INTRODUCTION

The Legacy Corporation Characterisation Study has been prepared to support the review of the Legacy Corporation Local Plan and act as a reference for development proposals within the Legacy Corporation area. It provides a detailed picture of the character of the Legacy Corporation area today and how it has evolved focused around the four sub areas identified within the Local Plan.

The study identifies the physical characteristics of the area as a whole and breaks this down into character areas, identifying key positive and negative features. This is combined with planning information to determine the potential impacts on character. The aim of the study is to provide an in-depth understanding of the character of the Legacy Corporation area today and how it has evolved to this point, to provide guidance and parameters to influence future development in the area through a variety of means, including:

• Describing the evolution of the Legacy Corporation area and identifying the main drivers for change;
• Identifying the range, date and form of landscape and building types and relating them to the evolution of the area;
• Differentiating character areas as well as describing and explaining their distinctive qualities.

The Local Plan contains a number of policies that address matters of character and design. Key policies are:

• BN.4 – Designing development
• BN.5 – Tall buildings
• BN.10 – Protecting key views
• BN.17 – Conserving or enhancing heritage assets

The study provides context to the approach taken in these policies, including the associated ‘prevailing’ and ‘generally expected’ heights that are identified within the Local Plan sub areas. It also provides context to the potential for intensification across each character area by drawing on the planning designations and information from the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). Therefore, scale, massing and grain, as well as constraints and sensitivities, are identified, including where identified character areas fall within Conservation Area boundaries and by providing information on heritage in these areas.

POLICY CONTEXT

The Legacy Corporation Characterisation Study is being undertaken at a time of change within the wider planning policy context. The Mayor of London published a draft new London Plan in December 2017 which, following an Examination in Public during 2019, is due to be published in its final form in the near future. This includes supporting evidence based studies looking at London’s wider character across the city as a whole. Nationally an updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in July 2018.

The Legacy Corporation Local Plan was adopted in 2015 setting the local planning policy context for its area. A review of the Local Plan has also been undertaken, with an Examination into the updated Plan taking place in 2019 with adoption expected early in 2020. The review of the Local Plan has taken the recent pace, scale and nature of change within the area into account. This pace of change has had an impact on local character which is reflected in this study. The Legacy Corporation has published a range of additional planning guidance that informs this study, these include the adopted Bromley-by-Bow, Pudding Mill and Hackney Wick Fish Island Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD’s). The Legacy Corporation area has conservation areas at Hackney Wick, Fish Island and White Post Lane, Sugar House Lane and Three Mills that reflect the historic character of those locations and help to inform this study.

There is guidance in place to support the production of characterisation work in the form of the Mayor of London’s Character and Context SPC. This sets out the parameters and guidance around scope, methodology and analysis to ensure conformity as well as providing a framework for the production of appropriate evidence. The SPC emphasises the importance of local character, as well as context and scale and linking identified areas at any scale up to the wider area within which they sit. This study has been prepared in line with the guidance set out within this SPC.

BACKGROUND TO THE LEGACY CORPORATION CHARACTERISATION

STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

The Legacy Corporation area has seen significant change in recent times, with much of this associated directly or indirectly with the hosting of the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012. The investment in the development of what is now the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and the wider infrastructure required to support the 2012 Games has also acted as a catalyst for investment and change in the areas surrounding the Park. Its transformation and reopening in 2014, including the removal of temporary venues and facilities, along with the on-going development of a significant amount of new mainly residential and business space in those surrounding areas, has resulted in an unprecedented level of change. This characterisation study sets out this historic and changing character of the area providing a current reference point and practical tool for development proposals and in making planning decisions.

This study builds on work already undertaken in producing the area SPDs for Bromley-by-Bow, Pudding Mill and Hackney Wick & Fish Island and the information already available in relation to the conservation areas, along with other evidence and studies associated with the review of the Local Plan. Extensive surveys of the area have taken place, with site visits being undertaken to compliment desk based work and establish a detailed understanding of the area. Other key tasks have included:

• Area-wide mapping of key features and conditions including; routes, street pattern, land use, topography, flood zones, blue/green infrastructure, conservation areas and heritage assets;
• Area-wide mapping of existing built character including building height and the grain of urban blocks;
• Review of the contribution made by urban blocks to the immediate street environment and the wider area’s character;
• More localised work broken down by sub-area and within the sub-areas the detailed identification and division of sub areas into individual character areas;
• Site visits with key officers from the Legacy Corporation.

The Local Plan divides the LLDC area into four sub-areas:

• Sub Area 1, Hackney Wick and Fish Island
• Sub Area 2, North Stratford and Eton Manor
• Sub Area 3, Central Stratford and Southern Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park
• Sub Area 4, Bromley-by-Bow, Pudding Mill, Sugar House Lane and Mill Meads

Each sub area and its historic context are described in this study. In order to understand each sub area at a greater level of detail, this study breaks each one down into a further series of Character Areas, as shown in Figure 0.1 that are then individually described. Within this document a series of cross-sections illustrate the overall building form and heights along key routes. Figure 0.2 shows the pattern of existing development across the area along with development that has planning permission, indicating the building heights associated with this. This represents a point in time within a dynamic and changing area.

The information, including mapping and cross-sections, within this document represent a point in time and is based on the best available information at that time. It will not therefore always reflect future development or changes to current plans for development but will continue to provide a baseline for the character of the Legacy Corporation area.
Figure 0.1: Character Areas Map
- Sub Area Boundary
- Borough Boundary
- Character Area Boundary
- Local/Neighbourhood Centre
- Green Area
- Conservation Area
- Listed Buildings
- Locally Listed Buildings

Figure 0.2: Building Form and Heights
- Sub Area Boundary
- Borough Boundary
- Existing
- Area Under Construction
- Permitted (REM, FULL, OUTLINE)
- Area Covered By SPD

Building Heights:
- 30+ Storeys
- 20 - 29 Storeys
- 12 - 19 Storeys
- 5 - 11 Storeys
- 0 - 4 Storeys
THE LEGACY CORPORATION AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The Legacy Corporation area is located within east London, approximately four miles from the Central Activities Zone (CAZ). It occupies a key strategic location at the meeting point of the London-Stanstead-Cambridge-Peterborough growth corridor and the Thames Gateway Growth Corridor. Within London, the area is directly connected to the major business and growth hubs of Central London, Canary Wharf and the Royal Docks through extensive transport infrastructure.

HISTORY OF THE LEGACY CORPORATION AREA

The Legacy Corporation area has a fascinating and varied history. Historically the area was marshland and farmland along the spine of the River Lea, before settlements started to appear during the Roman period at Stratford. During the medieval period, the area included eight tidal mills, a Cistercian abbey at Stratford Langthorne and the early development of industry that would come to characterise much of the area began to take place.

Industry began to rapidly expand within the area from the 18th century, focused around the waterways and railways (including the River Lea) that continue to bisect the area. Industry at Fish Island was intermingled with back-to-back terraces to house those working in the area’s factories. The area around Sugar House Lane became a focus for brewing and distilling. Many of the structures and buildings identified as non-designated heritage assets across the area have their origins in this history. As the 20th century dawned many newer industries had an association or origin in buildings and yards of Hackney Wick & Fish Island, including early plastics, chemicals and petrol chemicals.

This development continued into the middle of the century but the area experienced significant bomb damage during World War II due to its industrial nature and proximity to strategically important infrastructure. The combination of this bomb damage and a reduction in traditional industries led to a period of increasing decline during the second half of the 20th century, leading the area to be earmarked for regeneration in the 1990s and eventually to its selection as the location for the main Olympic and Paralympic venues and facilities for the successful London 2012 Games bid.

The investment in venues, infrastructure and parkland within and around the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park that are a result of hosting the 2012 Games, has become a catalyst for change and regeneration within the area. With this and the wider Legacy from hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games having been integrated into these plans from the outset. This investment has resulted in the area becoming increasingly connected and accessible, while significant amounts of new development has and continues to be delivered on sites within and outside of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. The comprehensive change being experienced across much of the Legacy Corporation area is focused within large sites being planned and built in phases over time. East Bank is becoming a focus for higher education and cultural institutions, the International Quarter London (IQL) and Here East a focus for business and commerce and sites such as Chobham Manor, East Wick, Sugar House Island and Chobham Farm are being developed with a focus on housing and development of new communities. In Hackney Wick and Fish Island and some other more established locations, there is significant but finer grained change with a residential and mixed-use focus.

While much of the change being experienced is comprehensive, established areas such as the Eastway and the Trowbridge Estate in Hackney Wick are unlikely to experience significant change. The history of the area continues to be reflected in historic buildings, structures, street patterns and waterways that are reflected in the existence of a number of designated (nationally listed) and non-designated (locally listed) heritage assets and four conservation areas, shown in Figure 0.1. Influencing and providing a reference for the developing character of the area as it changes over time. Those conservation areas are:

- Fish Island and White Post Lane
  - Hackney Wick
- Sugar House Lane
- Three Mills
LEGACY CORPORATION AREA ANALYSIS

Sitting within the Lower Lee Valley and typified by its network of historic waterways running mainly north to south, connecting to the River Thames, the communities and industry within and around the Legacy Corporation area have grown up around these and the limited east-west highway routes. The form and type of settlement has historically been influenced by this waterway access, the fluvial flood risk from the River Lea and tidal flood risk from the tidal River Thames. Although there are strategic and local flood defence measures in place, there are some locations that remain identified as at higher risk and this continues to influence location form and type of new development.

The central part of the Legacy Corporation area is characterised by large amounts of open space, much of this designated as Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) and therefore heavily protected. As part of the evidence base for the Legacy Corporation’s Local Plan Review an Open Space and Play Space Assessment has been undertaken providing a clear picture of the network of open spaces across the area and the form and function of these. The Local Plan provides protection for these, designating these a ‘Local Open Space’, ensuring continued and appropriate high-quality provision. The network of green open space (Figure 0.4) creates opportunities for new developments to not only access but link to these resources.

The natural topography of the area is low-lying, flat and open, reflecting its historic marshland origins and its position within the Lower Lee Valley area on the course of the River Lea with its associated network of watercourses. Localised changes in levels occur, with higher land levels apparent in areas that have been artificially raised due to past development activity, especially the land raising of the former Stratford Raillands that are now home to East Village, the International Quarter London and Westfield Stratford City. The topography of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park has been specifically remoulded around the waterway network. The waterways and their towpaths and walkways provide a lower level, with Parklands, concourse and development platform areas sitting at a higher level, joined mainly by river walls in the South Park area and by remodelled landform and park in the North Park. This transition zone includes paths and gardens, while in the North Park a basin area has been created as home to a wetlands area that provides both significant habitat and flood mitigation. The area of the Lee Valley Velopark and the embankments associated with edges of the A12 highway route also provide a range of hard and soft landscaped edges to artificially raised areas. In other parts of the wider area topographic changes are less pronounced, with changes in level occurring mainly within development sites. The route of the Greenway from Wick Lane in Fish Island to Abbey Mills, provides a relatively unbroken raised route roughly west to east through the southern part of the area.

The built form varies across the area as shown in Figure 0.2, with tall buildings predominantly focused around the Stratford Stations and Stratford High Street. This reflects density increases that have been introduced by new developments located close to these transport nodes. Low-rise housing can be found to the south of Stratford High Street around Abbey Lane and in and around the Trowbridge Estate in Hackney Wick. In much of the area new development coming forward is in a mid-rise form, and in the Hackney Wick & Fish Island area the design of these mid-rise buildings often reflects the industrial and warehouse building types that have historically existed in this area.

The Legacy Corporation area has historically been well connected by canals and rail infrastructure as a result of its industrial past. Further infrastructure development took place at the end of the 20th century with High Speed 1 (HS1) and at the start of the 21st century to support the staging of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The area includes six stations, the locations of which are shown in Figure 0.3:

- Stratford
- Stratford International
- Hackney Wick
- Pudding Mill
- Stratford High Street
- Bromley-by-Bow

Currently the area is served by National Rail, HS1, four London Underground lines, the London Overground, DLR, TfL Rail and an extensive bus network, and is near City Airport, with links to other airports. The new Elizabeth Line (Crossrail 1) will also serve Stratford Station.

Conversely the rail, water and road networks that provide such a high level of strategic connection also bisect the area, creating challenges for localised connectivity and accessibility. This continues to be a challenge and has a strong impact on local character. A focus and feature of many new schemes is improvement in connectivity and the creation of local connections for cyclists and pedestrians. There are still areas to the North West which do not enjoy the same Public Transport Accessibility Levels (PTAL) as those to the east and south. These local connections are key to improving access to these areas.

The nature of development and development sites within the Legacy Corporation area is one dominated by large sites and with large, often multi-phase, development schemes that have a planning permission in place. This results in limited opportunity for small sites to become available for development. This study identifies the level of potential for small development sites within its Character Area analysis, the potential for small development sites is set out in Figure 0.7.

Figure 0.7: Potential for small development sites

- Sub Area Boundary
- Borough Boundary
- Character Area Boundary
- Low
- Very Low
- No Capacity