

# Canal Placemaking

in the making



## Executive Summary

The Canal Placemaking Study provides the Paddington Arm of the Grand Union Canal at Old Oak & Park Royal with an ambitious, deliverable and strategic framework for improvement which has been developed with and for a diverse group of communities, businesses, organisations and statutory bodies.

The study is structured to set out an overall, high-level vision > [Chapter 3](#) themed in accordance with the priorities set out for the Grand Union Canal Paddington Arm in the current Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC) Local Plan, which is then set out as a strategy > [Chapter 4](#) of principles and recommendations for delivery, material palettes, typical sections and so on. The study aims to achieve a balance between the canal as a place of enhanced public activity (civic, leisure, living afloat), a place of movement and connection, and a place of nature conservation and biodiversity – an ecological habitat equivalent in size to a central London park. Accordingly, strategic intentions are set out in terms of how they balance these needs, and as three ‘types’ of intervention: ‘caring’ projects which are about behavioural change, accountability and management; ‘nurturing’ projects which are about protecting and enhancing existing qualities; and lastly ‘enlivening’ projects which are about boosting public life. Uniting all of these, this study advocates the creation of a ‘canal community’ along the Grand Union Canal Paddington Arm, through which the area's diverse communities and bodies contribute to the canal's care, maintenance and life whilst also benefitting from its unique offer and quality. The delivery of the strategy is considered in a series of exemplar scenarios > [Chapter 5](#) showing how the multiple principles and projects might play out on specific sites and in relation to particular needs, challenges and opportunities, followed by a toolbox supplying more detailed palettes and techniques..

This study is underpinned by a body of public engagement work, *Listening to the Grand Union Canal*, key themes from which are summarised > [p.49](#) with every recommendation in some way responding to community input.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Objectives

The aim of this study is to set out a coordinated vision, strategy, and implementation guidance to support the creation of an active canal community of residents, businesses and developers. This will help maximise the benefits of the Paddington Arm of the Grand Union Canal and its setting across the Old Oak and Park Royal area and to make the best use of the canal's unique character in the context of significant change in the wider area.

This study sits within the extant draft OPDC Local Plan (June 2018) and represents a development of the policies and spirit of this plan with a particular focus on placemaking along the Canal in Old Oak and Park Royal. It is expected that the content of this study will go on to inform particular projects within and along the canal corridor and more broadly to inform supplementary planning guidance. Ensuring durability, flexibility and applicability has therefore been a key principle in developing this strategy, in parallel to ensuring that it has achieved support from key stakeholders and landowners, including the Canal & River Trust.

Building on the three themes in the Local Plan, several key questions emerge which are addressed in this study:

- Civic & Leisure – how can civic, public and leisure uses along the canal corridor be encouraged while mitigating the impacts of increased human activity as the regeneration of Old Oak and Park Royal is delivered?
- Ecology & Heritage – how can the 'wild' ecological character and industrial heritage of the canal be celebrated, protected and enhanced?
- Freight & Transport – how can waterborne movement, for example for freight and people, be encouraged?

This study sets out a framework through which these overarching challenges can be addressed by multiple stakeholders.

## 1.2 Rationale

The Paddington Arm of the Grand Union Canal is well loved by local communities as a place of calm and wildness. Though used by local residents, workers and commuters at specific times of the day, the canal remains a hidden asset, a peaceful space in West London. As it stands today, the canal has a variety of qualities, spaces and conditions of value. These include:

- Existing canalside activity, such as pub and restaurant terraces, and spaces, both designed and 'found', for public life such as eating lunch.
- A thriving boating community.
- A series of existing bridges, many of which are locally-listed and provide a strong visual and townscape character. Existing canal-side activity tends to be found around these bridges.
- Areas, including those inaccessible to people, of biodiversity and wilderness quality and which provide an important series of habitats and environmental benefits.
- A number of heritage artefacts designated and otherwise, from historic buildings through to easily-missed items such as 'stop locks'.
- A slower pace providing an opportunity for calm and escape from the business of the surrounding residential and industrial areas.

Park Royal and Old Oak will undergo significant transformations in the decades to come. The Grand Union Canal Paddington Arm presents an opportunity to support the quality and success of this regeneration and the public spaces that will be delivered. Within Old Oak and Park Royal, the canal passes through three London Boroughs, the Old Oak Neighbourhood Forum area and part of it is covered by Development Framework Principles (Old Oak North). Therefore, a coherent vision and organising principles for the canal are necessary. This will enable targeted investment and ensure that projects deliver appropriate improvements of high quality to optimise the canal in

Old Oak and Park Royal and its unique surroundings as an asset for the leisure and wellbeing of current and future residents, employees and visitors.

Strategic projects need to:

- Create improved access, including DDA considerations.
- Enhance the public realm and tackle issues of fly-tipping and antisocial behaviour.
- Encourage active travel and physical activity of local community members to improve public health and wellbeing.
- Manage conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists, and between those dwelling on the canal and those travelling through.
- Provide comfortable, well-managed moorings in the right locations, and with appropriate facilities.
- Enable activities that improve a 'sense of place' and perceptions of personal safety.
- Offer amenities for all users – established, emerging and future – including local businesses, residential communities, and visitors.

As summarised in 1.1, the emerging Local Plan for the OPDC area provides the policy context for the Canal Placemaking Study, outlining three strategic functions for the canal which shape the opportunity and the rationale of this study. They are as follows:

- The canal as leisure destination, with a focus on civic uses such as open space, permanent and temporary leisure uses, residential and community infrastructure including for boater communities, and as a connector between different neighbourhoods.
- The canal as environmental asset, in terms of its value as ecologic corridor between larger green spaces, its position within the Thames watershed, and as part of a network of ecosystem services.
- The canal as functional movement corridor, providing transport functions and space for moorings across a variety of uses, including its potential for freight transport uses.



This study sets out a strategic opportunity and approach for the Grand Union Canal Paddington Arm through Old Oak and Park Royal, drawing on experiences in London and elsewhere, both good and bad. It brings together and draws upon the many existing strategies, planning and design studies already in place within the area, such as the OPDC Local Plan and the OPDC Old Oak North Development Framework Principles. It provides additional detail where useful and relevant, and provides a coherent vision for the role of the canal as a sustainable spine for the redevelopment of Old Oak and Park Royal.

## 2 Context

### 2.1 Regional Context

Interventions at the Grand Union Canal Paddington Arm in the Old Oak and Park Royal area need to be considered in the canal's wider urban and regional context. There are two key conditions that need to be considered, these are also laid out on the maps on the following pages.

- The urban edge: the Grand Union Canal Paddington Arm in Old Oak and Park Royal, similar to the Lee Navigation at Springfield, feels like the 'edge of the urban'; a place where a 'wildness' of character feels stronger than in the more inner areas, in addition to the slower pace of life that the canal engenders wherever it exists. That character is likely to shift westward as development occurs at Old Oak North. This development is expected to increase pressure on boater communities and other canal and towpath uses. This study sets out how the slow pace and 'wild edge' qualities might be retained within the OPDC canal corridor and integrated with significant developments.
- Canalside activity, though less often including 'major' clusters of activity or uses, remains regular in the less densely activated and more wild areas of the Paddington Arm. Areas recommended for increased activity within this study respond to this rhythm and pattern.



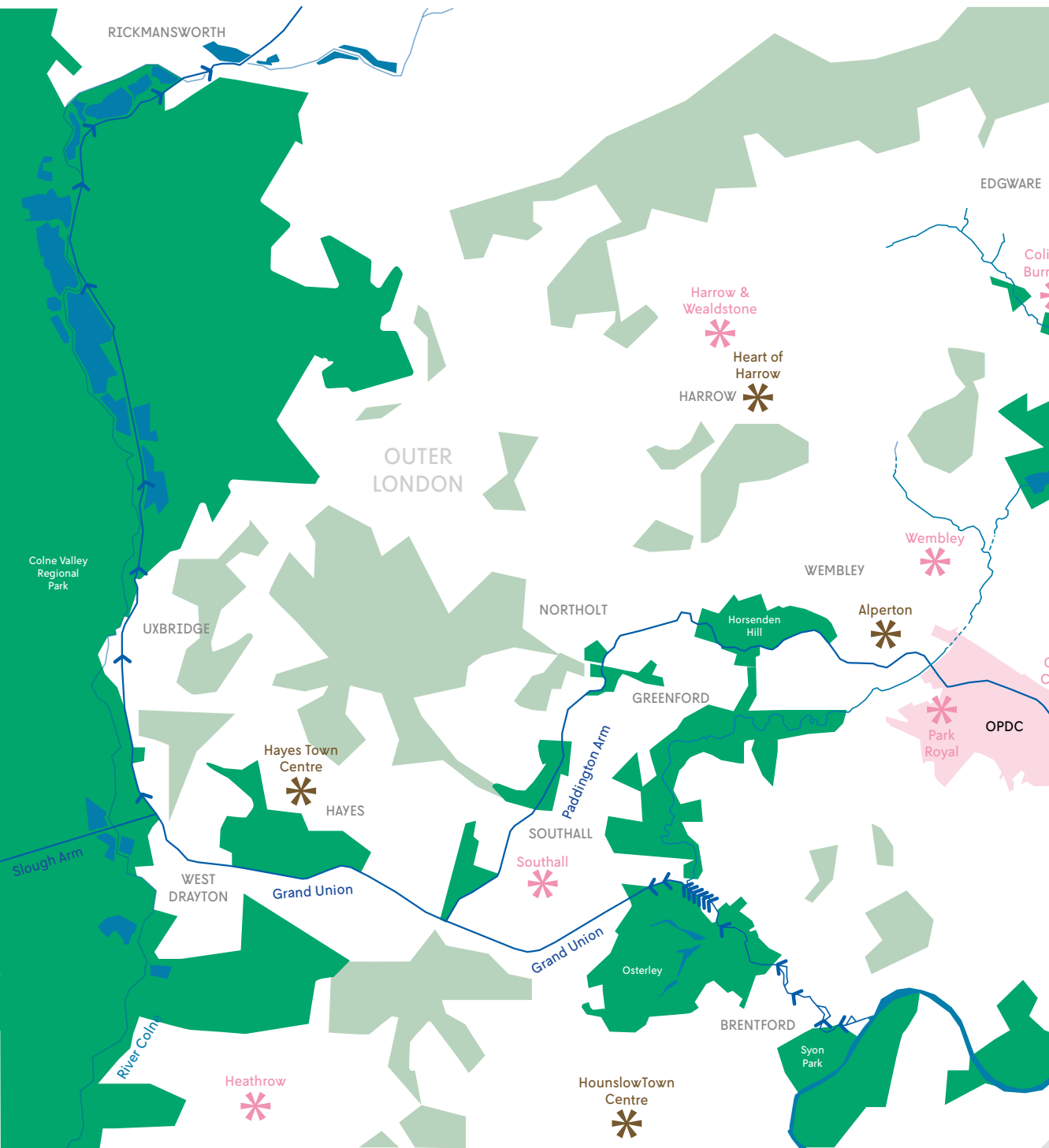
The Grand Union Canal towpath at Kensal

'We pass under Ladbroke Grove and the landscape changes instantly. The residential and commercial buildings we have passed since Paddington are replaced by train tracks, gasometers and vacant land on one side, a huge cemetery on the other. London as we have known it quickly transforms into something remote, leafy industrial... the air smells sweet, of sugar, sulphur and oats. It feels good to be getting out.'

— Helen Babbs, 'Adrift' (2016)

# In Context: All London Green Grid & London-wide development areas

- Canal/navigation
- Other water
- < Lock
- Inner London (London Plan 2018)
- OPDC area
- All London Green Grid
- All London Green Grid – spaces adjacent to canal or river
- ✱ Opportunity Areas (London Plan 2018)
- ✱ Housing Zones (GLA) not included in OA figures



- With a high concentration of Opportunity Areas and Housing Zones, the OPDC Grand Union Canal represents an unusual chance to deliver best practice in canal enhancement.
- Though bordered by significant green spaces, the OPDC Grand Union Canal sits in a sparse area of the All London Green Grid, particularly in terms of waterside green amenity. It is designated an ALGG strategic link and is an important green/blue corridor.



# In Context: Boater experience and facilities

## Boat facilities

- Canal/navigation
- Other water
- < Lock

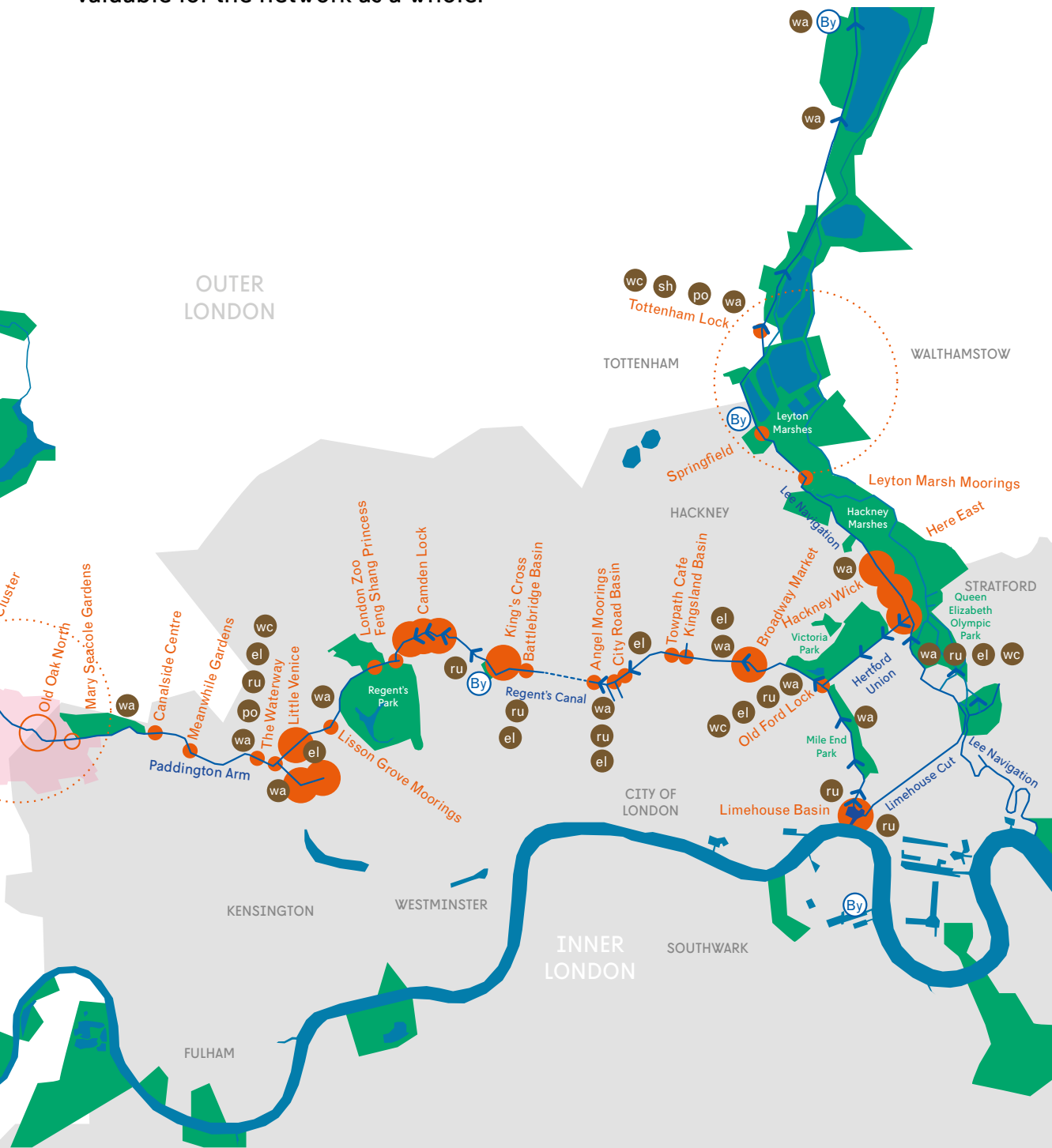
■ All London Green Grid – spaces adjacent to canal or river  
 ■ All London Green Grid – spaces adjacent to canal or river

- Canalside public activity, e.g. pubs, moorings, cafés, restaurants, boater facilities.
- Clustering of canalside public activity.
- Potential canalside activity in OPDC area.

- po pump-out (sewage)
- el elsan point (sewage)
- ru rubbish point
- sh showers
- wa water
- wc toilets
- By boatyard/dry dock



Overall the OPDC canal corridor is somewhat lacking in boater facilities and somewhat dependent on the very busy cluster at Little Venice. The nearest sewage point is close at Alperton (2m), though Little Venice (4.5m) offers better facilities. Nearest rubbish facilities are quite inconvenient, at Little Venice and at Bulls Bridge (10m). Water is close, at Kensal (2m), but boatyard and dry-dock facilities are unusually distant. Given the pressures on boater facilities in central London an increase in facilities within the OPDC area would be valuable for the network as a whole.



## 2.2 Local Context

The context framing the Grand Union Canal Paddington Arm in Old Oak and Park Royal changes significantly, and will continue to do so, across its length. This study therefore identifies a basic spatial structure, in the form of three Canal Character Areas. These set out the basic spatial conditions that interventions should respond to and which should shape the interpretation of the study's strategic design principles. They also describe existing qualities of the canal that should be retained, and are developed out of existing local policy.

### Park Royal

This area closely follows the Strategic Industrial Location area of the Local Plan, and the designated Park Royal neighbourhood centre. Recommendations for this area respond to the retention and proposed intensification of industrial uses & typologies in this location, and on the role of boater communities in the quality and liveliness of this part of the Grand Union. This area should work to retain its wild and tranquil feeling of the 'urban edge'. > [Chapter 2.1](#)

### Channelgate

Whilst likely to form a series of development sites in the long run, for the foreseeable future this area will exist as a worksite for HS2 construction; it therefore serves as a 'gap' between the distinct areas of Park Royal and Old Oak, though with a character of its own, combining wild qualities with significant infrastructure.

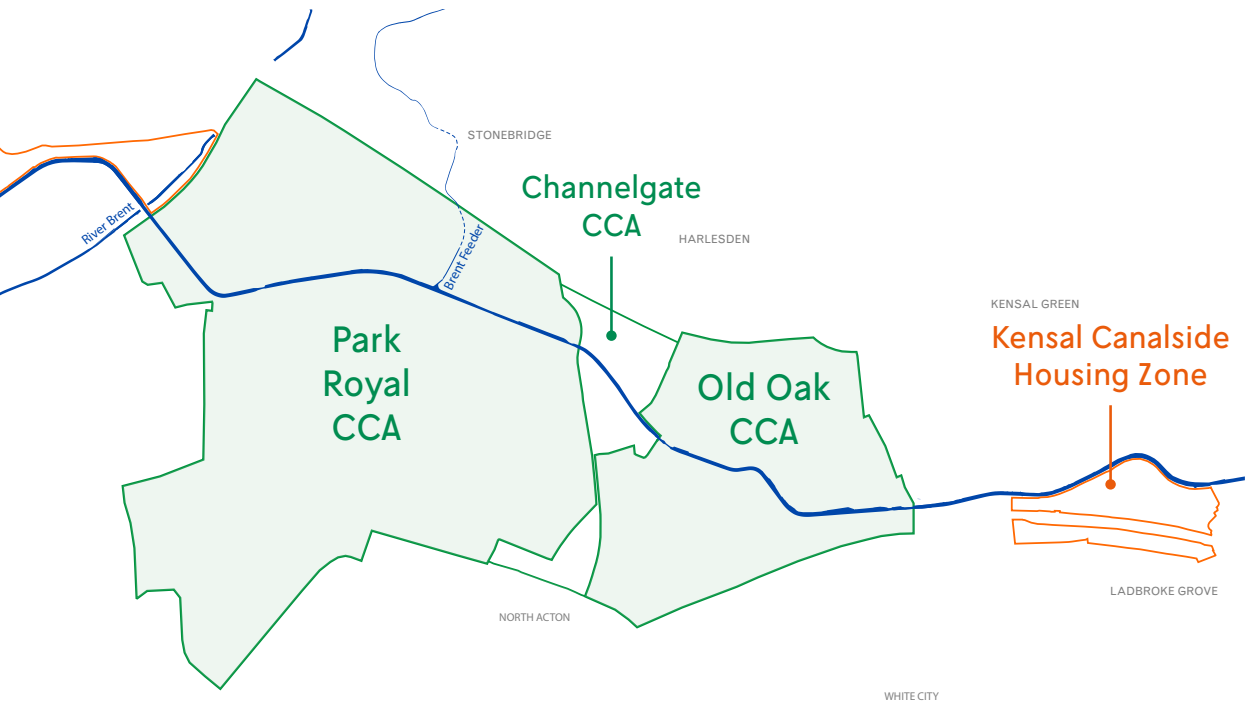
### Old Oak

Identified as a major new mixed-use urban district as well as an internationally-significant transport hub at Old Oak Common, this area is where new developments will most significantly change the context of the canal. Recommendations for this area respond positively to this intensification and also aim to establish clear parameter for how the canal should look and feel in the context of these major developments, including how particular qualities should be preserved and nurtured.

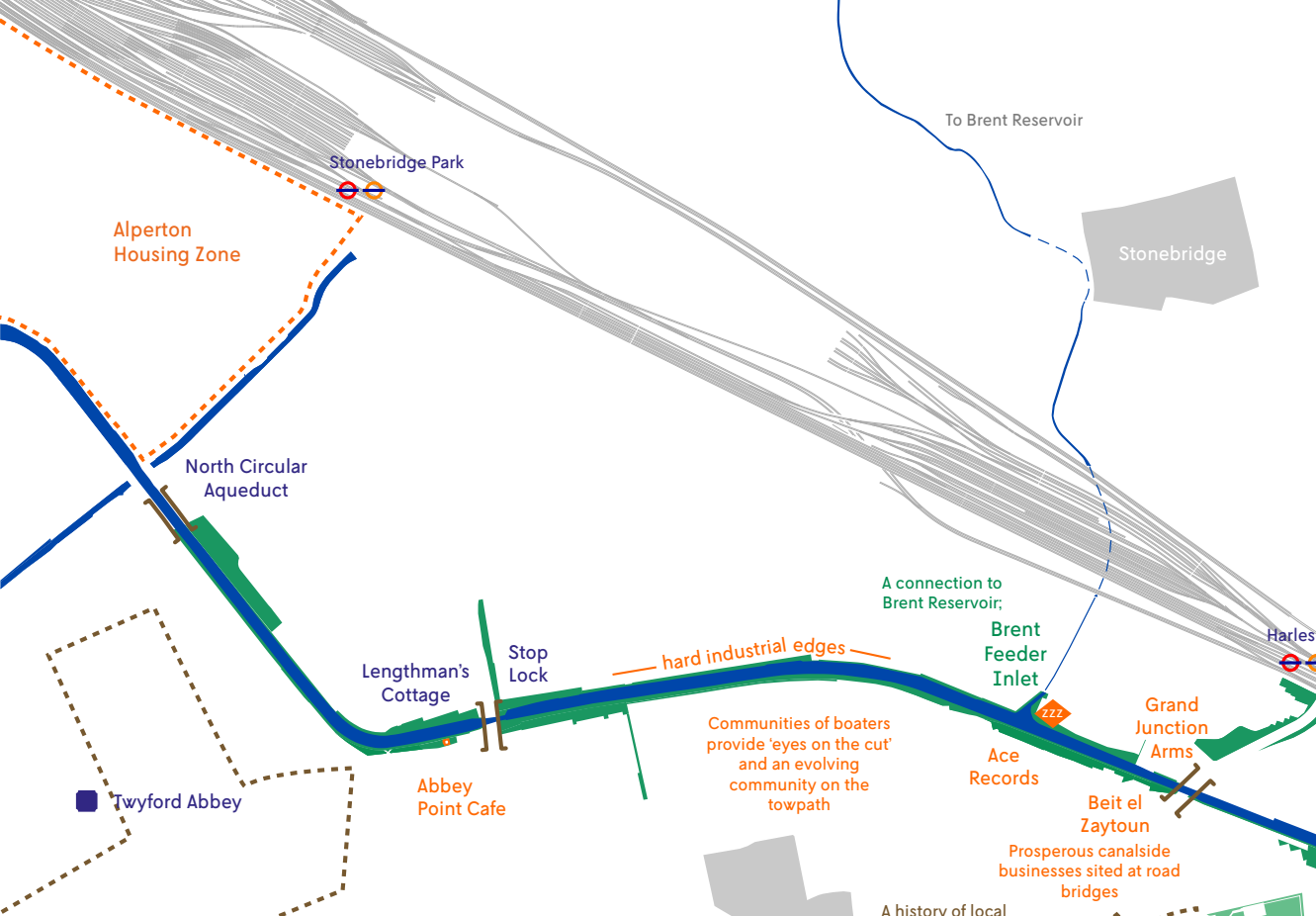
> [Old Oak North, p.22](#)











The study area is surrounded by two major Housing Zones, in Alperton and 'Grand Union' to the west (London Borough of Brent) and Kensal Canalside to the east (Royal Borough of Chelsea and Kensington). Planned development in these locations will see an increase in residential and commercial activity. The vision and strategy set out in this document is also intended to be relevant to the changes these surrounding areas will undergo.



**An overview of the Grand Union Canal area in Old Oak and Park Royal**

-  open public space
  -  existing quiet space
  -  existing bridge
  -  areas of biodiversity quality and wilderness
- Cultivation, market gardening and horticulture are important themes in Park Royal



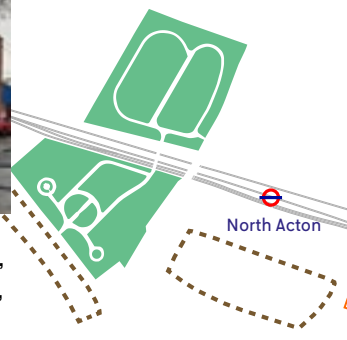
This part of the canal is already 'special' to a diverse community of boaters, whether long-term moored or passing through.



The canal is almost a continuous ecological corridor, also feeling wild and 'other' to the rest of the city'



Diverse communities, including businesses, ready to benefit more, and contribute more, to the canal's public life.



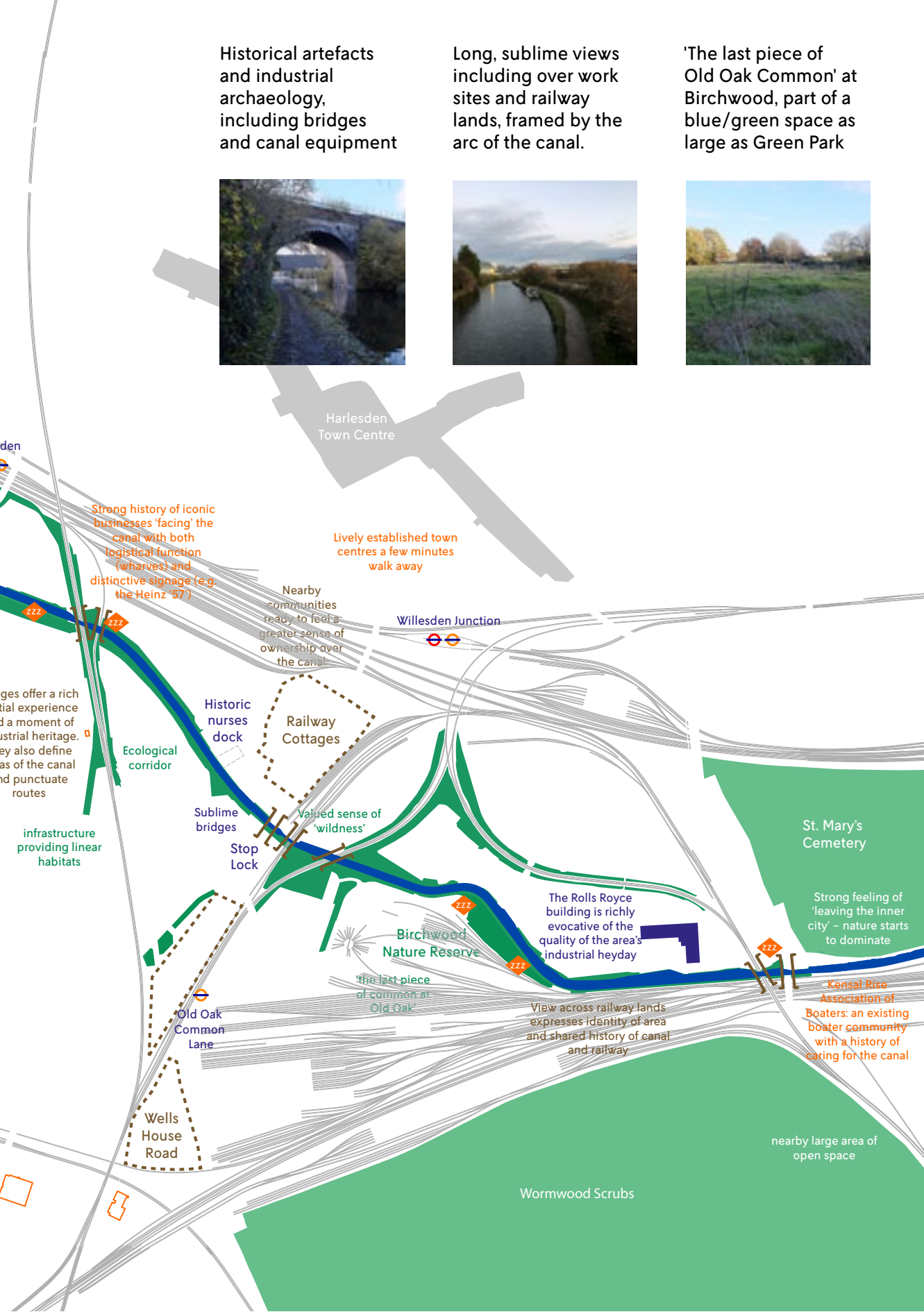
Historical artefacts and industrial archaeology, including bridges and canal equipment



Long, sublime views including over work sites and railway lands, framed by the arc of the canal.



'The last piece of Old Oak Common' at Birchwood, part of a blue/green space as large as Green Park

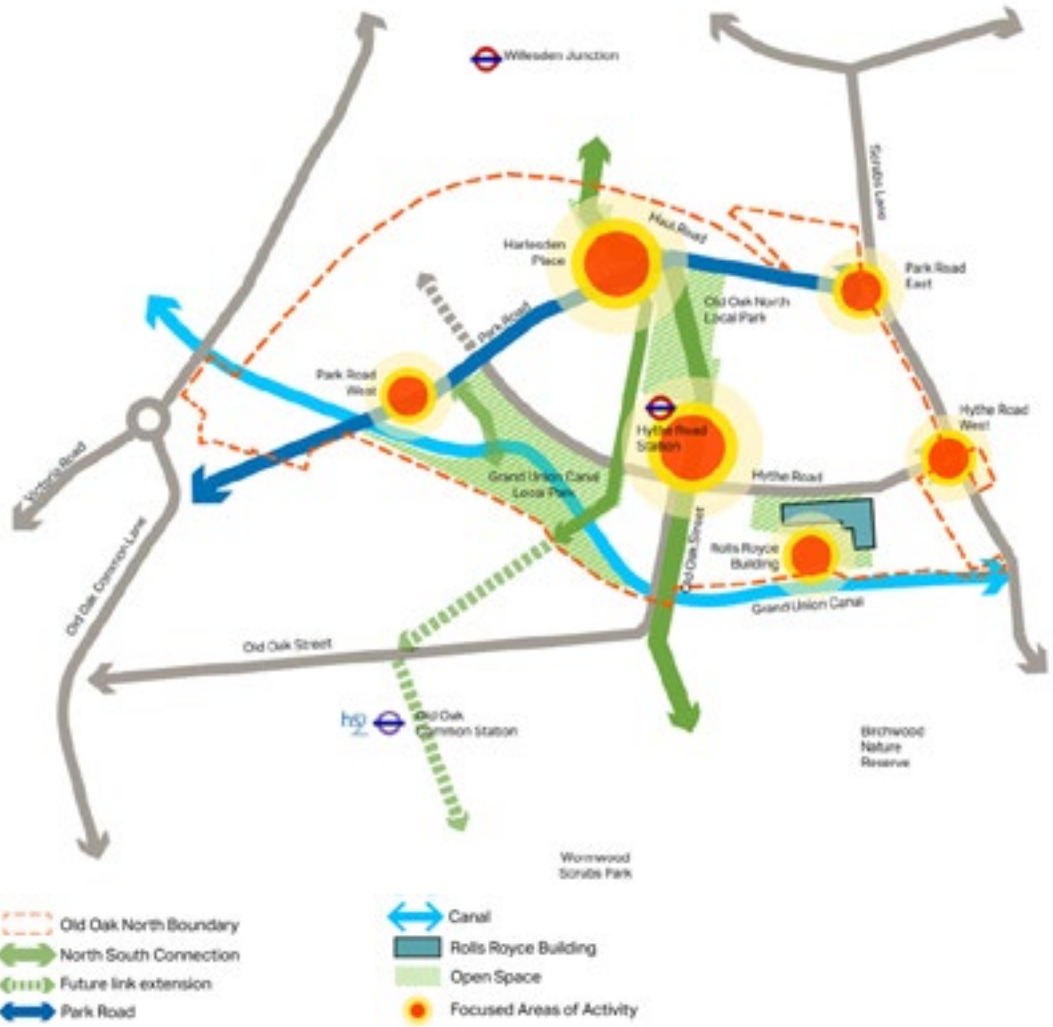


## Old Oak North

OPDC's Local Plan provides a local spatial vision for Old Oak North: *New connections will unlock Old Oak North to support the early delivery of a high density residential led place. Neighbourhoods within Old Oak North will contain a diverse mix of homes alongside new employment spaces, cultural uses, social infrastructure, town centre uses and the Grand Union Canal food and beverage quarter. These uses, publicly accessible open spaces and the area's heritage, including the Grand Union Canal and the Rolls Royce Building, will ensure Old Oak North is a vibrant new place, that people will want to live in, work in and visit.*

Old Oak North is located between the Grand Union Canal Paddington Arm in the south and Willesden Junction station and Harlesden to the north. To the east sits Scrubs Lane which will see development and improvements along this busy street while to the west sits the Old Oak Lane Conservation Area and HS2 construction sites at Channel Gate. Development will deliver a mixed use, high density place with locally distinctive lifetime neighbourhoods. The emerging Local Plan identifies the potential for a significant number of homes to be delivered (Policy P2) alongside mixed community, leisure and employment uses and 2 significant publicly accessible open spaces. A series of high-quality new bridges will cross the canal to provide connections from Old Oak North to the southern canal towpath, Birchwood nature Reserve, Old Oak South and beyond to the Old Oak Common HS2/Elizabeth line station as well as Wormwood Scrubs. The interfaces between bridge crossings and the canal will be key points of connection between the emerging neighbourhood and the waterway corridor.

The canal forms the southern edge of Old Oak North and runs the entire length of the sub-area, resulting in 1,000m of south-facing canalside land. Beyond Old Oak North, the canal continues west to Park Royal, and east to Kensal Green. The Canal is designated as a Conservation Area adjacent to Old Oak North and the two curves in this section of the Canal with parallel hard



Old Oak North illustrative concept plan.  
 Source: Old Oak North Development Framework Plan

edges are considered highly distinctive. There will be different waterway and waterside character areas along the canal, including a food and beverage quarter and an SME business and cultural hub at Rolls Royce Yard.

The Old Oak North Development Framework Principles document sets out the following key principles for development around the Grand Union Canal in Old Oak North which are embedded in the Local Plan:

- The general average shoulder and/or podium heights of buildings fronting on to the Grand Union Canal should be 6 to 8 storeys.
- The Grand Union Canal is an integral part of a blue and green network. It will connect to a series of open spaces to the north and the south of the canal, including the new Grand Union Canal Local Park in the west, and Rolls Royce Yard in the east.
- Development will open up onto the northern side of the canal with a series of new publicly accessible open spaces. They will include a variety of character areas providing for various waterway and waterside activities, including, for example, activity generating accommodation, a range of mooring types, water sports and green areas.
- A variety of moorings, including trade and visitor, and facilities will support activities in the new open spaces.
- Use of the existing towpath on the southern side of the canal is expected to increase due to development at Old Oak North. This may prove challenging with the current capacity of the towpath. Structural and behavioural solutions to mitigate user conflicts and overcrowding of the existing towpath will need to be put in place, including comprehensive east west walking and cycle routes within the wider OPDC area.
- New vehicular and pedestrian bridges will be needed across the canal to connect Old Oak North to its wider surroundings, in particular the Old Oak Common station located to the south of the canal.



- Old Oak North DFP Boundary
- Servicing and Light Industry
- Food & Beverage Quarter, leisure and cultural uses
- Hythe Road Station / Park Road / Harlesden Place / Town Centre Locations
- Employment Uses

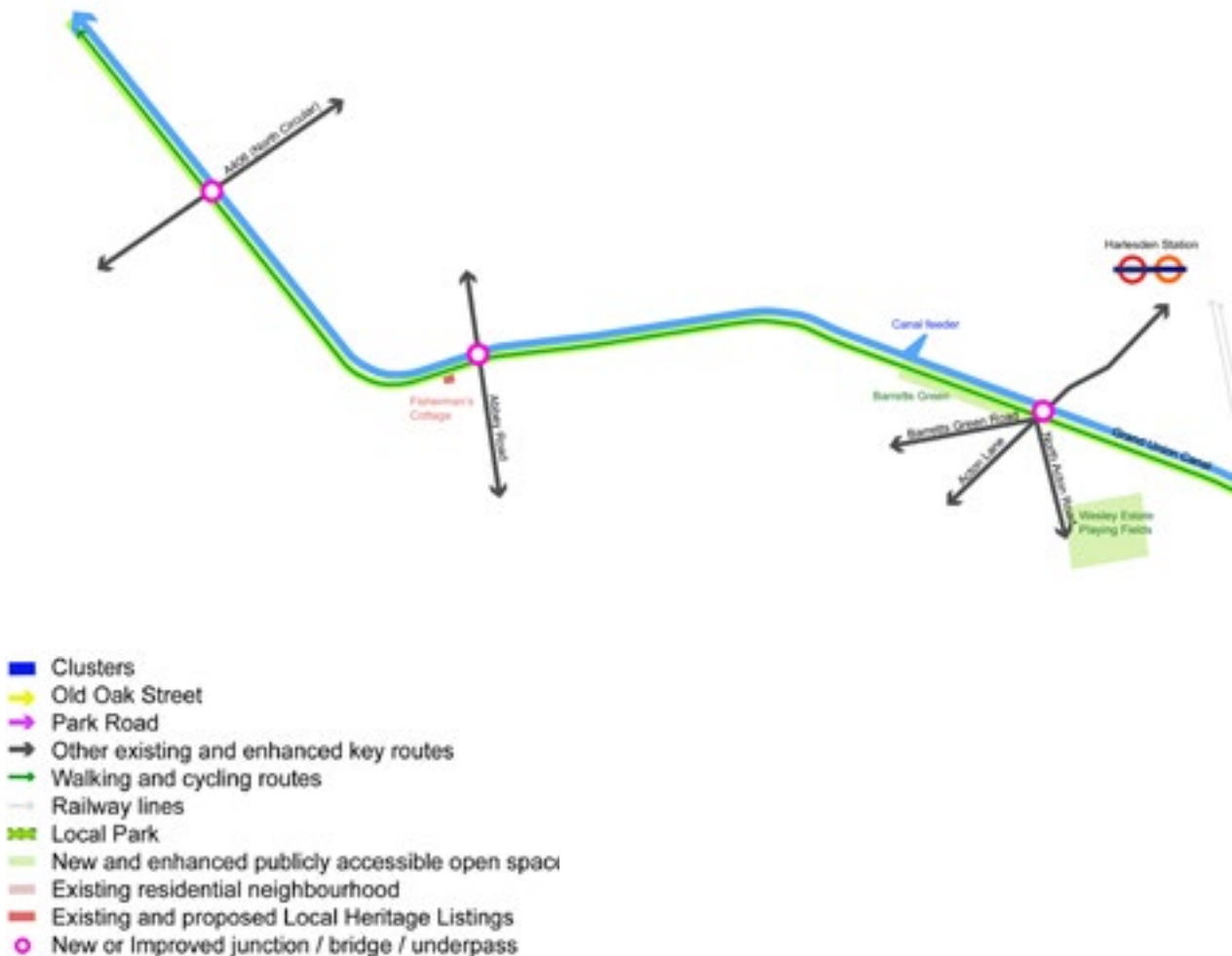
- Characteristic Clusters**
- A. Harlesden Place
  - B. Park Road West Cluster
  - C. Rolls Royce Cluster

Old Oak North places & destinations.  
 Source: Old Oak North Development Framework Plan

## 2.3 Policy Context

### Overview

In the context of planning policy for the OPDC area, this study is intended to develop a strategic framework that can be used, directly or indirectly, to form or inform supplementary planning guidance to OPDC's emerging Local Plan for the Grand Union Canal Paddington Arm as a place and an asset. It will also be used to inform any future review of the Local Plan. Proposals and strategies have been developed which are deemed appropriate for this usage.



Grand Union Canal 'Place' (OPDC Local Plan, 2018)



## Relevant policy and strategy framework:

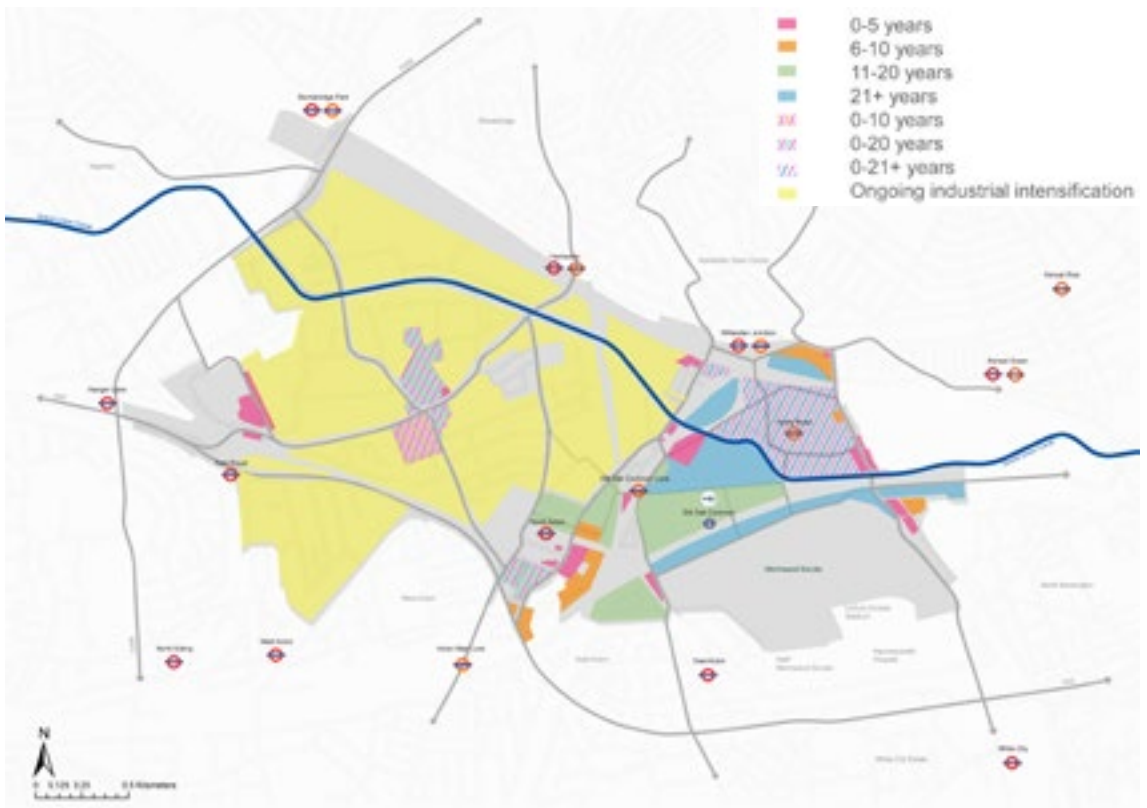
- London Plan and Draft New London Plan (GLA)
- Second Revised Draft Local Plan (OPDC)
- Old Oak North Development Framework Principles (OPDC)
- Park Royal Development Framework Principles (OPDC)
- Victoria Road and Old Oak Lane Development Framework Principles (OPDC)
- Scrubs Lane Development Framework Principles (OPDC)
- Heritage Strategy (OPDC)
- London Cycle Design Standards – Chapter 4 (Transport for London)
- Waterways and Wellbeing (Canal & River Trust)
- London Mooring Strategy (Canal & River Trust)
- Towpath Design Guidelines (Canal & River Trust)



‘The Grand Union Canal will be a defining feature of the OPDC area, shaping the character of both Old Oak and Park Royal. Moorings, open spaces and canal-side activities will support its role as a lively leisure and recreation destination. The canal’s role as a transport corridor will also be optimised, while ensuring that its ecology and heritage are conserved and enhanced.’

- Policy P3. Grand Union Canal Place Vision – OPDC Second Revised Draft Local Plan (2018)

The Paddington Arm of the Grand Union Canal is a Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation. It is a key part of local planning policy within the OPDC area. OPDC’s emerging Local Plan recognises the canal as an important place and heritage asset within Old Oak and Park Royal, and the need to conserve and enhance the ecological and heritage value of the canal, along with optimising its role as a transport corridor. It also recognises the major opportunity the canal presents to become a focal point in place making for new development in the Old Oak area as well as the evolving industrial areas in Park Royal. This is reflected across the policies of the draft Local Plan, with more specific and detailed guidance for heritage in the Built Environment Policy SP9, and for the canal itself in Place Policy P3 (Grand Union Canal). Other place policies within the Local Plan also provide guidance for how development proposals should respond to the canal and its setting to ensure the canal becomes an integral part of future redevelopment. As a key artery and space within the OPDC area there are few parts of the Local Plan which do not intersect in some way with the canal. This study responds closely to policies in the Local Plan and how impacts will differ at Old Oak and at Park Royal, the latter of which is expected to change chiefly through industrial intensification.



Development timeframes (OPDC Local Plan, 2018)

Local Plan policy does not extend beyond the OPDC area boundary though policies are informed by their wider context. This study does extend beyond the OPDC area in order to explore good connections and a wider strategic approach, especially important given that the canal within the OPDC area is part of a much larger national network.

### Policy summary

The following pages are a summary of key policies at the 'place' scale which have framed this study:

<p>Active and positive frontages. This study will set out this frontages framework through considering sites of activation and broader recommendations for what ‘positive frontage’ means in the specific context of the canal.</p>	<p>LP P3 a)</p>
<p>Moorings and boater facilities to be provided; this study integrates this policy with the Canal &amp; River Trust’s London Mooring Strategy (June 2018).</p>	<p>LP P3 c)</p>
<p>New and improved bridges and connections to canal-side routes such as the towpath, ensuring they are accessible, safe and include active frontages where possible. The nature of proposed bridges is beyond the remit of this study but their interaction with the canal will be explored.</p>	<p>LP P3 d) – f)</p>
<p>Towpath to be improved for walking and cycling in a way that improves conditions for all users. Local Plan policy proposes segregation of cycling and walking where possible. It is beyond the remit of this study to address the anticipated increase in cyclists and pedestrians using the canal, but it puts forward solutions to improve the comfort and safety for all towpath users on the short- and medium-term. &gt; <a href="#">Cycleways p.33</a></p>	<p>LP P3 g), T2 &amp; T3.</p>
<p>Contribute to use by waterborne passenger, leisure and freight transport; through delivering wharves and access at appropriate sites and utilising waterborne services during construction – this study sets out a framework for this usage.</p>	<p>LP P3 i)</p>
<p>Conserve and enhance the biodiversity value of the canal and its immediate surroundings. Enhance the environmental quality and role of canal including by enhancing water quality, enabling SUDS and new water infrastructure. This study places this policy centre- stage and envisions a networked,</p>	<p>LP P3 j) – k) and EU2</p>

canal-long approach to environmental and biodiversity enhancement that also enables and enhances human uses of such spaces including through education.

Protect and enhance the Grand Union Canal and St. Mary's Cemetery conservation areas, and their settings and Local Heritage Listings adjacent to the canal. Building on this policy and on the 2017 OPDC Heritage Strategy (see below), a waterway-specific approach to industrial and cultural heritage is required. Deliver a consistent and high-quality palette of materials that conserves and enhances the historic canal-side character.

LP P3 l) – m)

Deliver building heights and massing that support the functioning, designations, amenity and character of the canal and canal-side spaces; this sets out a development framework that is out of the scope of this study but which forms important context; the study integrates likely densities and adjacencies in the case studies and strategic proposals.

LP P3 m)

Contribute to and / or deliver publicly accessible open spaces across Old Oak North as part of a high quality, well-used and well-connected multifunctional network of multifunctional publicly accessible open spaces across Old Oak North. This should include i) the Grand Union Canal Local Park provided between Old Oak North and Old Oak South, including the Canal Park and Birchwood Nature Reserve linked by bridges and is of a minimum of 2 hectares in size, and ii) the Rolls Royce Yard.

LP P3 n)

Provide an opportunity to generate localised heat and cooling for development in Old Oak.

LP GUC16 and EU10

The study has also been developed with reference to the following London Plan policies:

- |                                 |      |
|---------------------------------|------|
| - Waterways – strategic role    | SI14 |
| - Water transport               | SI15 |
| - Waterways – use and enjoyment | SI16 |
| - Protecting London’s waterways | SI17 |

### Heritage and Conservation

Currently, the Grand Union Canal is partially covered by two conservation areas (CAs) within Ealing and Hammersmith & Fulham; the Canalside CA and Grand Union Canal CA respectively. A new combined Conservation Area following the entire length of the Old Oak and Park Royal canal corridor has been proposed by OPDC, which will replace the two current CAs. Evidence and appraisals previously developed for these CAs remain useful and relevant and will be used to inform the single CA.

The OPDC is preparing its Local Heritage Listings and has already produced a Heritage Strategy (2017) as supporting material to its draft Local Plan. Bridges spanning the canal and a number of canal-side buildings are proposed to be included in the Local Heritage Listings. This strategy centres the canal as one of five key heritage themes for the OPDC area and provides a thorough reading of its spatial and heritage qualities, including noting that the canal is the oldest built heritage asset in Old Oak and Park Royal.

### Canal and River Trust strategies

The Canal & River Trust (the Trust) is responsible for the Paddington Arm of the Grand Union Canal and its towpaths as part of its wider responsibilities for a canal network across England and Wales. The Trust is also the landowner for the canal and towpath, and a statutory consultee for all development likely to affect:

- Any inland waterway (whether natural or artificial) or reservoir owned or managed by the Canal & River Trust, or
- Any canal feeder channel, watercourse, let off or culvert, which is within an area which has been notified for the purposes of this provision to the local planning authority by the Canal & River Trust.

As such the Trust is a key stakeholder in this study and a partner in the development of the recommendations made by this study. Liaison has also taken place to ensure parity with the work of neighbouring boroughs in relation to Trust-managed waterways linking, directly or indirectly, to the canal corridor in Old Oak and Park Royal.

Key policies and strategies directly influencing this study are the Trust's Wellbeing Policy and London Mooring Strategy.

### TfL Cycleways

Cycleways are continuous and convenient cycle routes on less-busy backstreets across London. They are being delivered by Transport for London in collaboration with partners including the Canal & River Trust and Sustrans. Most of the first seven Cycleways have sections that are complete, but the project is ongoing.

It is planned that such a Cycleway, dependent upon funding, will be designated along the canal towpath from Paddington to West Drayton, which will incorporate the Old Oak and Park Royal canal corridor.

The provision of a Cycleway in this location would support walking and cycling along the Old Oak and Park Royal canal corridor, particularly for those who wish to travel at a slower pace on quieter routes, for leisure as well as commuting.

## 2.4 Heritage

The canal that runs through the Old Oak & Park Royal area is the Paddington Arm of the Grand Union Canal. The Grand Union Canal is the longest canal in England and was formed in 1929 by amalgamating the networks of nine distinct canals, including the Grand Junction Canal and, in London, the Regent's and Hertford Union canals which junction with the Lee Navigation to the east of the city. The Paddington Arm is 13 miles long and connects Bulls Bridge at Hayes to Little Venice and Paddington Basin in inner London, the latter of which was a crucial basin in the canal infrastructure of the canal's industrial heyday. The full infrastructure provided a direct connection between London and Birmingham, allowing an efficient transfer of goods and materials from the capital to the midlands and therefore becoming a key artery of the industrial revolution and beyond, still carrying waterborne freight until the mid-late 20th century.

Built in 1801, the Paddington Arm near Paddington itself was heavily industrialised almost from the outset, but quickly became a 'rural' canal travelling through open countryside. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, this rural character was rapidly overwritten by industrial development, not least the extensive railway lands and martialling yards of Old Oak Common, and the canal was a magnet for industrial concerns of many types as can be seen in the map and directory adjacent. In the mid-late twentieth century, with the increasing use of road haulage, the Paddington Arm entered a period of becoming a 'back' rather a front, a somewhat forlorn corridor to which the city and industry turned their backs. Whilst this part of the canal has always been something of a green corridor, its decline as an industrial corridor allowed wildlife and biodiversity to flourish. In the 1940s, as industrial usage reduced, interest in the canal as industrial archaeology and as a place of leisure grew, a tendency which continues today.





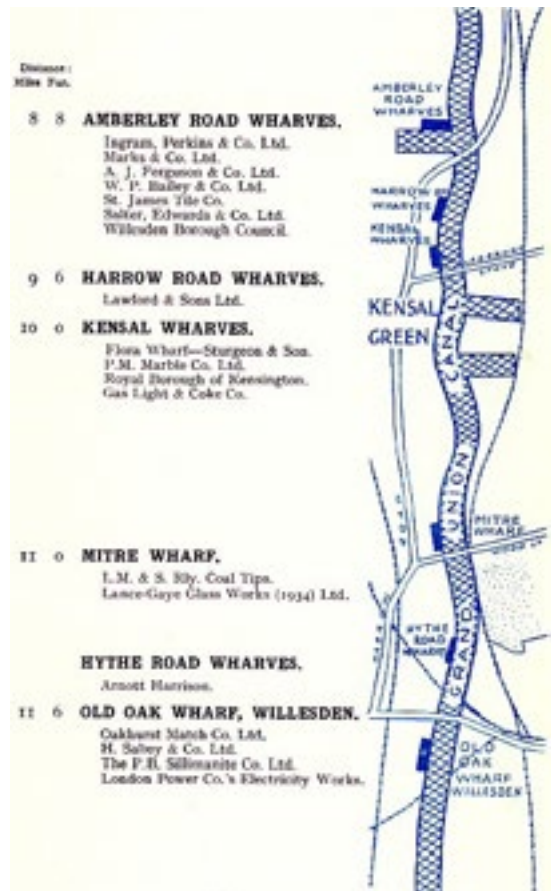
1895 Ordnance Survey map of the western section of the OPDC canal corridor, showing the significant area of the Twyford Abbey estate, which included a Gothic Revival residence, designed landscapes and agricultural land.



1866 Ordnance Survey map of the eastern section of the OPDC canal corridor, showing the intersection of the canal with Old Oak Common, agricultural land and rail infrastructure.

As with canals throughout the UK, the Paddington Arm has always been a place where people live, originally nomadically as industrial boaters, but today its residents include permanent, long-term moored communities.

The Paddington Arm is notable in its context for its continuous run of lock-free canal. This, whilst allowing for fairly rapid transit, means that the canal has few moments of explicit heritage character as locks often provide much of the visual and heritage interest, for example in the photographic works of Eric de Maré. With reference to the OPDC Heritage Strategy (2017), the following are considered key industrial heritage considerations for this study:



A 1930s canal directory describes the multiple wharves and adjacencies of the industrial

## The Canal

The channel itself, characterised by slow-winding arcs which have remained largely the same despite sometimes significant changes on adjacent sites, is a key heritage asset. Its nature as a wildlife corridor, industrial waterway, artery of the industrial revolution and transport are all factors in its richness. The towpath is a critical part of the canal and its past and present richness.

## Bridges

The canal through Old Oak and Park Royal is traversed by a series of distinctive, historic and attractive crossings, all of which have recently been locally-listed.

## Stop locks & feeder channel

At two locations within the OPDC area, fragmentary remains exist of 'stop locks', which were used to isolate sections of the canal from each other, particularly in the event of breaches or damage, including from WW2 bombs. The Paddington Arm is still supplied with water from the Welsh Harp reservoir (1835) via the 'Brent feeder', and this combined with the stop locks provides, in the absence of more complex lock systems, much of the industrial archaeology of this stretch of the canal.

## Adjacent industries

Whilst many of the industries – some of them household names – have left the area, sometimes leaving little or no trace, others remain. The industries that remain rarely make direct use of it as part of their business, but the relationship between canal and industry remains. The industries of today and yesterday are therefore both considered important to the heritage and identity of the canal, including tangible examples such as the Rolls Royce factory at the eastern end of the OPDC area.

## Boater communities

Boats, often lived-on and historically mainly narrowboats, have been central to the canal throughout its life. Most boats today are homes or sometimes holiday homes, though some contain businesses or are 'working' boats serving or maintaining the canal, and others, importantly, continue to use it for waterborne freight. The relatively unchanged design of narrowboats offers a strong historic link to the Grand Union as a primarily industrial waterway, and more recent (post-industrial) boater communities are also part of this narrative.

Additional to the core industrial heritage elements, there are wider cultural narratives that are important to this stretch of canal, these include:

### Cultivation, Gardening, Landscape

The Twyford Abbey estate > [p.33](#) was an extensive private landscape set out as walled garden, picturesque landscape and kitchen gardens, all organised around a Gothic Revival house built c1806. The house survives but the estate has mostly been broken up, though once the canal cut through farmland belonging to the estate. One of the purchasers of estate land, in 1903, was the Royal Agricultural Society, who established a show ground here which led to the naming of the wider area as Park Royal. Though traces of this period are extremely slight, the connection of the western stretch of the canal with agriculture and cultivation is an important part of its cultural history to celebrate in future interventions.

Industry, cuisine, society, multiculturalism



Grand Union Canal from Old Oak Lane, c1976



Grand Union Canal c1980

Some of the most popular foodstuffs in UK history have been produced, or are produced, alongside the Paddington Arm of the Grand Union Canal in this area, from salad cream to digestive biscuits, stout to samosas. Other significant names of UK industry, from Steinway to Rolls Royce also have local connections. This history is important beyond just industrial heritage terms, as these factories often sustained a broad range of community activities with Heinz alone seeing three or four football games played in parallel each lunchtime. They were also important sites of multiculturalism, with workforces hailing from diverse communities with origins in former British colonies.

### Commons & municipalism

Prior to the coming of the railways, Old Oak Common was a significant area of common land contiguous with Wormwood Scrubs. Though the Scrubs survive, Old Oak was the site of Old Oak Common TMD, a significant railway works and depot which closed in 2018. The area of birch trees at Birchwood, situated between the railway lands and the canal, can be read as the last remaining patch of the original Common, a leftover space between different types and eras of infrastructure.

Adjoining Wormwood Scrubs and its long-standing (1874-) prison is the Old Oak Estate, a pioneering (1911) London County Council garden suburb for working class communities. These examples are part of a wider culture of public and municipal activity in the area which predates both the canal and the railways and which might serve as cues for new forms of publicness at Old Oak and along the canal corridor.

## 2.5 Community context

The Grand Union Canal is a highly valued public space in the wider OPDC area. Users appreciate the calm and wildness, and its comfortable cycle-commute into central London.

Although the area is of relatively low density, accessible open spaces are scarce. Wormwood Scrubs to the south of the canal, is one of the largest open spaces in West London. However, access for communities from the north is compromised by infrastructure. In particular, the east– west railway lines contribute to the illegibility of the wider area.

A detailed account of the perception of the Paddington Arm of the Grand Union Canal in Old Oak and Park Royal can be found as an appendix in > [Part 2](#) of this study, entitled '*Listening to the Grand Union Canal*'.

### Canal Communities

The canal serves as a home to a significant number of boaters, whether on permanent moorings (such as the existing community at Kensal Rise, of approximately 20 boats) through to temporary, short-stay or visitor moorings as part of a wider inhabitation of the network. The canal has always provided a home in this way, originally people for whom the canal provided a living. In London, boater numbers have significantly risen in recent years.

This study's engagement activity suggests that the canal corridor is valued by boater communities as a peaceful, quiet and friendly stretch of waterway, with a quality of being 'on the edge of the urban' > [Chapter 2.1](#). It is a permanent home to many boaters, a winter home for many others, and also popular for those undertaking maintenance work on boats, some as part of a journey to boatyards on the western fringes of London.

## Land communities

Old Oak and Park Royal is located in a very diverse part of London. The population is relatively young in comparison to the London average, and made up largely of families with children. However, household incomes in the area are lower by around one-quarter when compared to London-wide incomes, despite having experienced similar growth in incomes since the economic downturn. This is consistent with lower rates of economic activity and higher rates of unemployment across multiple demographic groups that live in the area.

To the north of the Paddington Arm of the Grand Union Canal, Harlesden is a vibrant town centre with an important Caribbean and Brazilian community. To the south of the canal, North Acton is a fast-growing part of west London, with a large student population. Many active Neighbourhood Forums have been set up in the wider area, in particular:

- the Old Oak Neighbourhood Forum, connecting several residential pockets within the OPDC area, including the stretch of the canal between Old Oak Lane and Wesley Estate.
- the Harlesden Neighbourhood Forum to the North of the canal.

## Employee communities

For centuries this area of London has been dominated by employment and industrial uses, including canal transportation and adjacent railways. The workers of Old Oak and Park Royal are a significant and important community in their own right, whether those following conventional '9-5' hours or on shift work at any time of day or night. For them too, the canal functions as a vital public space, whether for walking or cycling into work, a place of relaxation before or after a shift or at lunchtime, or as a place of leisure. Particularly at Park Royal, local employees are a highly visible user group along the canal.



## Commuters and leisure users

As a largely flat, car-free route, the canal is a popular commuting route, primarily for people travelling in to central London. Though a majority of these users are 'just passing through' as part of a longer commute, many have strong feelings about the character, identity and maintenance of the canal. Their use of it as a route could potentially be expanded to include more diverse activities, including more engagement with the local communities of the area. These feelings are shared across occasional canal users, including runners, families and recreational cyclists.



The Grand Union at Kensal Rise / Mary Seacole Gardens, showing (right) the permanent moorings of Kensal Rise Association of Boaters (KRAB) and (left) boaters on short-stay or 'visitor' moorings which are time-limited depending on location.

### 3 Vision

The Paddington Arm of the Grand Union Canal is one of the most important blue and green spaces in the wider area around Old Oak and Park Royal. It sits at the heart of planned development and regeneration of Old Oak and Park Royal, providing crucial functions and connections between and through neighbouring communities. The canal's role is complex and multifaceted, providing a space of calm, wildness, wildlife habitats, biodiversity and peacefulness that is valued today by the canal's many users and admirers, while providing important sustainable transport functions. It is a key part of this area's particular character, embodying its industrial history and contemporary urbanisation.

OPDC seeks to retain these unique qualities and ensure the canal's special qualities will contribute to a much-valued public space for current and future communities. In order to realise the full potential of the Grand Union Canal's Paddington Arm in Old Oak and Park Royal, its character and qualities will be built upon to make it a vital public realm at the heart of the wider area, a place that gives identity to the emerging development and regeneration.

It will be both vibrant and green; it will be accessible for all; it will provide areas for respite and escape; it will provide wellbeing benefits to the local community; it will continue to be a home for boaters; its ecological value will be improved; it will continue to be an important pedestrian and cycle route as well as an ecological corridor; it will be distinct from but intertwined with its surrounding communities and public spaces.

To realise the potential and to achieve this vision, OPDC seeks to actively engage with developers, businesses, users and the community to put the unique qualities of the Grand Union Canal at the heart of the regeneration of Old Oak and Park Royal, and celebrate its heritage, and its ecological and functional value to the community. The delivery of this vision will depend on partnerships with key stakeholders, and the availability of funding for key projects.



General view over the Grand Union Canal in Old Oak..

This study sets out a series of key principles and approaches for the canal:

— **Lively bridges**

Public activity should be clustered at bridges where people cross the canal and can access the towpath. These should provide opportunities for improved public realm, access to a variety of nearby permanent or temporary moorings, and support activities for the diverse communities of the wider Old Oak and Park Royal area.

— **Good canal routes**

The canal should be a public realm for everybody. Access should be easy and legible and bring communities closer to the water. Access from the wider area should be more legible through signage and other interventions. These interventions should recognise the value of the canal's slower 'pace' in relation to its surrounding context and future development, and its place in a wider network of routes including alternatives for cyclists commuting at faster speeds.

— **A Boaters Paradise**

There is a growing community of residential boats along the canal in old Oak and Park Royal, but today this is predominantly informal and lacks supporting infrastructure. This study recognises the potential benefits of a well organised boating community to support the vision for the area.

— **Good industrial edges**

Large parts of the area surrounding the canal in Park Royal will remain industrial, lined with businesses which today typically don't engage the canal positively. Rethinking the 'backs' of businesses located along the canal can help to make the canal in Park Royal 'friendlier' and improve its biodiversity value and provide wellbeing benefits to workers, local community and visitors.

- **A continuous green thread**

The canal's 'wild' quality, particularly precious in the city, should form an uninterrupted green edge to the canal, adjusting to its context. It will range from larger nature reserves, pocket parks and planted edges, to floating reed beds, and enrich the area as a site of environmental education.

- **A thriving Canal Community**

Opportunities for local businesses and communities to volunteer and engage positively with the canal should be developed. The canal's diverse communities should be helped to care for it in a way that is structured around shared values, behaviours and expectations. Being part of this community should be a pleasure.



Fresco at Hythe Road bridge, celebrating the Grand Union Canal.

## 4 Strategy

The strategy to fulfil the vision is structured into 3 strategic themes, borne out of the Local Plan:

- Civic & Leisure > 4.1

The Grand Union Canal as leisure destination, with a focus on civic uses such as open space, permanent and temporary leisure uses, residential and community infrastructure including for boater communities, and as a connector between different neighbourhoods.

- Transport & Movement > 4.2

The Grand Union Canal as functional movement corridor, providing transport functions and space for moorings across a variety of uses, amongst others its potential for freight transport uses.

- Ecology & Heritage > 4.3

The Grand Union Canal as environmental asset, its value as ecological corridor between larger green spaces, its position within the Thames watershed, and as part of a network of ecosystem services.

The strategic recommendations and actions are structured along three approaches which emerged from 'Listening to the Grand Union Canal', this study's stakeholder and community engagement activity.



**CARING** – principles concerned with custodianship, accountability, behavioural change and management. The community cares deeply about issues of social and antisocial behaviour and their impact on the canal. Creating opportunities for local community, businesses and key stakeholders to engage with each other should provide a sustainable solution to these issues.



**NURTURING** – principles concerned with nurturing the 'lucky finds' and existing qualities and environments. The existing character of the canal is loved and it is important that any future changes work to retain the canal's identity and character, and where possible draw on these qualities to achieve good design and placemaking.



**ENLIVENING** – principles concerned with attracting more, and enhanced, public activity on and alongside the canal. From everyday activity and inhabitation to programmed events and festivals, cafes and watersports, these efforts should strengthen links between neighbouring communities and businesses with the water.



Furthermore, the study also indicates where recommendations are particularly appropriate for meanwhile use or prototyping to activate the area and test proposed interventions.

## 4.1 Civic & Leisure

- Public activity should be clustered at road bridges.
- Connections between the canal and the wider area will be enhanced.
- This stretch of canal will be a 'boater's paradise'.
- New development should respond positively to the canal.
- Industrial edges onto the canal will be revitalised.
- Litter and fly-tipping should be tackled.
- Bridge design should respond positively to the canal and its character.
- Towpath equality will be achieved through providing a charter for use by all canal users.
- Canalside spaces should be designed to mitigate overcrowding and user conflicts on the towpath.

The Paddington Arm of the Grand Union Canal will be one of the primary sites of public life in Old Oak and Park Royal. At key sites opportunities to enrich and enhance this public life will be taken, particularly at locations where existing connections with the wider area exist, where canalside activity is already present, and where such activity can play a positive role in the ongoing regeneration of Old Oak and Park Royal. Spaces to support everyday sociability and activity – including canal dwelling in the form of permanent mooring communities and other boaters – will be provided and enhanced, as well as spaces for special and temporary events. The potential of the canal to provide a series of vital civic spaces for Old Oak and Park Royal will be realised at a variety of scales and in ways that benefit new and





existing communities alike. Strategic principles are concerned with everyday activity – lunchtime pauses or commutes – but also with ‘special’ activity such as events programming and activity-based clubs.







The spirit of enhancing public life on the canal includes those who will live beside and on the canal, passing through as continuous cruisers or tourist boats, or on permanent moorings. The presence of boater communities is essential to the canal’s sense of being a safe and lively place.

## CL1 – Public activity should be clustered at locations where the canal intersects with pedestrian or road networks, such as bridges.

- ◆ CL1.1 – Activity hubs hosting particular activities, events and significant areas of public space should be located at key points of access such as bridges, in particular where the pedestrian and road networks intersect with the canal.
- ◆ CL1.2 – Quiet public space should be retained and protected in-between activity hubs.
- ◆ CL1.3 – Activity hubs should provide adequate and well-designed publicly accessible open space which respond to the activities they intend to accommodate.
- ◆ MU CL1.4 – Activity hubs should be supported with provisions and infrastructure for non-residential temporary moorings, in particular moorings promoting social and cultural activities.
- CL1.5 – Development proposals along the canal should provide or enhance publicly accessible open space adjacent to the canal in a way that responds to the existing uses and character of the canal at that location, particularly in relation to moorings.  
> [Chapter 2.2](#)
- ◆ CL1.6 – Biodiversity-friendly lighting, should be located at activity hubs. It should ensure that activity hubs are identifiable at night and have a lit character that encourages inhabitation while protecting the ecology of the canal corridor. > [Chapter 7.1](#)

## CL2 – The canal should be woven into the surrounding public realm and neighbourhoods.

### > Scenario 5.3







-  CL2.1 – Architectural, planting, or art interventions should be used to signal the canal from the street.
-  CL2.2 – Public realm improvements at street level should signal access to the canal below and bring neighbouring communities closer to the water. Improvements, including street crossings, surfaces and signage, should be delivered together with canal access works.
-  CL2.3 – Sightlines to the canal should be improved to enable clear lines of sight from canal to pavement and vice versa. This might be through reworking existing structures or plant thinning/pruning as appropriate, and balanced by the need to preserve some distinction between canal and street.
-  CL2.4 – Key views over the canal and adjacent natural and manmade landscapes should be identified and enhanced as places of discovery.
-  CL2.5 – Planting of trees, shrubs and hedges should be used to enhance access routes and as a means to offer shelter from wind, which can be a problem at more exposed access points. Planting should be of native species and appropriately selected and located so that it does not attract antisocial behaviour. > [Chapter 8.2](#)
-  CL2.6 – New developments along the canal should respond to the canal as a key public space and integrate some of its key qualities such as a heritage and ecology as assets into the surrounding development and public realm, by means of planting strategies and urban design principles.

## CL3 – Pedestrian and cyclist access should be exemplary and form successful places.

### > Scenario 5.3

- ◆ CL3.1 – Public access to the canal edge should be functional, delightful, accessible to all and respectful of the canal's character.
- ◆ CL3.2 – Landscape design should avoid utilitarian ramp and/or stair –dominated access in favour of a landscape of spaces and terraces, such that parts of the access encourage dwelling and inhabitation.
- CL3.3 – Interventions that enhance access should aim to preserve the sense of the canal as a space set apart from the wider public realm and with a very different pace and character.
- ◆ CL3.4 – Businesses adjacent to the canal should be encouraged to deliver public connections between the canal, the street, and their business to enhance canal access and promote the canal as open space for employees.
- ◆ CL3.5 – Improved connections to the canal, particularly with planting and landscaping, should be embedded within, and extend into, development proposals and existing neighbourhoods.
- ◆ CL3.6 – New development adjacent or close to the canal should contribute to improving access, by way of its urban design, landscaping, wayfinding or other means.

CL4 – Long-term moorings should be protected and enhanced, and new moorings created at appropriate locations and supported with appropriate facilities. > [Map pp.66–69](#)

-  CL4.1 – Long-term moorings, including commercial ones, should be provided at appropriate locations, supplied with adequate facilities as indicated on > [Map pp.66–69](#) and in response to the wider provision of facilities across the canal network.
-  CL4.2 – Mooring facilities should align with environmental policies outlined in the OPDC Local Plan as well as the new London Plan, in particular to prevent the use of solid fuel burners. > [Chapter 2.1](#)
-  CL4.3 – Off-side long-term moorings may be particularly appropriate in at Park Royal CCA, in liaison with private landowners (including adjacent industrial premises) to improve overlooking and social control along quiet stretches of the canal. Existing local boater communities should be consulted to learn good practice in developing long-term moorings.
-  CL4.4 – Commercial and trade moorings may be appropriate at activity hubs where high footfall can be expected, and in particular within the Old Oak CCA on both sides of the canal corridor. > [Chapter 2.2](#)
-  CL4.5 – Short-stay and winter moorings should be provided at appropriate locations throughout the OPDC canal corridor, except at precise locations where they might interfere with other uses. > [Map pp.62–65](#)
-  CL4.6 – Access points for leisure boats should be provided at activity hubs or major publicly accessible open spaces.



CL4.7 – Facilities to support and celebrate long-term moorings should be embedded within landscape or development proposals. > [Chapter 2.1](#)



CL4.8 – Current or latent 'winding holes' (widening of the canal to allow a 72'/22m craft to turn,) should be recognised, preserved and maintained.



CL4.9 – The presence of long-term moorings should be celebrated in any interpretation, naming and cultural commissioning on adjacent sites.



MU

CL4.10 – The provision of boater workshops at appropriate locations, such as where easy vehicular access is nearby, providing equipment and workshop space for liveaboard boaters available to all, should be explored further.

## CL5 – New development should respond positively to the canal and support its uses throughout Old Oak and Park Royal. > [Scenario 5.4](#)



CL5.1 – Development proposals along the canal should provide or enhance publicly accessible open space adjacent to the canal in a way that responds to the existing uses and character of the canal at that location, particularly in relation to moorings. > [Chapter 2.2](#)



CL5.2 – Development proposals should provide boater facilities such as bin storage and removal, sewage access and water points as well as canalside workspace for services that support boater communities in the wider west London area.



CL5.3 – New canalside development should deliver measures to mitigate overcrowding and user conflicts on the towpath, and provide evidence of its efficiency. > [CL10](#)

**CL6 – Design guidance should be developed that applies to all industrial premises in Park Royal CCA that are adjacent to the Grand Union Canal.**

**> Scenario 5.1**



CL6.1 – Design guidance should be developed, led by OPDC and key stakeholders such as the Canal & River Trust. The guidance will support attractive industrial edges. Such guidance should outline appropriate materials, fencing and planting for industrial edges, and encourage the activation of industrial edges for employee or public use. This can include site-specific signage facing the canal, and announcing local businesses to the canal corridor in engaging ways, among other strategies. [> Chapter 7.1](#)



CL6.2 – A Micro Grants Scheme for canalside premises should be put in place to encourage better inhabitation, biodiverse planting, fencing, and appearances facing the canal. Recent work in London's High Streets may provide useful precedents.

**CL7 – A towpath charter should be created that sets out expectations of all canal corridor users and communities. It should be authored collectively, be positive in tone and aim to create a 'canal community' of diverse users and user groups. [> Chapter 6](#)**



CL7.1 – A multi-agency group of relevant organisations and stakeholders should be established to commission the development of the charter', led by the OPDC and the Canal & River Trust.



CL7.2 – The charter should set out the expectations and responsibilities of all canal users and communities as a formative gesture to the ongoing work of building a 'canal community' on the Grand Union Canal as

well as foregrounding what can be gained through participation.

CL7.3 – The charter should be designed such that it feels a valuable, joyful thing to sign up to, rather than a responsibility or a chore. The successful Canal & River Trust Canal Adoptions programme is a model and should be referred to.

CL7.4 – The charter should aim to cover, as a minimum: maintenance; litter & fly-tipping; towpath pace and sharing; promoting canal custodianship and stewardship; and incorporate potential funding sources, available resources and collaborations.

CL7.5 – The charter should be conceived of as one element in a wider palette of approaches to custodianship, including 'litter picks' prompted by signage, volunteering sessions, or an increased roll-out of the Canal & River Trust's Canal Adoptions Programme.

## CL8 – Litter and fly-tipping, issues which dominate public perception of the canal, will be tackled.

CL8.1 – Bins with sufficient capacity (to avoid overfilling) to be provided at key locations of public activity, where access required for emptying the bins can be provided for.

CL8.2 – Responsible behaviour (from individuals and from organisations & businesses) in relation to litter and fly-tipping will form a core part of a Towpath Charter. > [CL7](#)

CL8.3 – Partnerships between the OPDC and key stakeholders and businesses will create a shared responsibility in providing and managing waste bins



along the entire canal corridor in Old Oak and Park Royal, and forming a core part of a Towpath Charter. > [CL7](#)



CL8.4 – Developers should provide bins and collection along their canalside developments, forming a core part of a Towpath Charter. > [CL7](#)



CL8.5 – Voluntary litter-picking (of appropriate items) should be encouraged through signage and OPDC's community and business engagement programmes. These activities should be integrated in the Towpath Charter. > [CL7](#) & [Chapter 6.1](#)



CL8.6 – Waterborne collection of waste from boaters and towpath users should be piloted by OPDC in partnership with key stakeholders.

## CL9 – The design of new bridges across the Grand Union Canal should respond positively to the placemaking opportunity of the canal.



CL9.1 – Overarching design principles for new bridges should be developed in partnership with all relevant parties, including the OPDC and Canal & River Trust. Their design needs to take into consideration not only their highway function, but also the quality of the environment created below the bridge deck and the experience of those passing under, whether by water or along the towpath.



CL9.2 – New bridges should be designed to contribute to the experiential quality of the canal, for example by avoiding 'dead' spaces, providing good daylight and sightlines, ensuring a considered and holistic approach to the design and materials of the bridge elements (abutments, beam, parapet, etc), a civic quality to visible finishes; and providing appropriate

and welcoming connections between canal corridor and the surrounding street network. Positive bridge design within Old Oak and Park Royal will help to create great new waterside places, enhancing the value of the waterway corridor to the surrounding neighbourhoods and other canal and towpath users.



CL9.3 – New bridges should proactively integrate principles for activity hubs and exemplary access from the road level to the canal towpath, ensuring they fulfil their strong placemaking potential. > [CL1 & TM1.1](#)



CL9.4 – New bridges should contribute to the overall orientation and wayfinding at towpath and road levels, for example through their naming, design and other integrated wayfinding possibilities.

## CL10 – Canalside spaces should be designed to mitigate overcrowding and user conflicts.



CL10.1 – Clear demarcation of space should be designed in to towpath and public realm improvements, using clear surface material changes which differentiate between through-routes (typically the towpath) and dwelling areas. > [Chapter 7.1](#)



CL10.2 – Towpath overcrowding should be mitigated in particular in areas where new residential development and public open spaces will draw new users to the canal. These may include a segregation of dwell and through spaces, towpath widening, and a clear demarcation between spaces of different uses and typologies along the canal. > [CL5](#)

## Precedents



### NEWARK RIVERFRONT, NEW JERSEY

This project is exemplary in its combination of high quality public realm design with legislative change (access to the river), behavioural change (new community associations with responsibility for maintenance and care) and events programming. The project began with an extensive series of research and engagement programmes in which local people were protagonists. (HECTOR/City of Newark and others)



### ECOLOGY OF COLOUR, DARTFORD

A timber-clad structure with a light-touch presence on the ground, which serves as an outdoor classroom, dyeing workshop, art studio, bird-watching hide, tree house and park shelter. Commissioned by Artlands Medway for a wild area of Central Park, Dartford, intended to 'fold away' and become a secure structure when not in use. (Studio Weave/Artlands Medway)



### ONWARDS & UPWARDS

A series of distorted or subverted industrial-scale brick chimneys sited at key locations along the canal at Sheffield, designed to celebrate and challenge the industrial heritage and provoke new readings of the canal. As vertical elements they are also intended to announce the canal to the city surrounding it. (Canal and River Trust, Alex Chinneck)



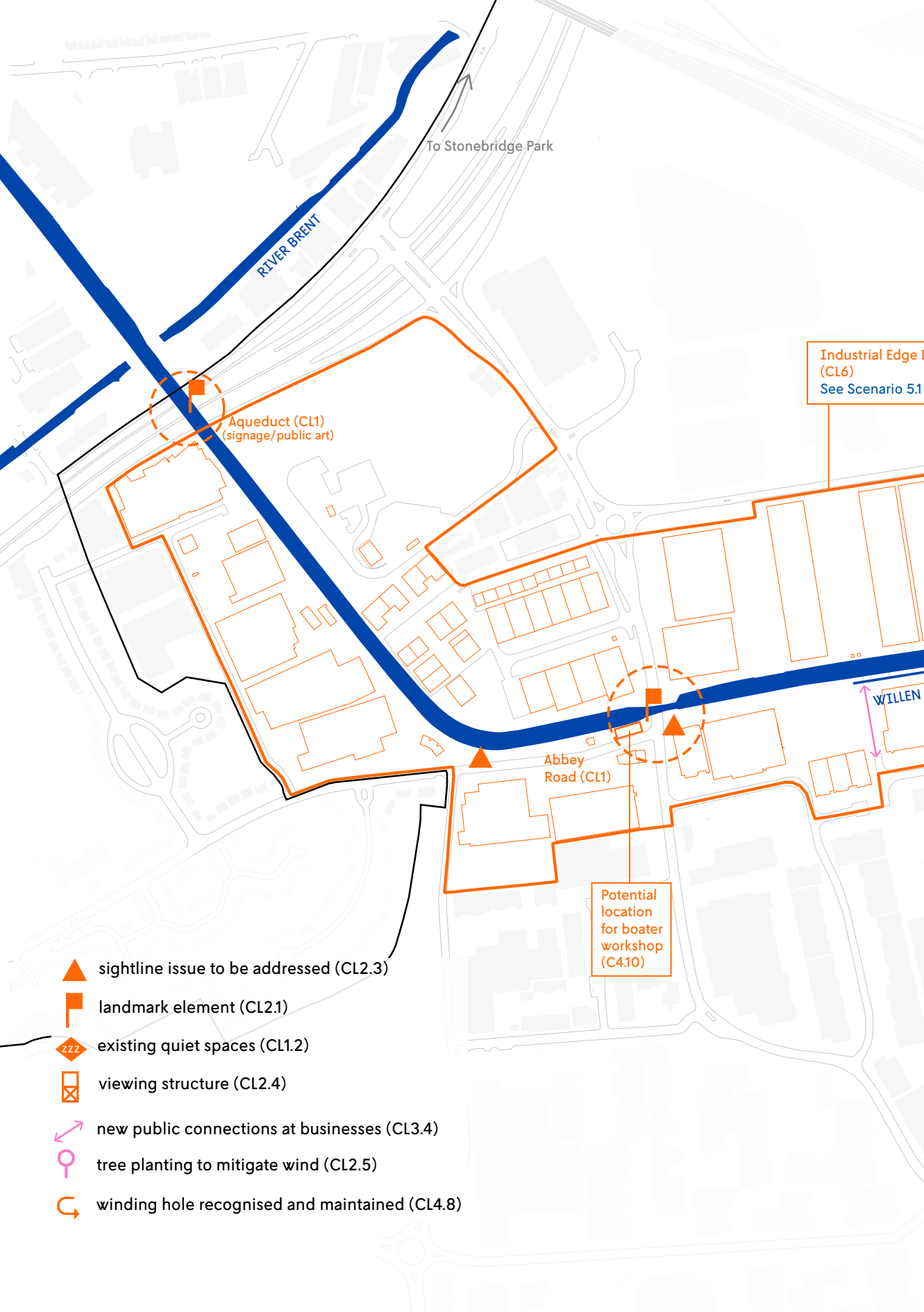
### LJUBLJANICA RIVERBANK, SLOVENIA

A series of public realm improvements along the river Ljubljanica running through Ljubljana. As part of a wider project, the design includes specific moments where dwelling is provided in parallel with the main towpath route and with a distinct design character. The difference on the Grand Union is unlikely to require such strong interventions or level changes and may be limited to a shift in planting, surface materials or furniture. (URBI)



### CANALS IN HACKNEY USERS GROUP (CHUG)

CHUG formed in 1983 and used a Hackney Council housing grant to convert the then-abandoned Kingsland Basin into a set of moorings for permanent use. Two of the moorings are allocated as temporary and are available on a twice yearly basis. CHUG runs open days to open the basin up to visitors and local people, collaborates with the local boat club and maintains a floating allotment.



To Stonebridge Park

RIVER BRENT








Aqueduct (CL1)  
(signage/public art)

Industrial Edge  
(CL6)  
See Scenario 5.1

WILLEN

Abbey  
Road (CL1)

Potential  
location  
for boater  
workshop  
(C4.10)

-  sightline issue to be addressed (CL2.3)
-  landmark element (CL2.1)
-  existing quiet spaces (CL1.2)
-  viewing structure (CL2.4)
-  new public connections at businesses (CL3.4)
-  tree planting to mitigate wind (CL2.5)
-  winding hole recognised and maintained (CL4.8)

Design Code

New structure to support nature exploration (CL2.4)

See Scenario 5.2



Continues Overleaf

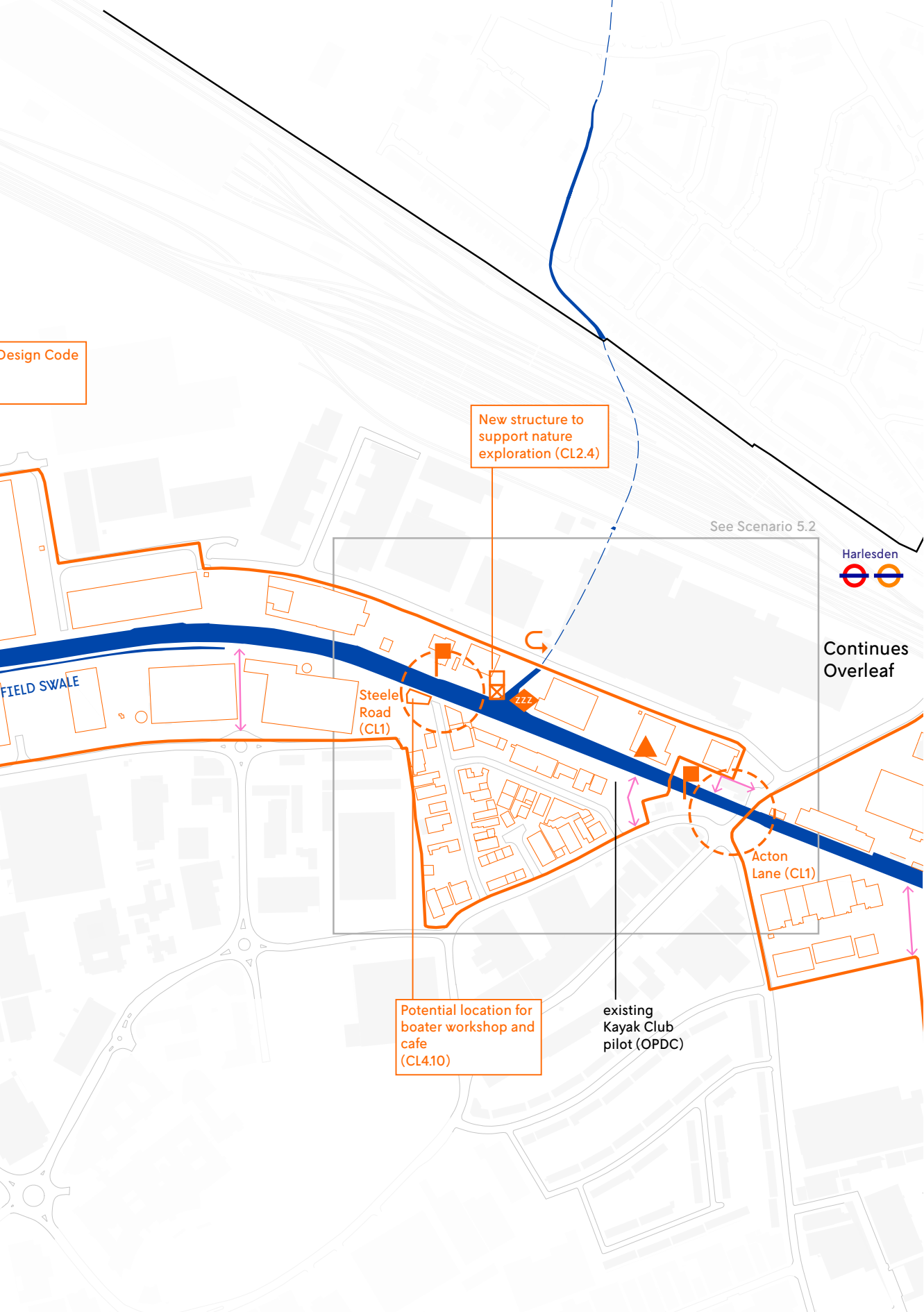
FIELD SWALE

Steele Road (CL1)

Potential location for boater workshop and cafe (CL4.10)

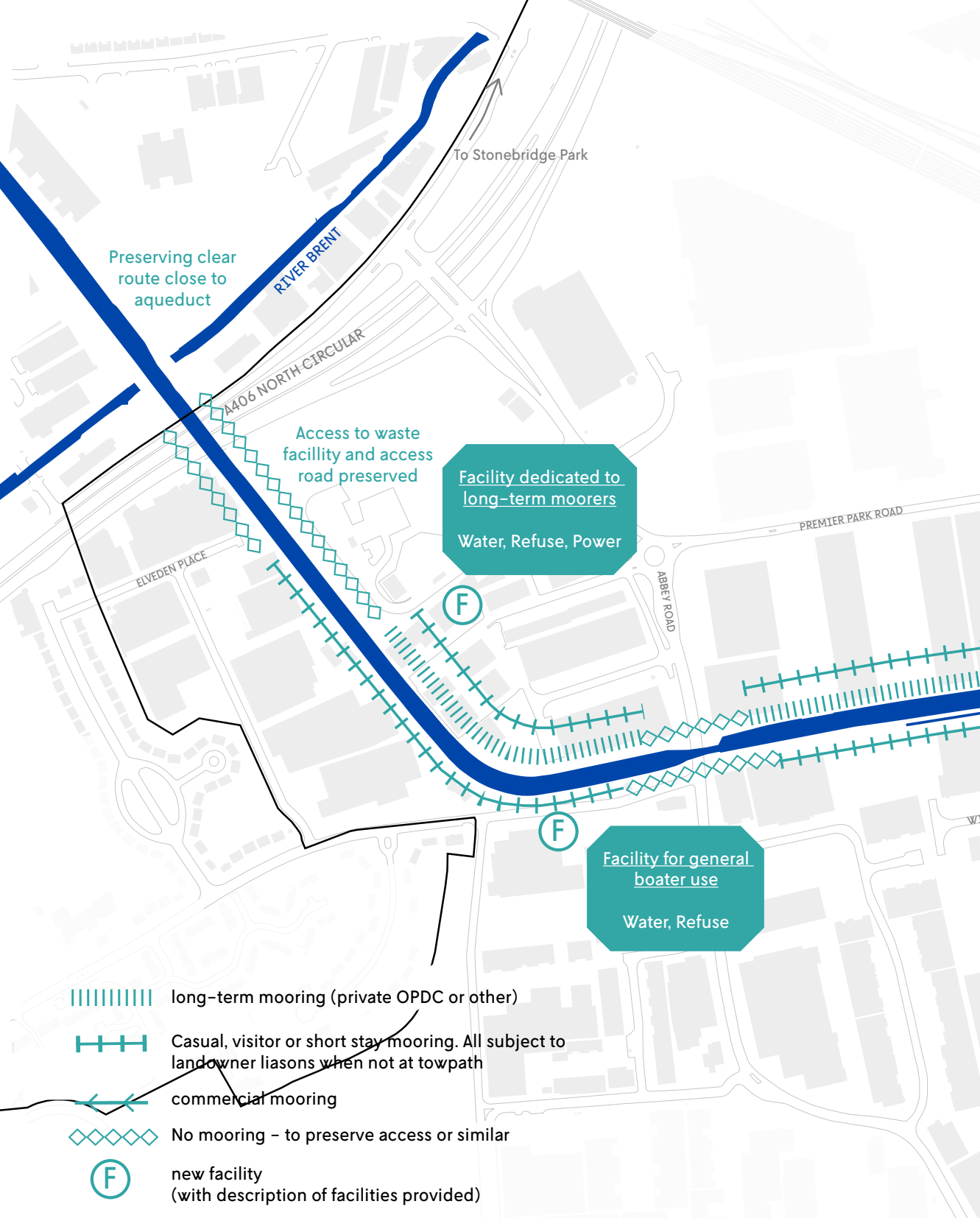
existing Kayak Club pilot (OPDC)

Acton Lane (CL1)









All potential mooring locations indicated can be superseded by proposed 'stop and shop' moorings where indicated on previous map.  
 The line closest to the canal indicates preferred mooring type.  
 Where appropriate an additional option is provided at one remove from the canal.



Facility dedicated to long-term moorers

Water, Refuse, Power

WAXLOW ROAD

Winding hole and access to Brent Feeder preserved

Continues Overleaf

Special Facility for general boater use

Water, Refuse, Elsan/Pump-out, Workshop facilities

*NB. Signage to identify dedicated short-term mooring locations for workshop users*

Facility for dedicated to commercial moorings

Water, Refuse, Power

*NB. Provided only with commercial moorings*

MILLEN FIELD ROAD

DISRAELI ROAD

ACTON LANE

BARRETT'S GREEN ROAD

To Harlesden

Continues from overleaf






Facility dedicated to long-term moorers  
Water, Refuse, Power

Potential long-term site as development comes forward. Facilities only required with moorings

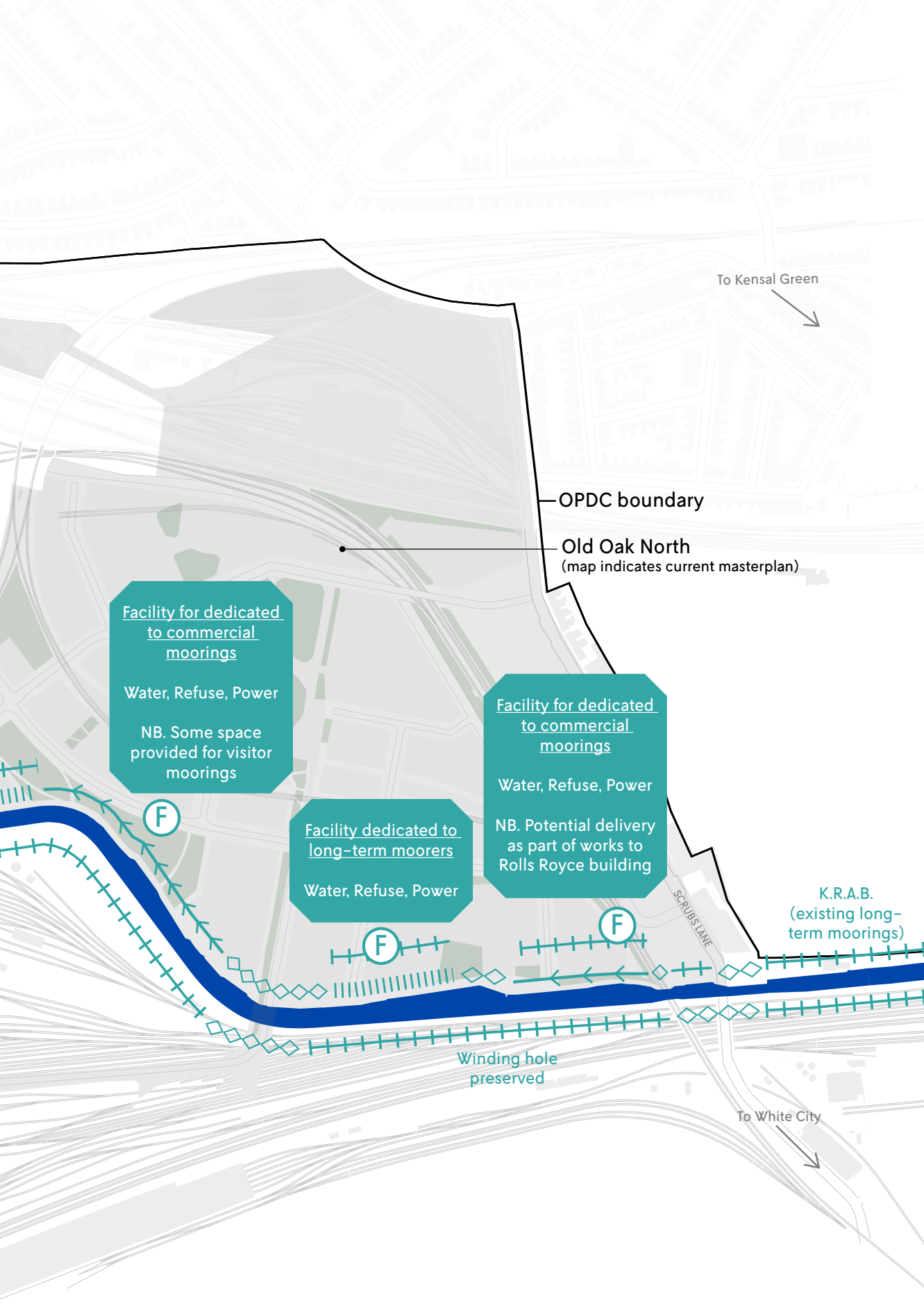
Facility dedicated to long-term moorers  
Water, Refuse, Power

Potential long-term site as development comes forward. Facilities only required with moorings

Maintaining Powerday access

-  long-term mooring (private OPDC or other)
-  Casual, visitor or short stay mooring. All subject to landowner liasons when not at towpath
-  commercial mooring
-  No mooring - to preserve access or similar
-  new facility  
(with description of facilities provided)

All potential mooring locations indicated can be superseded by proposed 'stop and shop' moorings where indicated on previous map.  
The line closest to the canal indicates preferred mooring type.  
Where appropriate an additional option is provided at one remove from the canal.



To Kensal Green

OPDC boundary

Old Oak North  
(map indicates current masterplan)

Facility for dedicated to commercial moorings  
Water, Refuse, Power  
NB. Some space provided for visitor moorings

Facility for dedicated to commercial moorings  
Water, Refuse, Power  
NB. Potential delivery as part of works to Rolls Royce building

Facility dedicated to long-term moorers  
Water, Refuse, Power

K.R.A.B. (existing long-term moorings)

F

F

F

Winding hole preserved

To White City

SCRUBS LANE

## 4.2 Transport & Movement

- Towpath equality will be supported through providing a charter for use by all canal users.
- Towpath equality will be achieved by establishing a continuous 2m towpath wherever possible.
- Public spaces along the canal will be retained and created to support future waterborne passenger, freight and leisure transport opportunities.
- This stretch of canal will be a 'boater's paradise', with a range of facilities to support a successful and sustainable boater community and providing a public realm that aids boater access.

The canal is a movement corridor – for boats, pedestrians and cyclists, in a wider series of networks across Old Oak & Park Royal. Pressure on it as a movement corridor will increase as development comes forward throughout Old Oak & Park Royal.

Greater towpath equality between its diverse users is a key objective, with pausing places and more generous paths across the canal corridor, along with measures to encourage more responsible sharing of the towpath. The towpath should become a safer place to walk and to cycle for people of all abilities.





The canal has always been an industrial corridor. In recognition of the environmental benefits of waterborne freight, it should be revitalised as an industrial waterway, providing materials and equipment to development sites throughout the OPDC area, including through convenient wharves close to the North Circular road. Waste collection and other public services,



including from construction sites, will be provided on the water and connections with other forms of transportation will be enabled at key locations.

The challenge of achieving a positive experience for the canal's diverse users in the long term increases as development comes forward, necessitating detailed movement studies for the canal and wider area.

## TM1 – The towpath should better support all users and active forms of travel, including those with reduced mobility. > [Chapter 7.3](#)

-  TM1.1 – A continuous 2m-wide towpath should be sought along the canal in Old Oak and Park Royal for the purpose of providing enhanced space for all users. Where there is more width available, the towpath should continue through at a 2-metre width and careful consideration should be given to the design of adjacent appropriate green or paved areas. In locations that the towpath is currently less than 2 metres in width, the reasons for this should be studied and widening options developed.
-  TM1.2 – Where extending the towpath on land is not possible, alternative solutions including routings, should be studied. Widening the towpath into the water space is generally discouraged and can be a detriment to navigation in addition to needing government approvals. Temporary installations, such floating pontoons may be used, but their long-term installation would need careful study for any proposed location as they could impede navigation or mooring.
-  TM1.3 – The 2m-wide path should allow for the retention or creation of the established ‘front verges’ on the towpath edge. These should be a minimum of 0.5m at the canal edge. Verges narrower than 0.5 are undesirable as they tend not to sustain plant life successfully.
-  TM1.4 – The towpath charter > [CL7 & Chapter 6.1](#) should include expectations and advice regarding towpath usage that accounts for all users include expectations and advice regarding towpath usage that accounts for all users.



TM1.5 – Design interventions to manage cyclist speeds should include positive signage (encouraging slow-downs and highlighting alternative fast routes), material changes to differentiate between spaces of movement and of dwelling and to acknowledge the different paces of the canal. A structural approach to the impact of increased cycle use across the OPDC area, and other growth areas of west London needs to be taken.



TM1.6 – Any design interventions to reduce speed should balance this requirement with achieving exemplar access to all users including the disabled. Highly textured surfaces, chicanes and similar are discouraged partly for this reason. > [Chapters 6.1 & 7.1](#)






TM1.7 – Any new movement routes along the canal, in particular through Old Oak North, should be developed with an awareness of the existing towpath conditions and work towards mitigating user conflicts, overcrowding and other issues both on the existing towpath and any new movement route. > [Chapter 2.2](#)







TM1.8 – Motorized travel (excepting electric assist bicycles and wheelchairs) outside of wharf access and necessary maintenance and emergency services access is prohibited on the towpath. Active travel has priority over motorized travel on all new publicly accessible canalside public spaces.

**TM2 – Existing access points with close and simple vehicle parking should be retained to ensure that the goods and equipment of boater communities can be transferred from vehicles to the towpath with ease.**

-  TM2.1 – Canalside public space should be retained wherever possible to support future waterborne passenger, freight and leisure transport opportunities.
-  TM2.2 – Public realm works should facilitate parking and vehicle loading nearby access points to the canal at appropriate locations for private users and boaters.
-  TM2.3 – Liaison with car park management should take place to facilitate boaters' access and transfer of equipment in existing car park facilities.

**TM3 – Opportunities for waterborne freight, goods transportation and waste relocation supported.**

-  TM3.1 – Sites are identified where waterborne delivery and waste disposal to construction sites might be easily facilitated. Proposals should be included in development briefs and design guidance.
-   TM3.2 – Waterborne freight should be piloted such that it is easier to use the canal to move materials to and from development sites. Clear guidelines are to be implemented in relation to considerate contractor principles, including covering of waste barges for health and safety reasons.
-  TM3.3 – Waterborne waste collection, already piloted in other areas, should be developed in order to test the capacity of the canal to provide this service. Service to be equipped to pick up fly-tipped items,



waste from bins, and boater waste, organised on a timed collection basis. > CL8



TM3.4 – Collaboration with LB Brent should be undertaken to explore the possibility of developing a wharf for heavy goods transfer from HMV's onto barges at Abbey Road Brent Recycling Centre, providing a convenient connection from the North Circular road.



MU

TM3.5 – Liaison with public-facing businesses (e.g. builders or plumbers' merchants) should take place to provide wharfage areas for 'stop and shop'-style moorings

## Precedents



### IRECYCLE CAMDEN TOWN PILOT

A pilot scheme for Labtech, the owners of Camden Market, is currently seeing 17.5 tonnes of recycling material per week leaving the extremely busy urban area on boats via the Grand Union Canal, depositing the material at Powerday's existing wharf at Old Oak for processing. The project enables the recycling of food waste, which the market did not previously have the capacity to undertake, and aims to eliminate approximately 2000 road miles per annum.



### GRANARY SQUARE, KINGS CROSS

A highly successful new urban space adjacent to the canal but one that brings challenges to movement, as can be seen in this image of an event on the specially-designed raked seating which causes the towpath to be unusable as a route. In response, Camden council's urban design team has been advocating providing additional spaces and routes in parallel to the canal, either enabling the continued use of the towpath as a route or finding/creating alternatives routes at a slight remove.



To Stonebridge Park

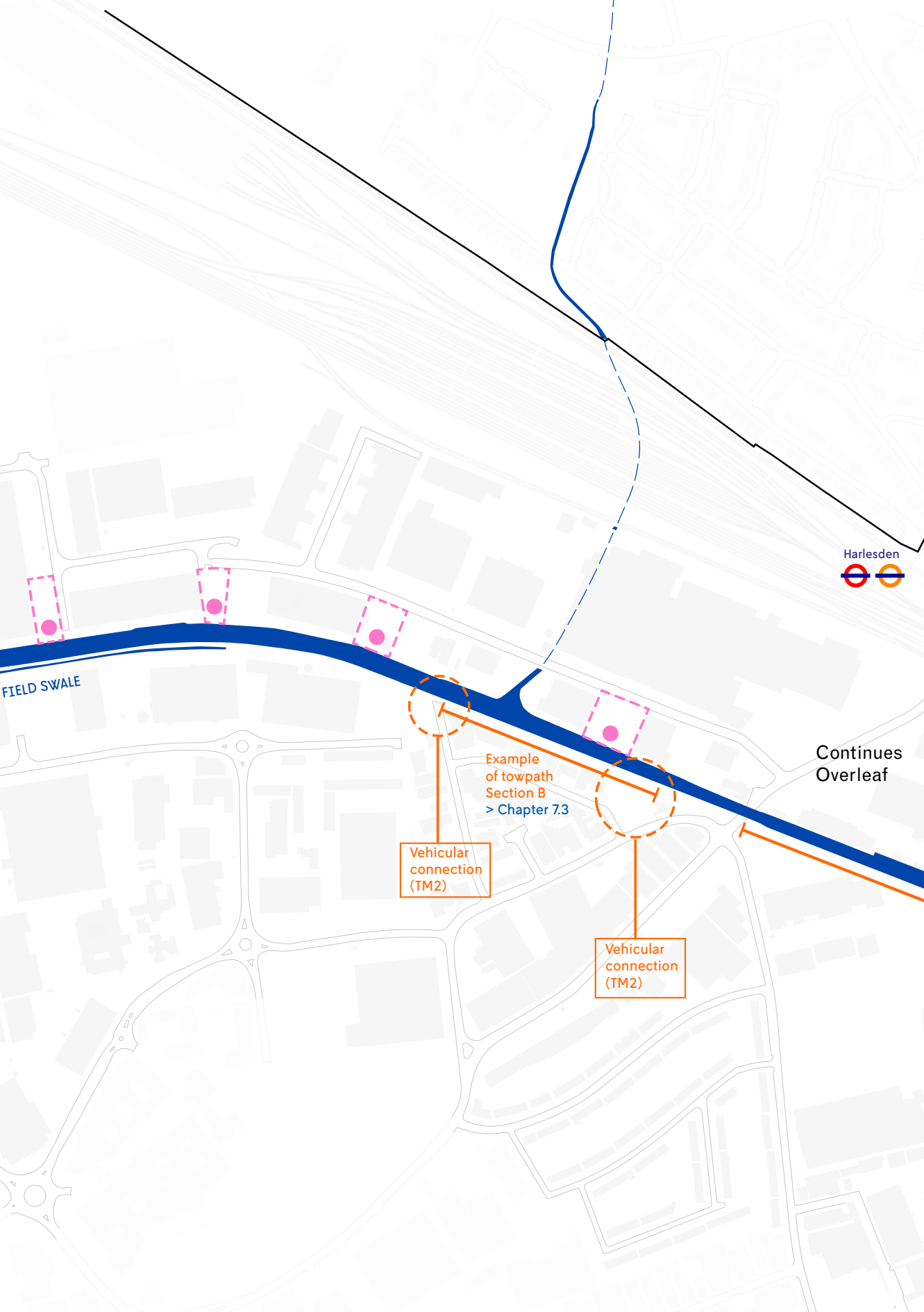
RIVER BRENT

Abbey Road Wharf (TM3.2)

Example of towpath > Chapter 7.3

WILLEN

- Stop + shop potential (TM3.5)
- ◆ potential wharfage for construction (TM3.2)
- Example towpath improvement locations (TM1)



FIELD SWALE

Harlesden



Continues Overleaf

Example of towpath Section B > Chapter 7.3

Vehicular connection (TM2)

Vehicular connection (TM2)

To Harlesden

Example of towpath Section C > Chapter 7.3

Continues from overleaf

Example of towpath Section D > Chapter 7.3

See Scenario 5.3

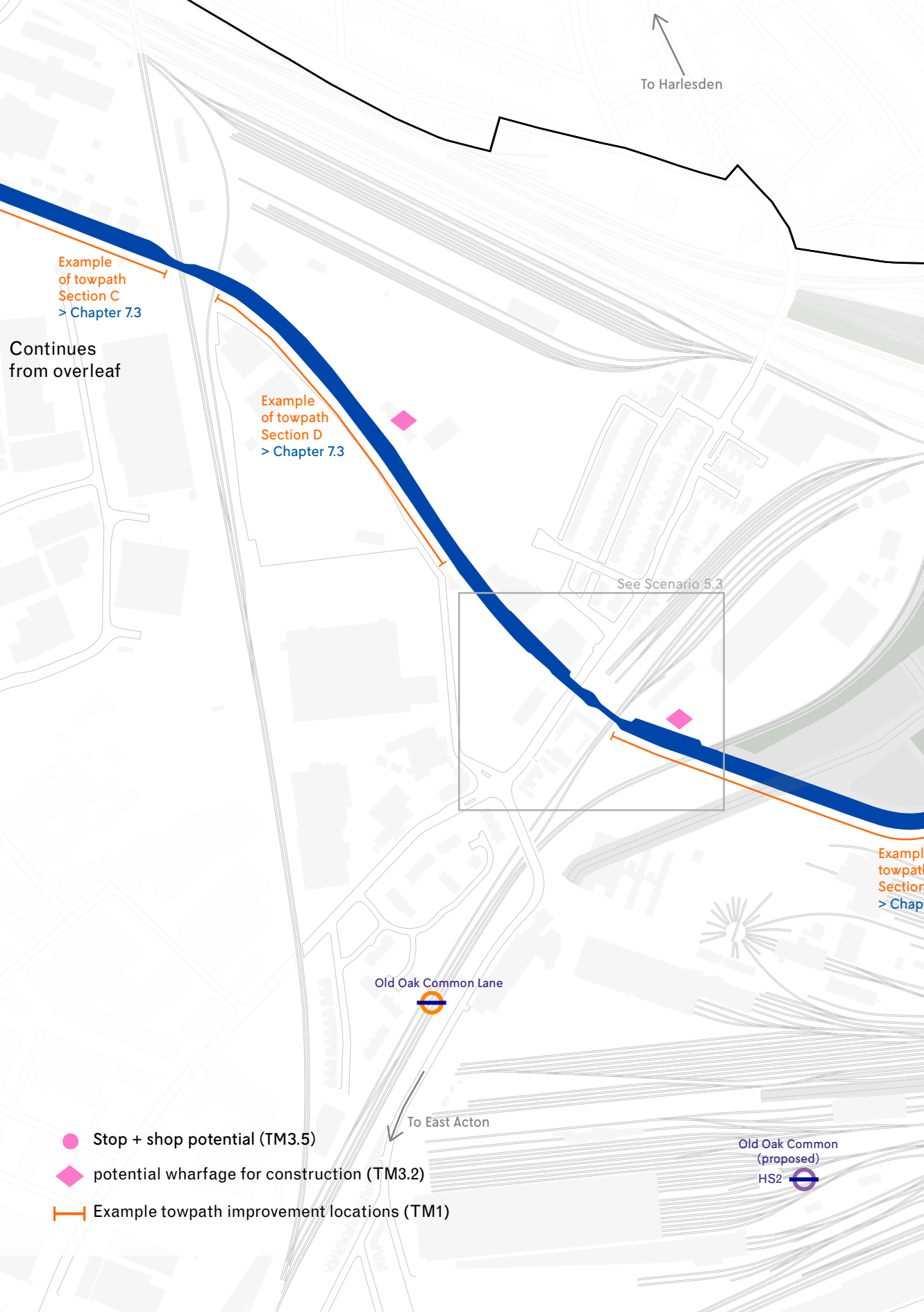
Example of towpath Section > Chap

Old Oak Common Lane

To East Acton

Old Oak Common (proposed) HS2

- Stop + shop potential (TM3.5)
- ◆ potential wharfage for construction (TM3.2)
- Example towpath improvement locations (TM1)



Willesden Junction



To Kensal Green



OPDC boundary

Old Oak North  
(map indicates current masterplan)

Hythe Road  
(proposed)



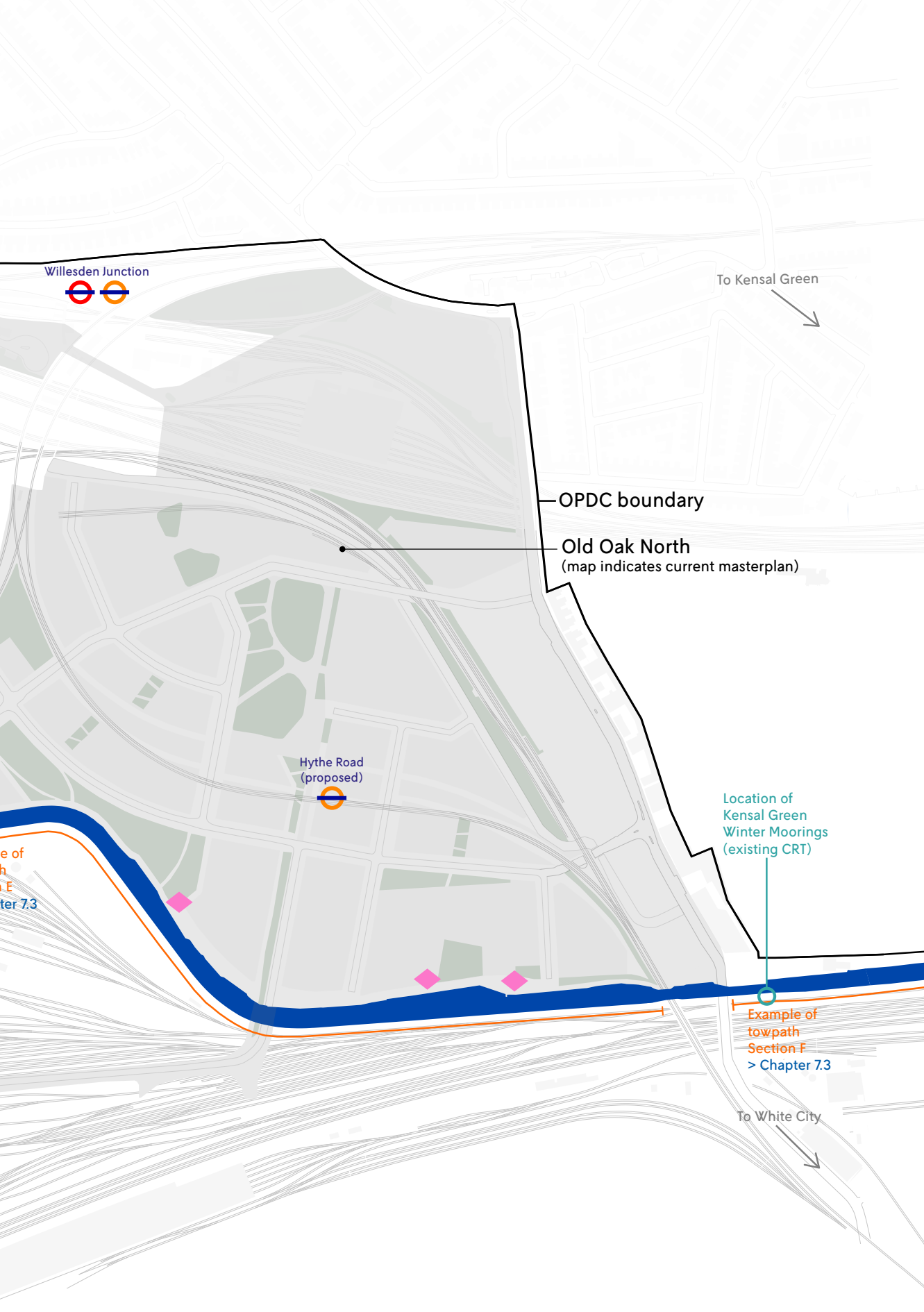
Location of  
Kensal Green  
Winter Moorings  
(existing CRT)

Example of  
towpath  
Section F  
> Chapter 7.3

To White City



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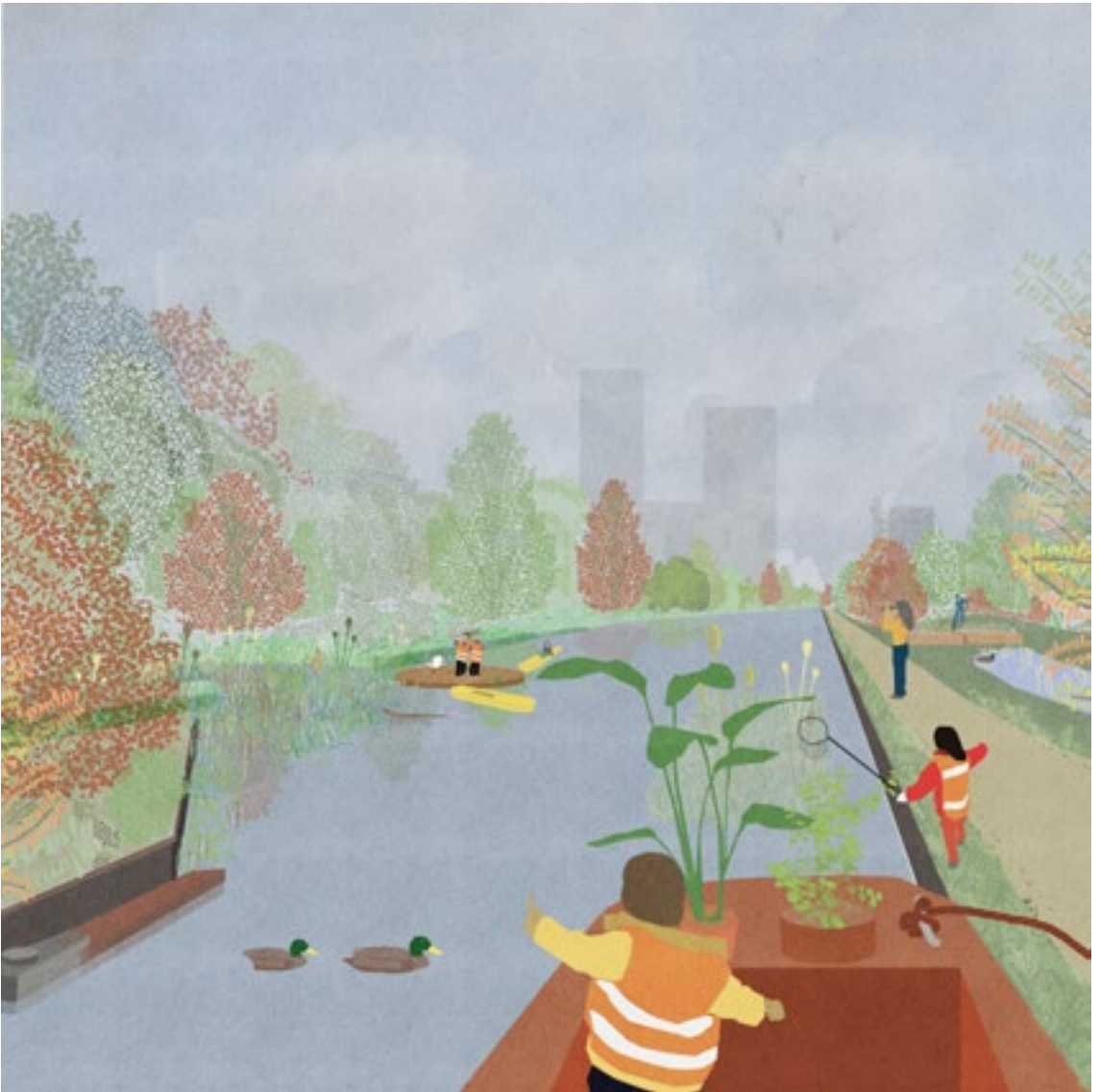
## 4.3 Ecology & Heritage

- A continuous ecological corridor will be created along the entire length of the Grand Union Canal in Old Oak and Park Royal.
- Pollution will be mitigated through increased ecological richness and a coordinated stakeholder approach.
- Industrial heritage and infrastructure, as well as the social and cultural narratives adjacent to the canal, will be celebrated.
- Where it already exists, the biodiversity and ecological value of the canal corridor will be preserved and enhanced.
- Where biodiversity and habitats are negligible or absent, they will be created and strengthened.

The Paddington Arm of the Grand Union Canal provides an opportunity for a continuous ecological corridor spanning the Old Oak and Park Royal area. There is potential to join up and enhance existing sites of ecology and biodiversity, integrate with the wider network of green spaces in the area and create new spaces that enrich the continuity of the corridor.

Steps to address and mitigate any sources of pollution should be taken, including ongoing management and accountability programmes to ensure the situation does not deteriorate in the future.





The canal has a 'wild' quality, interpreted here as natural processes occurring without overt human intervention. This quality or feeling, particularly precious and rare in the city, will be retained and enhanced in a way that enriches its industrial



and cultural heritage and as a means of balancing the increase in people using this part of canal by also asserting the role of nature. The feeling of leaving the inner city when the Paddington Arm of the Grand Union Canal reaches Old Oak and Park Royal as experienced by diverse users, > [Chapter 2.1](#) though it may be influenced or challenged by development, should be preserved.

Given its existing and emerging ecological richness and wildness, the canal's potential as a site of environmental education should be exploited, whether for school groups, lifelong learning or simply as a part of daily life.

**EH1 – The Grand Union Canal should provide a continuous green edge throughout Old Oak and Park Royal, simultaneously considering the creation and protection of habitat, ensuring effective species movement, and enabling access to nature.**

-  EH1.1 – Unless in exceptional circumstances, a green front verge on the towpath should be created to provide a continuous corridor connecting existing green pockets and habitats. A hard edge should only be provided where other ample greening is able to take the place of a green front verge and where mooring is not permitted.
  
-  EH1.2 – Design guidance should be produced regarding the value and specificities of the existing natural character.
  
-  EH1.3 – Interaction with local groups and visitors regarding care of the environment should take place as part of building a 'canal community'  
> [CL7 & Chapter 6.1](#)
  
-  EH1.4 – Effective management and appropriate techniques should be adopted to maintain and strengthen planting and ecology.



**EH2 – Planting along the canal corridor should be appropriate to its setting and respond to the planting characters identified within this study to enhance experiential and ecological value.**



EH2.1 – Plant species should be selected from the palettes set out in this study. > [Chapter 7.2](#)



EH2.2 – Existing planting with low biodiversity value should be enhanced by the addition of beneficial native plant species to increase ecological value.



EH2.3 – Collaboration should take place with local groups for community planting to foster a sense of custodianship and a 'canal community' that achieves on-going and long-term stewardship and management. > [EH7](#)






EH2.4 – Path side planting should aim to be relatively low-level to maintain a 0.5m offset from path edges, not encroach on usable path width, maintain sightlines and preserve capacity to support mooring.





EH2.5 – Guidance for planting to soften industrial premises > [CL6](#) should respond positively to the planting palettes set out in this study. > [Chapter 7.2](#)

**EH3 – Existing areas with a sense of wildness, usually on the off-side, should be enhanced and protected, ensuring valuable undisturbed habitat and contributing to wider ecological corridors.**

-  EH3.1 Management and replanting with suitable species should take place to conserve habitat, paying attention to the need for appropriate removal of invasive species such as giant hogweed.
-  EH3.2 Outreach and advocacy programmes should be developed to communicate the value of wild habitats within cities and their importance to wildlife.
-  EH3.3 Opportunities should be developed for guided groups to use wild areas and ecologically enhanced areas for education. > [Map pp.88–91](#) & [Scenario 5.2](#)

**EH4 – Pollutants should be remediated and mitigated with new areas of wetland and floating planting at specific locations.**

-  EH4.1 – Remedial strategies should be put in place where appropriate to deal with identified pollution issues. Collaboration with stakeholders to identify suitable sites for floating reed beds or marginal wetland planting to address remediation should be developed by OPDC and the Canal & River Trust.
-  EH4.2 – Short-term remedial strategies should include wetland and floating reed bed planting, simultaneously protecting and creating habitats for the wide range of bird, animal and aquatic species along the Grand Union Canal in Old Oak and Park Royal.



EH4.3 – Engagement with the public through information and community planting should be undertaken to increase awareness. > [EH3](#) & [CL7](#)



EH4.4 – A Task Force involving key stakeholders including the Canal & River Trust, Local Authorities, the Catchment Partnership and the Environment Agency should be established by OPDC to identify and tackle sources of pollution, in liaison with businesses which may be feeding in to existing watercourses, such as the Brent Feeder and the Willen Field swale.



EH4.5 – Floating and wetland planting should comply with Canal & River Trust policies, primarily that planting should not be placed directly in the navigable channel. If plants are desired in the navigable channel, they should be carefully located in consultation with the Trust and installed on floating reed beds.

**EH5 – Heritage assets that communicate the story of the Grand Union Canal and its wider area should be celebrated and interpreted, especially in ways that link up heritage with diverse voices including young people.**



EH5.1 – Durable, integrated interpretation projects at key locations along the Grand Union Canal should interpret key heritage assets including bridges, stop locks and historic wharves/buildings, integrated as much as possible with wayfinding and signage projects and with the structures themselves where appropriate.



EH5.2 – In interpreting the industrial heritage of the canal, the social and multicultural histories of neighbouring industrial sites should be incorporated and the voices of people in those spaces should be referenced or used.

- EH5.3 – Locally-listed bridges form a regular heritage asset across the canal corridor and should be a particular focus for interpretation.
- EH5.4 – Contemporary creative practice, whether design, literature or fine art, should be used to convey the complex narratives of this stretch of the canal. This should involve departing from conventional approaches to deliver interpretation in more innovative or engaging ways, and which prioritise traditionally excluded or marginalised voices, linking heritage with contemporary concerns and culture.

**EH6 – The Birchwood, should become part of a wider network of accessible natural spaces along the canal and an active public nature reserve.**

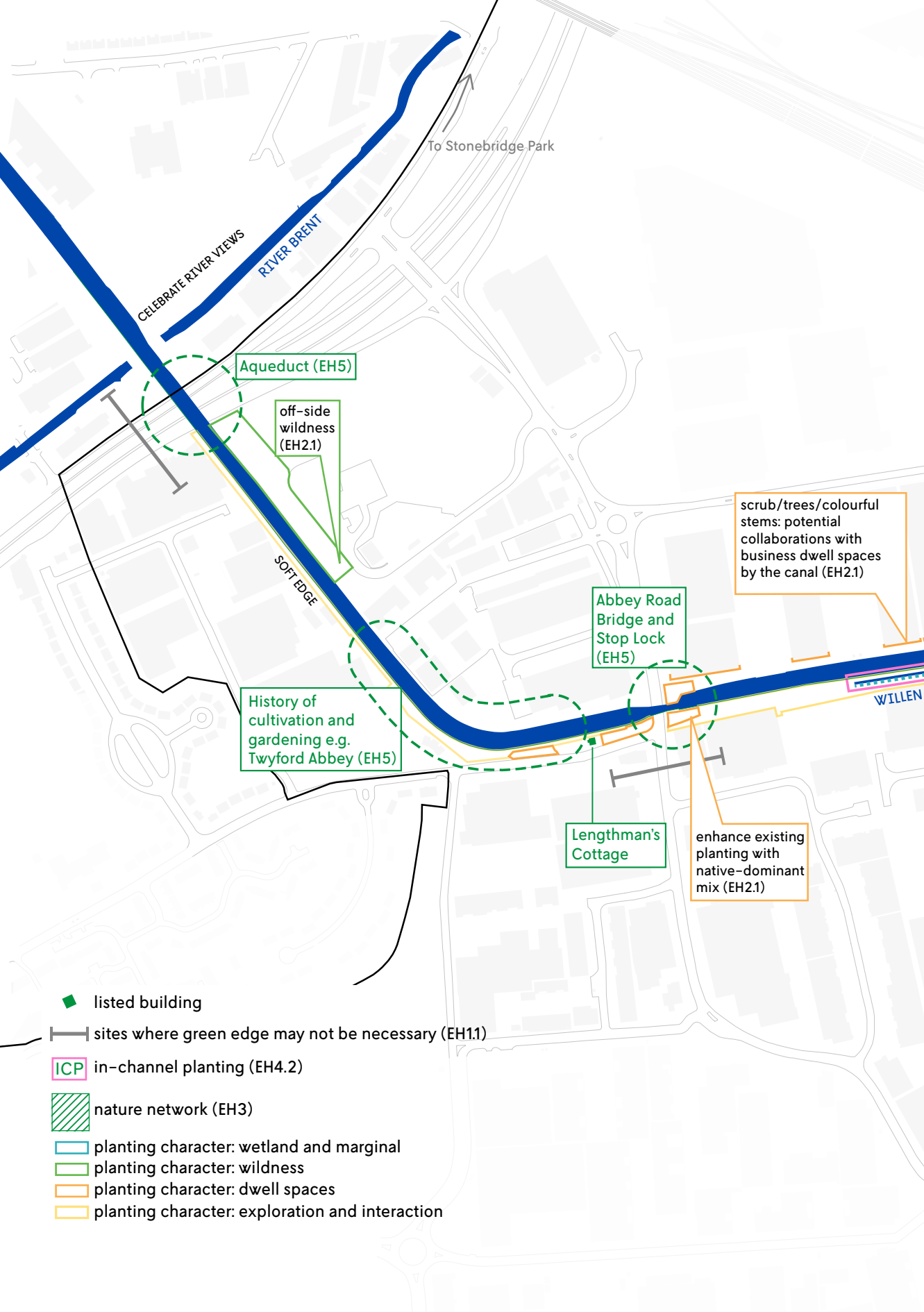
**> Scenario 5.2**

- ◆ EH6.1 – Programming of the Birchwood should be developed in collaboration with local schools, youth groups, environmental charities and contemporary artists to provide environmental education activities on-site.
- MU EH6.2 – Community group and/or volunteer network should be established to enable the opening of the Birchwood and to ascertain the frequency and type of access.
- ◆ MU EH6.3 – The potential of a shelter or small building, a 'Forest Schoolroom', to provide a light-touch sheltered learning environment within the Nature Reserve should be explored, on the perimeter of the reserve.

- EH6.4 – A series of wild environments, on and off side, will be provided to deliver an environmental network across the canal corridor, with Birchwood as the largest single space.

## EH7 – The towpath charter and eventual 'canal community' should include explicit environmental policies and priorities. > [CL7 & Chapter 6.1](#)

- EH7.1 – Volunteer clean-up activities should be quickly developed to allow diverse users and user groups to play a role in the maintenance of the canal, whether simply picking up litter incidentally or as a sustained stewardship activity. > [Chapter 6.1](#)
- EH7.2 – Parallel to the wider, looser 'canal community', a multi-stakeholder taskforce should be established to monitor water quality, identify potential sources of pollution, and work with potential polluters to resolve issues. > [EH4.3](#), [EH4.4](#) & [Chapter 6.1](#)



CELEBRATE RIVER VIEWS  
RIVER BRENT

To Stonebridge Park

Aqueduct (EH5)

off-side wildness (EH2.1)

SOFT EDGE

History of cultivation and gardening e.g. Twyford Abbey (EH5)

Abbey Road Bridge and Stop Lock (EH5)

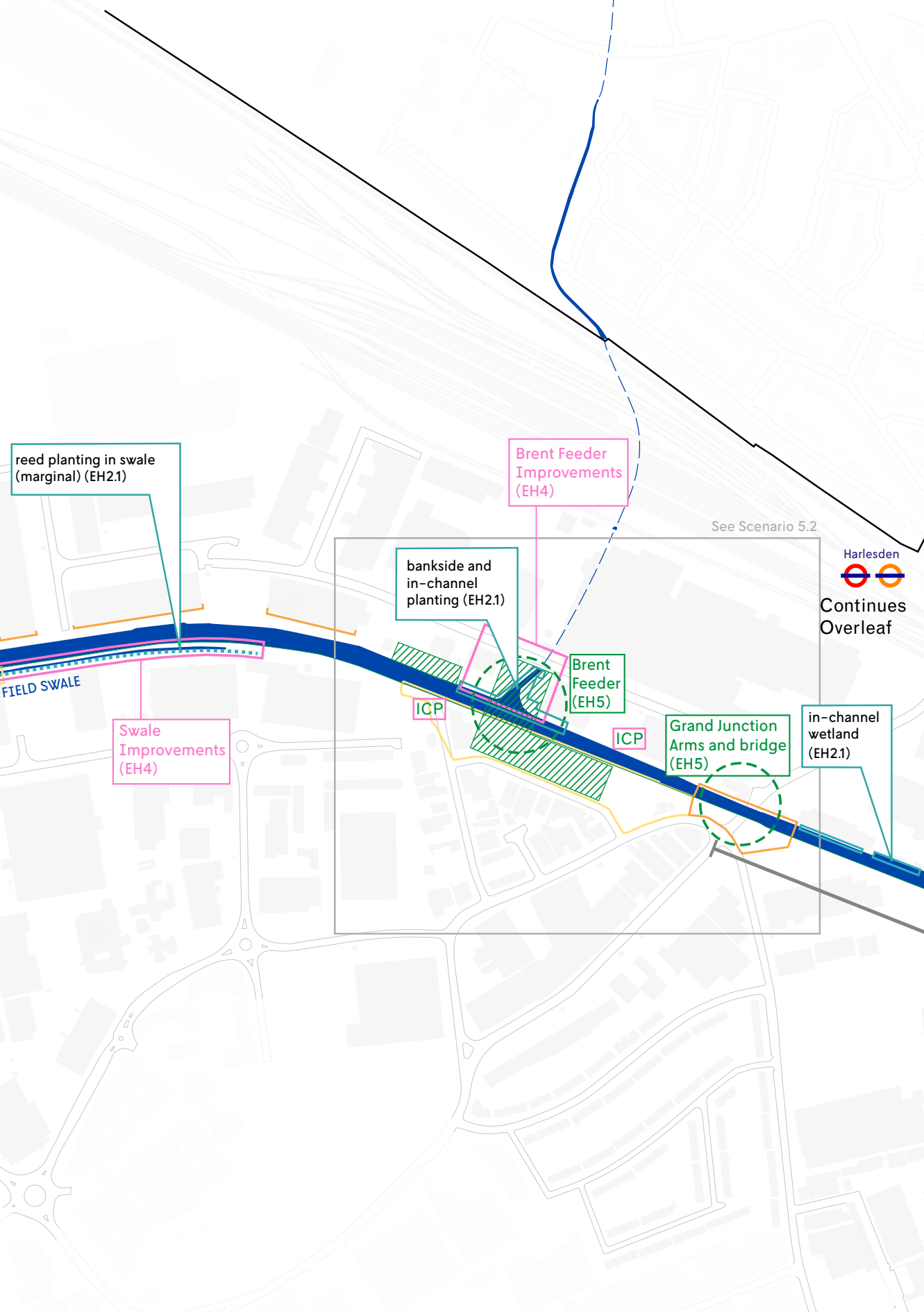
scrub/trees/colourful stems: potential collaborations with business dwell spaces by the canal (EH2.1)

Lengthman's Cottage

enhance existing planting with native-dominant mix (EH2.1)

WILLEN

- ◆ listed building
- sites where green edge may not be necessary (EH1.1)
- ICP in-channel planting (EH4.2)
- ▨ nature network (EH3)
- ▭ planting character: wetland and marginal
- ▭ planting character: wildness
- ▭ planting character: dwell spaces
- ▭ planting character: exploration and interaction



reed planting in swale (marginal) (EH2.1)

Brent Feeder Improvements (EH4)

See Scenario 5.2

Harlesden  
Continues Overleaf

bankside and in-channel planting (EH2.1)

Brent Feeder (EH5)

FIELD SWALE

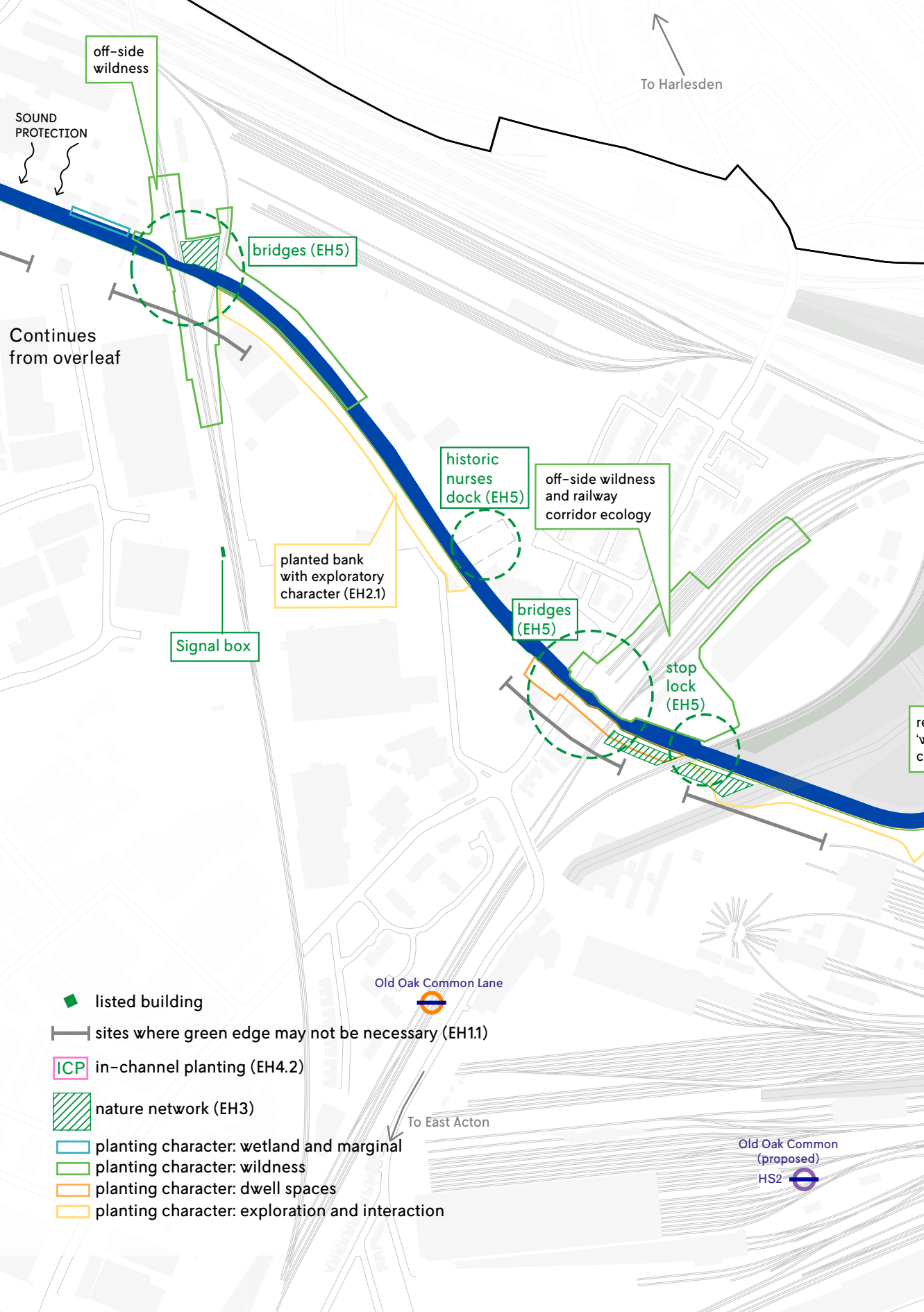
Swale Improvements (EH4)

ICP

ICP

Grand Junction Arms and bridge (EH5)

in-channel wetland (EH2.1)



off-side wildness

SOUND PROTECTION

To Harlesden

bridges (EH5)

Continues from overleaf

historic nurses dock (EH5)

off-side wildness and railway corridor ecology

planted bank with exploratory character (EH2.1)

Signal box

bridges (EH5)

stop lock (EH5)

Old Oak Common Lane

To East Acton

Old Oak Common (proposed)  
HS2

◆ listed building

— sites where green edge may not be necessary (EH1.1)

ICP in-channel planting (EH4.2)

▨ nature network (EH3)

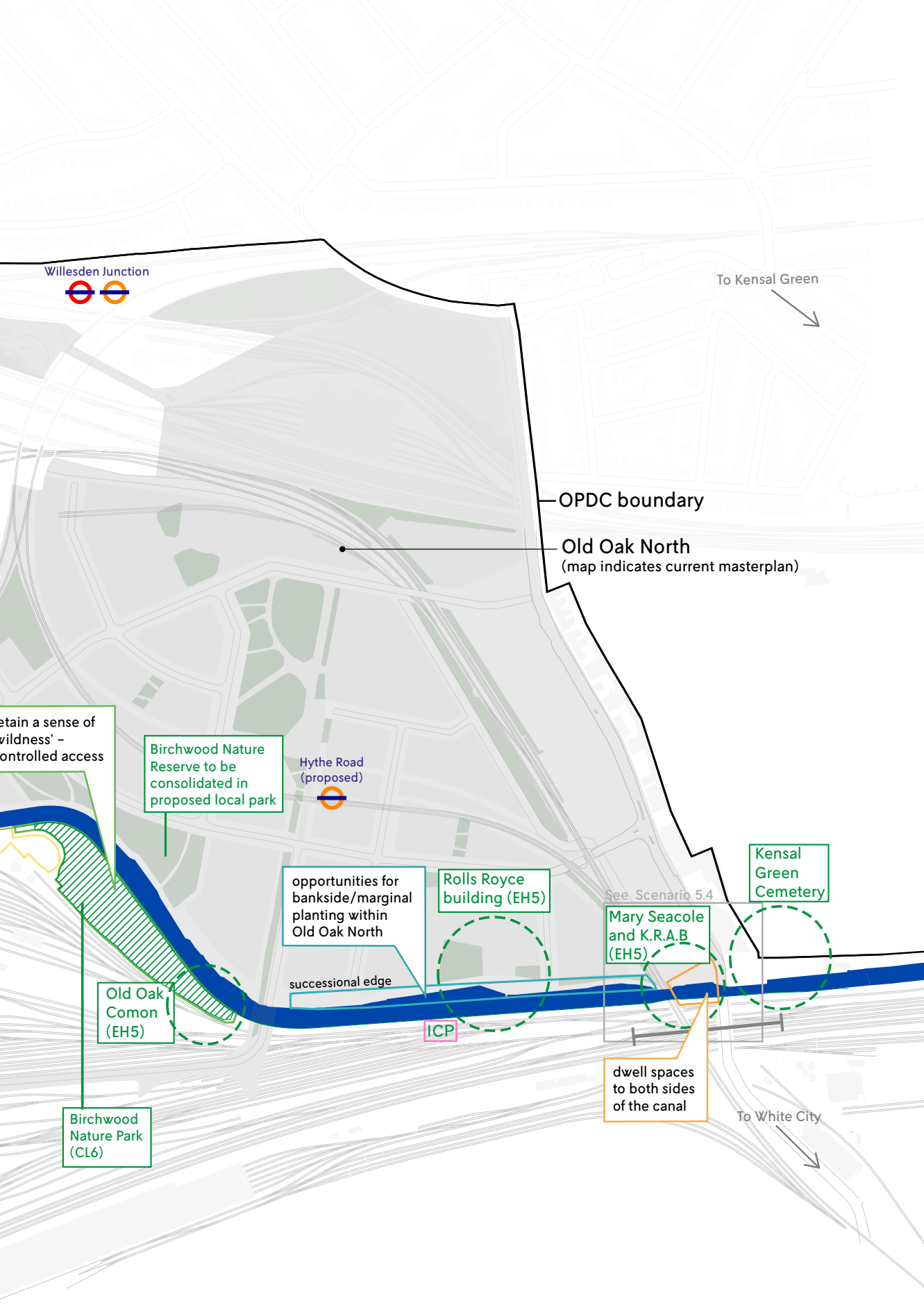
▭ planting character: wetland and marginal

▭ planting character: wildness

▭ planting character: dwell spaces

▭ planting character: exploration and interaction





Willesden Junction



To Kensal Green



OPDC boundary

Old Oak North  
(map indicates current masterplan)

retain a sense of  
wildness' -  
controlled access

Birchwood Nature  
Reserve to be  
consolidated in  
proposed local park

Hythe Road  
(proposed)



opportunities for  
bankside/marginal  
planting within  
Old Oak North

Rolls Royce  
building (EH5)

See Scenario 5.4

Mary Seacole  
and K.R.A.B  
(EH5)

Kensal  
Green  
Cemetery

Old Oak  
Comon  
(EH5)

successional edge

ICP

dwel spaces  
to both sides  
of the canal

Birchwood  
Nature Park  
(CL6)

To White City



## Precedents



### CAMLEY STREET NATURAL PARK, KINGS CROSS

A designated Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation, Camley Street Natural Park sits on the site of a former coal yard in Kings Cross, between busy railways and beside the Regents Canal. A wild oasis in the heart of the city, it provides diverse habitat including woodland, grassland and wetland, and regularly hosts school groups and educational activities. (London Wildlife Trust)



### DUISBURG NORD WASSERPARK, ESSEN

The open water system within Duisburg Nord park has restored a variety of natural ecological processes to an environment once characterised by industrial pollution. Bankside planting, in-channel reed beds and floating bio-havens facilitate nature within the old industrial park, whilst performing vital filtering of water run-off from the once contaminated land. Pieces of old infrastructure form sculptures and bridges across the water. (Latz + Partners)



### RIVER WANDLE, COLLIERS WOOD, LONDON

As part of 'Connecting Collier's Wood', a new riverfront walk with biodiverse planting and enhanced habitat provides a journey along the banks of the River Wandle. Rest points with new seats are surrounded by lush planting. Existing vegetation has been improved by selective thinning of saplings plus new native wetland plants to enhance the qualities of this verdant place. (Gort Scott & JCLA)



### THE ODD GUIDES / GRIME UP THE RIVER, LEAWAY

An alternative series of guides made to accompany transformations to the riverside public spaces of the Lower Lea Valley. Three thematic guides, distributed freely along the network, were supported by a series of live events and a commissioned grime track, all of which shared the ambition of giving a voice to the young people of the Lower Lea's many neighbouring communities. (Create London, Leigh Clarke, Dash N' Dem and Gayle Chong Kwan)



### LOCKLINES

Commissioned by CRT as part of their ambition to incorporate contemporary art into working heritage waterways, 'Locklines' inscribed a series of evocative words onto replacement lock gate balance beams. The work was installed on locks around the country, and encourages moments of contemplation and reflection on the character and heritage of the waterways from canal users. (Peter Coates and poets Roy Fisher, Jo Bell and Ian MacMillan for CRT)

## 5 Scenarios

In the following sections a series of scenarios are presented which explore how, at the scale of particular sites and conditions along the canal corridor, the recommendations of this study should play out.

## 5.1 Park Royal: industrial edges

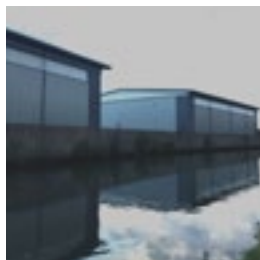
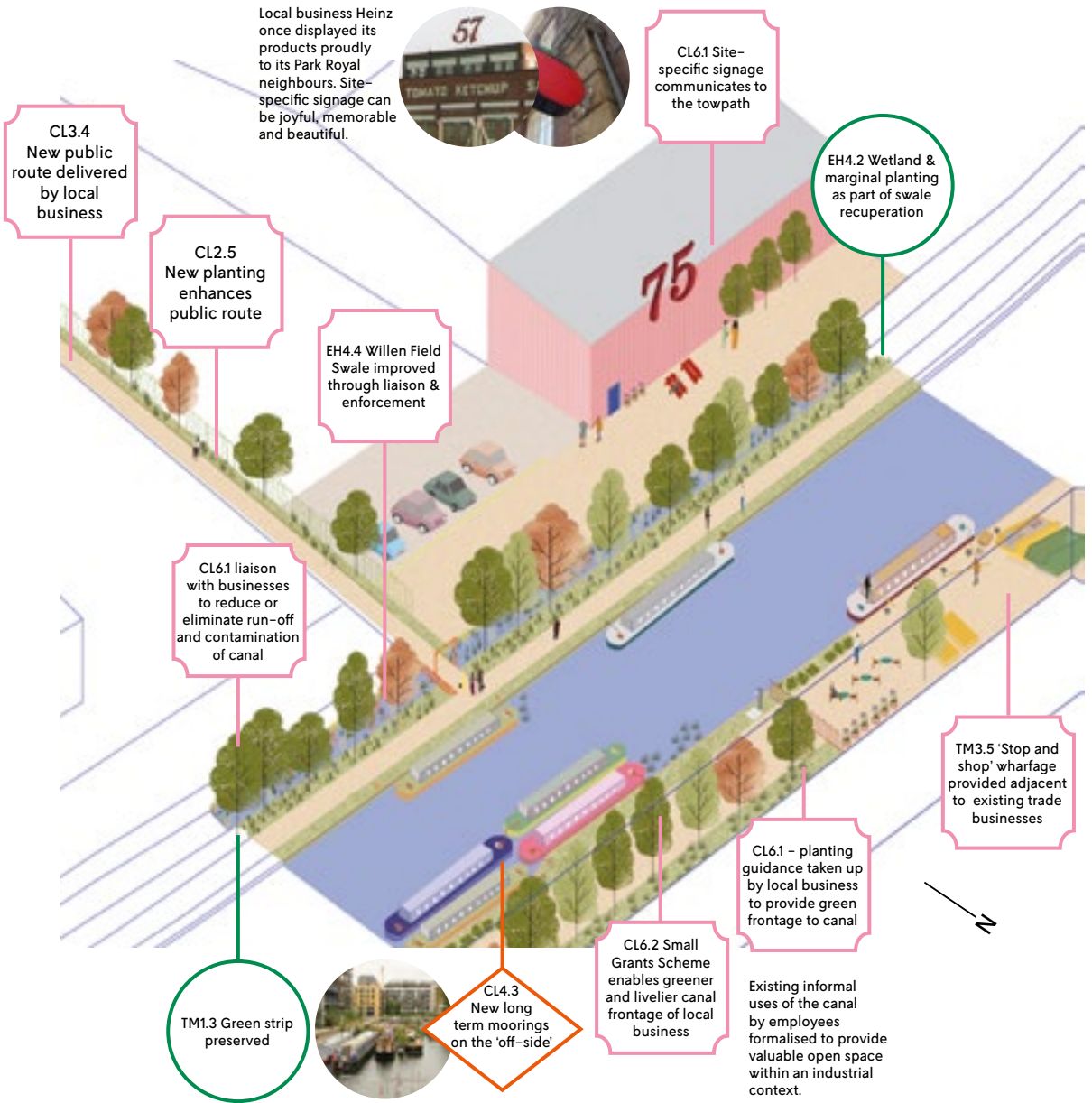
As the Paddington Arm of the Grand Union Canal passes through Park Royal, it is most framed by the ‘backs’ of industrial businesses, many of which once presented a front to the canal. The strategy envisages supporting positive frontages in these locations in line with the OPDC Local Plan to provide a more positive and livelier frontage to the canal for the benefit of all. The majority of interventions here are dependent on liaison, management or enforcement to ensure that businesses respond positively to the canal; others play out in the form of a design code that defines good design principles for all industrial premises with a frontage onto the canal corridor, to be applied during the planning process but also as a guide for use at any time.

Examples of this approach might include:

- Replacing (or augmenting) steel fencing with green boundaries such as hedging that soften the edge whilst providing important habitats
- Opening up public routes to enable greater porosity between the towpath and the wider public realm, for the benefit of general public and workers
- Formally opening employee access onto the canal to enable and encourage employee usage of the canal for leisure time and breaks.
- Creating canal side gardens and/or terraces to provide employee or customer space on the canal.
- Facade or signage interventions that allow premises to ‘face’ the canal better and communicate their use. These would ideally take the form of bespoke and/or site-specific signage that communicates qualitative aspects of the business – imagery of its product for example – rather than simply branding or standard signage.
- Appropriate planting and ecological improvements, and measures to eliminate run-off into the canal from industrial premises.

New mooring spaces in line with the Trust’s London Mooring Strategy and subject to liaison with local landowners will enliven this location. They would improve natural surveillance, care and stewardship over this stretch of the waterway.

>CL6



Hard blank industrial elevations offer an unsatisfactory 'back' to the canal



Appropriate planting forming green edges and linear habitats on the off-side.



The fire brigade canalside garden provides a local precedent for better off-side uses.

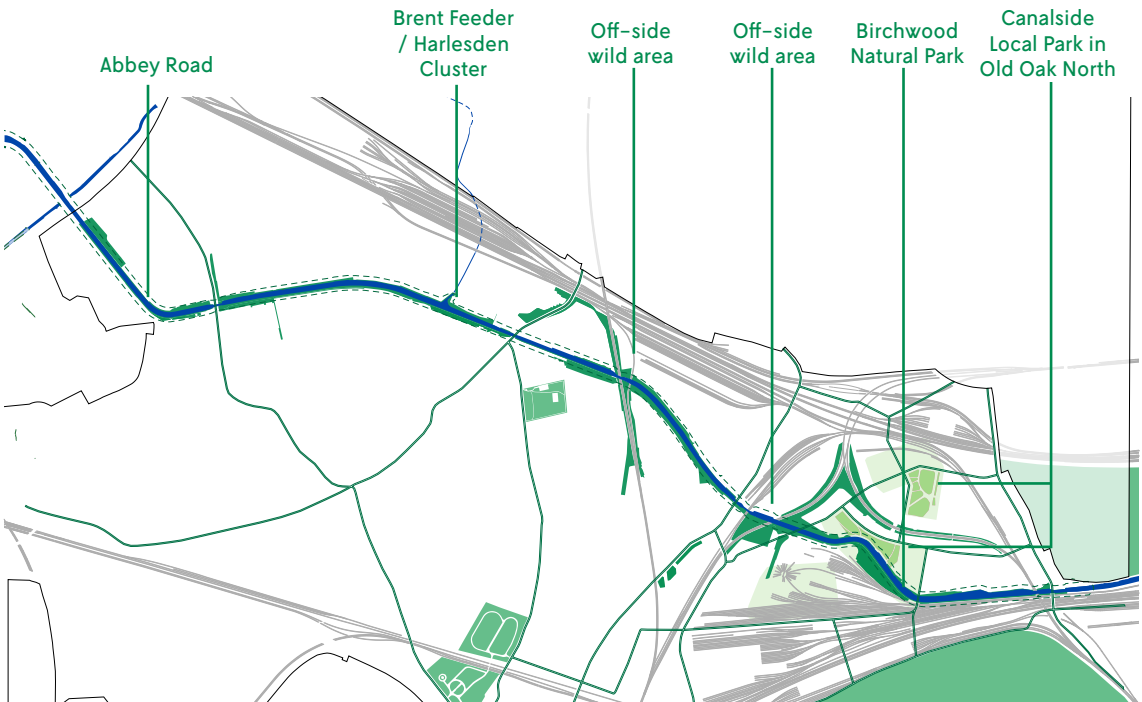
## 5.2 Harlesden: an environmental network along the Grand Union Canal

The OPDC canal corridor provides 20 hectares of wildlife habitat, an area slightly larger than Green Park. Interventions should prioritise maintaining and enhancing its status as a continuous linear habitat in the context of enhanced and increased public life on and adjacent to the Grand Union.

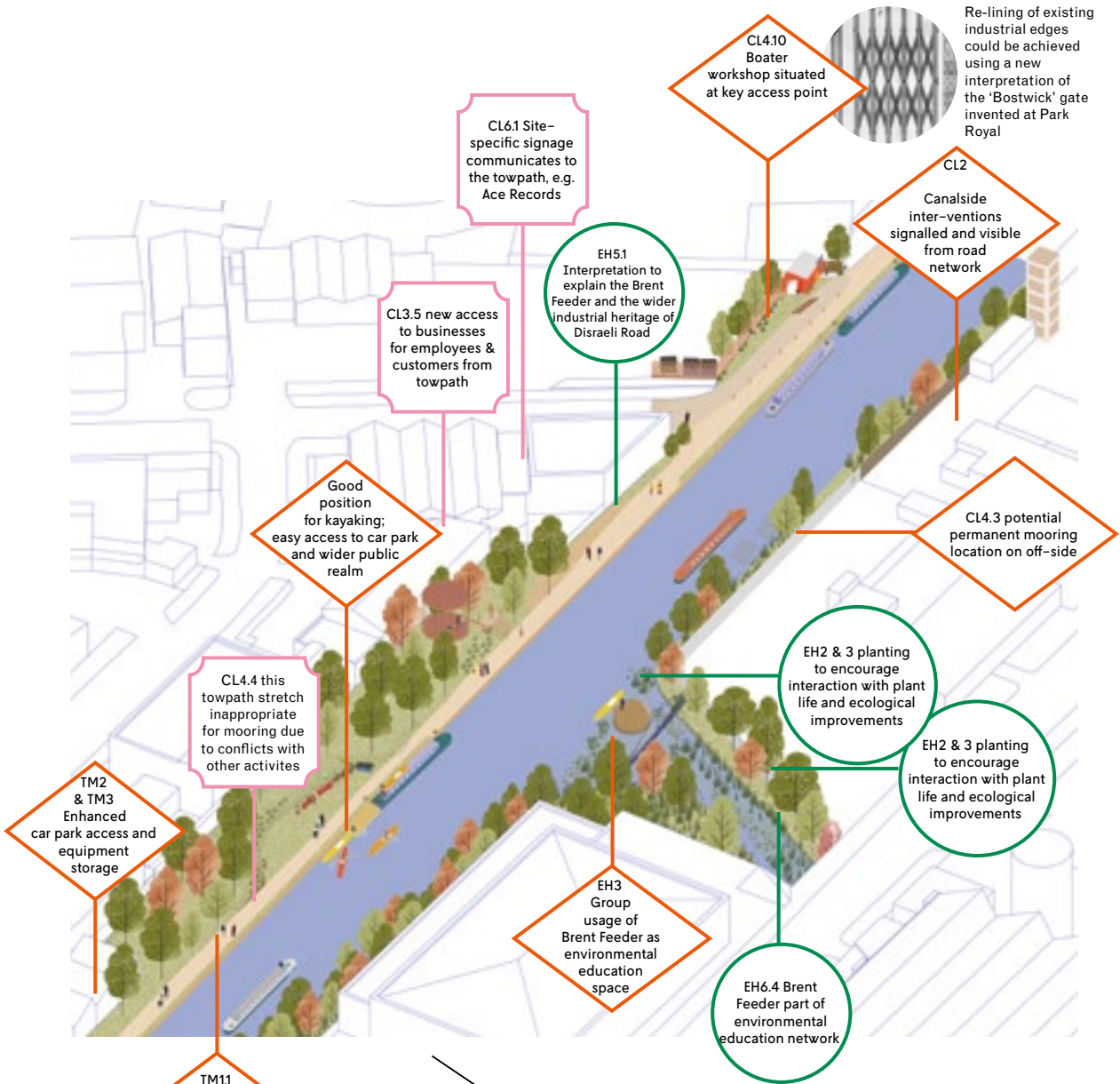
The strategy envisions a network of spaces which provide a series of educational, spatial encounters with nature, some structured and others much looser. As a network this provides incidental or accidental engagement with nature but also sustained, repeated, and highly interactive engagements through education programming in collaboration with local schools, youth groups, and environmental charities. This network should be continuous but key sites are indicated in the map below.

This scenario explores how specific enhancements to public life, including moorings, boater facilities and public activities such as kayaking, can intersect with ecological improvements and protections.

> EH6



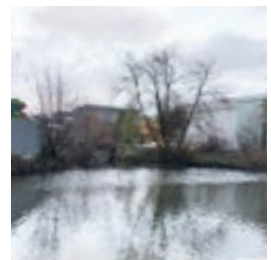
Identified sites of a potential 'environmental network' built upon Local Plan policies



The area has a wide green edge between towpath & industry, and mature trees



A direct vehicular connection into Park Royal via Steele Road adjacent to Ace Records



Brent feeder inlet is an opportunity for environmental improvements

### 5.3 Old Oak Lane: access

At this location there is a strong opportunity to provide exemplary access, to the canal in the first instance but also as a prototype for unlocking the wider area of Old Oak North for public use.

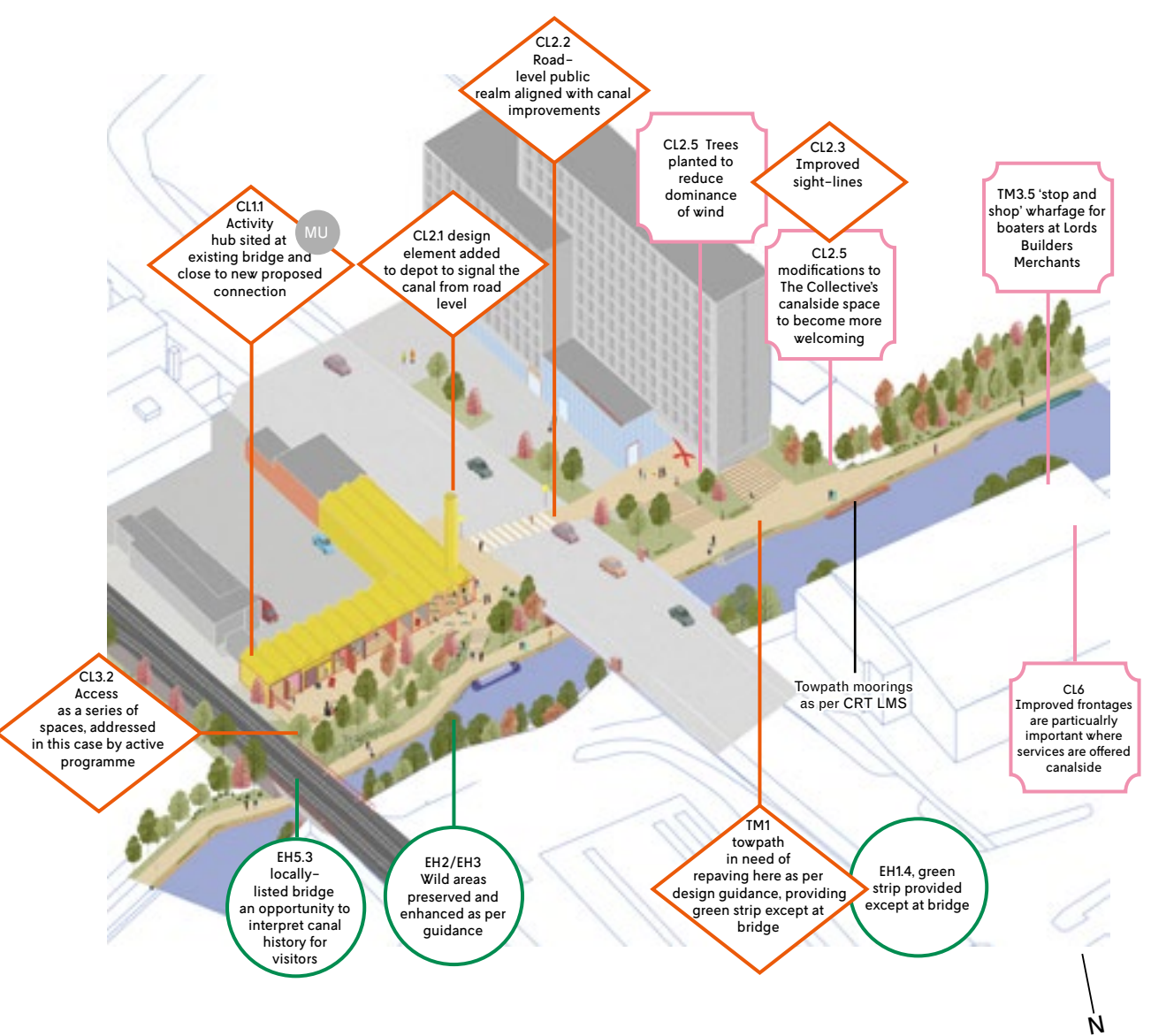
Current proposals for this area include a repurposing of the Network Rail depot as an active public use such as a cafe or visitor centre, potentially as a meanwhile-use intervention. This is included in the scenario drawing adjacent in a way that shows how such an intervention might fit into larger proposals that together achieve an exemplar relationship between canal and the wider road/pedestrian network.

This is a question not only of literal access but also of perceptions of accessibility. Design schemes can too easily become a complex network of ramps, handrails and steps, and this should be avoided in favour of schemes which make 'access as place', i.e. a series of planted and landscaped terraces and level changes which are convenient to pass through but also appropriate for inhabitation and dwelling. Clear sight lines, with recognisable things such as boats or people at the end of them, are a useful way of enhancing the sense of the canal as a public space and reassuring pedestrians. In this way, facilities that are already proposed at this location, such as enhanced towpath moorings, should be sited so that they are visible from road-level entrances.

Changes to access points should not stop at the edge of the top step but be integrated with the wider city. For example, road-level public realm interventions such as crossings having a materiality that signals the presence of the canal corridor running adjacent or beneath. Similarly, architectural, design or art interventions that evoke the character of the canal should be sited at these access points to emphasise the presence of the canal. In this example a 'chimney' added to an existing industrial building evokes the canal's industrial character in a way that is embedded within the architecture. Care must be taken to ensure that design interventions are well-integrated and carefully-judged such that they enhance their surroundings in a highly contextual way.

Incorporating the previously described Ecology & Heritage design principles will help to ensure that the wilderness qualities of this and adjacent sites are preserved alongside works to enhance access. > [CL2](#)





Existing access is overgrown and has unclear sightlines, and is a cause of anxiety



Towpath treatment here is unsuccessful, noisy and overly 'hard'

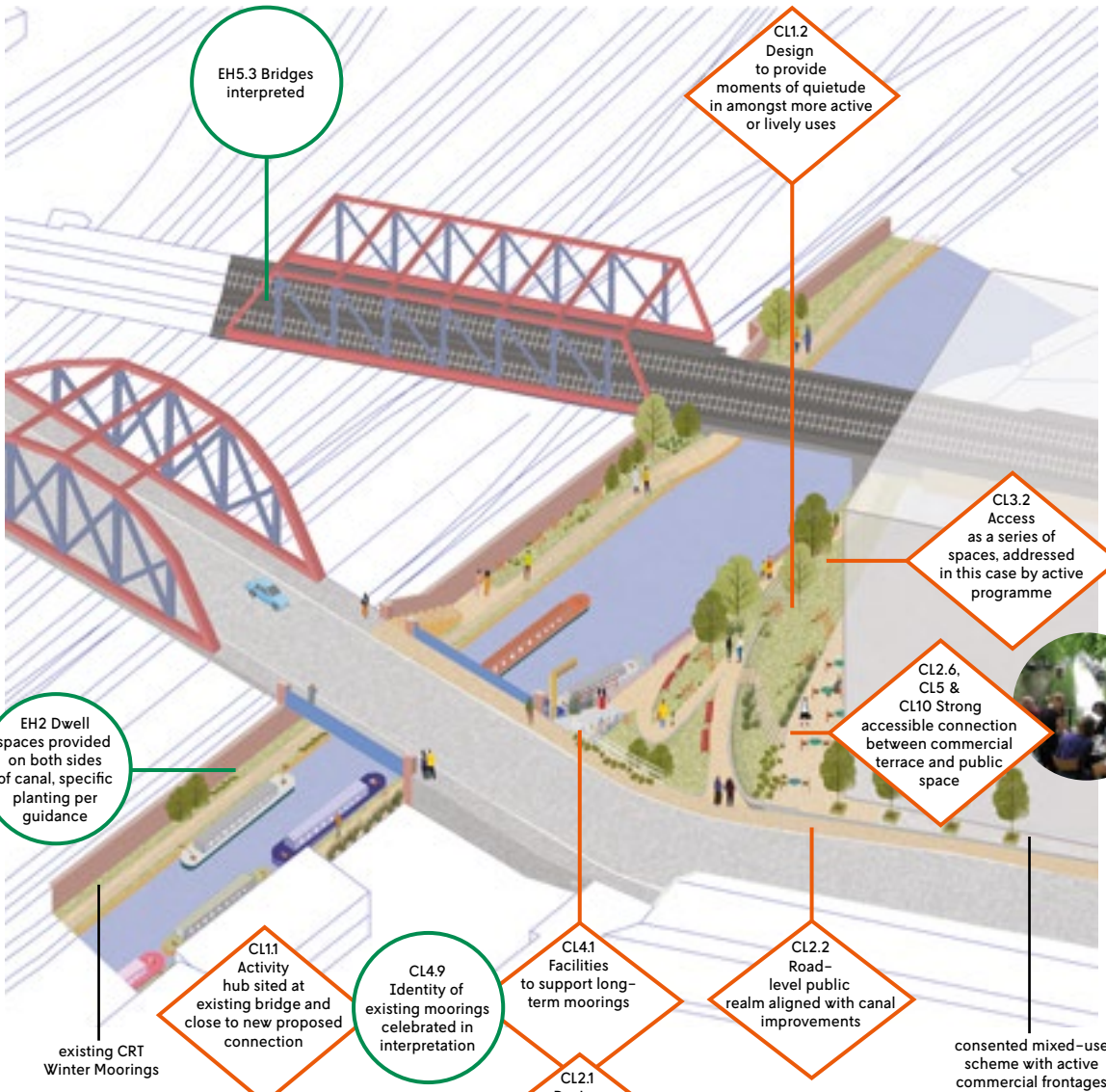


Railway bridge and immediate context evoke the canal's history

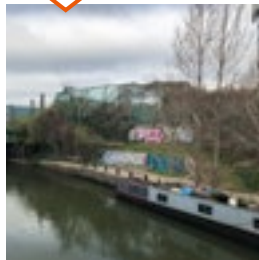
## 5.4 Mary Seacole Gardens: pocket-parks and active frontages

Mary Seacole Gardens is an existing public space on the 'off-side' of the canal, named in celebration of the woman who, in a 2004 BBC poll, was named the Greatest Black Briton. It offers a canalside public space away from the towpath and accessible from Scrubs Lane, and also provides access to the Kensal Rise Association of Boaters (KRAB) at Mitre Wharf, established in 2001. The site is close to existing large green spaces at Wormwood Scrubs and Kensal Green Cemetery, and the two bridges which frame the space are distinctive trussed structures. A new mixed-use development has planning permission directly to the north of the Gardens, and would replace the existing waste facility and directly address the gardens with a terrace and commercial active frontages. The challenge here lies in achieving a pocket park that fully integrates the development with the canal corridor, preserves the extant (and valued) quietude of the space whilst achieving good quality access for all users, including existing KRAB residents. Design delivery in this and similar contexts should focus upon:

- Requiring that canalside proposals consider the space as a whole, from building curtilage to canal channel; ensuring that the space feels integrated with the new development and avoiding unnecessary barriers and separations. In locations where routes and adjacent uses might conflict, some carefully-designed separation will be appropriate.
- Responding positively to the canal as a 'green corridor'. New uses should support the retention and enhancement of wildlife habitats
- Providing dedicated areas for pause and dwelling within the space, sheltered from noise and wind somewhat by planting. In this case such spaces could be associated with, and potentially 'adopted' by, adjacent long-term moorings. The need to preserve a 'green corridor' can go hand-in-hand with the need to preserve or create spaces of quietude
- Adjusting the approved terrace to make a sheltered belvedere overlooking the canal, connected to the open space.
- Ensuring active frontages, habitable rooms, balconies and equivalents addressing the canal corridor and the pocket park.
- Providing 'mooring to road' routes for boaters and their equipment
- Design interventions to signal the space and canal at road level could celebrate the moorings as well as the park; in this case a single design solution might contain a post box, bin store, and signage.



Existing post facilities at the road-level access to Mary Seacole Gardens



Mary Seacole Gardens is a small, valued green space



Existing bridges provide enclosure to the space and link with industrial heritage

## 6 Delivery

### 6.1 Management principles

#### Managing backs facing the canal > CL6

The recent history of the canal corridor at Old Oak and Park Royal has seen what were industrial ‘fronts’ become ‘backs’, with buildings of all types and uses turning their backs on the canal, with notable exceptions such as the Grand Junction Arms. This ‘backness’ has positive and negative consequences; it is a major factor in the prevalence of fly-tipping, littering and anti-social behaviour that takes place on this stretch of the canal, but it is also a factor in the wildness and quietness of the canal which is highly valued by its diverse users and communities. It is recommended that interventions in the canal corridor do not extend or duplicate ‘landside’ services or designs but instead provide canal-specific solutions wherever possible. For example, a waterborne waste collection service is preferable to extending existing roadside services, and visible boater communities at permanent or temporary moorings should be considered as important as more traditional passive surveillance models, e.g. from adjacent dwellings.

#### Micro Grants Schemes to support implementation of design principles > CL6.2

Micro Grants Schemes to support adjacent businesses in providing enhanced frontages and connections to the canal corridor can help deliver the design principles of this study in a multi-stakeholder way, similar to the ‘shopfront grants’ often used in high street projects. This should be implemented to combine some oversight across all schemes with individuality for each individual project. Common approaches at the scale of a whole industrial estate might build relationships across the study area and allow good practice to be disseminated and learned from.

A towpath charter, a canal community

> CL7 and also TM1.4, EH1.2 & EH7

Issues such as use of the towpath as a commuter route should be addressed through the encouragement of behavioural change in parallel to design interventions. >TM1

A towpath charter, made visible through good quality design interventions throughout the canal corridor, should be created which would set out the 'terms of use' for this stretch of the Grand Union Canal Paddington Arm, particularly in the context of its special developmental status. Such a charter would set out behavioural expectations from people using the towpath and canal corridor as well as setting out what canal users might expect from the bodies which maintain the canal and/or have businesses or organisations alongside it, with a view ultimately to creating a positive, future-facing 'canal community' of engaged users and groups.

Such a charter should not be authored by a single body but, perhaps brokered by OPDC, should seek collective authorship and 'sign-up' by a number of appropriate organisations, from cycling and boater organisations through to local businesses. Topics should include responsible commuting, litter, fly-tipping, access to services and support, as well as information about the biodiversity of the canal corridor at this location, emphasizing that the canal here plays the role of a discrete linear park or public space as well as part of a wider network.

The charter should sit 'within and alongside' existing Canal & River Trust initiatives such as the 'Share the Space' programme.



Examples of the Canal & River Trust's 'share the space' signage in use on the Grand Union Canal to encourage better sharing the space of the towpath.

## Volunteering & Community Association

Work should be undertaken to foster, support and where appropriate assist in the creation of local groups to support the preservation and enhancement of the canal as a green corridor, perhaps arising out of Towpath Charter dialogue and happening in tandem with educational programmes across the network of 'green' spaces > CL8. Where it is possible to support or create local groups, alignment should be sought with the idea of a 'canal community', which should aim to provide a structured means for volunteers to play a role in the management and maintenance of the canals, as well as with 'canal adoption' schemes already established by the Canal & River Trust.

## Environmental management

There is an ambition to improve all watercourses within the Brent catchment area to a 'good' ability to support wildlife, from their current 'moderate' ability.

There is an ambition to improve all watercourses within the Brent catchment area to a 'good' ability to support wildlife, from their current 'moderate' ability. This study has identified a number of sites where pollutants are entering the watercourse; these have been raised with the Canal & River Trust and the Environment Agency, and processes started to identify how to eliminate pollutants and remediate the area. This should lead to a multi-agency taskforce to tackle pollution issues in a holistic and comprehensive way.

> EH4.4

Both the Canal & River Trust and the Environment Agency are receptive to ideas about using planting to aid remediation strategies, including the use of bankside marginal planting, and in-channel planting at appropriate locations outside of the navigable channel. Habitat and species monitoring should take place to influence future environmental management plans.

Improved litter management to prevent material from ending up in the watercourse is an integral part of the waste management strategy for the area.

Within development proposals for the area, careful thought should be given to landscape detailing to ensure surface run-off with potential contamination does not end up in the watercourse.



The towpath lined with industrial edges along the Grand Union Canal in Park Royal.

The vision of a 'boater's paradise' on the Paddington Arm of the Grand Union Canal is dependent on ensuring the appropriate balance, quantity and type of moorings along the length of the canal.

- Provision of moorings should be central to development proposals on the off-side of the canal, with a presumption in favour of new moorings unless solid reasoning for not providing them is given.
- A key issue for moorings in urban locations is the potential tension between resident boaters and residents in adjacent developments. Addressing this issue is partly about clear codes of conduct, for example regarding engine noise and solid fuel burning but also about design and facilities, with schemes evaluated in terms of how they organise the relationship between moorings and the wider development.
- Commercial moorings, particularly providing services to the public at towpaths or canalside public spaces, are popular and add to the vitality of the canal. They should be situated in areas of high (or anticipated high) footfall and are particularly appropriate at canalside public spaces. New canalside development should provide services to support these.
- Long-term leisure or residential moorings, however delivered, should carefully consider appropriate charges, such that moorings are affordable by a diverse group of boaters. This might include subsidised 'community moorings' aimed explicitly at key workers, for example.
- Moorings need to be carefully handled in areas of high public life or intense activity. This does not mean that co-existence is impossible, but it does mean that design is key to ensuring that territories and functionality of any group are not overly compromised by another.
- The provision of new moorings will depend in most locations on private landowners. OPDC and the Canal & River Trust will encourage this by setting out policy-level requirements for moorings whilst also promoting the benefits provided by moorings, such as increased overlooking and



social control provided by boaters and the impact this can have on reducing antisocial behaviour.

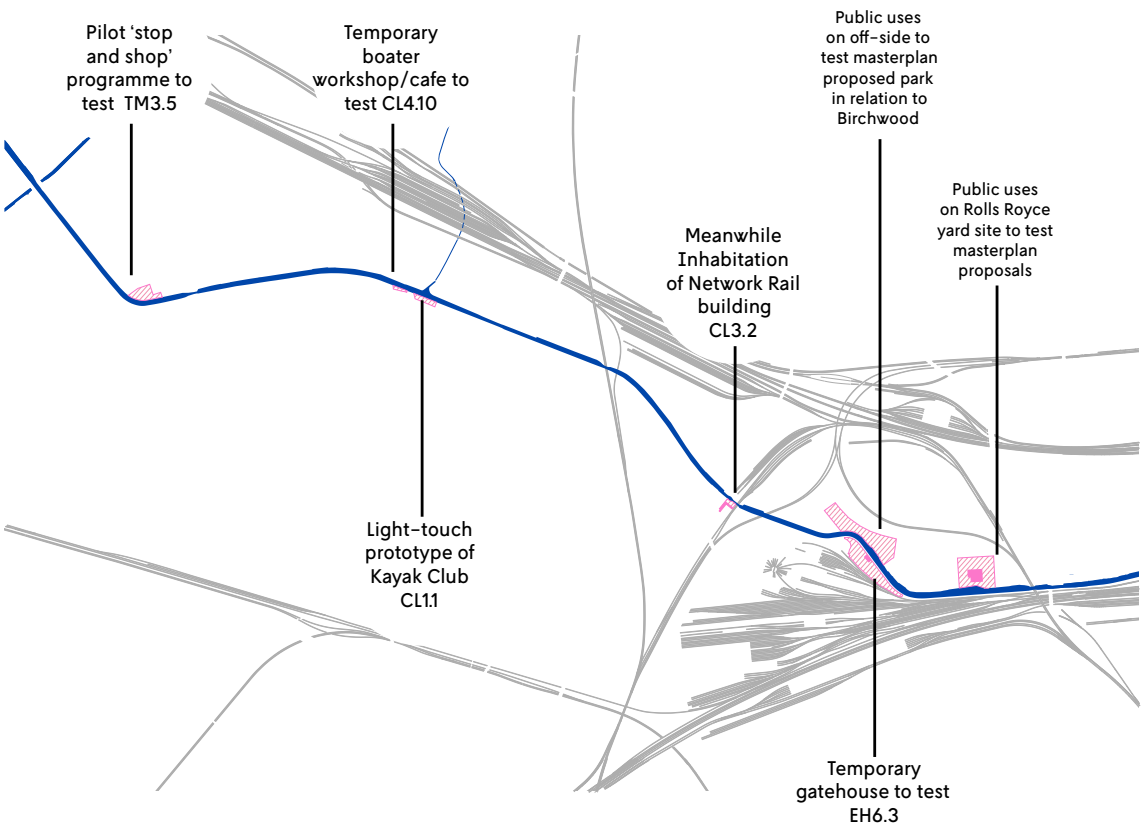
- It is imperative that new moorings are supported by enhanced and increased facilities such that issues of, for example litter (which can become a major issue if infrastructure is not in place) or antisocial behaviour (which boaters can be a particular victim of if moored in insecure or unsurveilled areas) do not dominate perception of new moorings by the wider community. Key facilities to consider should include water and sewage access, waste disposal, and electric power points.
- Shore power should be provided at the temporary as well as the permanent moorings in accordance with the new London Plan (SI17), to prevent the use of solid fuel burners. Ideally there need to be enough connection points for all moored boats to access power and pay-as-you-go solution

## 6.2 Meanwhile use approach

A number of the design principles set out in this study would benefit from prototyping or testing through ‘meanwhile use’ programming. These projects can be understood primarily as opportunities to test or refine permanent interventions in advance of significant capital investment, as well as their more established use to provide activity or interest on sites that are awaiting permanent development.

- Prototyping use: Testing new uses and programmes or the expansions of existing ones.
- Prototyping inhabitation: Unlocking previously private or underused spaces, views, perspectives, sites.
- Prototyping relationships: Testing the capacity of organisations to collaborate on processes of change or new approaches.

Moments where this approach is particularly appropriate are identified below and precedent projects are discussed adjacent.



Potential meanwhile use sites/conditions along the Grand Union

## Meanwhile use Precedents



### ERITH LIGHTHOUSE

Delivered as the first tangible expression of the Erith Meanwhile strategy for Bexley Council, the Lighthouse was designed as a temporary and mobile structure to embody, test and assert some key design and urban principles for wider use in larger developments on the horizon in the town centre. The building takes maximum advantage of its riverside site, sites fine dining and a community cafe in a loved but under-programmed park, and evoked the maritime languages that were once prevalent in Erith but have been gradually lost. (DK-CM)



### A FACTORY AS IT MIGHT BE

The project established a temporary factory in New York, building on the foundations of the Granby Workshop in Liverpool. The first products of the factory were used to build the factory's own facade, creating a showpiece and urban artefact out of the factory's core processes. At the end of the programme, the equipment was relocated to Granby Workshop for ongoing development and testing. The project set out to prototype processes and approaches as well as spaces, and sets up a 'productive' spirit in its location. (Assemble/Granby Workshop)



### KING'S CROSS POND CLUB

The UK's first man-made natural swimming pond, situated very much in the midst of significant urban transformations at King's Cross Central. The 10m x 40m pond was completely chemical free, water was purified through a natural closed-loop process using wetland and submerged water plants to filter the water and keep it clear. The plants surrounding the pond cleaned and enriched the soil, creating an environment rich in biodiversity for visitors to observe, experience and enjoy. (Ooze Architects, Marjetica Potrc)

## 6.3 Next Steps

How might the vision and strategic principles of this study be initiated and realised? The following are recommendations for some key next steps.

- OPDC is to establish a steering group which will promote and coordinate steps and initiatives underway to deliver the Canal Placemaking Study and specific projects along the canal. This steering group should include key stakeholders such as the Canal & River Trust, local authorities, community organisations including from the boating community, and local businesses.
- Build on collaboration between OPDC, local authorities and the Canal & River Trust as established through this study
- Develop detailed design guidance for industrial edges towards a workable SPG for use across the area of Strategic Industrial Land at Park Royal, and work to build a network of engaged businesses. > [CL6](#)
- Initiate Micro Grants Schemes to quickly demonstrate tangible, on-the-ground interventions and readiness to work with the wider community and business community. > [CL6.2](#)

- Pilot project with local businesses and residents to address rubbish/litter/fly-tipping along the Grand Union Canal in Old Oak and Park Royal, as a means of visibly tackling the most common public issue with this part of the canal. > [CL8](#)
  
- Work to create a 'canal community' of diverse stakeholders through building relationships, events programming, social media and direct, ongoing dialogue, initially focussed upon co-development of a towpath charter.  
> [CL7 & Chapter 6.1](#)
  
- OPDC with Canal & River Trust to explore in more detail how strategic principles and palettes established in this study can be applied to current and emerging development proposals such as at Old Oak North, with a particular focus on off-side canal edges and Birchwood Nature Reserve. > [EH6](#)
  
- All recommendations indicated as meanwhile use 'prototypes' to be prioritised as a means of testing longer-term interventions. > [Chapter 6.2](#)
  
- Ensure principles of this study are applied to projects with extant funding, e.g. Good Growth Fund and Great Place Scheme –funded projects, and that these projects are evaluated as prototypes of the approach set out in this study.

## 7 Toolbox

### 7.1 Material palettes

#### Materials & Elements

The ideal towpath section, derived in part from Canal & River Trust's guidance for towpath design in urban areas, is a continuous 2m strip of tar spray and chip, in a buff colour, with a continuous green front verge maintained at the waters' edge.

> [Chapter 7.3](#)

Key material principles are as follows:

- Buff colour tar spray and chip on tarmac to be default surface treatment of towpath. An appropriate hard-wearing sub-base is critical in such an anticipated high footfall area, and should be provided for.
- Changes in material, colour or texture should be used to distinguish between towpath (space of movement) and other areas (space of dwelling or activity).
- Non-towpath materials may be more textured than towpath materials to imply a change of speed or use.
- A mix of hard and soft landscaping can enable a continuous front verge at the canal edge whilst also enabling year-round access where required (for example kayak access)
- Additional public realm lighting at activity hubs to be of a character befitting enhanced public life in an ecological corridor – pedestrian scaled, warm hue. > [CL1](#)



Warm, pedestrian-facing public lighting (DK-CM, Southall)



Buff spray and chip towpath with green edge and material change for bench area (Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park)



Defined edge to spray and chip surface, achieving 'clean' line to green planted edges



Paving and grass in tandem to achieve year-round access across soft landscaping (Lola Domènech, Barcelona)



Setts and grass designed in tandem



Material change adjacent to buff spray and chip delineating other uses.



An alternative method: change of colour and a distinctive edging



Softer, more tactile treatments can also help to delineate

## Fencing and boundary treatments > CL6

Fencing of industrial or business premises represents a chance to improve the biodiversity of the canal corridor and also present new forms of 'frontage' to the canal. This can be undertaken in parallel with façade enhancements such as signage and supergraphics. The Canal and River Trust advocate transparent fencing solutions.

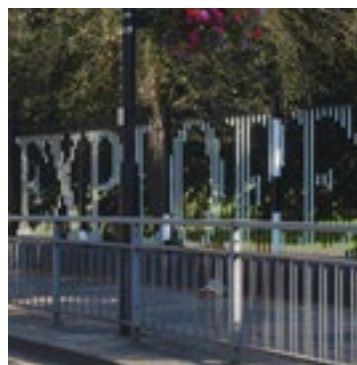
Planting of fences should include a mixture of native and evergreen plants, giving an ecologically valuable year-round coverage with seasonal accents. Suitable species may include *Clematis vitalba* (traveller's joy), *Hedera helix* (ivy), *Humulus lupulus* (hops), and *Lonicera perclymenum* (honeysuckle).



Planted non-continuous fencing, Caithness Walk, Croydon (muf architecture/art, J&L Gibbons)



Graphic treatment on non-continuous services (What:if, Rainham)



Supergraphics on railings (DK-CM, Southall)



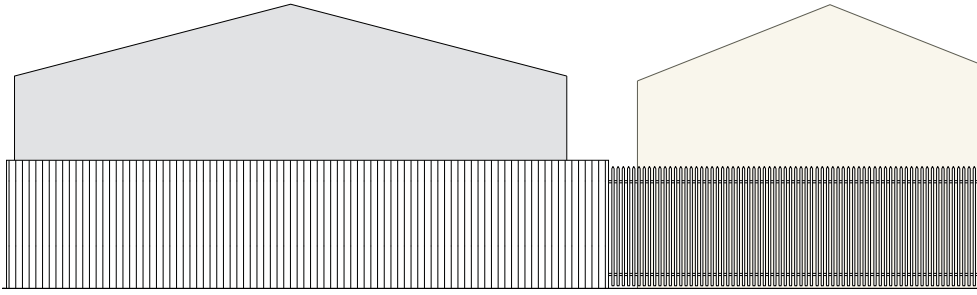
Figurative bespoke fencing, using contextual forms



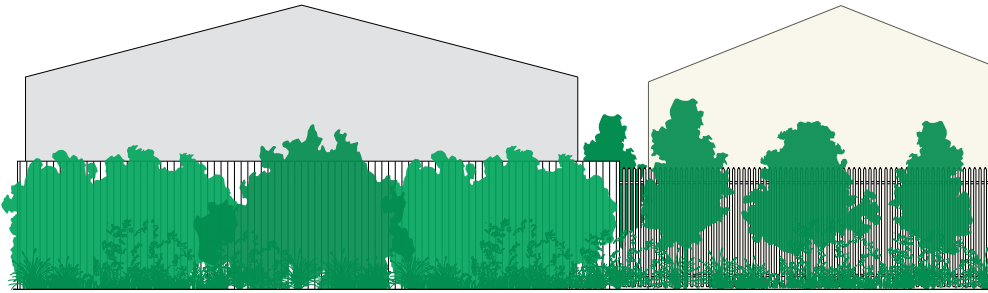
Supergraphics on industrial premises (Alison Brooks)

Right: Approaches to boundary treatments between industrial premises and the canal

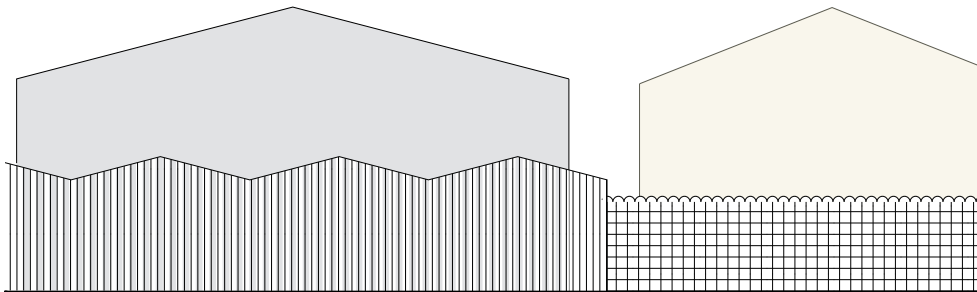




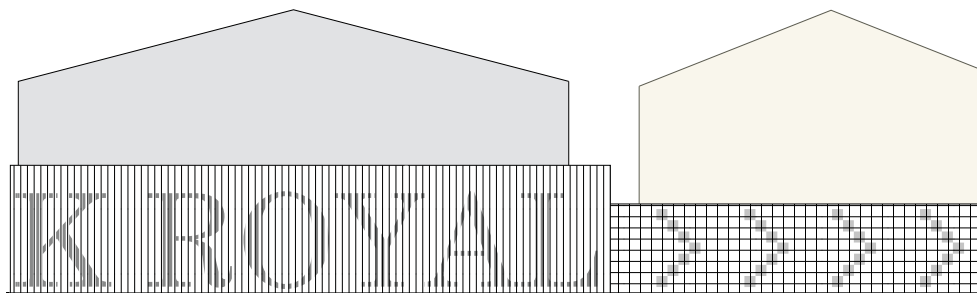
Existing condition, often continuous surface or galvanised steel verticals



Existing condition augmented with planting (can include in-channel planting)



Non-continuous surface presenting figurative elevations



Non-continuous surface presenting informative and engaging supergraphics to the canal

## 7.2 Planting character palettes > EH2



*Cornus sanguinea*



*Viburnum opulus*



*Digitalis purpurea*



*Verbena hastata*



*Carex pendula*



*Luzula nivea*

### A. DWELL SPACES

- Places to spend time in
- Pause points
- Access points to towpath

#### STRUCTURE

*Cornus sanguinea*  
*Ilex aquifolium*  
*Viburnum opulus*

Dogwood  
 Holly  
 Guelder rose

#### HERBACEOUS

*Asplenium scolopendrium*  
*Aquilegia vulgaris*  
*Digitalis purpurea*  
*Hedera helix*  
*Polypodium vulgare*  
*Verbena hastata*  
*Vinca major*

Harts tongue fern  
 Columbine  
 Foxglove  
 Ivy  
 Common polypody  
 Blue vervain  
 Greater periwinkle

#### GRASSES/SEDGES

*Carex pendula*  
*Luzula nivea*  
*Luzula sylvatica*

Pendulous sedge  
 Great wood-rush  
 Snow rush



Ribes sanguineum



Humulus lupulus



Rosa canina



Galium odoratum



Allium ursinum



Geranium nodosum

## B. EXPLORATION & INTERACTION

- Exploratory character
- Plants with a tactile, sensory interest
- Species transitioning into surroundings

### SHRUBS

Prunus spinosa  
Ribes sanguineum  
Rubus fruticosus  
Sambucus nigra

Blackthorn  
Flowering currant  
Blackberry  
Elderberry

### CLIMBERS

Humulus lupulus  
Rosa canina

Hops  
Dog rose

### HERBACEOUS

Allium schoenoprasum  
Allium ursinum  
Filipendula ulmaria  
Fragaria vesca  
Galium odoratum  
Geranium nodosum  
Hemerocallis sp.

Chives  
Wild garlic/Ramsons  
Meadowsweet  
Wild strawberry  
Sweet woodruff  
Cranesbill  
Day lilly



Juncus effusus



Phragmites australis



Filipendula ulmaria



Cornus alba 'Sibirica'



Eupatorium cannabinum



Iris pseudacorus

## C. WETLAND & MARGINAL

- In-channel, floating beds
- Bankside planting

### AQUATICS

Juncus effusus  
 Phragmites australis  
 Schoenoplectus lacustris  
 Typha angustifolia

Soft rush  
 Common reed  
 Common club rush  
 Lesser reedmace

### MARGINAL

Butomus umbellatus  
 Filipendula ulmaria  
 Iris pseudacorus  
 Lythrum salicaria  
 Silene flos-cuculi

Flowering rush  
 Meadowsweet  
 Yellow flag iris  
 Purple loosestrife  
 Ragged robin

### TRANSITIONAL

Carex pendula  
 Eupatorium cannabinum  
 Glyceria maxima  
 Cornus alba

Pendulous sedge  
 Hemp agrimony  
 Reed sweet-grass  
 Sibirica



*Alnus glutinosa*



*Corylus avellana*



*Frangula alnus*



*Prunus spinosa*



*Sambucus nigra*



*Sorbus aucuparia*

## D. WILDNESS

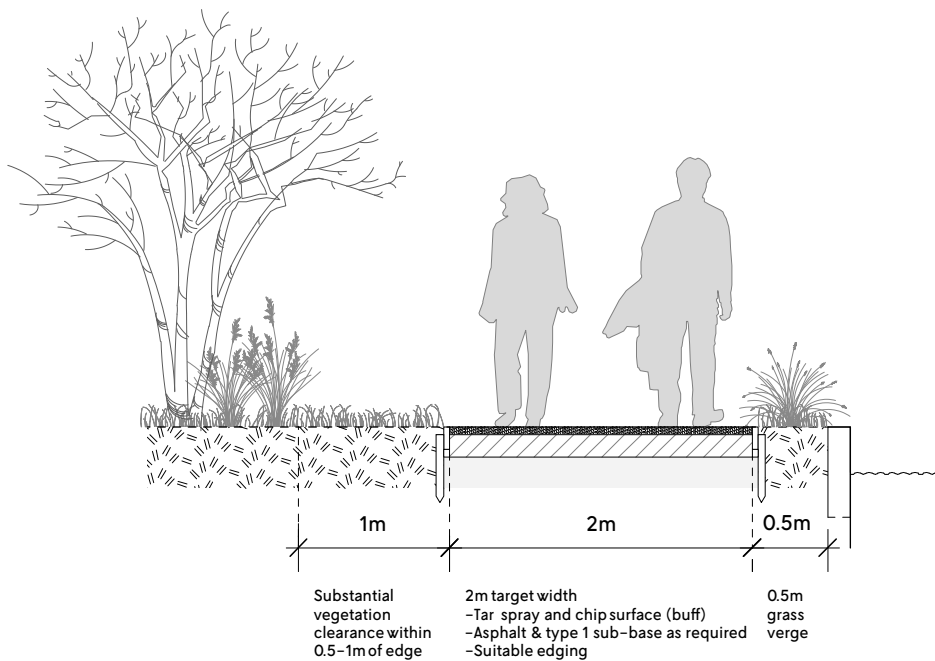
- Enhancing existing wild spaces
- Adding to species diversity
- Appropriate management

### STRUCTURE

*Alnus glutinosa*  
*Corylus avellana*  
*Crataegus monogyna*  
*Frangula alnus*  
*Ilex aquifolium*  
*Prunus spinosa*  
*Sambucus nigra*  
*Sorbus aucuparia*

Alder  
 Hazel  
 Hawthorn  
 Alder buckthorn  
 Holly  
 Blackthorn  
 Elder  
 Rowan

## 7.3 Typical sections > TM1

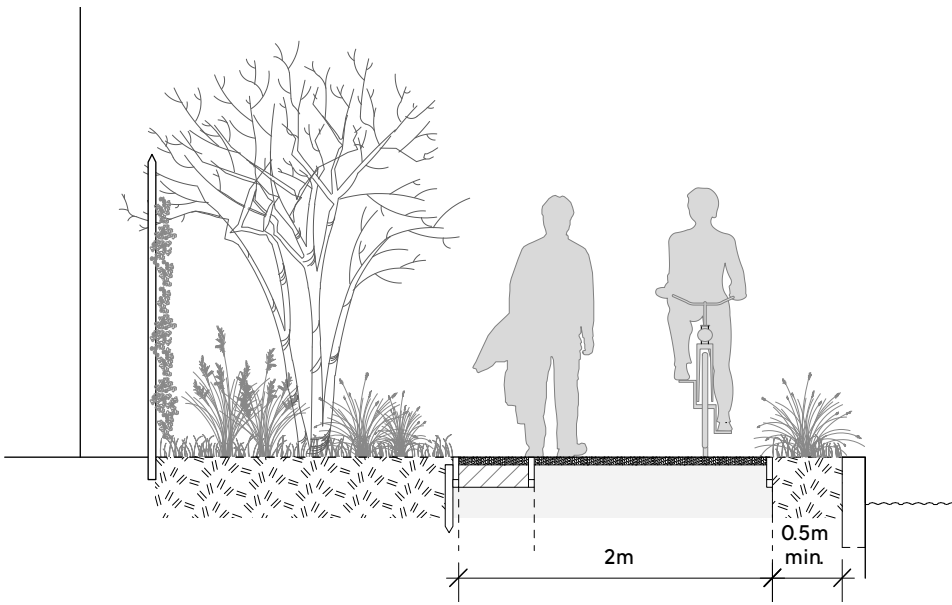


### TFL CYCLEWAYS TYPICAL SECTION/SPECIFICATION

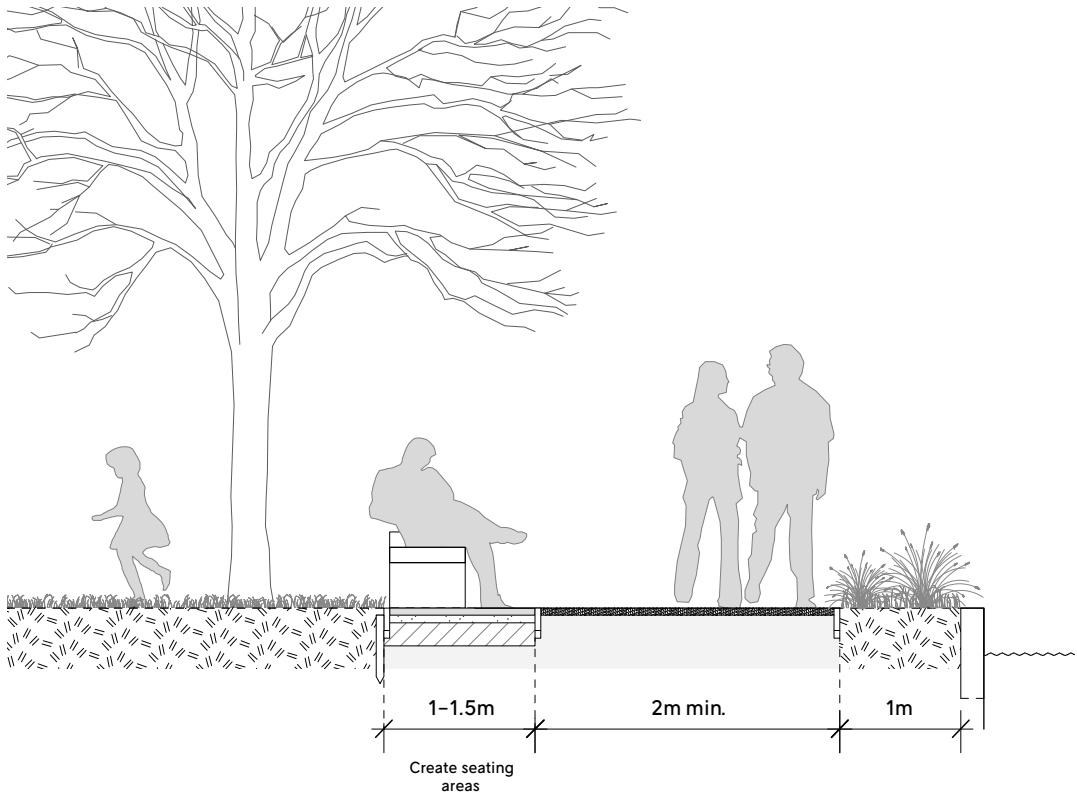
As developed by Transport for London / CRT

NB. This describes an ideal condition.

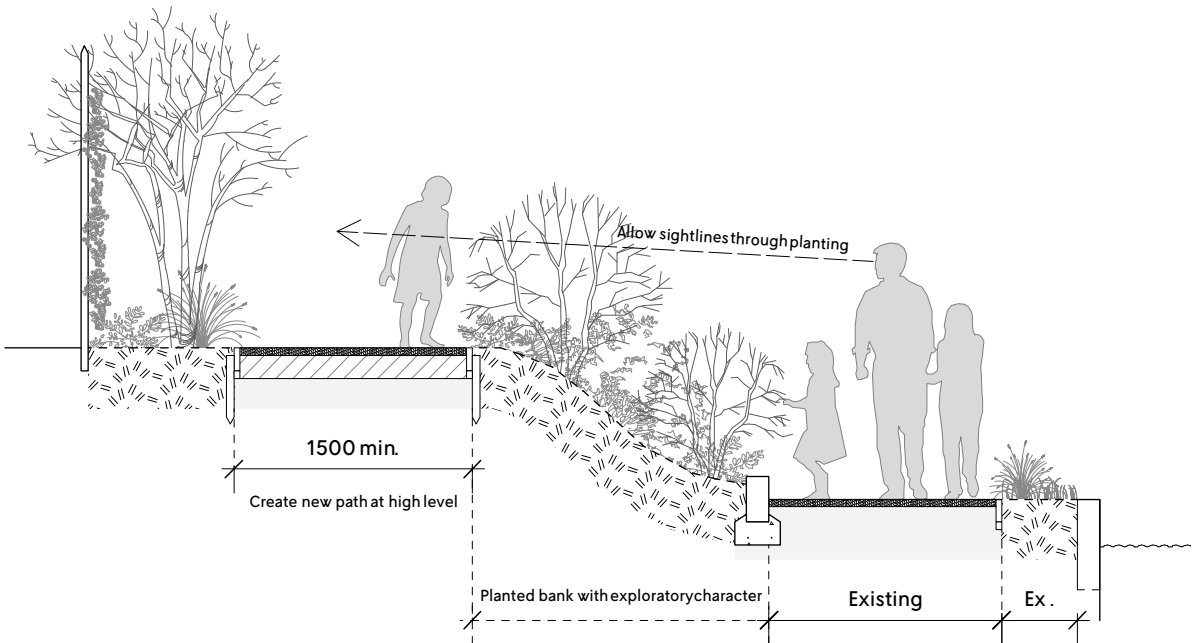
1:50



**SECTION A**  
Towpath adjacent to industrial use  
1:50



**SECTION B**  
Towpath adjacent to generous open space and close to activity centre  
1:50

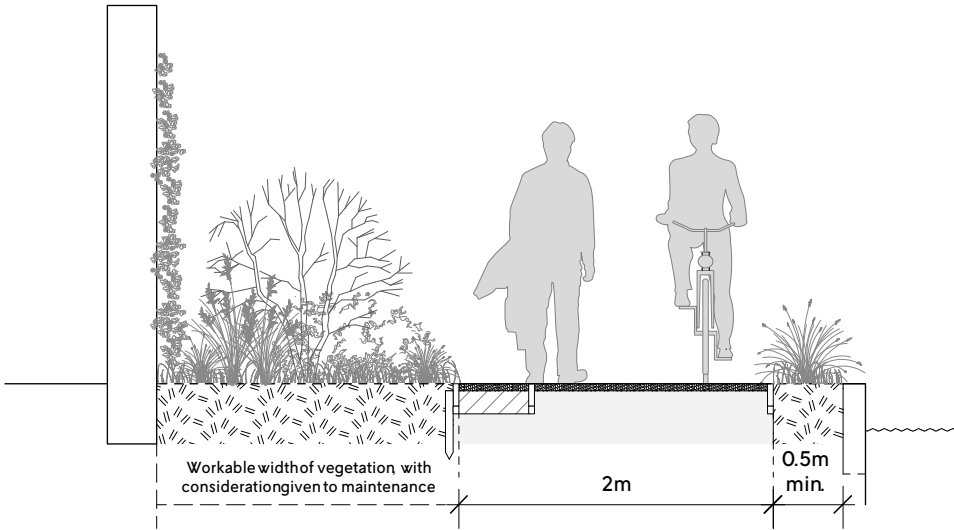


**SECTION C**

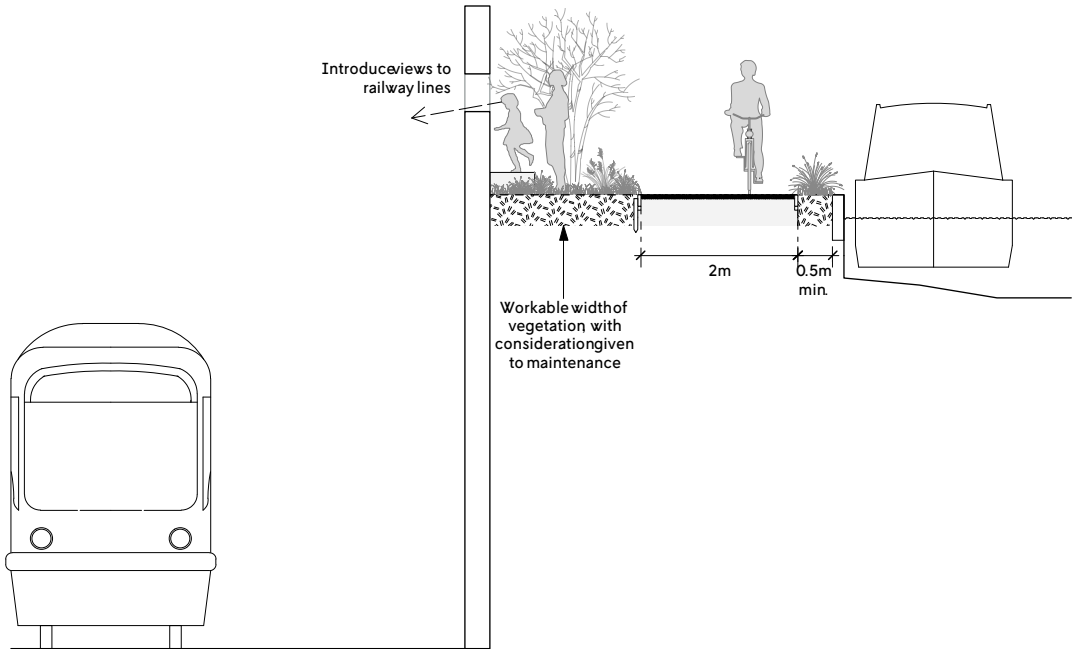
Creating an alternative route parallel to the towpath and with a different offer and supported by appropriate activation.

1:50





**SECTION D**  
 Towpath adjacent to permanent boundary walls  
 1:50



**SECTION E**  
 Towpath with railway cutting adjacent and below  
 1:100

## 8 Supporting Information

### 8.1 References

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## Canal Placemaking Study, 2019

This study was commissioned by the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation, in partnership with the Canal & River Trust, and with representatives of neighbouring local authorities, and through dialogue with the OPDC Place Review Group and Community Review Group.

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Engagement Consultants  
Spacemakers

Graphic Design Consultants  
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