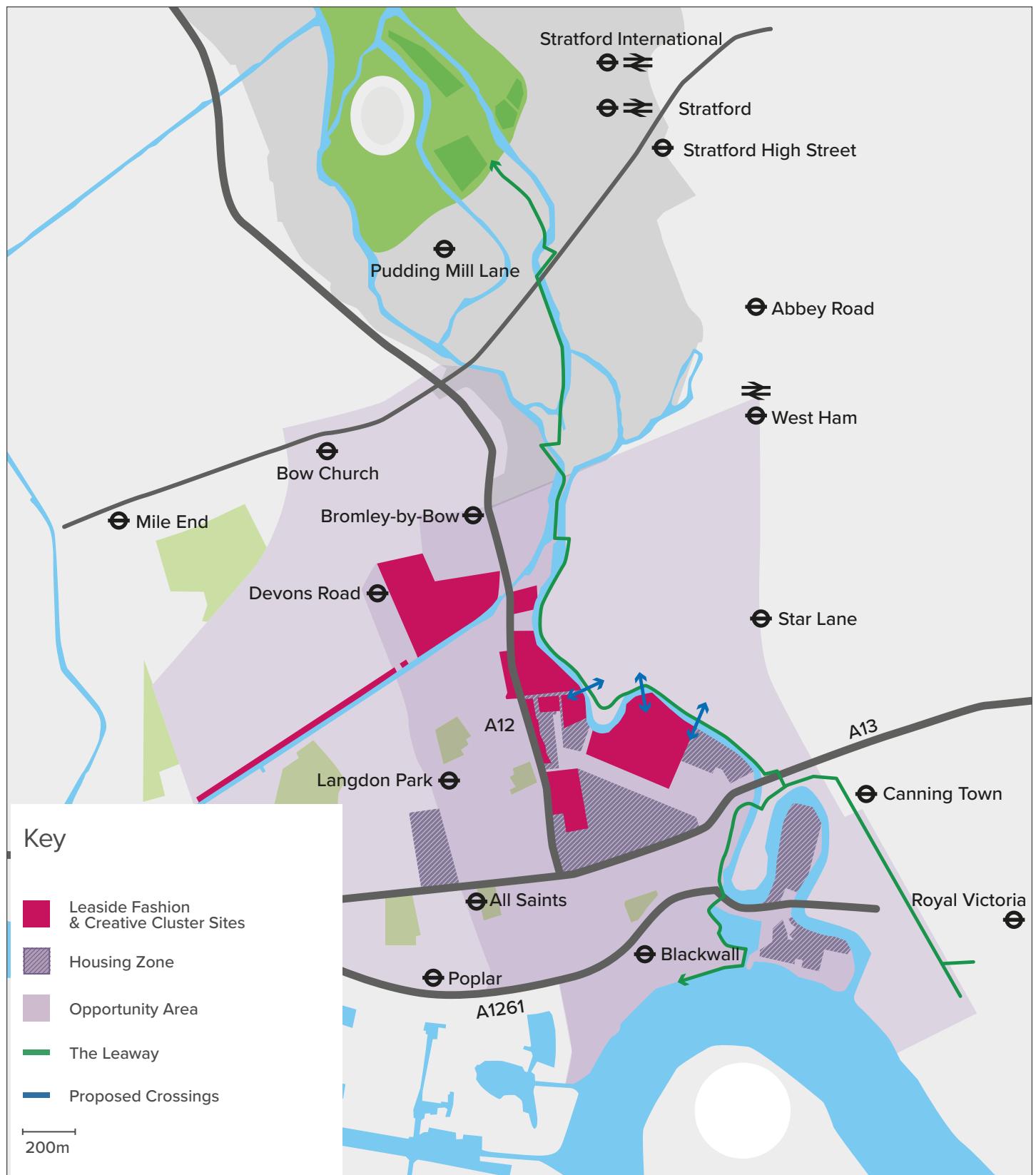


# LEASIDE FASHION & CREATIVE CLUSTER

Delivering an industrial strategy  
for Poplar and the Lower Lea

DECEMBER 2019



**50,000 SQM FASHION &  
CREATIVE WORKSPACE**

**813 BUSINESSES**

**4,375 JOBS**



## LEASIDE FASHION & CREATIVE CLUSTER

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Leaside Fashion & Creative Cluster is sector-leading cluster returning design & manufacturing to Poplar and the Lower Lea, delivering permanent jobs and affordable workspace for a mixed and ambitious community.

The first phase, Poplar Works, has converted over 100 redundant garages and a boiler house alongside the A12 in E14 into a multi-faceted fashion workspace including manufacturing, design and innovation in partnership with UAL: London College of Fashion, The Trampery and the GLA. This fashion hub is just the first step in seeding a burgeoning industry within and around the Poplar Riverside Opportunity Area in the Lower Lea as it undergoes seismic physical and demographic change. An industry which will deliver social, economic and cultural regeneration, and forge strong, saleable area identity. Ultimately producing a sustainably **accessible, authentic and ambitious** place for the benefit of the community of Poplar and East London, current and future. This brochure sets out the local development and fashion / creative sector contexts, which hold the opportunities for building a sizeable cluster of inter-related fashion and creative workspace in Poplar, and beyond.

Residential-led schemes, often on brownfield sites, will deliver thousands of homes and considerable commercial space in the next decade. Meanwhile, GLA Culture & Regeneration strategies are focusing on the huge undersupply of creative workspace and fashion & creative production in East London. Utilising loan financing, increased land and residential values and new revenue streams, there is the opportunity to secure and curate a financially self-sufficient workspace cluster which impacts for residents, developers and the local authority. At present 11 sites have been identified as deliverable over the next 10 years. Including Poplar Works, which launched in 2019, this would deliver a creative workspace cluster of 50,834 sqm – supporting 813 businesses – creating over 4,375 jobs.

And that will be just the start...



## LOCAL REGENERATION CONTEXT

The population of Poplar is set to more than double in the next 10 years. And this exceptional growth sits within a wider area regeneration context of a similar scale. From the Isle of Dogs Opportunity Area Planning Framework in the south, to the LLDC activity in the north, to Canning Town and the Royal Docks over the River Lea to the East.

Much of Poplar's new build will emerge from ex-industrial and brownfield sites. The challenge is how we ensure these new places include **social, economic and cultural opportunities** for existing and incoming residents.

How do we build authentic identities and sustainably mixed communities? Places people want to live and set down roots? LBTH's emerging Lower Lea masterplan is identifying sites, including previous Housing Zone sites, which will deliver upward of 10,000 homes, new education, health and retail facilities, and infrastructural improvements, including access to and across the River Lea.

In addition, new accessibility is coming forward with the Bromley-by-Bow master plan, whilst the redevelopment of North Quay and the Poplar DLR Depot will allow a stronger link between South Poplar and Crossrail / Canary Wharf. The sites will also offer up a range of new commercial / work space – upwards of 70,000sqm across the various sites. We see this as a key opportunity to create identity and meaning for current and future communities. If assembled and curated within an industrial vision for the Lower Lea, building early partnerships with the local authority, developers, the fashion & creative sectors, local business and the community, we have the chance to create a truly thriving, dynamic place.



# CREATIVE WORKSPACE CONTEXT

## THE CHALLENGE

London's fashion and creative sectors are growing – the available spaces, especially long-term, are shrinking.

Competition from residential and higher-value uses is pushing out industrial and commercial activities, beginning with the lower-value. The value chain is undermined by this fracture, potentially leading to the loss of key industry to other parts of the country or overseas. According to the GLA, 3,500 London artists are set to lose their place of work in the next 5 years.

Meanwhile, creative sectors continue to be major players in London's economy. In 2015, the creative industries' output in London was £42 billion, accounting for 47.6% of the UK total and 11.1% of the total Gross Value Added in the London economy. Their performance was higher than the average across all sectors of the London economy, growing 8% faster from 2009-2015. In 2016, there were 882,900 jobs in the creative economy in London (16.9% of total jobs in the capital), having risen by 24.2% since 2012 (GLA Economics 2017).

Especially so in the fashion sector - the economic value of which to East London grew from £805million to £1.282billion pa (an increase of 59%) between 2010 and 2015. The sector has added more than 10,000 jobs (22,700 to 32,800 - a rise of 45%) in the same period. In addition, fashion manufacturing in East London bucked the trend of decline seen across manufacturing in London to be the fastest-growing sub-sector, with a 94% increase in employment (an additional 2,600 jobs) and 128% increase in GVA, to £217m. (BOP 2017)

And the flow of creativity looks set to continue to grow with 35,000 graduates emerging from London's Art & Design Schools each year (GLA 2014) and 1,800 London College of Fashion students starting new businesses annually. (LCF 2016)

So business is booming – demand is high – but we must secure the space if we are to retain the benefits of that growth.

**"Securing move-on space close to the capital's action for our businesses with rapid growth, is challenging - duly, we're risking the inevitable brain drain of successful designers"** Judith Tolley,  
Centre for Fashion Enterprise



## THE RESPONSE

It's early days, but agencies and the wider sector are responding.

City Hall has responded with a range of important research, funding initiatives such as the London Regeneration and Good Growth Funds (which have funded Poplar Works) and key policy strands:

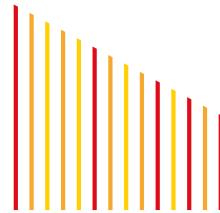
- The Deputy Mayor for Culture launched the **Fashion District** in September 2018 – catalysing UAL:London College of Fashion's move to the Olympic Park by strengthening and promoting the fashion value chain in East London.
- The **Creative Land Trust** initiative will seek to secure long term creative workspace across the capital.
- The Mayor's **Creative Enterprise Zones** will support the clustering of creative workspace and activity, with East London figuring prominently.
- **Thames Production Corridor** – a vital step in the planned Creative Infrastructure Strategy, looks to establish creative production bases from Poplar's Leaside in the west to Barking & Dagenham in the east.

Locally, The London Borough of Tower Hamlets is supporting the growth of the local creative economy. It's April 2016 report, 'Tower Hamlets Growth Sectors and SME Workspace Study' notes the importance of the fashion sector to the identity of the borough, as well as the 80% creative industries growth in Tower Hamlets in the last 5 years (ONS BRES 2014). The report goes on to note the high demand and low vacancy rates for such workspace in the area and positions LBTH "to respond to potential opportunities as they emerge, particularly where they relate to strategic aspirations" (Regeneris 2016).

**"There is currently a chronic undersupply of quality studio facilities which emerging fashion labels can afford. This is directly impairing the development of London's fashion industry."**

Charles Armstrong, *The Trampery*

# POPLAR WORKS



A £5.5m fashion hub in Poplar – the first chapter in the Leaside Fashion & Creative Cluster. Poplar HARCA are working in partnership with UAL:London College of Fashion, and creative space enterprise The Trampery.

Poplar Works has brought an exciting, ambitious and resonant industry back to Poplar. Fashion manufacturing, training, technology and incubator programmes work alongside low-cost workspace for fashion design, making and local businesses. It works with break-out fashion enterprises, LCF graduate start-ups, community sewing groups and young people. Disused garages, a redundant boiler house and neglected open space have been transformed into a substantial, cultural and enterprise asset which will create a new mini-high street, with public events space, café and meeting facilities.

It will create 1,928sqm workspace, 166 jobs and support 83 businesses in its first five years.

The vision for the scheme was never limited to the hub, but has always sought to seed the industrial regeneration of the area alongside and within its physical regeneration. Purposefully located to maximise the impact on wider area workspace strategies, it has begun to influence workspace development in new schemes and spread this large, interlinked fashion cluster in the area.

“Poplar Works heralds UAL:LCF’s move east to the Olympic Park. It supports existing East London fashion enterprises, creates further economic growth and social engagement initiatives for the area and is a hugely significant step along the road to the Fashion District.”

*Professor Frances Corner OBE, former Head of London College of Fashion*





## 1. Poplar Works

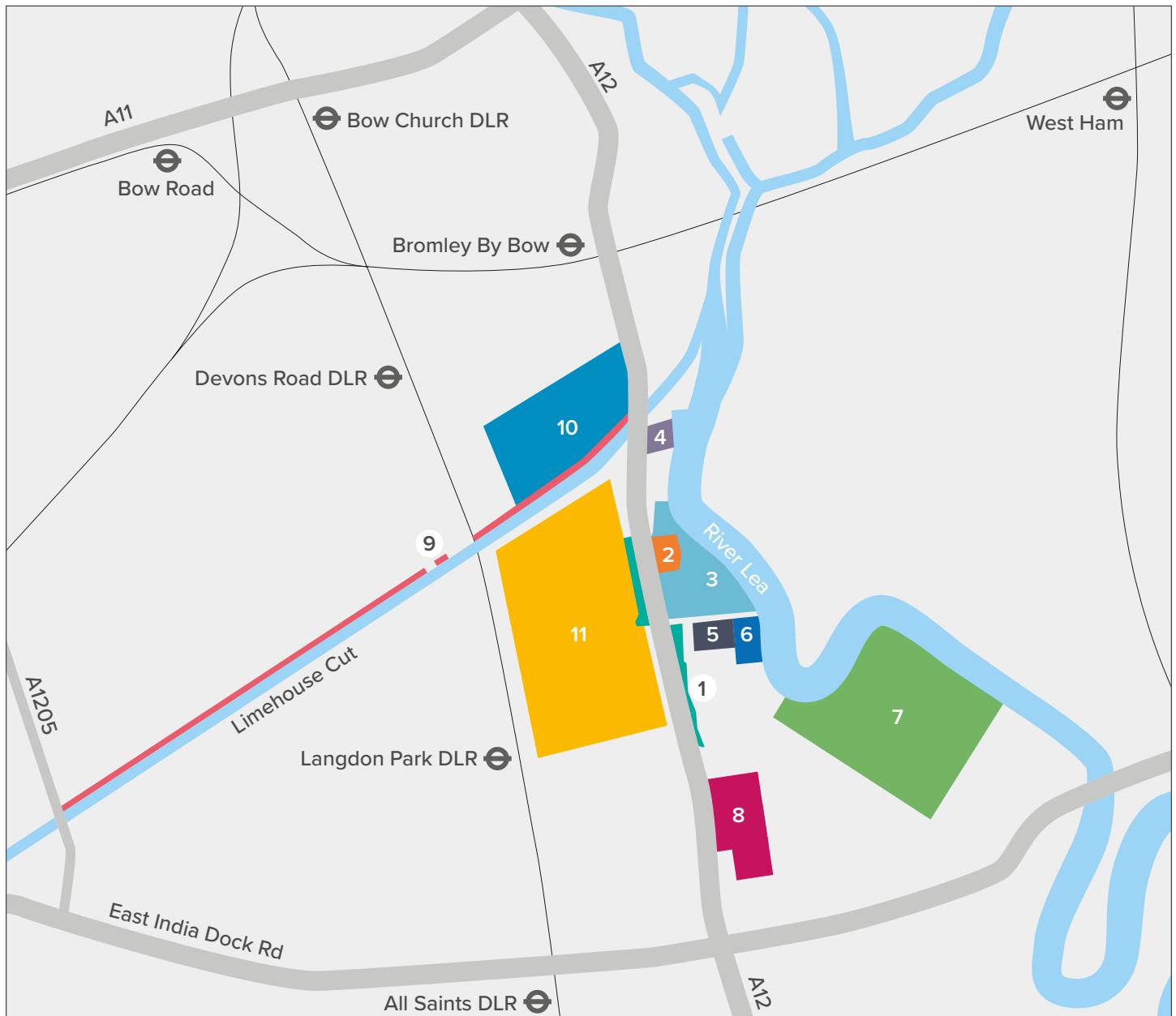
WORKSPACE:  
**1,928 SQ M**

CURRENT OWNERSHIP:  
**POPLAR HARCA**

RENTAL:  
**FROM £16–£28 PER SQ FT**

AVAILABLE: IMMEDIATELY  
FUNDING SECURED:  
**GLA / POPLAR HARCA & IN-KIND SUPPORT**





## OPPORTUNITY SITES

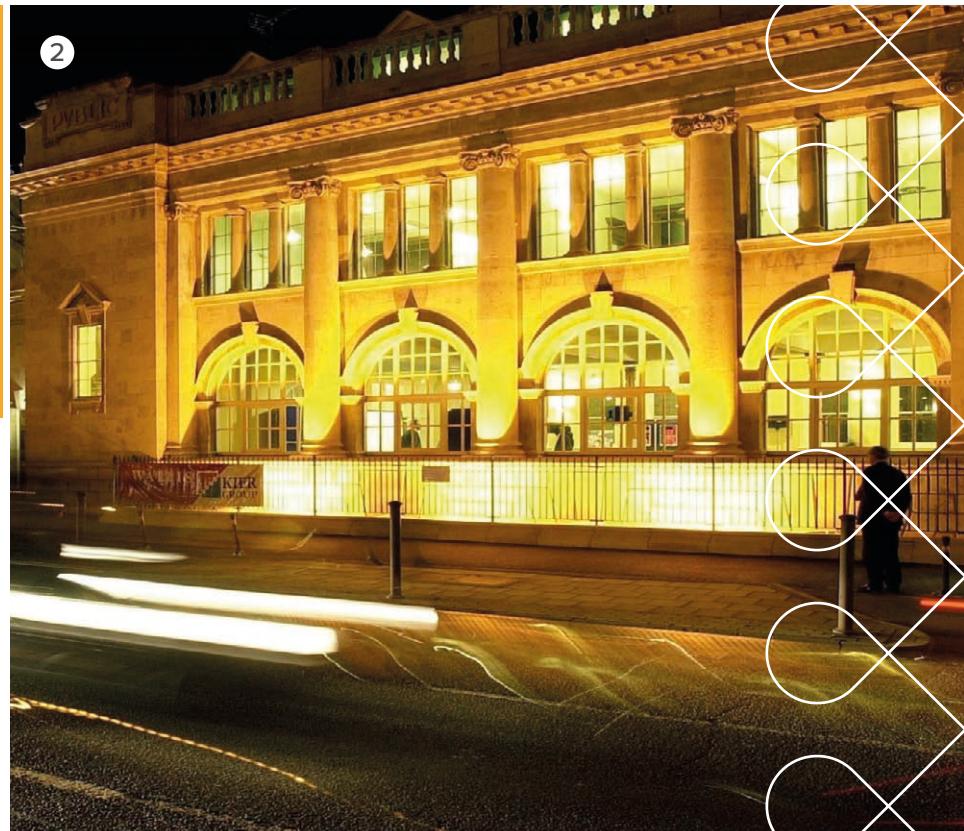
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|--|--|---|
| <span style="color: #009966; font-size: 2em;">1</span> Poplar Works            | <span style="color: #333366; font-size: 2em;">5</span> Bromley Hall School                   | <span style="color: #CC0066; font-size: 2em;">9</span> Limehouse Cut Moorings |
| <span style="color: #FF9933; font-size: 2em;">2</span> Leaside Business Centre | <span style="color: #006699; font-size: 2em;">6</span> Leven Road Bus Depot                  | <span style="color: #0099CC; font-size: 2em;">10</span> Empson Street         |
| <span style="color: #339999; font-size: 2em;">3</span> Alisa Wharf             | <span style="color: #669933; font-size: 2em;">7</span> Leven Road Gas Works                  | <span style="color: #FF9933; font-size: 2em;">11</span> Teviot Estate         |
| <span style="color: #666699; font-size: 2em;">4</span> Gillender Street        | <span style="color: #990099; font-size: 2em;">8</span> Aberfeldy Village<br>(Phase 4, 5 & 6) |   |

## 2. Leaside Business Centre

Active business centre comprising two listed buildings (Bromley Hall and Poplar Library) and a number of temporary shipping container offices. Poplar HARCA has approved change in lettings policy and management.

RENTAL:  
FROM £18–£26 PER SQ FT  
AVAILABLE: IMMEDIATELY

WORKSPACE: 1,035 SQ M  
CURRENT OWNERSHIP:  
**POPLAR HARCA**  
FUNDING: £0



## 3. Alisa Wharf

Forthcoming commercial space on ground and first floors across 5 blocks with residential above. Planning approved with build completion expected early 2022/23.



WORKSPACE: 2,607 SQM  
CURRENT OWNERSHIP:  
**COUNTRY GARDEN / LBTH**  
FUNDING REQUIRED:  
**£4–6M**

RENTAL:  
FROM £14–£22 PER SQ FT  
COMPLETION EXPECTED:  
**2022/23**  
AVAILABLE: 2023

#### 4. Gillender Street

A Peabody / Mount Anvil scheme to the southern end of Bow Creek, which will necessitate the reprocision of commercial workspace. Fashion & creative could offer the right blend of values and importantly, link to the Limehouse Cut.

WORKSPACE: 1,915 SQM

CURRENT OWNERSHIP:  
**PEABODY / MOUNT ANVIL**

FUNDING: £5M

RENTAL:  
**FROM £20–£25 PER SQ FT**

AVAILABLE: 2021



#### 5. Bromley Hall School

LBTH and Poplar HARCA are working with industry body UK Fabrics & Textiles to explore the opportunity of refurbishing the listed school building to create an artisan leather work and training space.



WORKSPACE: 970 SQM

CURRENT OWNERSHIP:  
**LBTH**

FUNDING: £5.5M

RENTAL: UNKNOWN

AVAILABLE: 2021



#### 6. Leven Road Bus Depot

An RER scheme delivering a range of new commercial space, which could return both significant garment manufacture, plus higher value design space.

WORKSPACE: 3,550 SQM

CURRENT OWNERSHIP:  
**RER**

FUNDING REQUIRED: TBC

RENTAL:

**FROM £15–30 PER SQ FT**

AVAILABLE: 2023–2025

## 7. Leven Road Gas Works

A 10 hectare ex-gas holder site, neighbouring the Cluster being brought forward by St.William, with planning approved. The scheme will need to deliver a large amount including a river bridge, park and school, but design and making would provide ideal usage for the commercial space.

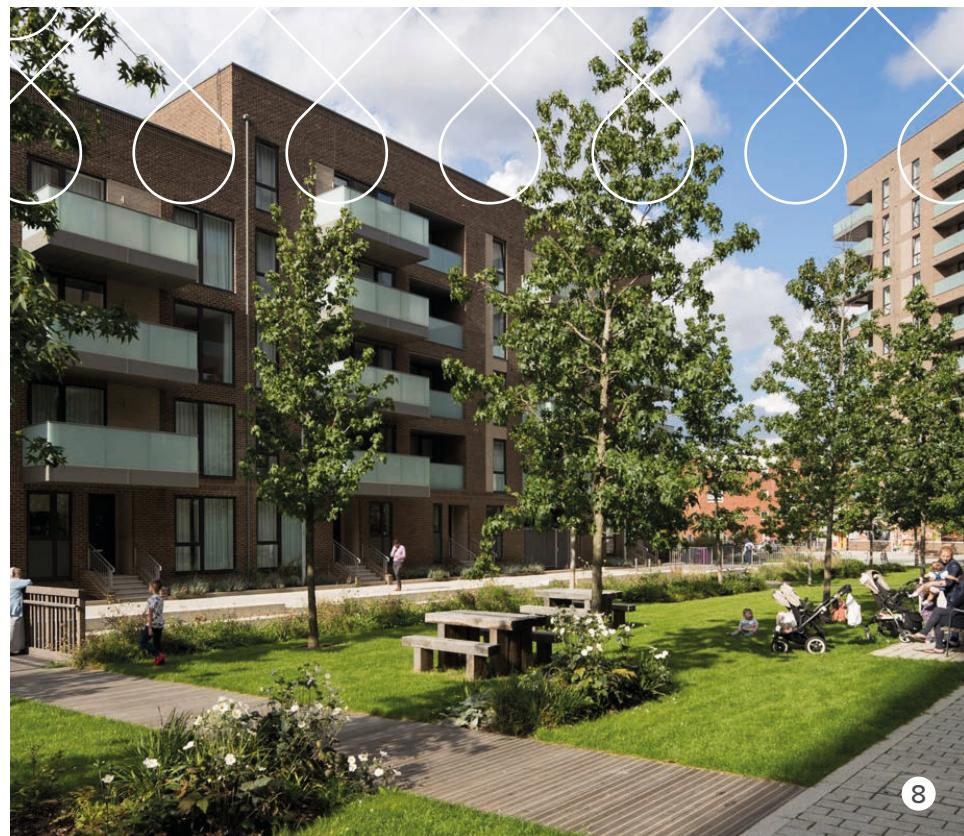


**WORKSPACE:  
10,700 SQM**

**CURRENT OWNERSHIP:  
ST. WILLIAM**

**FUNDING: UP TO £15M**

**RENTAL: UNKNOWN  
AVAILABLE: 2021–2029**



## 8. Aberfeldy Village

Remodelling of Phases 4, 5 and 6 could provide a significant amount of new commercial space, offering options for both light industrial companies, auxiliary creative businesses and designers.

**WORKSPACE: 12,000 SQM  
CURRENT OWNERSHIP:  
POPLAR HARCA/  
ECOWORLD  
FUNDING REQUIRED:  
TBC**

**RENTAL:  
FROM £15–35 PER SQ FT  
AVAILABLE: 2023–2027**

9



FUNDING: £1.6M

RENTAL: UNKNOWN

AVAILABLE: 2021

WORKSPACE: 616 SQM

CURRENT OWNERSHIP:  
CANAL & RIVERS TRUST

## 9. Limehouse Cut Moorings

Mixed use moorings along the Limehouse Cut. Builds on Poplar HARCA's adoption of the canal and strong relationship with the Canals & Rivers Trust. Subject to agreements and funding, could be completed by 2021.

10



WORKSPACE: 15,000 SQM

CURRENT OWNERSHIP:  
VARIED

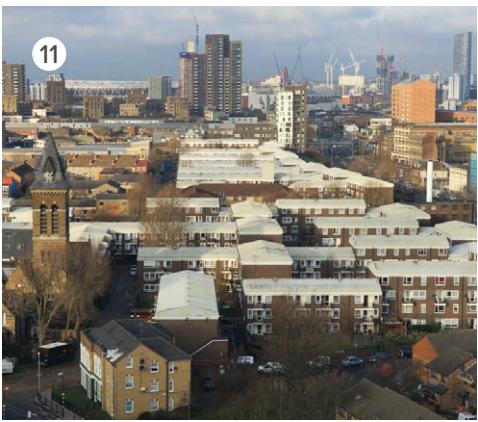
FUNDING: UNKNOWN

RENTAL: UNKNOWN

AVAILABLE: FROM 2024

## 10. Empson Street

Designated Strategic Industrial Land, it will be vital that any regeneration scheme retains, protects and improves industrial productivity. Large scale garment manufacture would return such industry to the site and ensure its relevance as part of the ecosystem. Space Studios and ACAVA both already provide workspace for artists.



## 11. Teviot Estate

A resident ballot in 2019 voted overwhelmingly (86% on an 81% turnout) for regeneration of the Teviot Estate. This offers the opportunity to integrate the cluster further within the community and linked through to district centre Chrisp Street.

WORKSPACE: TBC

RENTAL: TBC

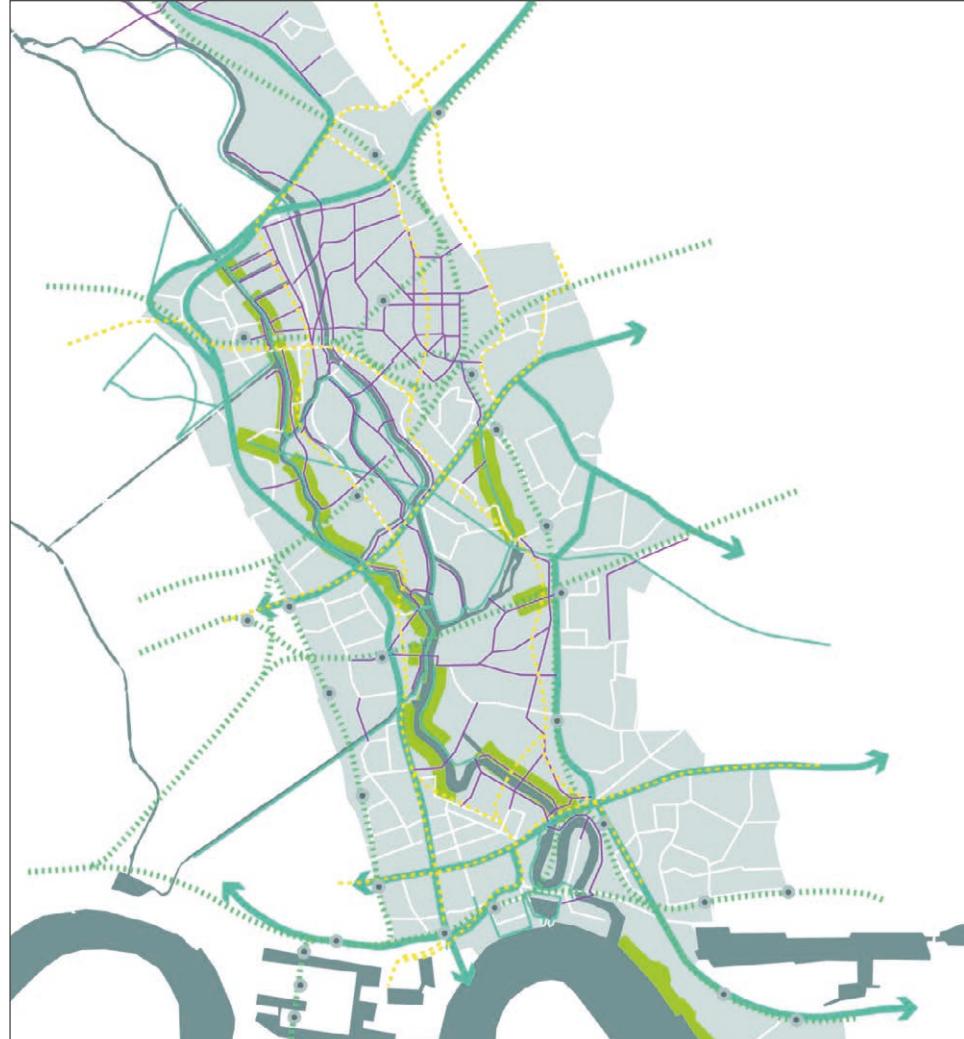
CURRENT OWNERSHIP:  
POPLAR HARCA

AVAILABLE: 2024–2030

FUNDING REQUIRED: TBC

...and then there's  
Newham's 'Arc of  
Opportunity'

The name ascribed to the 30 or so hectares of industrial land which sweeps down the eastern side of the River Lea in Newham. The area is a vital source of low-skilled jobs, with Amazon and Sainsbury's having distribution centres amongst heavier industrial uses. The Leaside Fashion & Creative Cluster could provide a solution which both densifies the business activity and the jobs, whilst building impact and accessibility for the current community.



# CURATION & MANAGEMENT

Creation of a workable industrial strategy for the Lower Lea, proving the demand and identifying the potential sites, can take us so far.

Delivering on a strategy which necessarily requires a permanent range of typologies and affordabilities of work and training space to maintain and build a relevant and thriving ecosystem, is the next step. The solution must involve overall curation and, as far as is feasible, ownership of the commercial space by the curator.

The planning process will be able to guide some of that curation – dedicated affordable space, the right quantum of commercial in the right location, non-habitation orders for residential prior to commercial letting, strict lines on commercial-to-residential flipping etc.

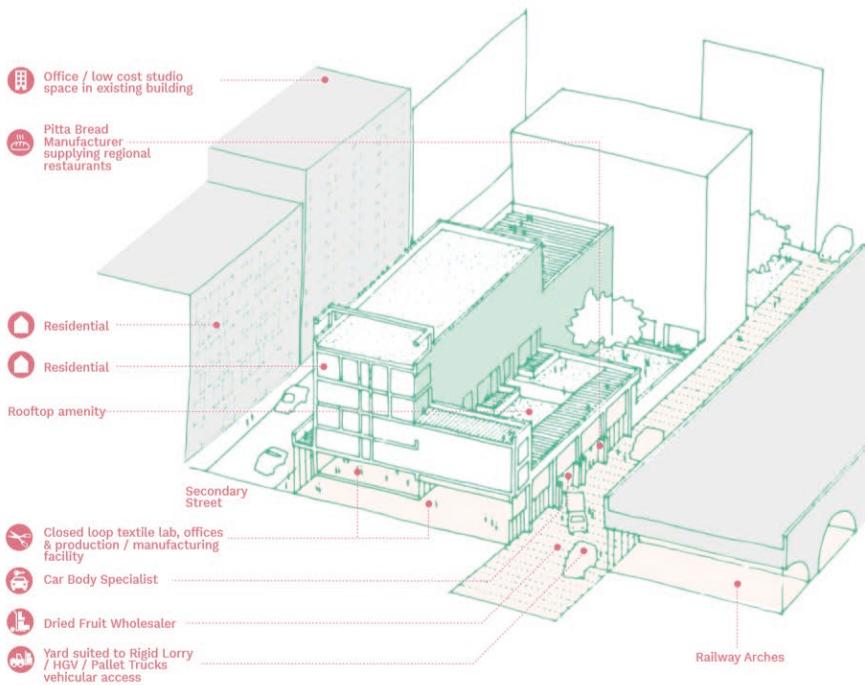
These ex-industrial sites are though, already demanding a lot in site remediation, infrastructure, public realm and education.

Equally, individual developers may be interested in retaining the commercial and delivering to the industrial strategy themselves. However, this cannot be relied on alone, especially in the long term, to deliver the scale, breadth and integration of workspace and jobs that this industrial strategy has identified. The solution, this paper argues, is an independent, stand-alone **Special Purpose Vehicle** (SPV), set up to acquire new commercial space, off-plan, as it comes forward.

As the recent 'Places That Work' Report (GVA / Dan Hill / 00 / Centre for London) noted, the creation of such a Poplar Riverside SPV or **Local Economic Growth Company** (LEG Co), securing commercial space at scale, would:

- facilitate the curation of cost and activity across the holdings to deliver the breadth required for this inclusive industrial ecosystem;
- ensure immediate activity, jobs and business rates outputs from the new commercial space;
- allow the gathering of varied third-party workspace operators within the cluster, to bring expertise, spread risk and boost profile;
- promote the area as a new business location;
- protect the long-term focus and accessibility of the cluster;
- provide a viable, independent business model, with medium-long term reinvestment and growth potential.

The SPV can be capitalised by the market or partners, be they the council, local stakeholders like Poplar HARCA, or indeed developers. Poplar HARCA and LBTH are already in discussions regarding the formation of such an SPV, following positive conversations with the markets, developers and other potential financial partners.



# COMPLEMENTARY PROJECTS

A number of creative institutions and initiatives are already active in close proximity to the Leaside Fashion & Creative Cluster. These form the bedrock of creative activity in the area and, collectively, help to forge this strong new creative industrial identity for the Lower Lea.

## Empson Street Studios

SPACE, ACAVA and Artist Studio Company all currently offer affordable artists workspace in Empson Street. Between them, the organisations have 117 years of experience in supporting artists.

## Bow Arts Trust

With their headquarters and Nunnery Gallery on Bow Road to the north of the cluster, Bow Arts Trust has a long relationship with Poplar HARCA, local schools and other local stakeholders, delivering arts & educational projects for over 20 years.

## Republic

A new commercial, leisure & cultural development on East India Dock Road due to complete in 2021, including affordable workspace managed by The Trampery.

## English National Ballet

In 2018, the ENB moved to Ballymore's City Island, part of the Poplar Riverside Housing Zone, offering production, teaching and rehearsal space.

## London Film School

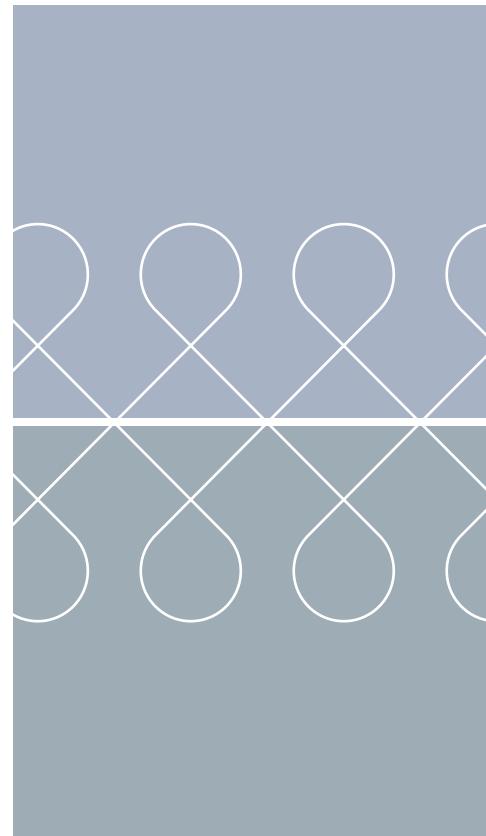
The LFS joined the ENB at City Island in 2018, including two cinemas, studios and office space.

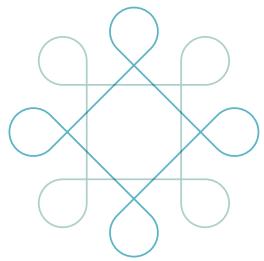
## Arbeit Studios

From their beginnings in Hackney Wick, Arbeit have grown down the River Lea with affordable studios and gallery space operating in both in Poplar and at City Island.

## ACME Fire Station

Locally founded in 1972, ACME offer 5 year live/work residency programmes to 12 artists at the Fire Station on Gillender Street.





## LEASIDE FASHION & CREATIVE CLUSTER

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POPLAR HARCA

