, heritage and so on, are to be enjoyed for themselves – there is increasing recognition that culture can and does have an impact on wider agendas and priorities in a way that perhaps no other area of activity can.

Since the Local Government Act 2002 local authorities are no longer required to produce free-standing Local Cultural Strategies, but should subsume these within Community Plans. There is an increasing recognition of the contribution that cultural and leisure activities make to the Government/Local Government Shared Priorities referred to in the previous section.

A key factor in this was the decision of the Audit Commission to create a **Culture Block in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)** from 2005, bringing together a range of indicators that had previously been dispersed. One driver for this has been the increasing focus on the community leadership role of councils, and that cultural provision is one area where that role can clearly be demonstrated.³ Although the Culture Block was initially dominated by library indicators, where measurement had been strong for some time, indicators for recreation and active lifestyles have gained increased prominence. The Arts Council is now working very actively to develop a performance framework for the arts.

The **Towards an Excellent Service (TAES)** framework⁴, originally directed towards sport and recreation services, is increasingly being used for the self-assessment of a whole range of cultural services, as has been done in Tower Hamlets during 2006.

Understanding of the contribution that culture can make to the crosscutting agenda has also moved on considerably. Again evidence for this can be found in the work of the Audit Commission where the **Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE)** for service inspections of Culture, place emphasis on such themes as: Healthier Communities; Safer and stronger Communities; Economic vitality; Learning; Quality of life for local people.

Although in most areas cultural services teams have until now struggled to gain recognition for culture and leisure in the Local Area Agreement (LAA), the increasing emphasis on the LAA, for example in the Local Government White Paper⁵, means that culture will increasingly come to the fore.

A Passion for Excellence: An Emerging Self-Improvement Strategy for Cultural Services, a consultation paper published earlier in 2006 by the DCMS and Improvement & Development Agency (IDeA) in conjunction with all the NDPBs⁶ for the sector, takes as its main driver the fact that “The cultural sector in local government has a valuable contribution to make to improving public services and building and

³ “An increasing focus on the community leadership role of councils within CPA from 2005 helps to recognise that culture services and provision are in some important respects different from those of housing and environment. A significant section of activity is not prescribed by a statutory duty. Councils nevertheless have a role in creating the conditions for the wider cultural opportunities available to the local community, often in partnership with other agencies.” Service Assessment Framework Technical Guide for CPA. Audit Commission. 2005

⁴ ‘Towards an Excellent Service: A performance Framework for Sport and Recreation Services. Sport England. 2004

⁵ For example, the development of LAAs into sub-regional Multi-Area Agreements. ‘Strong and prosperous communities. Local government white paper’. DCLG. 2006

⁶ Non Departmental Public Bodies, i.e. Arts Council, Sport England, MLA, English Heritage

maintaining sustainable communities”⁷, and then moves on to argue that the sector must therefore address its performance, and its ability to measure that contribution.

Regional Cultural Commentaries⁸ are a further recent development in the sector. From autumn 2006, DCMS is instigating a national programme of regional commentaries for all single tier and county councils. The purpose of the commentaries is to provide:

- A means to develop and improve working relationships between local authorities and regional agencies
- A means to a better understanding of the work of each local authority and regional agency
- A focus to discuss how national, regional and local objectives are aligned and can be developed, to ensure that culture contributes to shared priorities and is incorporated in partnerships; local area agreements; regional strategies; and corporate plans
- A basis to discuss service planning, delivery, and improvement in local authorities and explore the capacity and potential of regional agencies to support improvement

The commentary process is being managed by the Government Offices in the regions and will comprise the views of the regional agencies within Sport England, Arts Council England, and the Museums Libraries and Archives Council, supported by the Regional Cultural Consortium in each region. Commentaries are not a scored judgement but will assess the current position of the cultural sector in a local authority area.

In February 2006, the DCMS has sought to build on the emphasis being placed upon sustainable communities, and seeking to position culture at the heart of this process with the launch of **Where We Live!**⁹:

“Culture is how we enjoy ourselves and where we spend our leisure time. Participation in culture means connecting with the people and places around us. Culture is often the focal point for communities to come together to enjoy new experiences and express diverse views in a safe environment. Through cultural events, institutions and places, important bonds between individuals and communities are forged and strengthened. Also, by sustaining links to the past, communities retain their sense of place and identity. Culture therefore has a key role to play in developing citizenship through active, cohesive communities that are both safer and stronger.”

“Culture can build sustainable communities and with our cultural agencies we are working together to ensure that culture plays its part in the plans for regeneration and housing growth across the UK”.

The Secretary of State, Tessa Jowell, commenting on the importance of culture in building sustainable communities has said¹⁰:

⁷ ‘A Passion for Excellence: An Emerging Self-Improvement Strategy for Cultural Services’. Executive Summary. DCMS. June 2006

⁸ ‘Regional Commentaries: Creating a partnership for improving cultural and leisure services’. IDeA. 2006

⁹ The agencies involved in ‘Where We Live!’ are the Arts Council England, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, the Department for Culture Media and Sport, English Heritage, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council and Sport England. 13 July 2006 the chief executives of these agencies signed an agreement on Culture and Sustainable Communities. The Agreement sets out how the agencies and Government will work together to promote culture in communities, particularly those experiencing housing-led growth and regeneration.

"Cultural opportunities should be available to all parts of the community. As well as being valuable in themselves they can also offer ways to engage with people that other local services find hard to reach. This is particularly true of young people for whom culture is a natural part of life – whether it is playing sport, dancing, reading, or using local places and heritage to help with school work."

The case for the positive economic impact that culture can bring to an area is also now well stated and well known. Cultural regeneration can bring economic benefits by providing employment and generating revenue. It also attracts people and businesses. The economic and cultural well being of an area can be assessed by measures such as inward investment, job creation, tourism, retention of graduates and increased property prices. Publishing a consultation document on this subject in 2004, **Culture at the heart of regeneration**¹¹, the DCMS commented, "There is an emerging body of evidence, which suggests that culture is a key driver in the regeneration process and can help create sustainable communities". The report looked at the regenerative effects of large cultural buildings as well as smaller community initiatives, assesses the economic and social benefits of cultural regeneration, and posed a series of questions designed to build up the body of evidence and to engage a wide range of stakeholders.

2.3 THE POLICY CONTEXT FOR ARTS AND EVENTS

"The powerful contribution that the arts can make in delivering the shared priorities between central and local government is being increasingly recognised, but more still needs to be done. Where the arts are not simply seen as an afterthought, but instead integrated into planning processes, a number of local authorities have provided ample evidence of the part the arts can play in providing creative solutions in all areas of local activity."¹²

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) aims to improve the quality of life for all through cultural and sporting activities, to support the pursuit of excellence and to champion the tourism, creative and leisure industries.

To achieve this vision the DCMS has developed five strategic priorities:

- Children and young people
- Communities
- Economy
- Delivery
- Olympics

The DCMS also aims to:

- Broaden access for all to a rich and varied artistic and cultural life
- Ensure that the artistic activity the DCMS funds aspires to be world class
- Ensure that everyone has the opportunity to develop artistic talent and to achieve excellence in the arts

¹⁰ DCMS Press Release No. 020/06

¹¹ 'Culture at the heart of regeneration'. DCMS. 2004

¹² IDeA Knowledge

- Develop the educational potential of all the nation's artistic and cultural resources
- Raise standards of artistic and cultural education and training
- Ensure an adequate skills supply for the arts and cultural sectors
- Reduce the number of those who feel excluded from society, by using the arts

The Arts Council England's ambition for the arts, which is set out in Agenda for the arts 2006-8¹³, is "to put the arts at the heart of national life and people at the heart of the arts".

The agenda for 2006-08 has six priorities

- Taking part in the Arts
- Children and young people
- The creative economy
- Vibrant communities
- Internationalism
- Celebrating diversity

The Arts Council England national aims for children and young people to 2008 are¹⁴:

- To foster a world-leading arts infrastructure alongside other cultural organisations that supports and values the cultural expression of children and young people and increases their opportunities to engage in activities relevant to their needs and interests
- To ensure the arts and creativity have a place within wider Government and other policy agendas that have an impact on children and young people
- To see wide social recognition of the value and transformational power of the arts and creativity, particularly in relation to children and young people

Tower Hamlets is extremely fortunate to be the home of the **Cultural Industries Development Agency (CIDA)**, one of the leading creative and cultural industries support agencies. The presence of CIDA in the Borough gives it a strategic role in the development of the cultural industries and makes it a leader in achieving the shared Government/Local Government policy theme of Economic Vitality.

CIDA supports those working in all areas of the creative and cultural industries at whatever stage of their development. CIDA's Vision is:

- To provide a wide range of essential services to the creative and cultural industries
- To promote a culturally diverse and sustainable creative industries sector
- To promote access to cultural and creative industries
- To sustain and increase economic prosperity through supporting entrepreneurial activities of individuals

¹³ Arts Council England

¹⁴ Arts Council England

- To support policy, planning, urban regeneration, creative hubs, clusters and cultural quarter initiatives

2.4 THE POLICY CONTEXT FOR IDEA STORES AND LIBRARIES

The Public Library Service is the one area within cultural and leisure sector for which there is a statutory basis. Having said this, the statutory definition is relatively vague in that under the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act Library Authorities are required simply to “provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof”.

In 2001 the Government introduced the **Public Library Standards**, which were intended to formulate a clear definition, which is accepted by all public library authorities, of the duties included in a ‘comprehensive and efficient service’ and to develop a set of performance monitoring criteria and guidelines against which library authorities can be evaluated. In 2004 the Standards were revised and reduced from the original 26 to 10 key standards. These, along with some other measures, feature in the Audit Commission’s CPA and achievement against them plays a significant part in the assessment of the Culture Block. In line with the wider review of local government performance and inspection, however, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) is currently consulting on a new framework for performance management in libraries, based upon a consultation document produced by PricewaterhouseCoopers¹⁵.

Alongside this for several years DCMS required each library authority to produce annually first of all an **Annual Library Plan** and latterly a **Public Library Position Statement**. These were independently evaluated with a view to determining, and scoring, the service’s quality and its capacity to improve. The last year in which Position Statements were required was 2004.

Framework for the Future¹⁶ was published in 2003 by the DCMS and is the government’s ten-year vision for public libraries. It recognises that libraries have four key strengths:

- Space: they offer neutral welcoming community space and support active citizenship
- Stock: they hold enormous stocks of materials ranging beyond books to include DVDs, CDs and computer software
- Services: public access to the internet, community centres of formal and informal learning, promotion reading across the age range and access to information and advice
- Staff: run by committed staff
- It states, “Libraries need a modern Mission; libraries need to constantly renew and communicate their purpose to the communities they serve. Their mission should be based on:
- Evolution: Build on traditional core skills

¹⁵ ‘A New Libraries Performance Management Framework. A Stakeholder consultation document’. PricewaterhouseCoopers for MLA. November 2006

¹⁶ Framework for the Future. DCMS. 2003

- Public Value: Focus on areas where public intervention will deliver the largest benefits to society including adult literacy and pre-school learning
- Distinctiveness: Build on open, neutral, self-help culture. They should complement other services through partnership working
- Local interpretation of national programmes: develop national programmes that are flexible enough to be adapted to local needs

The following Central Themes should be at the heart of their work: Books, reading and learning; Digital citizenship; Community and civic values”.

Tower Hamlets of course has provided possibly the best response to these themes in the creation of its Idea Stores, integrating access to libraries, learning and a wide range of other resources.

Probably the greatest opportunity currently for the public library is to be innovative, developing partnerships that enable them to have a real impact on the wider shared agenda. This opportunity is perhaps strongest in the area of work with children and young people.

Fulfilling Their Potential¹⁷ is a report, and subsequent programme, managed by the Reading Agency and is the initial work coming from **Framework for the Future**. It outlines how the work that libraries do with young people can play a key role in the important participation agenda and challenges libraries to play a much greater role in involving young people in designing policies and services. Libraries are encouraged to be more responsive to young people’s needs in designing services and more dynamic in delivering and marketing them. **Both Fulfilling Their Potential** and **Hear By Right**¹⁸ offer a progressive framework to library and youth services for not only involving young people but also improving their services to this sector of the community.

2.5 THE POLICY CONTEXT FOR SPORTS AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Health and well-being are important elements of a sustainable and successful community. National and regional strategies for sport aim to increase participation in sport and physical activity across the population. They target groups with the lowest participation, notably older people, women, people who are most economically disadvantaged (especially from social groups D & E), people with disabilities and people from black and minority ethnic communities. The strategies particularly acknowledge the importance of targeting children and young people, as forming an exercise habit early is likely to carry through to adult life. Targeting younger people yields long-term benefits for both individuals and society as a whole if there is a corresponding reduction in the cost of health-care that is required because of physical inactivity.

A Sporting Future for All¹⁹, establishes the Government’s vision for community participation in sport and top competition:

¹⁷ ‘Fulfilling their potential: A National Development Programme for Young People’s Library Services’. Prepared by The Reading Agency as Part of the Framework for the Future Action Plan. 2004

¹⁸ ‘Hear by Right’ is a standards framework for organisations across the statutory and voluntary sectors to assess and improve practice and policy on the active involvement of children and young people. The National Youth Agency. Revised 2005.

¹⁹ ‘A Sporting Future for All’. DCMS. 2000.

“To ensure that every member of our society is offered the opportunity and encouragement to play, lead and manage sport. This means opening up new possibilities and improving existing ones – at all stages of life, in school, in local authority facilities, in clubs, in representative squads and in international competitions.”

The report also states that the drive to encourage wide participation in sport and to achieve excellence in sport is part of the same package as it is from the broad base of participation that talented stars emerge.

The remit of **Game Plan**²⁰ is wider than **A Sporting Future for All** as it recognises the importance of physical activity to health, and the social and economic cost of increasing inactivity in the population. In addition to improving the health of the nation, an increase in sport and physical activity can contribute to improved educational outcomes, reduce crime and contribute to greater social inclusion.

Government policy on regeneration recognises that arts and sport, cultural and recreational activity can contribute to neighbourhood renewal. Regeneration programmes value diversity, embed local control, support local commitment, promote equitable partnerships, define common objectives, work flexibly with change, secure sustainability and promote social inclusion.

Published in 2004, and reflecting Government strategy, Sport England’s **Framework for Sport in England**²¹ sets out their approach and priorities. Their vision for sport is to make England the most active and successful sporting nation in the world. The vision of Sport England London reflects the objectives set in the **Framework for Sport in England**, notably “to have an active and successful sporting capital”.

2.6 THE POLICY CONTEXT FOR PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

The provision and management of good parks and open spaces is one of the most challenging areas of cultural provision, not least because of the diversity of provision it can encompass – ranging from small play areas and local parks to extensive major parks with sports pitches and many facilities, country parks, woodlands, ecological areas, historic grounds and city farms. Essentially however the overall objective is the same: people want to live in attractive places that are clean and safe, with good parks, play areas and green spaces and everyone should have access to these.

Events, play areas, and space for sporting activities, provide the opportunity for a diverse range of pastimes. Green spaces, with their landscape design, buildings and structures, often reflect the history of communities and add to their local distinctiveness. The majority of the open space provision in London is based on historical provision comprising formal Victorian parks, the former grounds and gardens of country estates, and a pattern of parks and recreation grounds added during the suburban growth of the inter-war period. In more recent years this inherited provision has brought real challenges through the pressure to reduce costs and the inability to maintain traditional regimes of maintenance such as formal bedding and close mowing, issues of safety and vandalism, the changing needs of rapidly changing communities, and new approaches to the ecology and biodiversity of our open spaces.

Parks and green spaces provide a wealth of opportunities for improving the quality of life for children and young people. As well as enclosed play areas, the range of green

²⁰ ‘Game plan: a strategy for delivering government’s sport and physical activity objectives’. Government Strategy Unit and DCMS. 2002.

²¹ ‘Framework for Sport in England’. Sport England. 2004

spaces - from parks and gardens to woodlands and city farms - provide creative play spaces for children and young people to explore and discover. Good quality spaces provide opportunities for formal and informal play, exercise and learning. For the child this can mean:

- Socialising – making new friends
- Improving - self-esteem and behaviour
- Maintaining - fitness and health
- Encourage - creative thinking and learning

It can also help to achieve wider social objectives like tackling childhood obesity and health inequalities for those in the poorest communities.

The **Every Child Matters Inspection Framework**²² and the guidance for the new **Children's and Young People's Plans** recognise the role of green spaces in delivering benefits for children. The current capital renewal programme for schools also presents excellent opportunities to improve the environment around many schools.

Parks provide safe environments that are used nationally by an estimated 33 million people a year. However, the actions of a minority can fuel feelings that people don't care and perceptions of crime and anti-social behaviour, and as in some other settings 'fear of crime' in parks is often far greater than the reality. Encouraging greater use is key to addressing this - the presence of large numbers of people in a place is a deterrent to bad behaviour – and many local authorities are now reviewing staffing arrangements with visible **parks rangers**. Essentially, creating welcoming, well-used and attractive spaces, where people want to be is a key element to prevent anti-social behaviour.

The **Green Flag Award** is the national standard for parks and green spaces in England and Wales, begun in 1996 as a means of recognising and rewarding the best green spaces in the country. It was also seen as a way of encouraging others to achieve the same high environmental standards, creating a benchmark of excellence in recreational green areas. Awards are given on an annual basis and winners must apply each year to renew their Green Flag status. Green Flag provides a very useful framework, but it must however be used cautiously to avoid focusing limited resources too heavily on 'showcase' parks to the neglect of the many smaller local green spaces.

The **Urban Green Spaces Task Force** was established by Central Government to develop proposals to improve urban parks, play areas and green spaces. It made 52 recommendations to the Government. Their report **Green Spaces, Better Places**²³ emphasises the diverse value of urban open spaces. The Task Force states, "The Government and local authorities working through local strategic partnerships should make it a priority to provide high quality parks and green spaces to serve the needs of people in disadvantaged areas. This objective should be at the heart of regeneration and renewal programmes which target such areas."

Three key priorities were identified:

²² 'Every Child Matters: The framework for the inspection of children's services'. Ofsted. 2005.

²³ Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, May 2002

- Local authorities should carry out an assessment of need and an audit of provision. An 'urban open space typology' was defined, to enable comparison across local authorities
- Local authorities should develop a strategy for green space provision including locally determined provision standards
- A national agency to be established to co-ordinate strategies and champion the cause

The Government's report **Living Places – Cleaner, Safer, Greener**²⁴ included a response to the Urban Green Spaces Task Force. This report challenged those bodies responsible for public spaces (its remit was wider than parks and public open spaces) to:

- adopt a holistic approach and see the public realm as a network
- end creeping deterioration through incremental decisions or lack of action
- recognise the importance of high quality open spaces for disadvantaged neighbourhoods
- respond to changing patterns of demography and development

This report led directly to the establishment of **CABE Space** as the national championing role for the development of open space.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) is responsible for delivering **Floor target PSA 8 Liveability**. This means that it will lead on the delivery of cleaner, safer, greener public spaces and the improvement of the built environment in deprived areas and across the country, with measurable improvement by 2008.

A key element of this target is the recognition of the **Green Flag** awards scheme with its eight criteria for good parks management, as a measure of achievement. The scheme is managed on the Governments behalf by the **Civic Trust**. It has established a national standard for best practice in parks provision and management. Other key measures for public spaces are the standard of cleanliness and the level of satisfaction of residents with local parks and open spaces.

Floor targets for other Government departments also have a bearing on the provision of good quality open spaces. The Department of Health has targets aimed at improving the general health of the population including a specific target to tackle obesity. In addition to sharing the obesity target, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport has targets to increase the take up of sporting opportunities by school children and other target groups.

The Government published **Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 on Planning, Sport and Recreation**²⁵ (PPG17) in 2002. The policy guidance stresses the roles of open space as supporting an urban renaissance, promoting social inclusion and community cohesion and promoting sustainable development. The policy guidance requires robust assessments of need as well as audits of the number, quality and use of existing open spaces to be undertaken. Open spaces cannot be disposed of or planning permission granted without such assessments having been carried out.

PPG17 requires Local Authorities to set local open space standards, including quantitative, qualitative and accessibility thresholds. It states that Local Planning

²⁴ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister October 2002

²⁵ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2002

Authorities should formulate effective planning policies to protect open space and ensure adequate provision of high quality open spaces, and that Local Planning Authorities should seek opportunities to remedy deficiencies in provision in terms of quantity, quality or accessibility.

The **Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy** (2002) sets out the Mayor's policies for promoting biodiversity in green spaces and encouraging public access to and appreciation of nature. To realise this goal, the Mayor seeks to survey all open spaces and wildlife habitats in London, identify areas of deficiency of access to natural areas, develop good practice guide for enhancing the biodiversity for green spaces and promote sustainable management of parks and open spaces. The **Tower Habitats Partnership** produced the **Tower Hamlets Local Biodiversity Action Plan** (adopted 2004) and its Parks, Gardens and Burial Grounds Habitat Action Plan in accordance with this strategy.

Thames Gateway London Partnership (TGLP) is co-ordinating the **East London Green Grid** programme. The Green Grid concept serves to implement the aims of the Mayor's London Plan by providing the sub-regional framework for open space enhancement. It identifies where stakeholders will be able to shape their policies and actions to deliver projects to the strategic network as an integral part of achieving social and economic regeneration. The **East London Green Grid** is an inter-linked network of multi-functional green spaces and public rights of way, which contribute to the environmental enhancement of East London and enable the creation of sustainable communities within the Thames Gateway. Delivering the Green Grid will involve the creation of new public areas and the enhancement of existing parks and green spaces.

The Vision for the East London Green Grid is:

'A living network of parks, green spaces, river and other corridors connecting urban areas to the river Thames, the green belt and beyond.'

The objectives of the East London Green Grid are to:

- Deliver new and enhance existing public spaces that promote vibrant, sustainable landscapes for East London communities
- Provide high-quality strategic public areas along the river tributaries and green areas
- Provide a diversity of leisure, recreational uses and landscapes for people to escape, relax, learn, play and enjoy, and promote healthy living
- Manage water collection and flood risk with multi-functional spaces
- Provide beautiful, diverse and managed green infrastructure to the highest standards for people and wildlife

2.7 THE POLICY CONTEXT FOR HERITAGE AND CONSERVATION

Heritage and conservation, although not part of Cultural Services in Tower Hamlets, are essential to the cultural life of places. The historic environment, documents and artefacts help people understand places and feel connected.

The **Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990** places a duty on Tower Hamlets to designate Conservation Areas in "areas of special architectural or historic interest", and to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation

and enhancement of its Conservation Areas. National policy for planning and the historic environment is set out in Planning Policy Guidance 15 (PPG15).

Within Tower Hamlets there are 50 Conservation Areas, spread throughout the Borough. The Council is in the process of adopting **conservation area appraisals** for all of these. Apart from identifying the historically important aspects and characteristics of an area, conservation area appraisals also identify actions for improving areas. These can inform future investment in Tower Hamlets.

Regionally, policy 4B.1 of the London Plan states that 'The Mayor will seek to ensure that developments ... respect London's built heritage.'

At the local level, the **Interim Planning Guidance 2007** of Tower Hamlets states that 'the Council will protect and enhance the historic environment of the borough'.

In March 2007 the Department for Culture, Media and Sport published a white paper on the future of heritage protection titled **Heritage Protection for the 21st Century**. The white paper proposes a unified heritage protection and listing system and streamlined consent procedures, which will have more opportunities for public involvement and community engagement.

Renaissance in the Regions is MLA's (the national development agency for museums, libraries and archives) programme for development of and investment in regional museum hubs. The programme aims to enable museums regional museums to raise their standards and make a real difference to learning, social inclusion and economic regeneration.

Action for Archives is MLA's programme of practical support and development for archives running from 2007 to 2010. Funding will focus on a small number of schemes that will work directly with archive services. Programmes are based on successful projects that have been tested by the MLA regional agencies. National programmes will run in selected regions, with over 80 archive services.

2.8 THE POLICY CONTEXT FOR CHILDREN'S PLAY

Play is understood as:

- Intrinsic to children and young people's culture, a core component of their 'way of life'
- Intimately connected to adult and community 'ways of life'

Children and young people therefore want and need designated high quality play spaces, supervised and unsupervised but also, and as importantly, opportunities to congregate and play within shared public spaces. This dual entitlement, of children and young people's legitimate demand for dedicated play space and their equal right to a respected place in the wider public realm, forms part of the rationale for including play objectives in complementary strategies. These include, for example, Open Space Strategies, Planning objectives and guidance, Children and Young People's Plans, Cultural and Community Strategies, Community Safety Strategies. Whilst play contributes to meeting for example, formal educational goals, it has its own distinct justification to be valued in its own right.

In 2003 DCMS published **Getting Serious about Play: a review of children's play**. The review recognised that children's play was vital to communities and followed a

pledge to invest significant amounts of lottery funding in children's play facilities across England. Aiming to identify the best way of investing this funding, the review concluded that allocations should be made to local authorities as lead partners. This ensured that distribution at a local level would follow a strategic framework and emphasised the role of

The **Mayor's Children and Young People's Strategy (2004)** sets out regional priorities for Play and encourages local authorities to develop play strategies as well as ensure that public spaces available for children to play are not lost when places are being redeveloped and that planners allow for these spaces when designing new developments.

Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 17 on Planning, Sport and Recreation²⁶ requires Local Authorities to set local open space standards, including quantitative, qualitative and accessibility thresholds. It states that Local Planning Authorities should formulate effective planning policies to protect open space and ensure adequate provision of high quality open spaces, and that Local Planning Authorities should seek opportunities to remedy deficiencies in provision in terms of quantity, quality or accessibility.

The Mayor of London published **Further Alterations to the London Plan** in September 2006 which included a revised borough housing target of 3,150 dwellings per annum until 2017 (approximately a tenth of all housing growth in London). It also includes an additional policy requiring borough's to prepare 'Children and Young People's Play and informal recreation strategies' and requiring all new housing provision to include provision for play and informal recreation. Supporting this new policy the Mayor has developed benchmark standards for play which will form **Supplementary Planning Guidance to the London Plan** and has produced guidance on the development of play strategies for London Boroughs. This guidance has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this strategy and is considered complementary to the Children's Play Council guidance that has taken precedent.

²⁶ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2002

3 REGIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Before moving on to look at the specific local circumstances in Tower Hamlets, it is important to have an overview of what is happening regionally, and particularly in the East London sub-region where the challenges and opportunities are greater than anywhere else in the region at present.

3.1.1 London

Greater London covers an area of 1,584 sq km and is the smallest of England's nine regions, but with a population of 7.2 million people it is one of Europe's most densely populated areas. It is home to 1 in 8 of the UK's population and has 3 million households. More than a quarter of its population is from an ethnic minority background, making up half of the UK's total ethnic minorities. This gives London the largest non-white population of any European city and is an important part of its cosmopolitan feel. Over 250 languages are spoken in the city. Throughout history, immigrants and refugees have been arriving in London; the city is renowned for its multi-cultural society.

Not surprisingly, against this background a blend of history, groundbreaking architecture and culture has created an amazing and constantly evolving city. This vibrant metropolis embraces the diverse cultures of its population, reflected through cuisine, shops, music and colourful festivals. Despite a population of over seven million, more than 30% of London is made up of parks and green space, greater than any other city of its size in the world. This space provides the perfect opportunity for walks, relaxation or sporting activities. London also offers some of the best shopping opportunities in the world. From major department stores to designer boutiques and street markets - the choice is immense. London is hard to beat when it comes to nightlife: there are huge numbers of restaurants, pubs, cinemas, theatres and nightclubs plus live music and comedy venues.

The **Greater London Authority Act 1999** places responsibility for strategic planning in London on the Mayor, and requires him to produce a Spatial Development Strategy for London – which he has called the **London Plan** – and keep it under review. In the **London Plan**, published in February 2004, the Mayor sets out his vision for London “as an exemplary, sustainable world city for the 21st century.”²⁷ The Mayor's vision for London is based on three interlocking themes:

- Strong and diverse economic growth
- Social inclusivity to allow all Londoners to share in London's future success
- Fundamental improvements in environmental management and use of resources

The Plan states that “a number of forces are now driving rapid change in London: population growth, economic growth, environmental issues, lifestyle changes and technological change. All of them have their roots in global changes, each with a particular London dimension, and they require a new and imaginative response from policy makers”.

²⁷ The London Plan. Greater London Authority. February 2004. Summary Page 5

The **London Plan** aims to be consistent with, and provide an integrating framework for, all of the strategies the Mayor has developed. They are all based on ensuring that London becomes a city for people, a prosperous city, a fair city, an accessible city and a green city. The plan develops each of these five themes into a targeted objective, along with a specific additional objective about the future spatial structure of London. These fundamental objectives are:

- Objective 1: To accommodate London's growth within its boundaries without encroaching on open spaces
- Objective 2: To make London a better city for people to live in
- Objective 3: To make London a more prosperous city with strong and diverse economic growth
- Objective 4: To promote social inclusion and tackle deprivation and discrimination
- Objective 5: To improve London's accessibility
- Objective 6: To make London a more attractive, well-designed and green city

The **London Plan** replaces existing strategic guidance, and boroughs' local plans must be in 'general conformity' with it. The required content of the **London Plan** is set out in the Act, supplemented by a government guidance note (Circular 1/2000). The Mayor is also required to produce other strategies for London. Each must be consistent with the others and the **London Plan** acts as the spatial framework integrating all. Each must take on board national policies and international obligations, and take account of three crosscutting themes:

- The health of Londoners
- Equality of opportunity
- Contribution to sustainable development in the UK.

The **London Plan** is also required to take account of the **European Spatial Development Perspective** and other EU directives. It is a statutory requirement that the draft London Plan undergo a 'sustainability appraisal'.

The **London Plan** focuses on the development strategies for five broad sub-regions, including one for East London including the Thames Gateway. Within this overall planning framework, specific areas have been identified as Opportunity Areas, Areas for Intensification and Areas for Regeneration. East London is, unsurprisingly, a key focus for a number of the Mayor's London-wide objectives. In May 2006 the Mayor published five **Sub Regional Development Frameworks (SRDFs)**, including one for East London (see below).

London: Cultural Capital - Realising the potential of a world-class city is the Mayor's ten-year plan to develop London as a centre of cultural excellence and creativity. Published in April 2004, it is the first co-ordinated strategic approach to culture, which includes arts, sport, heritage and the creative industries in London.

The key policy drivers in **London: Cultural Capital** are:

Policy 1: London needs to ensure its cultural institutions and events are of a high quality, world class status

- The Mayor supports substantial investment in the

infrastructure of London's cultural facilities.

- The Mayor supports London hosting large scale cultural events.
- The Mayor supports London hosting the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Policy 2: Improvements in infrastructure and support are necessary to realise the creative potential of London's cultural diversity

- The Mayor supports maximising the potential of existing talent and nurturing new creative talent by supporting the cultural infrastructure – including buildings, funding and the professional development required.
- The Mayor supports maintaining and developing a programme of events throughout the year that help to raise the profile of a broad range of organisations showcasing London's rich cultural diversity.

Policy 3: London needs to develop its brand and promote itself as a world cultural city and tourism destination

- The Mayor supports the sustainable development of London's evening and late night economy.

Policy 4: Creativity needs to be recognised as a significant contributor to London's economy and success

- The Mayor supports sustaining and developing the creative industries.

Policy 5: Education and lifelong learning must play a central role in nurturing creativity and providing routes to employment

- The Mayor supports the role of lifelong learning in providing routes to employment in the cultural sector through education programmes at all levels delivered through the formal and informal education sectors and training and professional development programmes for those working in the cultural sector and new entrants.

Policy 6: Access to culture should be the right of all Londoners

- The Mayor supports dismantling the barriers to accessing culture by promoting safe and accessible play activity and play areas, initiatives for older people and ensuring the Olympic and Paralympic Games impact on community sports participation particularly targeting those currently under represented in sports participation.

Policy 7: Culture should be a means of empowering London's communities

- The Mayor supports promoting local cultural activity by maintaining and developing the networks of community and street festivals, encouraging activity to address social inclusion including working with London's libraries on reader development programmes, promoting the role of culture in health and community safety, promoting programmes aimed at improving older people's health and co-ordinating opportunities for vulnerable young people to participate in cultural activities.

Policy 8: There should be a spread of high-quality cultural provision across London and at all levels – local, sub-regional and regional

- The Mayor supports creating local cultural provision and prioritises cultural

development in East London as a key area of growth.

Policy 9: Cultural activity should be encouraged in the development and regeneration of London

- The Mayor supports protecting and developing cultural quarters and developing new creative hubs by ensuring planning strategies protect the mixture of uses, encouraging live/work developments and helping small cultural organisations to purchase property.
- The Mayor sees creative industry developments in the Thames Gateway as a priority.

Policy 10: The cultural value and potential of London's public realm should be fully realised

- The Mayor supports developing 100 public spaces in London and promoting temporary pedestrian zones.
- The Mayor supports reclaiming the public realm for temporary events, encouraging public awareness of London's public art, architecture and urban design, developing a programme of commissions for artwork and promoting greater access to London's green spaces and waterways for disabled people, young people and children.

Policy 11: Culture in London should receive the resources that are commensurate with its demographic, economic and spatial needs

- The Mayor wants to make the case for London and improve the quality of life for Londoners by ensuring that it gets the resources, it is entitled to by promoting the economic value of the culture sector and the contribution it makes to London and developing a strategic approach to the collection and management of data on the cultural sector.

Policy 12: The structures and funding for culture should deliver the best deal for all Londoners

- The Mayor seeks to ensure that London works effectively as a region and a capital city with its neighbours and other regions by exploring the synergies between London and the adjacent regions around issues such as Thames Gateway; as well as sharing good practice across England.

3.1.2 East London

East London, perhaps more than any other part of the capital, is at this time at the heart of the wider challenges and opportunities facing London. Identified in the London Plan as "the Mayor's priority area for development, regeneration and infrastructure improvement"²⁸, East London²⁹ has many of the capital's largest development sites and a large number of areas suffering multiple deprivation. Add to this the staging here in 2012 of the Olympic and Paralympic Games and the mix becomes both potent and highly volatile.

²⁸ The London Plan. Greater London Authority. February 2004. Summary Page 23

²⁹ East London is defined in the East London Sub- Regional Development Framework as covering the City of London and the nine boroughs of Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Newham, Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Redbridge, Lewisham, Greenwich and Bexley). Sub-Regional Development Framework: East London. Greater London Authority. May 2006

The key challenges and opportunities for East London at this time are:

- Growth: “East London should plan for a minimum of 104,000 additional homes and 249,000 jobs up to 2016.”³⁰
- Growth: The Thames Gateway development: “Our strategy is to develop London Thames Gateway as a mixed-use, multi-density ‘city within a city.’”³¹
- The London 2012 Games: focused primarily in East London, the Olympics should “provide a major catalyst for change and regeneration in east London, especially the Lower Lea Valley”³². The impact will be enormous but every aspect needs to be managed carefully to reduce the risks and possible negative side effects. “The 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games will drive change at an unprecedented pace”³³
- Changing communities³⁴:
 - “Most of the sub-region will see significant increases in the younger (0-17) and older age groups (over 65). This will have implications for health, education and other services”.
 - “Ethnic diversity across the East sub-region as a whole is similar to Greater London. However the spatial distribution within the sub-region gives a very different picture”.
 - “East London also has significant areas of deprivation. Some of the large social housing estates feature in the estates renewal programme. They are characterized by isolation and need co-ordinated programmes of improved public transport, skills development, capacity building and environmental improvement”. “Conversely many communities in East London are relatively prosperous and enjoy good services and environments”.
 - “East London has significant levels of unemployment with three boroughs higher than 10%, or roughly twice the English average: with Hackney 16.4%, Newham 13.5% and Tower Hamlets at 11.8%”.

3.1.3 Tower Hamlets

Tower Hamlets is at the heart of regional growth and regeneration plans, providing the Borough’s communities with unprecedented opportunities. However, this growth must be well planned and supported by the highest quality social and cultural infrastructure if regeneration is to be sustainable.

Tower Hamlets, in London’s East End, is one of Britain’s most culturally vibrant and diverse areas and has for centuries been home for many migrant communities. Today, over 200,000 people live within its 8 square miles. As shown in the chart below (taken from the evidence base in the Appendix to the Regeneration Strategy), Tower Hamlets some 49% of the population are from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds.

³⁰ The London Plan. Greater London Authority. February 2004. Summary Page 23

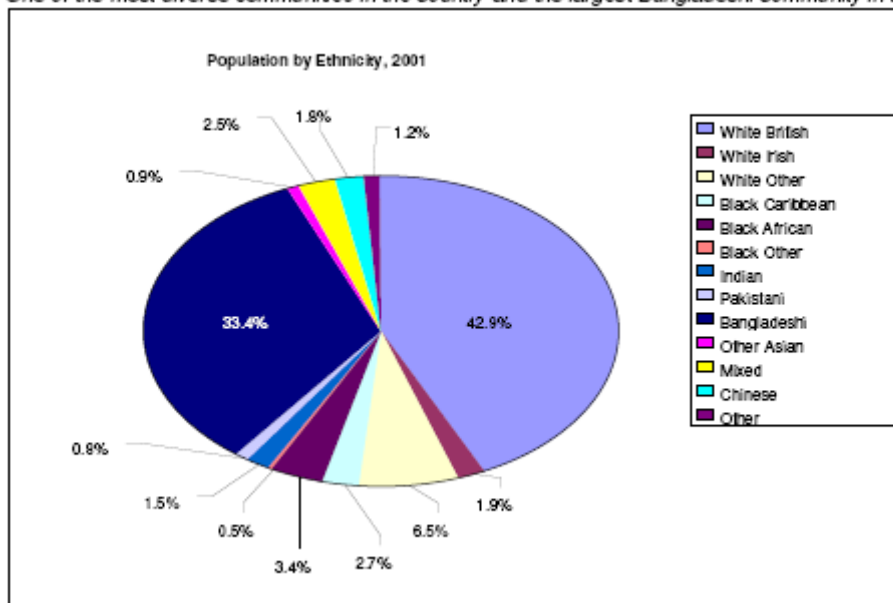
³¹ London Thames Gateway Development and Investment Framework. Greater London Authority. April 2004. Page 13

³² The London Plan. Greater London Authority. February 2004. Summary Page 23

³³ Sub-Regional Development Framework: East London. Greater London Authority. May 2006. Page 13

³⁴ Sub-Regional Development Framework: East London. Greater London Authority. May 2006. Page 11

One of the most diverse communities in the country and the largest Bangladeshi community in the UK.



The proportion of the working age population not in employment and claiming Incapacity Benefit in Tower Hamlets is well above the London average. Tower Hamlets is one of the most deprived areas in the country but alongside this the business community continues to grow, bringing greater prosperity and inward investment into the borough. The population of Tower Hamlets is forecast to grow by more than 30%. Over 25,000 new homes will be built. Hundreds of thousands of people will travel on new public transport to work in the Isle of Dogs, City Fringe and Lower Lea Valley. The borough will offer a unique cultural alternative to central London. Nightlife and museums, landmark contemporary architecture, waterfront public spaces, specialist shops and a vibrant youth culture will attract visitors and business tourists from across the globe.

As already mentioned, East London is the Mayor's priority area for development regeneration and infrastructure improvement. The agenda for growth and change in Tower Hamlets is enormous, coming from:

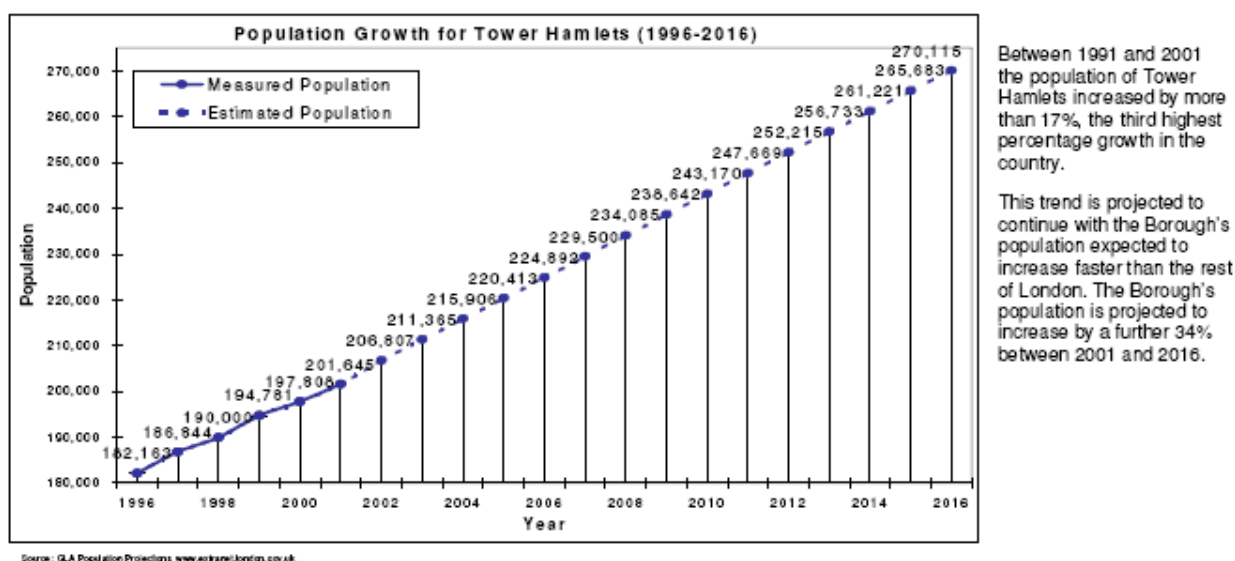
- The Thames Gateway development – directly affecting the Isle of Dogs and the Lower Lea Valley but obviously impacting on the whole Borough as a gateway to London.
- The Lower Lea Valley Opportunity Area – closely linked of course with the 2012 Games site as well as the Thames Gateway. Tower Hamlets' Leaside Area Action Plan sets the planning framework for part of this opportunity area.
- The City Fringe – as guided by the City Fringe Area Action Plan.
- The Isle of Dogs – as guided by the Isle of Dogs Area Action Plan.
- There is a significant amount of change and improvement taking place throughout the Central Area of the Borough as well.

The **Draft Local Development Framework (Draft LDF)** is a series of documents detailing the future spatial strategy for development of Tower Hamlets. The Draft LDF recognises the vital contribution that cultural services makes to local residents quality of life and sets out a clear commitment to protect and promote cultural facilities. Once the LDF is formally adopted it will have significant influence on the future

protection and provision of cultural facilities across the Borough, as well as other social infrastructure such as schools and health facilities. The LDF also offers an opportunity to introduce supplementary planning documents in relation to planning contributions.

In particular in the light of Lottery funding nationally being re-directed to fund the central delivery of the 2012 Games, there will be increasing pressure to identify sources of funding to develop local programmes harnessing the benefits of the Games for residents.

As the following graph shows, Tower Hamlets has one of the fastest growing populations in the country:



The agenda around growth and regeneration of course extends beyond the built environment. **Creating and sharing Prosperity in Tower Hamlets**³⁵, the Council's regeneration strategy recognises this, identifying four themes:

- Develop the economy to create wealth, business and employment for local residents
- Develop people to help local resident find jobs and succeed in the knowledge-driven economy
- Develop places which combine a healthy environment with enjoyable open spaces, a well-designed mix of homes and business premises, good-quality services and excellent public transport
- Develop marketing to promote the transformation of Tower Hamlets into a global city-district and attract ongoing public and private investment

Clearly the **2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games** can be expected to have a major impact upon Tower Hamlets and as the greatest sporting event in the world, bringing with it wider opportunities for cultural celebration and events, the implications for cultural policy in the Borough leading up to the event, and for many years to follow, are wide-reaching.

³⁵ 'Creating and sharing Prosperity in Tower Hamlets: Regeneration Strategy'. Tower Hamlets. 2005.

The Council has developed a London **2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games Legacy Strategy and Programme** setting out its overall policy approach to the Games³⁶. This document is comprehensive and rather than repeating the policy issues here any cultural planning in the run up to the Games should be undertaken with reference to that document.

The London 2012 Legacy Strategy and Programme expresses the local vision in four themes:

- *“Creating and Sharing Prosperity* – bringing investment and employment into the Borough and ensuring that all residents and businesses are in a position to benefit from, and contribute to, growing economic prosperity as a result of the Games.
- *A Socially Cohesive Community* – celebrating the rich cultural diversity of local communities; strengthening community networks and organisations; and enabling the community to develop as a whole.
- *A Transformed Environment* – ensuring that the alluring physical transformation anticipated in the Olympic Park is matched with the physical transformation within Tower Hamlets.
- *The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games Experience* – providing every Tower Hamlets resident with an opportunity to have a Games experience, whether participating, volunteering, or being a spectator”.³⁷

The Tower Hamlets 2012 Strategy and Programme identifies very clearly the potential benefits and opportunities, as well as the threats and weaknesses in a clear SWOT Analysis³⁸. This SWOT highlights a key concern that the media focus is upon the benefits of the 2012 Games, whereas there is in reality a danger, if appropriate interventions are not made, local people feeling that they have paid for the games, suffered inconvenience and disruption to traffic and services whilst the Games are held, whilst not being able to actually attend or participate, and that then the promised legacy is not realised. These risks are real, but certainly not inevitable and there is a huge opportunity through co-ordinated cultural and wider policy planning in the Borough to demonstrate that hosting the Games can bring overall advantage.

The strategic approach to community planning in Tower Hamlets is well established making explicit the ‘golden thread’ of policy themes between the **Community Plan**, the Council’s **Strategic Plan** and the **Local Area Agreement**. The Council has explicitly and directly linked the 12 priorities in its own Strategic Plan to the 5 themes in the Community Plan. The Community Plan in turn makes the connection to the 4 LAA themes, stating that, “All blocks are linked to one another”.

The **Tower Hamlets Community Plan** sets out five major themes by which the Council’s vision, set out at the beginning of this document, will be delivered. These themes are at the heart of everything the Council does. Each theme is supported by a number of priority outcomes. The delivery of quality and accessible cultural provision contributes to all of the Community Plan themes and all of the priority outcomes.

Theme	Key Priority
A Better Place for Living Safely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A cleaner, greener, safer Tower Hamlets

³⁶ ‘London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games Legacy: Strategy and Programme. London Borough of Tower Hamlets 2006.

³⁷ As Footnote 35. Paragraph 10.

³⁸ As Footnote 35. Page 7.

A Better Place for Living Well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decent homes in decent neighbourhoods • Healthier communities • Improved outcomes for vulnerable children and adults
A Better Place for Creating and Sharing Prosperity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing sustainable communities • Increased local employment
A Better Place for Learning and Leisure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased educational attainment • Increased participation in sporting, leisure and cultural activities
A Better Place for Excellent Public Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficient and effective services • Locally focused services empowering local people • Stronger and more cohesive communities • Improved equality of opportunity

The Tower Hamlets Community Plan is delivered through an annually updated **Strategic Plan** identifying top level objectives and detailed targets.

The Community Plan has been developed and is monitored in partnership with local stakeholders through the **Tower Hamlet's Local Strategic Partnership**. This consists of the Council's main service delivery and community partners.

The Council has developed a **Local Area Agreement (LAA)** with the other stakeholders in the Tower Hamlets Partnership. The LAA builds upon the priorities set out in the Community Plan and seeks to accelerate improvements in outcomes for local people, with a particular focus on: Economic Regeneration, Healthier Communities, Older People, and Children and Young People. Key themes in the Children and Young People Block include children and young people's health and support for parents. The play strategy will support these objectives.

Tower Hamlets has 37,500 pupils attending school and a growing number of children and young people in the population. The Borough has one of the highest rates of unemployment for young people aged 16-24 and the percentage of young people in this age group not in education, employment or training (NEET) is worryingly high.

The Tower Hamlets **2006 – 2009 Children and Young People's Plan** is a single, strategic, overarching plan for children and young people showing how the five Every Child Matters outcomes will be delivered across all children's services in Tower Hamlets.

The Government is promoting an extended schools programme to encourage schools to make their publicly funded facilities more accessible to the wider community. The Tower Hamlets **Extended Schools Strategy** recommends that by 2010 all schools will offer an extended service including childcare, study support, family learning, support services and improved access for children and their families to other services. Partnership working with schools will enable the delivery of shared local cultural facilities.