A hundred years ago, Hackney Wick was a thriving Victorian industrial suburb catering for a huge range of chemical industries and boasting London’s first dry cleaners and the world’s first synthetic plastic. The area’s industrial heritage is preserved to this day through the buildings, canals, yards and intimate streets dating back to the 1860s.

Until the Second World War, it was also a place to live as well as work, but the terraced housing in Fish Island has now almost entirely gone together with many of the original industrial buildings.

For generations Hackney Wick had been something of an island, cut off from the mainstream of London, circumscribed by canals, railway lines and, later, the A12.

**1914 – A connected neighbourhood**

Historically, Hackney Wick was well connected to Hackney, with its amenities like pubs, clubs and shops loosely clustered around connection points on the western edge.

**1980 - A disconnected neighbourhood**

The construction of the A12 in the early 1970s physically cut Hackney Wick off from Hackney, severing the connecting streets, removing the local amenities and enhancing the sense of disconnection caused by the railway line.
The heritage value of Hackney Wick is recognised in its designation as a conservation area. As well as being interspersed with several significant heritage buildings, the streets of the area are defined by the mix of buildings of different heights and scales.

Two recently extended Conservation Areas meet at the neighbourhood centre; the Hackney Wick Conservation Area (Hackney) and Fish Island & White Post Lane Conservation Area (Tower Hamlets).

The closeness to the site of the London 2012 Games has increased the level of investment and development interest in the Conservation Areas.

The designation of a Conservation Area does not prevent development taking place but does provide special protection under the law. This means that any proposals for new development will need to help preserve the character of the designated area, which can include historic buildings and open spaces. This is why the Legacy Corporation adopted the extension of the two Conservation Areas.

New development in the Conservation Areas

It is vital that any development in the neighbourhood centre enhances the Conservation Areas. We plan to retain the locally listed buildings within the site boundary, as well as improve the historic open space of Queen’s Yard and access to the canal. We will also keep the height of proposed buildings in line with planning policy (generally four to six stories), therefore not overbearing Central Books and Unit 9 Queen’s Yard, which are currently the tallest buildings within the site area.

Views of the canal, and the treatment and setting of heritage buildings, including the sympathetic design of new neighbouring buildings, will be key in the design development in the next stage.

Central Books and Rubberworks

The four-storey warehouse of Central Books was built in approximately 1910 as a printworks and cardboard box factory.

Former Carless Institute

This building was built by William Leonard, owner of the nearby Carless, Capel and Leonard chemical works as a social club for local workers.

The Lord Napier Pub

Built c. 1865 the two storey pub and two adjoining houses are the sole survivors of the mid Victorian residential development of the area south of the railway.

Everett House

Everett House is an Edwardian commercial structure built in 1911 for the offices of Achille Serre whose name is still just visible at parapet level.

Unit 9, Queen’s Yard

This building was built to house a chocolate factory as part of the former Clarnico confectionery works on White Post Lane.

Unit 7, Queen’s Yard (The White Building)

The White Building was built in 1921 as a chemical warehouse in the late 19th century but later used by the Clarnico company.

Lee Navigation Canal

The Lee Navigation or Hackney Cut was constructed in the 18th Century. It runs from Hertford Castle Weir to the River Thames at Bow Creek.

Public Exhibition, February 2015

HACKNEY WICK
NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE

Enhancing the Conservation Area
The past three decades has seen the emergence of creative and art uses in Hackney Wick and Fish Island with over 600 studios now operating and a growing number of large creative businesses locating here and re-purposing vacant industrial buildings.

This has contributed to Hackney Wick’s reputation as the creative heart of east London, an attribute that is celebrated annually at the Hackney WickED arts festival.

An Employment Land Review, conducted by the Legacy Corporation in 2014, highlighted that Hackney Wick and Fish Island has the highest concentration of businesses in the Legacy Corporation area. With 448 businesses, 213 within the arts and culture sector, this represents 98% of all such businesses in the Legacy Corporation’s development area.

The area around Hackney Wick station has the highest concentration of businesses and artists in the area, with an incredible mix of industrial businesses, start-ups, creative businesses and artists’ studios, many of which rely on the low rents and flexible workshop spaces the area offers.

It is therefore vital that the new neighbourhood centre supports and promotes the industrial and creative mix of uses that underpins the unique character and economy of Hackney Wick.
Social infrastructure refers to the uses, facilities and services that support day to day life in a neighbourhood, such as community facilities, shops and healthcare.

Our mapping of the social infrastructure in the area includes all publicly accessible facilities within buildings and features in the public realm such as benches and post boxes. It has revealed that within Hackney Wick there is currently the following gaps in provision:

- No free to use ATM - there are currently three pay to use ATMs
- No crèche within the local area
- No local training or adult learning facility
- No space that is used and shared by all sections of the local community
- No dentist, opticians or pharmacy
Hackney Wick was significantly physically cut off from the rest of Hackney with the building of the A12. This large piece of road infrastructure has disrupted the original street pattern and made an island of Hackney Wick, further reinforced by the waterways.

Physical barriers

The railway presents a significant barrier to movement with limited access points that are restricted in height and width. The new improvements to Hackney Wick Station will provide the opportunity for a vital new pedestrian north south link. It will also simplify the current ramp access.

Poorly planned parking/servicing

Current parking and servicing arrangements are poorly designed in the existing yard spaces. Better design could make these types of spaces more efficient and better places to work or relax.

Limited access to the canal

Access to the canal side is currently limited and inconsistent, and much more could be made of this valuable resource.

Poor quality public realm

Hackney Wick currently has limited public space that is subject to many demands, including vehicle servicing for workspace. Currently the streets and yards of Hackney Wick are dominated by vehicles and suffer from poor definition, lighting and surfacing, as well as a lack of safe crossing points.

Ramp access

Space constraints prevented ramp access being provided when the Walls Road bridge was designed. The new neighbourhood centre presents an opportunity to make it easier for cyclists and other users.