

# Use of the Tidal Thames

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND DEVELOPERS



**PORT OF  
LONDON  
AUTHORITY**

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# INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to enhance the development of the tidal River Thames (“the Thames”) and assist local authorities and developers when they are preparing and assessing development proposals on or adjacent to the Thames. It also provides details on the topics that need to be taken into consideration at an early stage when developing within the unique environment of the Thames to help shape developments alongside or on the river, to enhance their connection with the water.

Robust consideration of these topics will help ensure developments are in line with the priorities of the Port of London Authority’s (PLA) [Thames Vision 2050 plan](#) [The PDF at this link provides a summary checklist of all the topics included in this guide](#) and further detailed information on each topic can then be found throughout the remainder of this guide.

The PLA can provide advice and guidance throughout the planning stage of a development proposal. In the first instance please contact Michael Atkins, Senior Planning Officer on [Michael.Atkins@pla.co.uk](mailto:Michael.Atkins@pla.co.uk) or 01474 562305.

Topic	Aim	Method
Construction – heavy freight	Maximise use of river as part of construction / demolition stage of a development	Development proposals should demonstrate how the use of the river can be maximised during demolition and construction. Planning conditions should secure Construction Logistics Plans (CLP) and Construction Environmental Management Plans (CEMP) that consider the use of navigable waterways and include evidence that contact has been made with nearby marine operators.
Last mile logistics – small-scale freight	Enable the movement of small-scale/light freight by water	Development proposals must consider the potential for marine structures to be used for the waterborne transport of small scale/light freight within Delivery and Servicing Plans (DSPs). Any viable use should be secured through planning conditions.

**[OUR CHECKLIST IS AVAILABLE AS A PDF AT THIS URL: HTTPS://WWW.PLA.CO.UK/ASSETS/A-PRACTICAL-GUIDE-TO-USE-OF-THE-THAMES-CHECKLIST.PDF](https://www.pla.co.uk/assets/a-practical-guide-to-use-of-the-thames-checklist.pdf)**



## THE PORT OF LONDON AUTHORITY



The PLA carefully protects and improves the environment for people and wildlife.

The PLA is the statutory harbour authority for the tidal Thames, running for 95 miles from Teddington Lock in West London to the North Sea. The PLA manages the UK's busiest inland waterway for passenger travel and freight movements. There are over 70 wharves and terminals across the area. In 2021, 51.8 million tonnes of freight was handled within the Port of London, the most cargo of any UK port.

As a Trust Port, through its activities and the regulation of others the PLA are committed to leaving the Thames in a better state than we received it, and we provide information, support and technical expertise to help river users and investors maximise the use of the river. The PLA works with a wide range of stakeholders and partners on various matters including conservation, safety, leisure, sport, commercial freight, property and passenger transport.

As stewards of the marine environment, the PLA carefully protects and improves the environment for wildlife, keeping the river clean and free of rubbish. We also support the use of the river as a low-carbon solution for the south east of England, while continuing to respond to the climate impacts changing the river and the port. We act as an environmental leader in the UK ports industry and in 2018 were the first harbour authority to develop and publish an evidence-based [Air Quality Strategy](#). Updated in 2020, the strategy and actions continue to be implemented with key stakeholders within the port.

In terms of landownership, the PLA owns and has the responsibility for approximately 90% of the riverbed and banks of the tidal Thames up to the Mean High Water (MHW), with the remainder owned by the Crown Estate and private landowners.

All planning decisions that relate to the UK marine area which includes the tidal Thames must consider the Marine Management Organisations (MMO) [South East Marine Plan \(2021\)](#), which conforms to the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and Marine Policy Statement requirements with regard to any development within the marine environmental.

## THE THAMES VISION & SHARED OBJECTIVES

The [Thames Vision 2050](#) is built around three interconnected themes, centred on the role the river plays for people and the environment

 <b>Trading Thames</b>	 <b>Destination Thames</b>	 <b>Natural Thames</b>
		
<p><b>The No. 1 Net Zero UK trading hub</b></p> <p>The country's largest and most competitive port, closest to the UK's biggest market, producing Net Zero emissions. Improved connectivity to road and rail infrastructure. Technologically innovative, expanding the transportation of light freight into central London as urban logistics transform.</p>	<p><b>A place to live, visit, play and enjoy</b></p> <p>Accessible to all, a national and international icon for the city and the country. More visitors, drawn to the river as the best way to enjoy London and the Thames Estuary, and its many cultural attractions. More people from diverse backgrounds enjoying sport and leisure opportunities on the Thames.</p>	<p><b>Clean air, water and land supporting diverse wildlife</b></p> <p>A clean river, free of sewage, waste and other pollution, supporting greater biodiversity and recreational use. Valued for its clean air, natural flood defence, wildlife and as a carbon sink.</p>

In London the Thames Vision priorities are in line with the Mayor's London Plan, and associated Transport and Environment strategies and align with over 90% of local authority Local Plans, across the PLA's navigational jurisdiction. (The remaining 10% due to the timescales in the preparation of Local Plans). The PLA sits on the Thames Estuary Growth Board and its action plan, [The Green Blue](#), is consistent with the Thames Vision goals, providing a focus on investment in and use of the river from London to the outer estuary.

The PLA will also sit on the Thames Freeport board which has the aim to achieve a digitally-linked economic zone connecting Ford’s world-class Dagenham engine plant, the global ports at London Gateway and Tilbury, large development employment areas and many river communities in need of regeneration.

This all highlights how the tidal Thames can play a central role in meeting wider economic, social and environmental objectives, including the priority of the net zero transition and supporting a green recovery.

[See our Action Plan, which highlights how we are delivering on the Thames Vision.](#)



Our Thames Vision 2050 aims to create the UK’s leading port, central to the nation’s economy, with Net Zero emissions. A clean river, free of pollution and rubbish, supporting more sport, passengers and freight. A resilient Estuary, adapting to climate change and richer in wildlife. A more diverse Thames, providing jobs, learning and enjoyment to the whole community, and always, everyone, staying safe.



## 1. FREIGHT

There are two key aspects with regard to freight transportation that must be considered for planning applications which are located in close proximity to navigable waterways.



The Thames is the UK's busiest inland waterway, a low-carbon transport option, keeping lorries off the capital's congested roads.

### i. Construction – heavy freight

Currently around 90% of freight in London is moved by road. The tidal Thames provides an excellent option for modal shift providing a sustainable transport option for construction and waste materials across London, Kent and Essex. Where roads are already congested and air quality is poor, the use of the river as an alternative means of transportation can play a key role in improving these issues and help improve road safety, lower the carbon footprint of a development and provide a solution for abnormal loads. Use of the River in this way is supported by national, regional and local planning policies and every million tonnes carried by water can take over 100,000 lorry trips off the roads. See [Growing the UK inland water freight sector- Lessons from the Thames](#).

Construction materials and waste can be transported on the river to serve development and infrastructure projects close to the river, either directly to/from a development site or through the supply chain by using a nearby wharf or landing facility.

The PLA welcomes planning applications which consider the use of the river. Where applications require the production of Construction Logistics Plans (CLP) and/or Construction Environmental Management Plans (CEMP) the PLA recommends that planning conditions clearly set out the requirement for these plans to consider the use of navigable

waterways. Furthermore within detailed CLPs and/or CEMPs; it is recommended that information is provided on the contact that has been made with nearby wharf operators on the sourcing of materials from their facilities and/or the use of their facilities as part of the construction and demolition stages, which can allow related planning conditions to be discharged.

The Water Freight Toolkit contains information on barge operators, operational wharves and guidance for incorporating the river into CLPs and/or CEMPs. [See the toolkit for more.](#)

## ii. Last mile logistics – small-scale freight

There is an opportunity to utilise existing marine infrastructure to enable the movement of small-scale/light freight by water. This would significantly reduce the need for road-based delivery vehicles, reducing traffic levels, road danger and improving air quality. For development proposals located near to navigable waterways, it is recommended that at an early stage these consider the potential utilisation of this infrastructure for small scale freight, in co-ordination with stakeholders including the PLA. To further support this Delivery and Servicing Plans (DSPs) should include information on how the multi-use of wharves, piers, jetties and other landing points has been considered, and if a viable use is recommended, this should be secured through an appropriately worded planning condition.

There is also potential for freight facilities on riverside sites to be combined with electric vehicles/cargo bikes/walking to improve air quality and reduce congestion through the creation and use of micro consolidation hubs for local areas. This approach to logistics is set to grow to help meet changing patterns of demand and the river can play a large part in helping to achieve this change. The PLA is working with the GLA, the Thames Estuary Growth Board, Cross River Partnership and other partners to develop light freight logistics on the Thames.

The City of London Corporation has developed plans to consolidate and relocate three historic wholesale food markets (Smithfield, Billingsgate and New Spitalfields) to a new 42 acre site in Dagenham Dock. To combat concerns over additional congestion on road networks, including the A13, the use of the tidal Thames will form a key part of the transport aims for the project for the transportation of produce. Another example is [DHL's use of the Thames to provide an express parcel delivery service](#), with courier bicycles used for final mile delivery from Bankside Pier.





## 2. SAFEGUARDED WHARVES



The Peruvian and Royal Primrose safeguarded wharves form part of an industrial cluster in Newham, East London

There are a number of wharves and terminals located along the tidal Thames many of which operate up to 24 hours a day. These are protected for waterborne freight cargo-handling through local and regional planning policy. In London specifically, 43 wharves are protected by [2021 Safeguarding Directions](#) issued by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and supported by associated London Plan policy SI 15.

In Kent, wharves are safeguarded through the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013-30 (2020) and supported by local planning policies. In Essex, wharves are safeguarded through local plans, the Essex and Southend-on-Sea Waste Local Plan (2017) and the Essex Minerals Local Plan first review (1996).

The PLA is actively engaged with the Mayor of London, Local Planning Authorities, and other stakeholders to ensure the continued protection and reactivation of safeguarded wharves for waterborne cargo handling. The PLA also seeks to protect safeguarded wharves from inappropriate development on nearby land which could result in adverse impacts on their operations.

In addition to safeguarded wharves, there are also a number of operational boatyards located along the tidal Thames. These are essential for servicing passenger and other vessels and are protected by planning policy. This essential waterway support infrastructure must also be taken into consideration when development is proposed in close proximity to them.

When development proposals are situated in close proximity to safeguarded wharves or other operational sites, early contact should be made with the PLA to ensure that the assessments required to support an application (such as noise, vibration and air quality assessments) fully assess and mitigate the potential impacts that prospective new users of a development may experience due to the operations at these sites. As part of these assessments, particularly for noise, it is important to consider:

- i) The potential for wharves and operational boatyards to operate for 24 hours a day throughout the year, in line with the tides, therefore it is essential that assessments measure day and night time activity.
- ii) The required noise assessments must be undertaken using British Standards BS 8233 (Guidance on sound insulation and noise reduction for buildings) and BS 4142 (Method for Rating Industrial Noise Affecting Mixed Residential and Industrial Areas). The noise rating levels must be determined using BS 4142 and then compared to the background sound level (BS 4142) and the guideline values (BS 8233). This must account for the nature of the noise (tonal, intermittent etc) and correct the assessed noise level in order to determine the 'rating level'. Only once this assessment is complete can appropriate mitigation be identified and conditioned.
- iii) In addition, it must also be made clear within the required assessments that all types of potential noise have been taken into account, including low frequency noise from dredging operations, which can occur at some safeguarded wharves at any time over a 24 hour period.
- iv) The need to contact nearby operators to confirm that the time periods for a proposed assessment would capture a 'typical' operating period for the wharf and/or boatyard. Discussions should also be held with the operator to understand what activities might reasonably be expected to take place at the site in the future so a reasonable worst case scenario can be assessed.

There are examples of successful residential development adjacent to wharves, such as Greenwich Millennium Village where sound reduction was designed into the scheme.

A variety of mitigation measures are available to prevent adverse impacts including impacts from noise, odour, vibration, air quality and highways access, and the need for this to be addressed as part of new development proposals is set out in planning policy through, included in paragraph 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021), which places the responsibility of mitigating the impact of noise from existing noise

generating businesses, such as wharf operations, on the proposed new development close by. This is also reflected in planning policy including policy D13 (Agent of Change) of the London Plan, the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan Safeguarding Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (2021) and recently adopted Local Plans. This principle helps to ensure that potential future residents and existing and potential wharf operations are both protected.

It is essential these assessments are completed at an early stage, to enable any required mitigation measures to be incorporated into the detailed design of a development.

Potential mitigation measures could include:

- Ensuring habitable rooms such as bedrooms do not directly overlook an operational facility;
- The incorporation of different glazing requirements for windows;
- The requirement for winter gardens and/or the fixing shut of windows.

The PLA continues to work proactively with all stakeholders to achieve the aims of the Thames Vision to ensure the reactivation and maximisation of use of all safeguarded wharves within the PLA's jurisdiction. Any parties considering developments in close proximity to this vital infrastructure are encouraged to contact the PLA an early stage.

#### GREENWICH MILLENNIUM VILLAGE (GMV)

The GMV site is located on Greenwich Peninsula in an area that has been allocated for 700 jobs and a minimum of 13,500 new homes. Approximately 30 metres from the development are two of Europe's largest marine dredged terminals, the Safeguarded Angerstein and Murphys Wharves. Between 2012 – 2016 the wharves handle between almost 3 million tonnes of aggregate per annum and provide 40% of the London's supply of aggregates.

The design of the GMV scheme accepted that as part of the residential development there was a need for a substantial screen along the boundary between the development site and Wharves. This resulted in a scheme with corridors and storage spaces along the boundary with the wharves and residential properties that look out over the river away from the wharves.

The development process highlighted the need for early and proactive engagement between residential developers, wharf operators, the Local Authority and the PLA in order for there to be a full understanding of the operations that take place at a wharf and the impact that would be experienced at the nearest residential receptors. Another important aspect of the development was the need for robust noise modelling to be undertaken, which was able to determine the size and specification of windows and whether they should be openable or not. To date no noise complaints have been received from residents with regard to the wharf operations.





### 3. PASSENGER TRANSPORT AND PIERS



Daily scheduled passenger services now operate over 20 miles of the Thames, from Putney to Barking Riverside.

A number of new passenger piers are being introduced along the tidal Thames most recently at Royal Wharf Pier in Newham and Barking Riverside in Barking and Dagenham and there are also opportunities for the extension of river services to continue eastwards into Kent and Essex. These provide a valuable addition to public transport infrastructure for communities and visitors, particularly when combined with good pedestrian and cycle access, and links to other forms of public transport.

Charter vessels also operate throughout the tidal Thames for both residents and visitors to London and the south east and there is a need for additional berths for such vessels.

Early discussion with the PLA can help shape the development of any new piers or jetties and provide guidance developers. Examples include accessibility standards for new piers, understanding the impact of tides and the depth of water, and ensuring structures do not extend too close to the navigable channel.

The PLA can also assist in identifying key environmental considerations and suitable mitigation measures, for example the provision of green technologies and habitat enhancements. Future considerations should include access during extremes of weather, flood walls requiring raising, and the provision of fuel for low emissions vessels.

Transport connectivity should also be considered including integration with bus, rail, road, cycling and walking networks. There are also opportunities for the extension of river services to continue eastwards into Kent and Essex, particularly given the increasing development and population growth expected throughout this region.

Transport Assessments and Travel Plans for new developments should demonstrate that existing and proposed river bus services have been fully considered, including providing targets for promoting increased use of these services. Often new developments are accompanied by Travel Information Packs which provide information to new residents on nearby public transport locations and timetables and it must be ensured that river bus service information is included as part of these.

Developers and pier owners should also consider a range of uses for piers, such as allocating berths or timed access for river tours, chartered services or recreational uses to support the local visitor offer and associated economic benefits. In London TfL's [Passenger Pier Strategy](#) (2019) promotes the potential for the multi-use of piers, including small-scale freight, to further help promote modal shift from road to river. It is recommended that the use of the river in this way is considered as part of associated Delivery and Servicing Plans for appropriate developments and this should be specifically highlighted as a requirement within associated planning conditions.

## 4. THAMES PATH & RIVERSIDE PUBLIC REALM



Clear signage is an important part of riverside developments.

The Thames Path National Trail, England Coastal Path and other riverside spaces should be accessible to the public and inclusive in nature. Any proposed development which includes these areas must provide details of access ways and routes to the riverside for the benefit of both new and existing communities. If there are gaps in the existing riverside path, these should be closed where possible, and the provision of additional routes should factor into the design an extreme tide escape route should this be close the river edge.

There can be particular challenges in finding the best access route near wharves and terminals. This requires pragmatic solutions that achieve appropriate, safe public access, taking into account safety, regulatory and operational requirements.

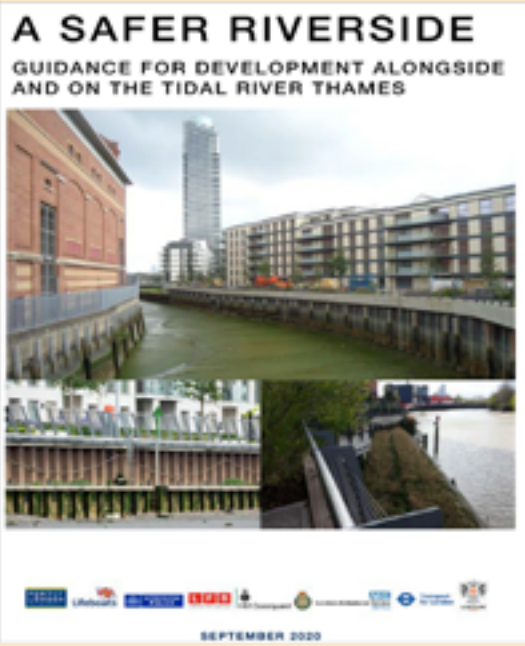
Local Authorities and developers must also consider and promote access to the Thames Path and riverside areas through the development of wider master plans to ensure that not only developments located directly adjacent to waterways, but also other, nearby developments can access the riverside. Signage is also a key consideration in the enhancement of these routes.

As part of any riverside public realm proposals it must also be ensured that litter is prevented from falling into the river and there should be a maintenance strategy provided via planning condition for riverside areas which includes details of how litter will be managed, in line with the PLAs [Thames Litter Strategy](#) and to help achieve the target of the PLA's [Cleaner Thames Campaign](#) to get 75% of the Thames Foreshore graded B or above (predominantly free of litter) by 2022.

Within London there are a number of Thames Policy areas and associated Thames Strategies which cross local authority boundaries and seek to ensure that various marine based environmental, historic and cultural topics and deficiencies are identified. The case



for a [Cultural Vision for the Thames in London](#) was also published in 2019. Development proposals within these areas should consider these strategies and demonstrate how the development is looking to address any identified deficiencies or enhance existing infrastructure / provision. Development proposals in Kent and Essex should also consider opportunities to enhance existing provision and address any deficiencies identified through Local Plan policies.



**A SAFER RIVERSIDE**  
GUIDANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT ALONGSIDE  
AND ON THE TIDAL RIVER THAMES

[In September 2020 the PLA published A Safer Riverside;](#) guidance to assist those responsible for areas alongside or on the tidal Thames in preventing an unplanned entry into the water and assisting the safe rescue of individuals who are at risk of drowning. It includes design guidance on edge protection, lighting, and signage as well as detailed information on riparian life saving equipment (such as life buoys, grab chains and escape ladders) that should be provided as part of all riverside development.

This guidance includes a series of recommendations which must be considered as part of all development alongside or on the tidal Thames and it is recommended that this is used when developing planning conditions to ensure development proposals are fully compatible with their riverside setting.

SEPTMBER 2020

## 5. ACCESS TO THE FORESHORE



The Thames is the heart of British rowing.

The foreshore is used as a means of access for recreational boating and foreshore exploration, and in many areas is also frequently accessed for group litter picks ([See Cleaning the Thames](#)). Searching of the foreshore is a popular activity and the PLA provides permits for all searching, metal detecting, 'beachcombing', scraping and digging. ([See Thames Foreshore Permits](#)).

Every year the Police, Fire Brigade, RNLI and London Ambulance Service rescue people who have become trapped on the foreshore. London Coastguard is responsible for the co-ordination of all search and rescue incidents by the emergency services.

There must be safe and accessible exit points for people to use in an emergency, along with the provision of appropriate life-saving equipment ([See A Safer Riverside](#)). There are multiple locations where the general public can access and exit the foreshore by using historic access points, including steps, stairs and slipways. These access points are often privately owned and do not fall under the responsibility of the PLA with regards to their upkeep and maintenance.

Development proposals which include an existing landing point or propose a new access to/from the foreshore must demonstrate how the access will be maintained and incorporated into the development, particularly as a means of escape from the river.

## 6. COMMUNITY-FOCUSED DEVELOPMENTS



An estimated that 19,000 people use the tidal Thames for recreation each year.

Making the most of riverside locations can involve developing facilities to promote safe engagement with the Thames by communities and visitors. It is therefore important for any development proposals on or over the tidal Thames to primarily be for water related uses or to support the enhancement of existing water-related uses and any ancillary uses (such as a bar or café) should enhance the principal water-related use. Within London, Policy SI17 (Protecting and enhancing London's waterways) of the London Plan specifically states that waterways should not be used as an extension of developable land, and the PLA considers that this is a relevant consideration for any proposed development across the entire tidal Thames.

### **Sports facilities**

The tidal Thames hosts the equivalent of over 15,000 football pitches of space and in 2017, London Sport research estimated the unused tidal Thames capacity at 40.6% which represented a potential increase of 13,000 individuals using the river. Sailing, stand-up paddle boarding, rowing and canoeing are actively encouraged on the tidal stretch and are part of the history and culture of the Thames. Any development proposals on the tidal Thames should protect and enhance water-related cultural, educational and community facilities and events, and any new facilities should be supported, taking into consideration other uses.

Sport England's planning guidance [Active Design](#), supported by Public Health England highlights 10 key principles, all of which can be applied to maximising the sporting asset that is the Thames.



The PLA are working with London Sport, National Governing Bodies and others to expand upon the potential of the river via the [Active Thames Partnership](#). This partnership can be approached in order to understand the sporting needs and potential for the river, as part of pre-application advice.

### **Community and education facilities**

[Thames Explorer Trust](#), [Thames Festival Trust](#) and [Thames21](#) are exemplary organisations which connect the rich heritage and educational opportunities of the Thames with the community. Annual events such as the Estuary Festival and Totally Thames celebrate the river. The river readily lends itself to the subjects of History, Science, Geography, Art and Physical Education and features prominently within the [London Curriculum](#). Examples such as the Fulham Jetty and [Chiswick Pier Trust](#) demonstrate how riverside locations can be used for multiple purposes.

It is recommended that development proposals seeking to introduce community, cultural and or educational facilities near to riverside areas should take the opportunity to ensure that the global asset of the Thames is fully considered in the development of such sites, and to reflect this in the planning submission. Relevant organisations should also be contacted to ensure that links between the Thames and new/existing communities are maximised and that access to information about the Thames is enhanced.

### **Moorings**

Across the tidal Thames there are various residential moorings with the majority found upstream of Vauxhall Bridge in west London. These moorings add to the vibrancy and diversity of the character of the Thames and development proposals adjacent to waterways should protect and enhance any nearby moorings. It is also important to recognise and promote other types of vessel moorings on the tidal Thames in appropriate locations including commercial and visitor moorings. ([See the PLA's Boating on the Thames site.](#))

Development proposals that include the provision of new moorings and associated facilities (including power, water and waste disposal) must include detailed information on the suitability and design of such proposals. In addition, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency classify the tidal Thames as Category C waters where wave heights of up to 1.2 metres may be expected and this must be taken into account as part of any moorings proposals. Turbulent waters (wash) from passing vessels can at times create issues for residential moorings. The amount of wash will dictate the type of mooring and vessels that are suitable in a specific area and can also help to ensure that river operations are not negatively affected. Therefore, it is essential that all mooring infrastructure, including wash mitigation

measures, are clearly set out within relevant planning application and it is advisable to consult with the PLA on this at an early stage.

In addition, any development proposals including moorings must ensure that they are designed in such a way that respects their local character, environment and biodiversity, particularly if the proposed development is located within or in close proximity to a Conservation Area or other designated heritage asset. This is particularly important for the access between marine and landside development and should be set out in associated Design and Access Statements and/or heritage or characterisation assessments.



Moorings add to the vibrancy and diversity of the character of the Thames

## 7. DESIGN GUIDANCE – ENVIRONMENT AND SAFETY



Development near the Leamouth Peninsula.

### A Safer Riverside

In addition to the [A Safer Riverside](#) guidance highlighted earlier is this guide, the PLA, along with other organisations including the RNLI and emergency services produced the [Drowning Prevention Strategy](#) (2019) ) which sets out to ensure that safety forms an intrinsic part of future development. Development proposals must show how suicide prevention measures (such as CCTV and signage with information to access support) have been considered and this should be supported by appropriately worded planning conditions.

The Tidal Thames Water Safety Forum have also recently published the [Riverside Community Water Safety Guide](#) to provide advice on enjoying the river safely for all those living or working near the river and it is recommended that this guide is provided as part of any 'welcome packs' for new residents moving into a riverside development.

### Habitat enhancement and improvements

For development proposals with a riverside edge, the Design and Access Statement and/or Landscape Strategy, must consider the impact of the development on the river environment and address enhancements through mitigation or compensatory habitat. Information on how to provide this is available via [Estuary Edges guidance](#).

Development proposals should also seek to identify any potential opportunities to promote river bank restoration and improve water quality and the foreshore in line with strategic planning policy. Under the Environment Act 2021, all planning permissions granted in England (with a few exemptions) will have to deliver at least 10% biodiversity net gain including in intertidal habitats by 2023 and the PLA is developing an approach to the





Estuary Edges offers a 'how to' guide on ecological design to encourage wildlife into urban estuaries.

implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain so it provides appropriate benefits to the tidal Thames and stakeholders.

### **Waste management**

As part of the construction stage of a development it is essential that there are appropriate waste management plans in place to prevent materials from falling into the tidal Thames. Measures may include covering skips or building materials to stop waste products escaping, reducing the number of single-use items used in a project, and consideration of alternative materials. These measures should be included within CEMPs secured through planning conditions.

### **Lighting**

It is important that any proposed external lighting located adjacent or on the river is appropriately designed to ensure that there are no negative impacts on ecology or navigation and lighting strategies must ensure that these points have been considered and have helped inform the design. Associated planning conditions must also specify that detailed lighting schemes clearly show how these potential impacts have been addressed.

### **Green technologies on river structures**

For development proposals located on or over the river, it is important that the utilisation of green technologies has been fully considered to reduce local impacts, make operational savings, reduce maintenance, secure energy supplies and reduce carbon footprint.

There are four types of renewable energy which are particularly suited to river structures on the Thames: solar, wind, river source heat and tidal energy which can contribute to security

of energy supply, provide a cushion against energy price rises and contribute to a reduction in corporate carbon footprint. Proposals should consider other forms of energy efficient green technologies, including shore power to allow vessels to connect to the electrical grid when alongside to avoid running their engines / generators. This would minimise emissions from vessels and related land-side infrastructure, reducing air pollution.

As part of the PLA's river works licencing process, all applications must include consideration of the use of green technologies and this should also be reflected in energy and sustainability statements provided as part of a detailed planning application. [Further information on this requirement can be found here.](#)

### **Climate resilience**

Flood defences are the responsibility of the riparian landowner. The Environment Agency(EA) issue Environmental Permits (formerly Flood Defence consent) on the tidal Thames for developments on the river or works within a relevant distance from the bank or flood defence structure. [Please see EA website here.](#) For works near an ordinary watercourse, the local council or internal drainage board can advise if land drainage consent is needed.

The [Thames Estuary 2100 Plan \(T2100\)](#) is an important consideration which aims to; manage the risk of flooding to people, property and the environment, adapt to the challenges of climate change, ensure sustainable and resilient development in the floodplain, protect the social, cultural and commercial value of the tidal Thames, tributaries and floodplain, and enhance and restore ecosystems and maximise benefits of natural floods. The TE2100 plan is currently undergoing review, with an updated plan due in 2023 which will reflect on the improved understanding of climate change impacts, introduce better ways of working, increase access to the river, create habitat, support sustainable and resilient development, and enhance the quality of life of people living around the Thames Estuary.

With regard to future technologies the PLA also has guidance on the following:

Best Practice Guidance for Inland Fleet Operators: <https://www.pla.co.uk/assets/finalguidanceforinlandoperators.pdf>

Ship-to-shore power connection cost benefit tool: <https://www.pla.co.uk/Environment/Air-Quality-and-Green-Tariff/Useful-tools-for-developer-and-fleet-operators>

Emission reduction roadmap for inland shipping on the Tidal Thames: <https://www.pla.co.uk/assets/emissionsroadmapjune2020final.pdf>

[PLA Thames Green Scheme](#) which incentivises environmentally friendly inland operators using the Thames. <https://greenscheme.pla.co.uk/>

## Radar infrastructure

Across the tidal Thames the PLA owns and operates a network of 15 radars overseeing the river. Data from these radars is transmitted via microwave links to the PLA's Vessel Traffic Centres at Gravesend and the Thames Barrier and provide a full picture of all shipping movements to and from the river and the outer estuary and it is vital that such infrastructure is protected. Development proposals adjacent to the river, particularly including tall buildings must contact the PLA at an early stage to confirm whether there are any radar links in the vicinity of the development, and if so, what measures need to be put in place to ensure these links can continue to operate.



PLA radar facility at All Hallows.



## 8. RIVER WORKS LICENSING



The PLA licenses works that are proposed in / over the river.

A river works licence is required from the PLA for any works in, under or over the Thames. [See here for further information](#). Where a river works licence is required in addition to planning consent, an informative should be added to the planning permission, highlighting this requirement.

The information required to support each type of RWL application is detailed on the PLA's website. This includes overlaying any structures proposed in/over the river on [a PLA chart, available here](#). It is recommended that the overlaid chart is also provided with the planning application, to allow for detailed PLA comments to be provided.

The PLA also licences dredging activities, including both capital and maintenance dredging on the tidal Thames. A development proposal may include dredging for example through the removal of material to enable a pile to be cut off below the riverbed or for a new structure to be installed. [Further information can be found here](#). With regard to maintenance dredging near protected sites, the PLA undertakes a strategic assessment called a Baseline Document, which is required by Natural England. This provides operators with an assessment for their maintenance that takes into account the combined effects of the dredging activity.

As a harbour authority the PLA also has legal requirements to see the full outcomes and analysis of Water Framework Directive Assessments and Appropriate Assessments in order to consent construction or activities. [Further information on this can be found here](#).

## 9. OTHER CONSENTS

In addition to planning and PLA consents, consent from other statutory bodies may be required when placing or carrying out works in the Thames including:

- i) An Environmental Permit from the EA (<https://www.gov.uk/topic/environmental-management/environmental-permits>)
- ii) A Marine Licence from the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/do-i-need-a-marine-licence>)
- iii) Natural England consent for works on a protected site (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/developers-get-environmental-advice-on-your-planning-proposals>)

## 10. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- i) PLA Environmental Guidance (<https://www.pla.co.uk/Environment/Environmental-Guidance>)
- ii) PLA guidance on climate change & greenhouse gases (<https://www.pla.co.uk/Environment/Climate-Change-and-Greenhouse-Gases>)
- iii) Passenger Transport: Achieving Safe and Sustainable Growth of River Transport (2020) (<https://www.pla.co.uk/About-Us/The-Thames-Vision/Thames-Vision-2035-Achieving-safe-and-sustainable-growth-of-river-passenger-transport>)
- iv) Thames Vision 2050 (<https://thamesvision.pla.co.uk/>)
- v) A glossary of related terms is available online (<https://www.pla.co.uk/Planning/Use-of-the-Tidal-Thames-A-Practical-Guide-for-Local-Authorities-and-Developers>)