

2.5 Urban Analysis : History

Silvertown Portal

2.5.1 In 1852 Samuel Winkworth Silver and Co, after whom the area was named, moved across the River Thames from Greenwich and established a rubber works, originally to make waterproof clothing. This subsequently developed into the works of the India Rubber, Gutta Percha and Telegraph Cable Company, which constructed and laid many submarine cables. By the 1860s a number of manure and chemical works and petroleum storage depots had been set up.

2.5.2 Sugar refiners in the area were joined by Henry Tate in 1877 and Abram Lyle in 1881, whose companies merged in 1921 to form Tate & Lyle - their refinery is still a major presence in the area today.

2.5.3 Industry thrived, partly as a result of the area's proximity to the Docks, and also because the Metropolitan Building Act of 1844 made it illegal to carry out 'harmful trades' inside the boundaries of London. But Silvertown was just outside this boundary, and its plentiful supply of labour and easy access to ports made it too good a location to overlook for many industries.

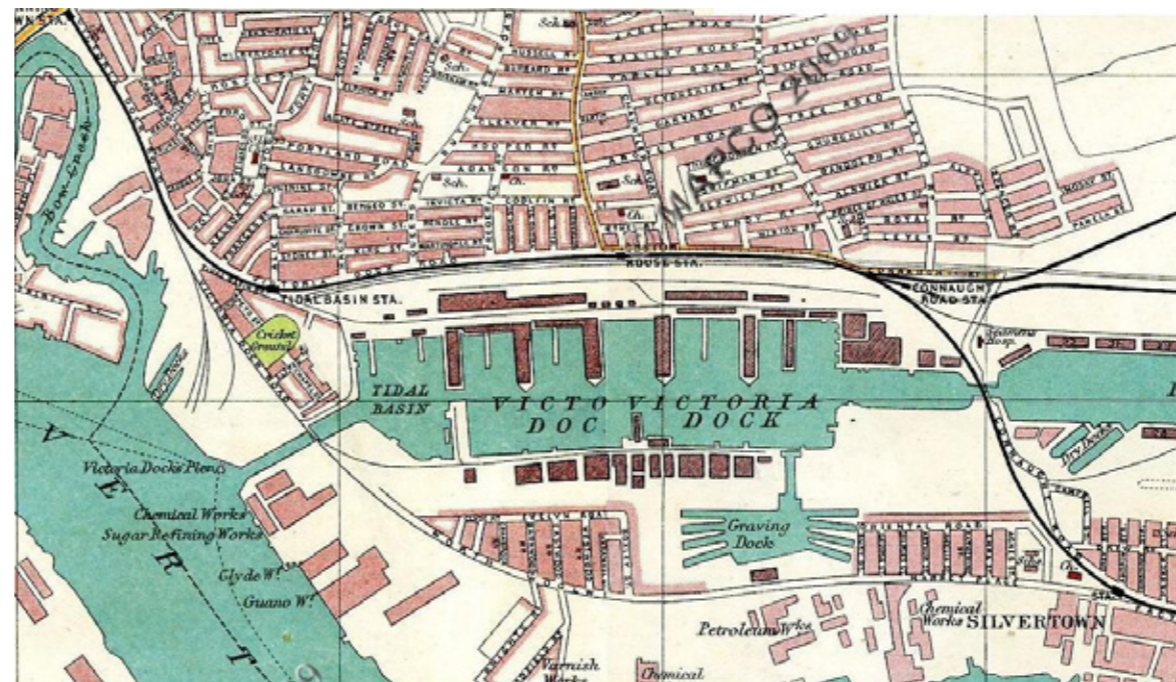
2.5.4 A map from 1908 (Figure 2.4) shows a Cricket Ground at almost the exact location of the proposed tunnel portal.

2.5.5 With the decline of the docks, the area also went into decline, and has since been part of the ongoing regeneration of Docklands which has been in progress since the 1980s when the LDDC was set up to oversee the transformation of the area. While many sites in the vicinity of the tunnel are currently used for concrete batching and waste recycling, forthcoming proposals will see this change significantly in coming years to a more residential-led mixed use community and higher quality environment.

Figure 2.3 1872 Map of Northern Portal area



Figure 2.4 1908 Map of Northern Portal Area



Greenwich Portal

2.5.6 For most of its history the Greenwich Peninsula existed as wetlands and tidal marshes. In the 16th Century Dutch engineers drained the Peninsula to improve the land as pasture for livestock.

2.5.7 It remained this way until the 19th century which saw the transformation of Greenwich Peninsula, as the Victorians exploited the land for heavy industry. Works included manufacture of: ordnance for heavy guns; chemicals; submarine cables; iron boats; iron and steel stock; oil processing, shipbuilding, boiler making, Portland cement; linoleum; bronze manufacturing; asbestos; and animal feed.

2.5.8 From 1884, for the next century the Peninsula was dominated by Europe's largest gasworks which produced town gas from coal. The works also produced coke, tar and chemicals as important secondary products. The site had its own extensive railway system connected to the main railway line near Charlton, and a large jetty used to unload coal and load coke. There were two large gasholders (see Figure 2.5). The larger holder, originally the largest in the world, was reduced in size when it was damaged in the Silvertown explosion in 1917.

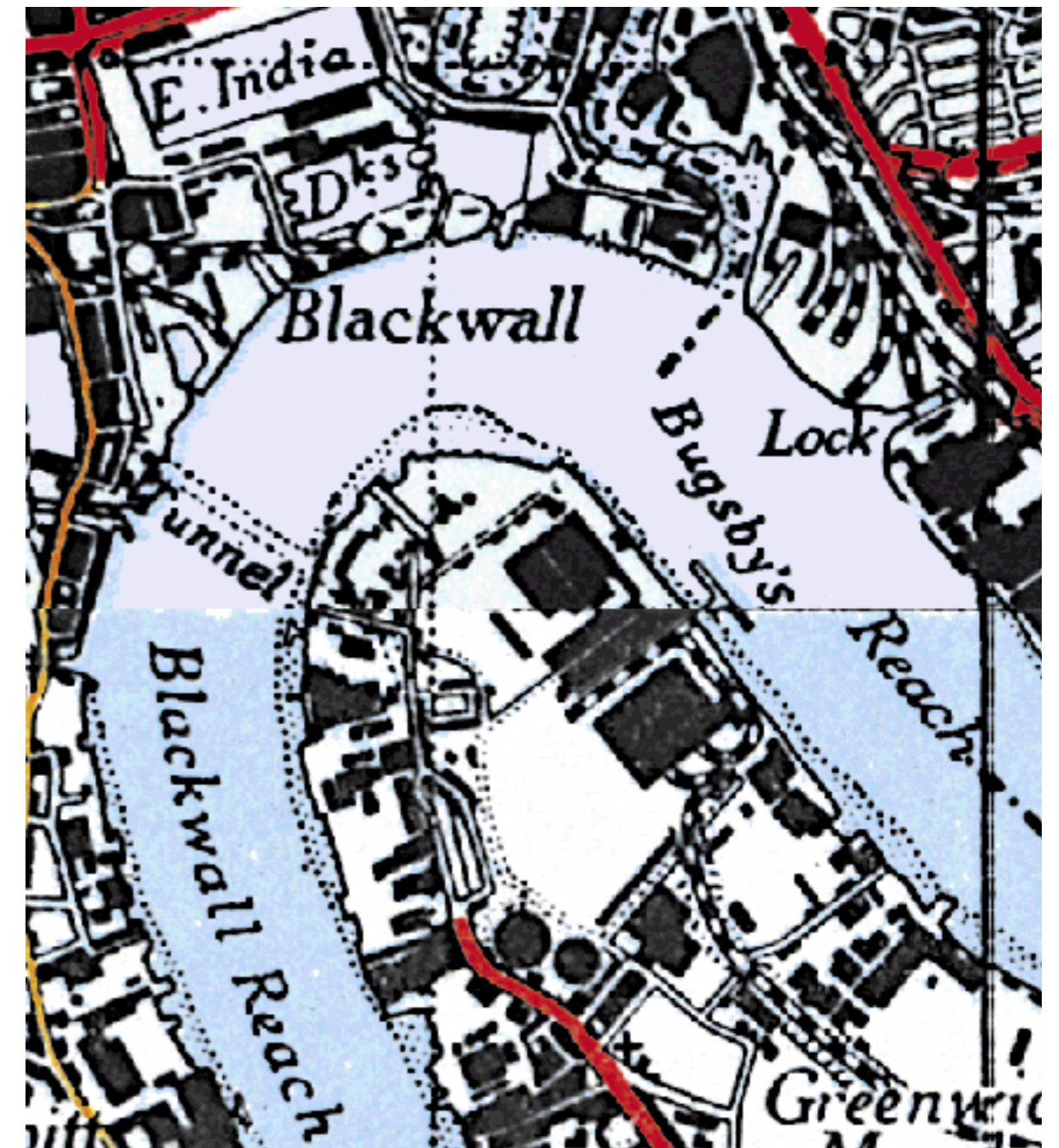
Figure 2.5 c.1908 view of Tunnel Avenue looking north with the gasholder, and the building now occupied by the Studio 338 Nightclub as part of a terrace in front, along tree lined road that accessed original Blackwall Tunnel.



Figure 2.6 Artist's impression of the East Greenwich Gas Works



Figure 2.7 1946 map of Southern Portal area



2.6 Urban Analysis : Land Use

Silvertown Portal - Today

2.6.1 The existing urban area around the northern portal of the tunnel is industrial land, some of which is now disused, but much of which is still actively used on a daily basis. Uses include concrete batching and waste sorting and recycling. The area is also divided by extensive linear transport infrastructure - roads and railway lines (including 2 branches of the DLR) cross through the area and, as some are elevated, they pose a challenge to movement and integration in the area. The new tunnel could add to this complexity, but through careful design from the outset TfL has sought to make its development a catalyst to add value for regeneration. It could support improved connectivity, improved permeability and help pedestrians and cyclists to move around in the area.

2.6.2 Despite this dominance of infrastructure and industry, the area around the portal is an area that is undergoing significant regeneration. The Royal Docks saw some of the earliest Docklands regeneration with the construction of City Airport and ExCeL, but in the last 15-20 years development has typically been focused on the Isle of Dogs and Canary Wharf further west.

Figure 2.8 Existing and under construction primary land uses



Figure 2.9 Potential future primary land uses



Silvertown Portal - Future

2.6.3 The regeneration of the area around the Silvertown Portal has been ongoing for a number of years, and in the near future it will become even more pronounced with many of the last remaining industrial areas becoming residential-led mixed use communities. Since 2012 the area has been seeing significant change, with the construction of the Emirates Airline Cable Car and the opening of the Siemens Crystal, both of which have brought new attractions and movement generators to the area.

2.6.4 There are currently a number of major schemes either under construction or consented and pending development, and the last remaining sites could come forward for regeneration in the coming years. The potential for a new DLR station at Thames Wharf would, in particular, stimulate the redevelopment of the adjacent land, much of which is within the safeguarding area for the Silvertown Tunnel. These developments could generate different requirements for surface movement, with more people in the area moving between the homes, jobs, transport nodes and leisure destinations - in particular stimulating more movement across the safeguarded area.

Greenwich Portal

2.6.5 The area of the Greenwich Portal is more constrained than that in Silvertown, and the land is less fragmented. However, the land uses are perhaps more eclectic, with areas of open storage and depots as well as gas storage and a nightclub on the east side of the A102 Blackwall Tunnel Approach.

2.6.6 The land on the western side of the road by the River Thames is more like the character around the northern portal, with larger scale industrial and wharf facilities, although some of these will be changing in future through regeneration (see section 2.3).

2.6.7 The land that could be used for the portal and associated buildings is all located on the eastern side of the A102, and is currently occupied by a depot and an inaccessible area of green space.

2.6.8 The remainder of the Peninsula is a combination of residential areas, the key leisure venues at The O2 and it's immediate environs, and also the substantial areas of surface car parking associated with the venue. There are also two notable open spaces - Central Park and Greenwich Ecology Park.

Figure 2.10 Existing and under construction primary land uses

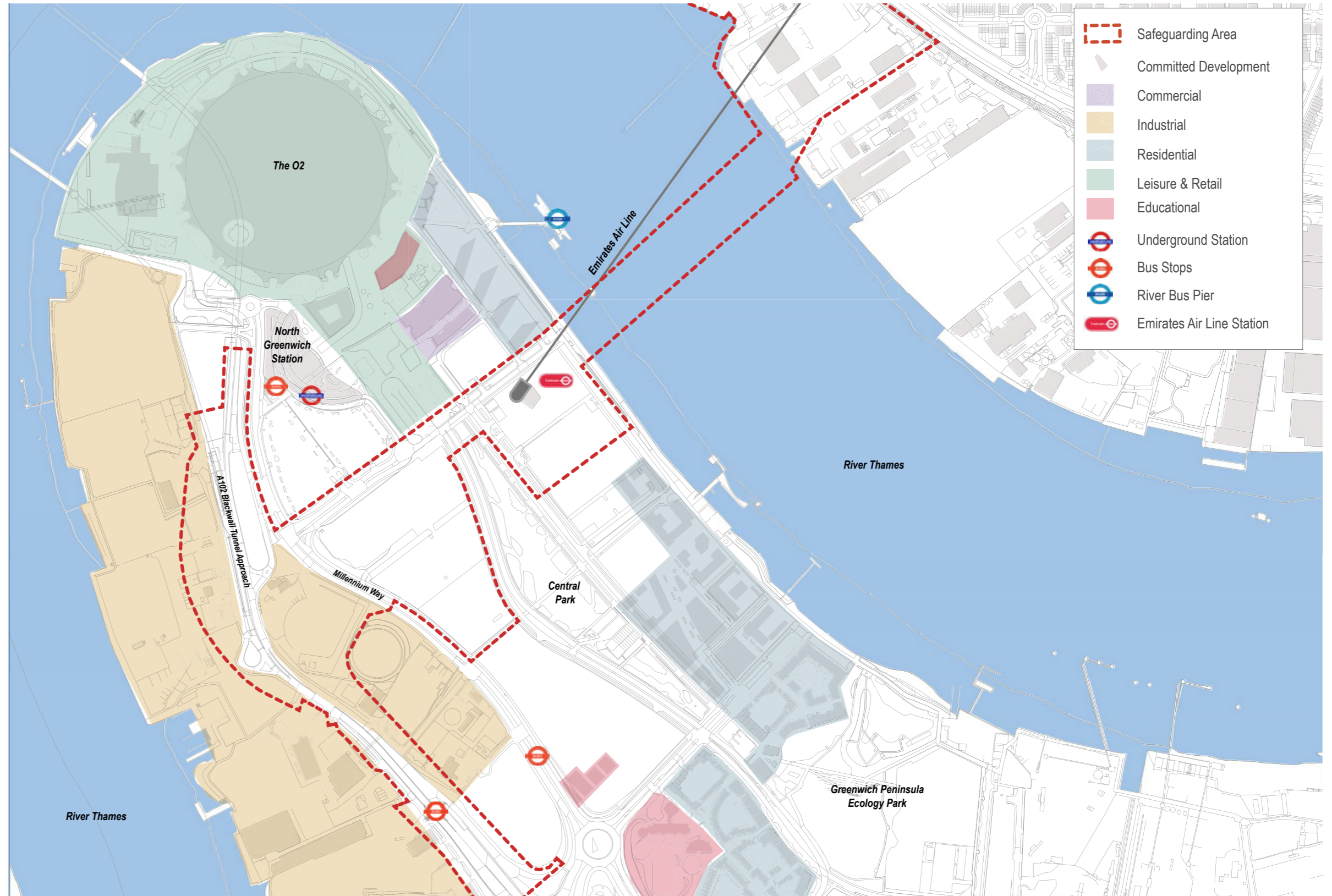


Figure 2.11 Potential future primary land uses

2.6.9 The 2004 masterplan for the site allows for an increase in the number of areas that will be residential, with a small increase in commercial floorspace too. This will be superseded by the 2015 Masterplan (shown in Figure 2.11) which increases the quantum of residential floorspace and also introduces additional uses such as a new commercial film and production campus.

2.6.10 There is also an SPD masterplan in place for the area around the gasholder, and developers are working on residential led mixed use masterplans for the Morden Wharf site on the western waterfront.

