

A Vision for Beckton Gasworks Community Planning Weekend Report Back Broadsheet

November 2023



Artist's impression of Pier Park: A destination for Beckton, Newham and London.

Just some of the ideas to emerge from the Vision for Beckton Gasworks Community Planning Weekend held from 3 to 7 November 2023 at Art in the Docks, Albert Wharf:

A vibrant neighbourhood celebrating the heritage of the gasworks and the diversity of the Beckton community; a new "village on the river" with mix of shops, restaurants, community and cultural spaces and events creating a new "heart" for the Beckton community and drawing in visitors; a new riverside park creating a "WOW!" factor along the Thames and connecting the network of green spaces in the area and extending the Thames Path; a range of high quality homes for households of all incomes; a variety of spaces for businesses, community and cultural activity; early meanwhile uses such as gardening projects, festivals and events to create early opportunities for local businesses and groups and to animate the gasworks site; continuing community participation in developing the proposals for Phase 1 and the delivery of meanwhile activities.

Background

The former gasworks is an important site in Beckton, owned by St William Homes LLP (part of the Berkeley Group). The site has been allocated in the 2018 Newham Local Plan for comprehensive residential-led, mixed-use development. The redevelopment provides an opportunity to bring forward high-quality new homes, a mix of commercial and community uses, significant public realm and connections to and through the site, including access to the historic river frontage.

The Beckton Gasworks community planning process is organised by JTP on behalf of St William. For more information, please visit becktongasworks.com or contact the JTP Community Planning team at community@jtp.co.uk on Freephone 0800 012 6730 or write to **Freeport JTP** (no stamp required).

Community participation

St William is committed to working closely with the local community and appointed architects and community planners JTP to facilitate the Beckton Gasworks Community Planning Weekend (CPW), which was open to everyone. Building on the community engagement work commissioned by LB Newham for the wider Beckton Riverside allocation, the aim of the CPW was to consider issues and opportunities and help shape the Vision for the future regeneration of Beckton Gasworks and its relationship with the wider area through facilitated workshops, walkabouts and hands-on planning groups.

Vision Report Back

After the public workshop days, the JTP-led team analysed and summarised the outcomes and drew up a consensus Vision for Beckton Gasworks (Phase 1), including an illustrative masterplan, which was presented back to the local community on the evening of Tuesday 7 November 2023.

Next steps

After the report back of the Vision, the St William team will continue to work with stakeholders and the community to bring together an Outline Planning Application for submission in the Spring of 2024.

Beckton Riverside Community Forum January 2024

Date and venue to be confirmed

For more information and to register your interest please email community@jtp.co.uk

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Illustrative Masterplan

Key

- 1 A new Riverside Green surrounded by multiple uses, located at the end of Atlantis Avenue.
- 2 A Riverside Park with a focal point at the centre of the Victorian Piers. Robert the Steam Engine and sculptures on the Piers attract people to stop and enjoy the unique space.
- 3 An Amphitheatre frames the centre of the piers and allows staggered seating to watch musicians and hold events.
- 4 The Lagoon is a quieter and more nature focused space. There are several nature watching spots south of the Lagoon so everyone can enjoy the water and nature.
- 5 Community Park has a local focus, with play, growing, and exercise equipment.
- 6 A plaza along Atlantis Boulevard will provide an attractive entrance to the development with a range of local services.
- 7 A mixed use hub located at the intersection of main routes.
- 8 Local school located near bus stops with access from Armada Greenway.



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Illustrative section through Pier Park



Artist's impression of the Pier Park:
Where heritage is brought to life.



Artist's impression of the High Street:
With all amenities and uses on your doorstep.



Artist's impression of the Community Park: A place for playing, growing and meeting friends.

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Key Themes

The following key themes represent a summary of the views of the participants through the community planning process. All quotes are from participants of the process unless otherwise stated.

Beckton Riverside

The redevelopment of Beckton Gasworks Phase 1 - as part of the wider Beckton Riverside regeneration - is a huge opportunity to provide high-quality new homes, a vibrant mix of uses, connections to and through the site, and significant public realm, including access to a new riverside park along the historic river frontage. The site has been allocated in the 2018 Newham Local Plan for comprehensive, residential led, mixed use development. Community Planning Weekend (CPW) participants were excited by the potential, realistic about the challenges and expressed a desire to be actively involved in helping to shape and deliver the new place.

“Let’s think about the relationship between the river and the docks – there’s this extraordinary resource on our doorstep!”

Connecting the dots, connecting the docks

Beckton is currently perceived as a collection of disconnected, zoned areas, divided by transport infrastructure, creating “pockets of places” with resultant physical and social isolation. The regeneration of Beckton Gasworks provides the opportunity to bring the fragmented areas together and deliver a wide range of benefits to the Beckton, Royal Albert Wharf and North Woolwich communities, including connecting the river and the docks and improving social integration. The streets and green links within the new development should connect with the surrounding network and DLR to facilitate improved public transport and active travel movement throughout the area, and new connections to the river.

“Beckton and Gallions Reach feel like different places - can the Gasworks site help to connect them?”

Image and identity

Although it benefits from a range of amenities, there is a lack of an integrated and cohesive identity and Beckton is perceived as a series of disconnected neighbourhoods, with no strongly identifiable centre or place to meet. In some cases, this has led to social isolation. CPW participants wanted to understand and

celebrate the heritage of the gasworks. Combining this with the benefits of a diverse community will help build a strong local identity based around a well-designed and curated place. The regeneration of Beckton Gasworks should aim to be an exemplar for London that locals are proud of and want to share, creating a destination with a strong brand that attracts people to visit from elsewhere. A good start would be to move on from referring to the site as Beckton Gasworks and to start using Beckton Riverside as the working title.

“Bring the heritage into the now and take it into the future!”

A village on the river

Participants felt that Beckton has insufficient facilities for daily life, evening and weekend recreation. It lacks an “anchor” attractor space or “heart” to bring the community together and provide for cultural and community events - Asda is the principal hub. Participants recognised the opportunity of the development to focus on the river Thames, providing a vibrant mix of uses and events which would serve existing residents and attract visitors. A “village on the river” would support a mix of small businesses, shops, restaurants, cafes, cultural and community amenities to serve the new and wider community. Providing for locals and visitors would help bring footfall to sustain a mix of businesses and facilities. Commercial space should be provided that is affordable and supports start-ups and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). Delivering the concept can begin early with “meanwhile” activity, involving the diverse local community. Bringing in small businesses and food, arts and cultural events will start to build the identity of the place.

“It’s a long way to central London and there’s nothing to do at night.”

Riverside Park “Wow Factor”

For generations industrial activity has made the riverside largely inaccessible and when walking along the Thames Path, residents currently say they can see the river but not get close to it. There was excitement about the prospect of opening the gasworks site up to create a new riverside park for leisure and events, walking, cycling as well as nature. The park will help connect neighbouring communities and participants were keen to explore the potential of using the river

Key Themes cont. on next page...

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...Key Themes cont. from previous page

for transport, bringing in the Thames Clipper service as well as boats for leisure. The Victorian piers are the only remaining built heritage and participants were keen that ideas should be explored as to how they may be creatively integrated into a curated Riverside strategy. Nature is a key consideration, with the mud flats designated a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and provision should be made for bird watching, interpretation, etc. The park will be part of the 'WOW!' factor of the development - and this should be delivered early to provide an attraction for local people and visitors and set the standard for Beckton Riverside.

"There such a juxtaposition of sky, green and river, and it's frustrating not being able to reach it."

Getting around - better connectivity

Beckton is seen as an isolated location and "trapped" by water, with a lack of river crossing opportunities. Many participants said getting around Beckton and North Woolwich is not easy and has been made harder for some by recent changes to local bus routes. Beckton Riverside provides the opportunity for improved connectivity around the docks including the provision of a Thames boat service from the riverside. Within Phase 1 the streets should be designed to accommodate active travel opportunities and be future proofed as new forms of mobility come on stream.

"There are no easy ways to get from A to B and a lot of people simply don't bother."

A place for everyone

Beckton Riverside should be a truly inclusive place, providing something for everyone, regardless of income or ability. There should be a range of homes to suit people of all incomes, set in an area that is affordable and welcoming and does not alienate or drive out local people who have already invested in the area. The development should provide the necessary range of facilities and have well-connected, safe open spaces to support daily life within walking distance, with areas to meet, play and help integrate existing and future residents.

"It must be "we", not them and us!"

"Make it a welcoming and friendly environment for everyone." (young person)

Building civic pride and positivity

The Beckton community has many strengths, not least its impressive young people, many of whom attended the CPW from Kingsford School and who expressed huge enthusiasm to build the "best in London" at Beckton Riverside. There is a strong desire to build on the positivity of the young people and create a place that celebrates the historic riverside location and the diversity of the community. Everyone wants to be proud of their community and what it has to offer, and Beckton Riverside has an important role to play in enhancing civic pride in the area. A certainty of investing in the local community will demonstrate positivity for the future.

"Civic pride can resonate with everyone."

"I want it to be the best in London!" (young person)

Continuing community engagement and early wins

Participants at the CPW appreciated the opportunity to be involved in workshops and hands-on planning groups, with time and space to explore ideas with the St William design team. Building relationships and trust in the process is important. This will be helped through continuing engagement and by focusing on the delivery of early win, meanwhile projects involving local people. These will help activate the site and bring it back into the consciousness of the local Beckton and London-wide community. Subject to site safety, the early provision of green spaces could include community growing projects, events and activities to animate the area. Further community meetings should be held as the proposals for Phase 1 are developed. A Beckton Riverside Community Forum could be set up to begin identifying opportunities, researching best practice from elsewhere and start planning for early win projects that can involve and showcase the local community and put Beckton Riverside on the map.

"I appreciate this process and want to know that we're contributing in the right way."

"To have to wait five to ten years for something - it's bonkers! Can we have something now?"

"Meanwhile uses are really important. Put something there. Show that you care."

"You were all kids back in the day. Kids are not very patient and we always want to have fun!" (young person)

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