

London Housing Zones

Draft Vision for London Housing Zone: Barking Town Centre

Barking Town Centre has superb accessibility enjoying London Underground, Overground and National Rail services together with numerous bus connections. Central London, Stratford and Canary Wharf are only 15-20 minutes away. National Express have just been awarded a long term franchise and are committed to completing a £5 million improvement scheme to the Grade II listed Barking Station by 2017 to ensure it meets the needs of growing numbers of passengers and presents a much improved gateway into the borough. Given the Zone 4 location and speed of connections to Central London, property values in Barking have failed to reflect this connectivity and as such the private sector has not brought forward a number of development sites with planning approval.

The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham has in recent years led on the creation of new homes in the Town Centre across a range of tenures alongside carrying out a wide range of other improvements and investing in facilities which drive growth and footfall such as the Technical Skills Academy, Barking Enterprise Centre, a new leisure centre (opening in December 2014), an ASDA superstore and a new mixed used development around the Town Square. The private sector is just awakening to Barking's potential and there are over a dozen sites which could be brought forward for housing delivery having a significant impact on London's housing demands and needs. Support to help deliver our shared objectives is needed and therefore it is an ideal time for Barking to become a London Housing Zone.

The Council has a very strong record of delivering new housing – directly and in partnership with others. The Council has utilised its land, its expertise (including extensive use of compulsory purchase powers), its financial freedoms, its innovative thinking and its partnerships with the private sector to deliver award winning schemes. As a Local Planning Authority we are committed to delivering decisions on Barking Housing Zone schemes within 13 weeks. In 2013/14 the Council approved 46 out of 47 major applications, 91% within 13 weeks. This has been possible by the borough being one of the first Councils to have an adopted Local Plan including an Area Action Plan for Barking Town Centre. The Council will introduce its Community Infrastructure Levy in January 2015 which will further speed up decision making and provide certainty to developers.

Our innovative and award winning William Street Quarter scheme in partnership with an institutional investor has delivered high quality affordable rent property tackling head-on the problem of 'generation rent' alongside helping to support town centre growth and prosperity. Alongside our own efforts to deliver high quality affordable rental properties in the town centre we are keen to support commercial private sector initiatives. Next year Grainger are due to let 100 apartments in the London Road/North Street mixed used scheme which the Council helped facilitate. It will be the first commercial private rented sector (PRS) scheme in the Town Centre however Grainger and others have recognised Barking's potential and are keen to work with us on delivering further schemes. The

Council sees commercial PRS schemes as an ideal mechanism for delivering well managed and maintained schemes ideally suited to town centres which provide a different offer to tenants and critically help to support the development of the town centre economy - in particular the nascent restaurant and evening economy.

In addition Barking offers scope to deliver private sector owner occupied and shared ownership housing which is the most affordable in the capital – helping give key workers and other people essential to the London economy the opportunity of their own home in a very accessible location.

The Council has a growing reputation for high quality design and public realm and will only partner with private and Housing Association partners who put quality of design and accommodation at the heart of their schemes. It is critical to Barking's long term prosperity that all schemes contribute positively to the Town Centre and the Council is ideally placed and experienced at co-ordination of development schemes for fulfilment of wider objectives. Density and height are not necessarily a concern provided design quality is achieved and they are consistent with the Barking Town Centre Area Action Plan which promotes tall buildings around the station, along the River Roding and in the Gascoigne Estate.

The Council recognises the importance of new house building in creating a more vibrant and prosperous town centre. The delivery of 6,000 new homes is at the heart of the Barking Town Centre Area Action Plan and it forms a central part of a new Barking Town Centre Strategy which mirrors the Mayor's Town Centres SPG with its focus on mixed used intensification. The range of schemes proposed as part of our bid deliver a wide range of social and economic benefits alongside addressing housing needs.

In terms of jobs and growth, a key focus is on ensuring Barking becomes East London's cultural hub which in turn supports place-making and Barking's improving popularity as a place to live. We will do this through supporting the Ice House Quarter to deliver its full potential as a home for creative industries, establishing a firm partnership with the Barbican and Guildhall at the Broadway theatre with Barking & Dagenham College and building on the success of active arts engagement of the community through Up! Barking and Creative Barking and Dagenham.

We expect all our bid partners to work together with the GLA to help further place-making in Barking Town Centre and promote the town's offer as a great place to live with high quality and affordable (in its broadest sense) housing.

The Council would be very interested in agreeing with the GLA the establishment of a rolling fund for Barking Town Centre where funding released from the completion of a scheme can move to another town centre project. This has worked very successfully in the past with English Partnerships and the Council's track record is strong in making best use of such resources. Our bid is broken down into sections – delivery by 2018 and delivery post 2018 and sites have further been grouped into either 'New housing in the heart of the town centre' or 'Realising the potential of the River Roding'.

Key schemes which could be included within our bid which collectively deliver a comprehensive package of housing units and regeneration objectives include:

- Working with Swan Housing on a site owned by both parties adjacent to Barking station. We share an objective of alongside providing high quality housing (both private and affordable) providing a permanent home for the Barking Bathhouse - an Outer London Fund pop-up spa and bar which was extremely successful in summer 2012 and has resulted in the formation of a social enterprise of local residents. A mixed used scheme with the Barking Bathhouse providing a striking ground floor spa and bar and other communal facilities will not only provide a superb facility for the development but further the promotion of Barking as an interesting location with new cultural and entertainment facilities. It is hoped a cycling hub can also be delivered as part of the project (Site 6).
- Utilising the Council's former Sport Centre site to create an innovative mixed use scheme involving housing, a cinema and Care City - a flagship scheme in partnership with North East London Foundation Trust delivering a wide range of social and economic benefits (Site 11).
- Working with Countryside to unlock 1,000 new homes on the River Roding which has had planning approval for a number of years (Site 4).
- The Council delivering a striking terrace of social rent homes (Site 14).
- Working with a private sector landowner on land assembly and demolition to transform an under utilised site close to the station containing a large vacant office block which does not meet occupiers' demands into a mixed used scheme delivering hundreds of new homes (Site 7).
- Continuing our strong partnership with Bouygues on unlocking a further development site through land assembly, demolition and creation of hundreds of new homes (Site 5).
- A longer term scheme to transform the Western edge of the Gascoigne estate recognising the potential for intensification through masterplanning, decanting and demolition (Site 13).
- Working with landowner Estates & Agency on redevelopment of a largely vacant retail park to deliver new riverside homes and a primary school (Site 3).

[NOTE: The plan (to be tabled) will be amended to put sites in priority order – it is unlikely all 15 sites shown on the plan will form part of the bid but there is ample scope to achieve bidding requirements without including all the sites. The full bid will detail exactly what is required to unlock development on the sites and the roles of different partners.]

Draft Vision for Barking Riverside London Housing Zone

[Note: A single Barking Town Centre/Barking Riverside bid could be submitted highlighting the 7 minute connectivity between the two if the Gospel Oak to Barking line (GOBLIN) is extended and how Barking would be the nearest town centre for Barking Riverside. In the meantime the section below highlights a vision for a Barking Riverside Zone.]

Barking Riverside is London's largest housing development site with outline planning approval for 10,800 homes and associated facilities. With 2km of River Thames frontage it offers superb potential to provide housing in a new community with superb accessibility to central London in a borough where property prices are more affordable for London's workforce. A London Housing Zone can help support the delivery of a population the size of Windsor in a very sustainable development supporting the growth of the local and regional economy.

Critical to the delivery of Barking Riverside and raising speed of delivery from around 150-200 homes a year to around 500 is securing the funding for an extension of the London Overground line. This would address the most significant barrier to growth and have a dramatic impact on the development's profile helping improve development viability. Delivery of such housing numbers requires a range of tenures fully in line with the LHZ aspirations.

Funding has been secured for the delivery of a new secondary school and Special Educational Needs school and construction will start later this year. A Community Interest Company has been established for the management of the public realm with significant public open space being provided as part of the development. and

One of Barking Riverside's current challenges is the oppressive entrances to the new development through a dated industrial area. The contrast between Barking Riverside's award winning architecture and the industrial area is stark however there is scope for a range of interventions to address this - from land assembly and redevelopment of the worst sites through to selective, low cost artistic interventions on sites which employ hundreds of people but just need some imaginative improvements. Therefore in addition to land owned by Barking Riverside Ltd the Council has identified a package of 'Creekmouth interventions' to form part of the bid which includes the delivery of over 200 homes. Improving the gateways into Barking Riverside also helps improve connections to the rest of Barking.

A Barking Riverside Housing Zone bid would therefore prioritise seeking funding towards the delivery of the rail infrastructure and delivery of 'Creekmouth interventions' to ensure Barking Riverside delivers new housing but forms an integral part of its surroundings.