

# THE OLD KENT ROAD

## PLACE-MAKING STUDY

### Final report

Allies and Morrison  
May 2016



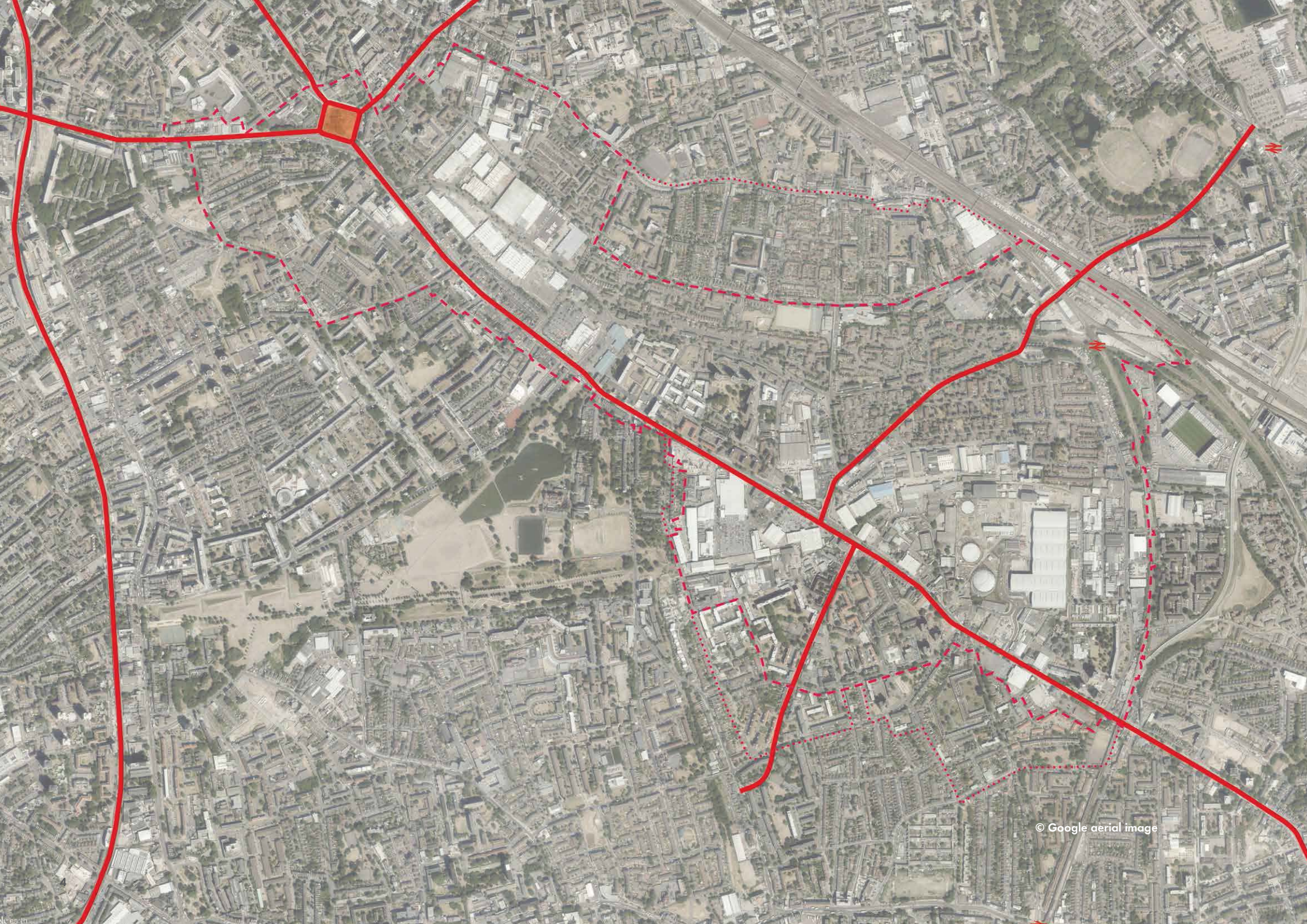




Old Kent Road, 1905  
(Source: Historic England)

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# 0 ROLE OF STUDY

## Brief

The Old Kent Road area is evolving and significant change is expected over the next 15 years. Key drivers for growth include the potential for the Bakerloo line extension (BLE) and two new tube stations, which would support very high levels of housing and business growth. The area around the Old Kent Road has been designated an Opportunity Area in the London Plan and it is expected to deliver significant numbers of homes and jobs.

The amount of business and industrial use presents significant opportunities in the context of the changing nature of business space, including growth of demand for flexible and hybrid business space and declining demand for warehousing and industrial space, changing shopping patterns and potential for growth of new residential neighbourhoods with much improved accessibility.

In August 2015, Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners was commissioned by Southwark Council to prepare a Place-making Study for the Opportunity Area. This study will inform the emerging Area Action Plan for the area, and help the authorities to understand the capacity for development.

The purpose of the study is to explore the potential to revitalise the Old Kent Road and surrounding neighbourhoods, to define their character and to communicate a vision which shapes them. Ultimately, the Area Action Plan will not comprise a prescriptive Masterplan, but rather a flexible development framework which provides strong design direction.

## Scope

The Opportunity Area stretches from Elephant Park on New Kent Road all the way down the Old Kent Road to the edge of the borough of Southwark around Ilderton Road and Millwall Football Club. The study boundary takes in extensive areas either side of the Old Kent Road up to Southwark Park Road and down to Bird in the Bush Park.

The study draws together an understanding of the issues and opportunities across this area. The study puts these in the "new light" afforded by the area's "Opportunity Area" status and the aspiration to deliver a step change in public transport accessibility through an extension to the Bakerloo line. The task has been to gauge the extent and nature of the transformation.

Through the study we have sought to answer a range of questions and explore a number of future scenarios for the Old Kent Road area. The focus of the work has been on establishing the place-making principles and fundamentals that should underpin change in the area.

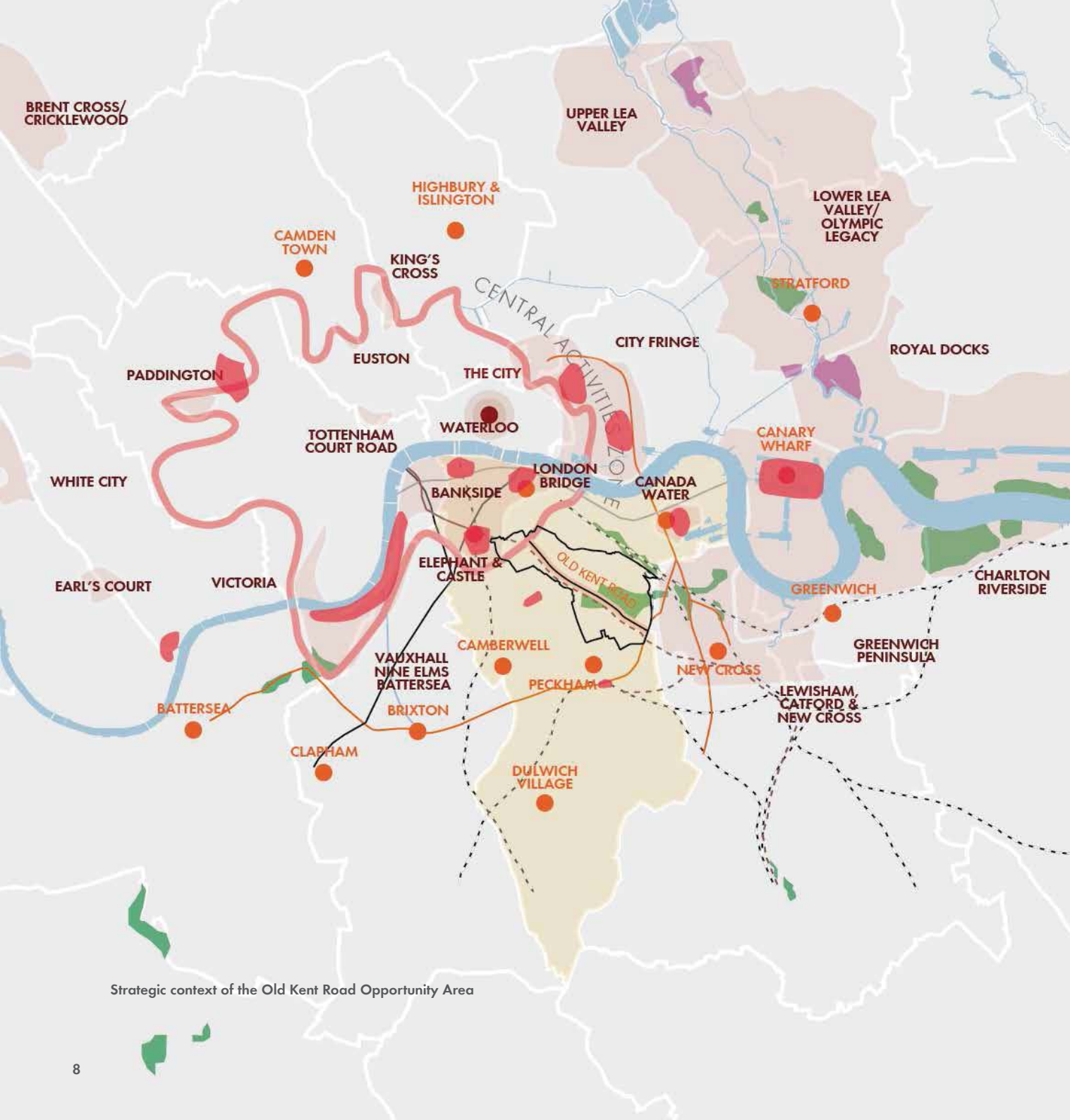
Many of the questions posed through the study have been answered and different options explored. Some questions remain unanswered, and these will need to be subject to further debate as the Area Action Plan / Opportunity Area Planning Framework process progresses. There are a number of challenges including balancing open space provision with new development and competing needs for residential and employment space.

# CONTEXT FOR CHANGE

1







- central activity zone
- opportunity areas
- tall building cluster
- preferred industrial location
- industrial business park
- study area boundary

Strategic context of the Old Kent Road Opportunity Area



# 1 CONTEXT FOR CHANGE

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Old Kent Road forms part of a key route into London from Kent. This section of the route is located on the edge of central London. As the crow flies it is only 1,000 metres from London Bridge - less than the distance from Angel to King's Cross.

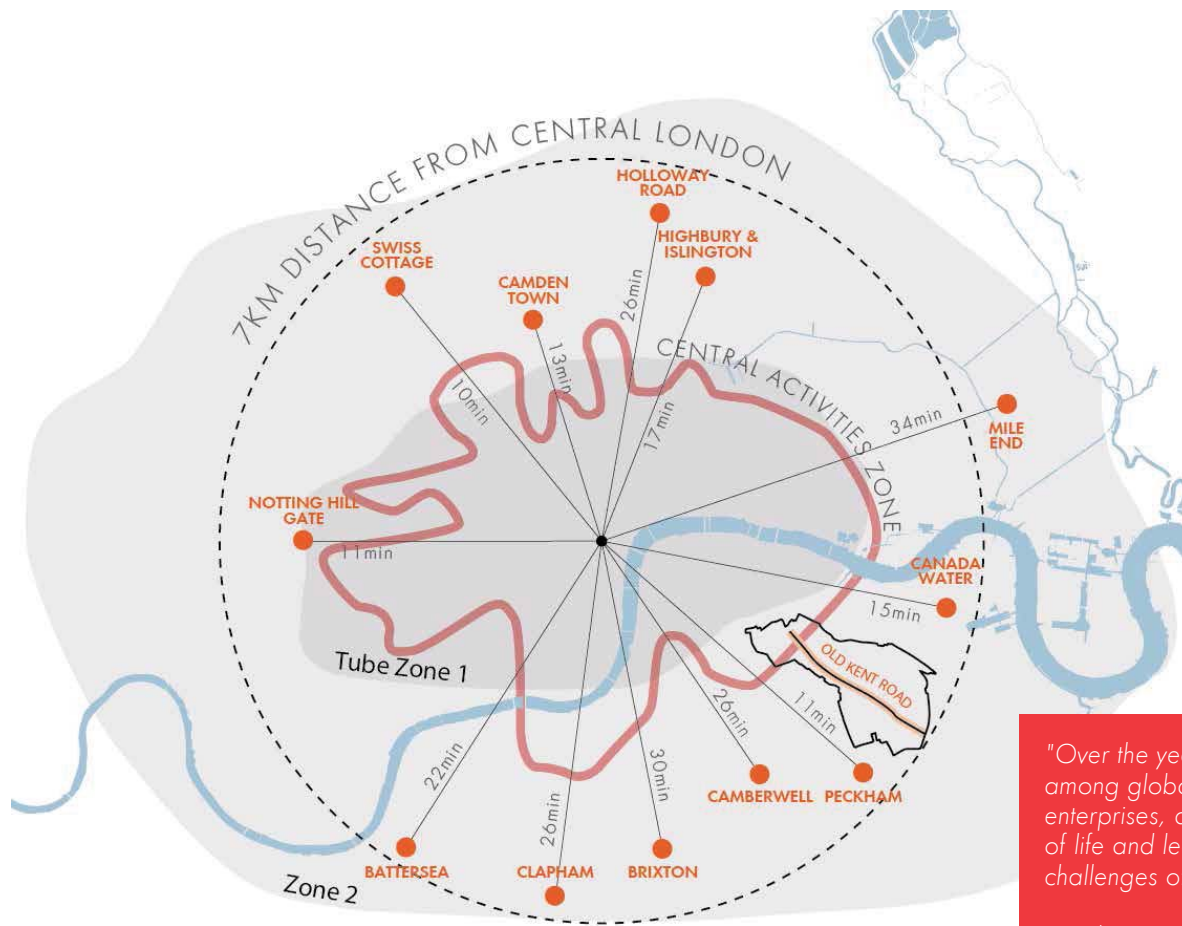
The northern part of the area around Bricklayers Arms is within the Central Activities Zone, making it comparable to areas such as Pimlico, Vauxhall and Finsbury. The eastern part of the area around Ilderton Road is less than 4km from London Bridge - equivalent to the position of Hackney Central to Liverpool Street station.

The Old Kent Road area has a remarkable past: Roman Watling Street, the medieval Pilgrim route to Canterbury, industrialisation, commerce and housing growth, through to 20th century wartime bombardment and reconstruction and the nurturing of new communities.

The Old Kent Road is an historic London high street recognisable across the world due to its place as a low value asset on the Monopoly board. Parts of the road continue to have a high street character, along other stretches there are larger retail premises as well as housing estates, green spaces and civic and educational uses. The hinterland on either side of the road is a mix of industrial and community uses and housing.

The Old Kent Road area has been designated as an Opportunity Area and has the potential to support significant housing and business growth. This could lead to major change in the area, redefining the Old Kent Road as part of central London. This change should result in improvements to the quality of the environment along the road and a change in the distribution of land uses in the area, unlocking central London sites for potential housing growth. Plans to extend the Bakerloo Line along the Old Kent Road will be a key factor in driving these changes.

# CONTEXT



Comparing proximity to central London

"Over the years to 2036 – and beyond, London should excel among global cities – expanding opportunities for all its people and enterprises, achieving the highest environmental standards and quality of life and leading the world in its approach to tackling the urban challenges of the 21st century, particularly that of climate change.

...Achieving this vision will mean making sure London makes the most of the benefits of the energy, dynamism and diversity that characterise the city and its people; embraces change while promoting its heritage, neighbourhoods and identity; and values responsibility, compassion and citizenship."

## London Plan

## 1.2 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

### A growing London

London needs to grow to maintain its position as a leading global city. This growth involves building many more homes and creating many additional jobs, expanding the Central Activities Zone, as well as improving and extending the transport network, delivering new schools, universities and health centres and supporting innovative responses to address climate change.

The scale of the growth and investment required will mean radical change in some areas.

A series of Opportunity Areas have been identified as the focus for the most significant change. These areas are defined as *"brownfield land with significant capacity to accommodate new housing, commercial and other development linked to existing or potential improvements to public transport accessibility"*.

### Revitalised neighbourhoods

The New Southwark Plan outlines a strategy to revitalise neighbourhoods and deliver more homes and jobs throughout the borough. The Plan includes an ambition to build 11,000 Council homes, and to see major improvements in access to public transport in those parts of the borough which have historically lacked connections.

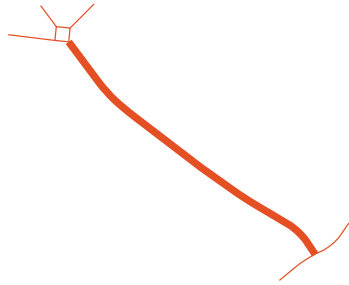
As one of the Borough's Opportunity Areas, the Old Kent Road is a key piece in this strategy. It has more potentially available brownfield sites than any other area on the fringe of the Central Activities Zone. The Council strongly supports the proposed options for an extension of the Bakerloo line through the borough. A new line and stations along the Old Kent Road would be a 'game changer' for the area, and would make the potential sites in this location a major opportunity for delivering housing and jobs.



View looking south west across London Bridge and the Old Kent Road area from the City

# CONTEXT

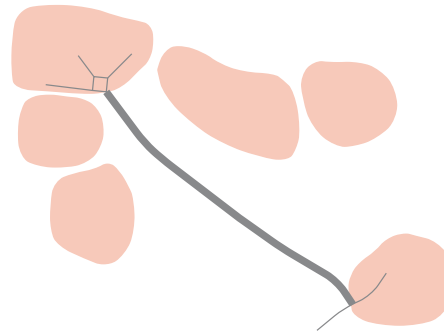
## 1.3 LOCAL CONTEXT



### 1 A ROAD

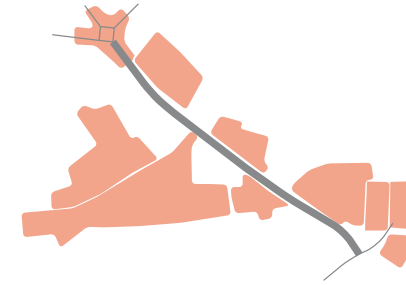
The Old Kent Road is one of the oldest routes into London. It is a major artery and forms one of a number of linear routes running in and out of London.

Traditionally these routes have operated as a series of linear high streets, serving the towns and communities along them. Indeed the rest of what was the historic route of Watling Street does just that - such as Kilburn and Cricklewood on the Edgware Road section of this historic route. This high street character has been eroded on the Old Kent Road with only fragments evident today. The Old Kent Road now operates as an important vehicular corridor, but a barrier to pedestrian movement and activity.



### 2 AN IN-BETWEEN

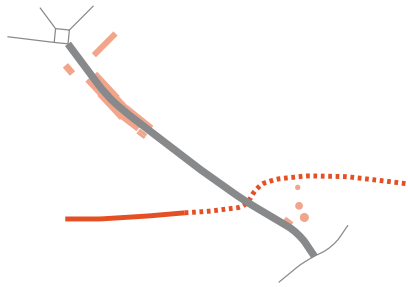
The Old Kent Road exists as a road but has little identity as a place. The neighbourhoods of Walworth, Bermondsey, Peckham and New Cross are much stronger as places. In many ways, the existing communities along the route look out to these places for their identity and association. The area looks north to the communities of Bermondsey, west to Walworth and south to Peckham.



### 3 BIG PIECES

As a major artery, the road has attracted large users to the area. Big box retail outlets and large supermarkets have developed along the route over the last decades. In addition, the nature of industry in the area has changed and is now dominated by large format warehouses and industrial facilities.

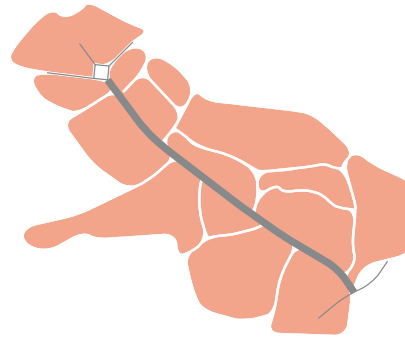
Together these uses have dramatically reduced the permeability of the area, cutting off residential neighbourhoods from the Old Kent Road.



## 4 HISTORIC FRAGMENTS

Despite the apparent dominance of the "big pieces" in the area, there are a substantial number of historic fragments - some very small - which remain and keep the area tethered to its history.

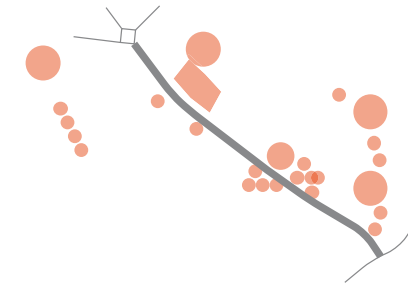
Fragments of historic high street along the Old Kent Road, pockets of finer grain industry and the line of the former Surrey Canal are all evidence of the area's vibrant past. Some more prominent landmarks also stand out such as the gas holders and surviving public houses. Throughout the area there is evidence of new and old sitting very comfortably together - such as the Victorian schools adjacent to contemporary academies and extensions.



## 5 DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

At the time of Booth's poverty map in 1898, the Old Kent Road was a thriving and relatively affluent part of London. A century or more later and the area is famous as being the lowest value location on the Monopoly board.

This apparent shift in fortune has done nothing to diminish the diversity and vibrancy of the communities which call the area home. Today the area's diversity is reflected in the fact that almost a third of its residents were born overseas.



## 6 ECONOMIC SERVICE

In addition to being an important residential area, the Old Kent Road operates an important industrial service to the City. A number of services that underpin London's day-to-day operation are located here, taking advantage of the fringe location and relatively low land values.

Across the area there are 750 businesses employing 9,500 employees. Warehousing and larger format industrial estates take up a significant proportion of the employment space and employ 45% of this total. High street shops and industries in the more historic, denser industrial areas have a high density of employees (together they take up 17% of the business land, but represent nearly 30% of the employment total).



Residential terraced streets



High street retail



Big box retail



Residential apartment blocks



Large scale industry

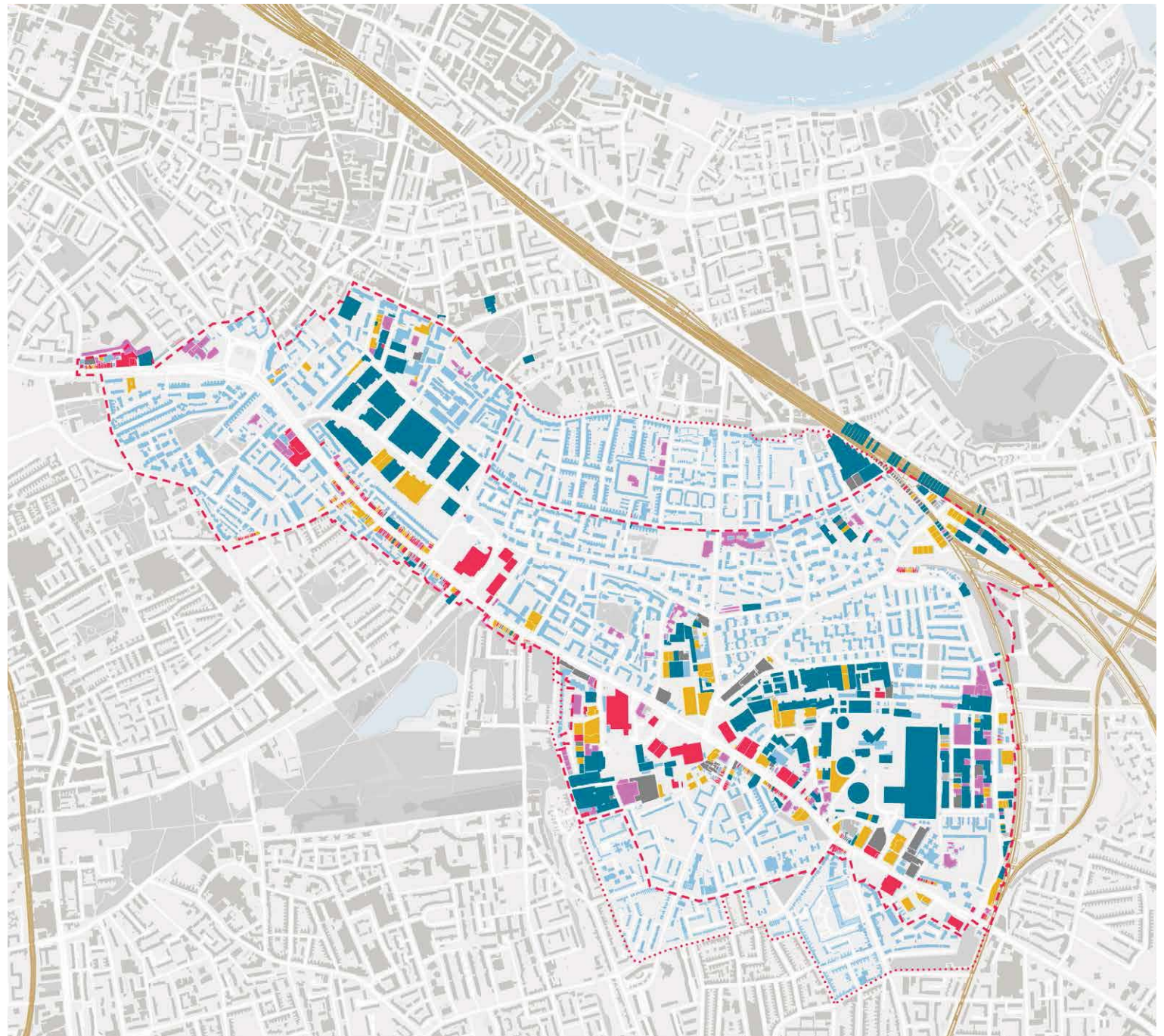
### Existing pattern of uses

The current pattern of land use across the area exhibits the following characteristics:

- Fragments of high street retail;
- Large swathes of industry and warehousing;
- A series of small retail parks; and
- Large residential hinterland, generally set back behind other uses.

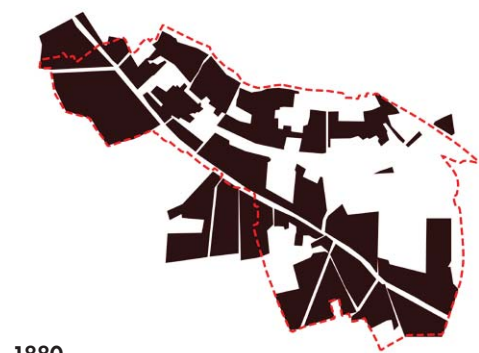
There is relatively little evidence of mixed use within blocks beyond the high street fragments. Generally the pattern is of mono-use and relatively low density.

A comparable street, such as Whitechapel Road, would have a much higher incidence of mixed uses along its frontage and deeper into its hinterland. Indeed, in a such a central location, one would expect a greater intensity of land use generally. It would appear that the lack of connection to the tube network has persistently held this area back from a more vibrant and active character.



- residential
- transport, storage and manufacture
- wholesale and services
- retail, cafes, restaurants
- education, art, faith
- other
- vacant

Land use plan



1880



1896



1920



1954



1962



1974



1981



1995



2015





## 1.4 PAST AND PRESENT

### Evolution of the area

All places are shaped by their past; the Old Kent Road more than most. In terms of London's growth the area was late to urbanise, but it has a long history stretching back almost two thousand years, to the Roman occupation and the origins of Watling Street. The Old Kent Road was a former area of marshland and liable to flooding due to its location adjacent to the River Thames floodplain. The underlying geology consists of alluvial silts and overlying sand and gravel deposits, with lower lying marshes and mud-flats. The area has been through two seismic shifts to its overall form and identity. First, the unprecedented growth and industrialisation in the nineteenth century, then wartime bombardment, slum clearance and redevelopment in the latter half of the twentieth century. This in turn was followed by the decline of industry and manufacturing and its replacement with retail and service industries.

### 1896

By the end of the 19th Century development had been consolidated across the area, with schools and workers housing carved out of spare space. Industry was concentrated near the railway line and the Surrey Canal. The Livesey gasworks extended eastwards.

### 2015

Today, Burgess Park forms the only sizeable open space in the area. The Old Kent Road is now home to a range of uses including extensive industrial parks and out of town shopping. Most recently there has been a move towards more intimate housing developments, fine grained and more responsive to their surroundings.



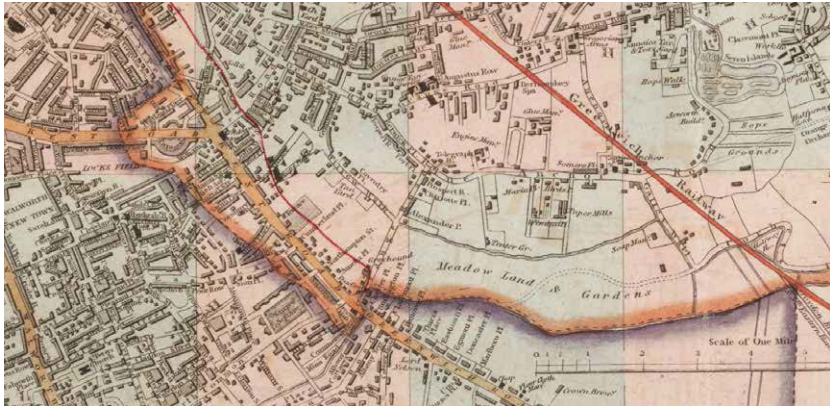
1896



2015



Mogg (1806)



Wyld (1843)



Booth's poverty map (1898)



Old Kent Road 1905

Source: Historic England



Old Kent Road, 2015



Old Kent Road 1905, showing original Thomas a Beckett

Source: Historic England



Thorburn Square, 1973

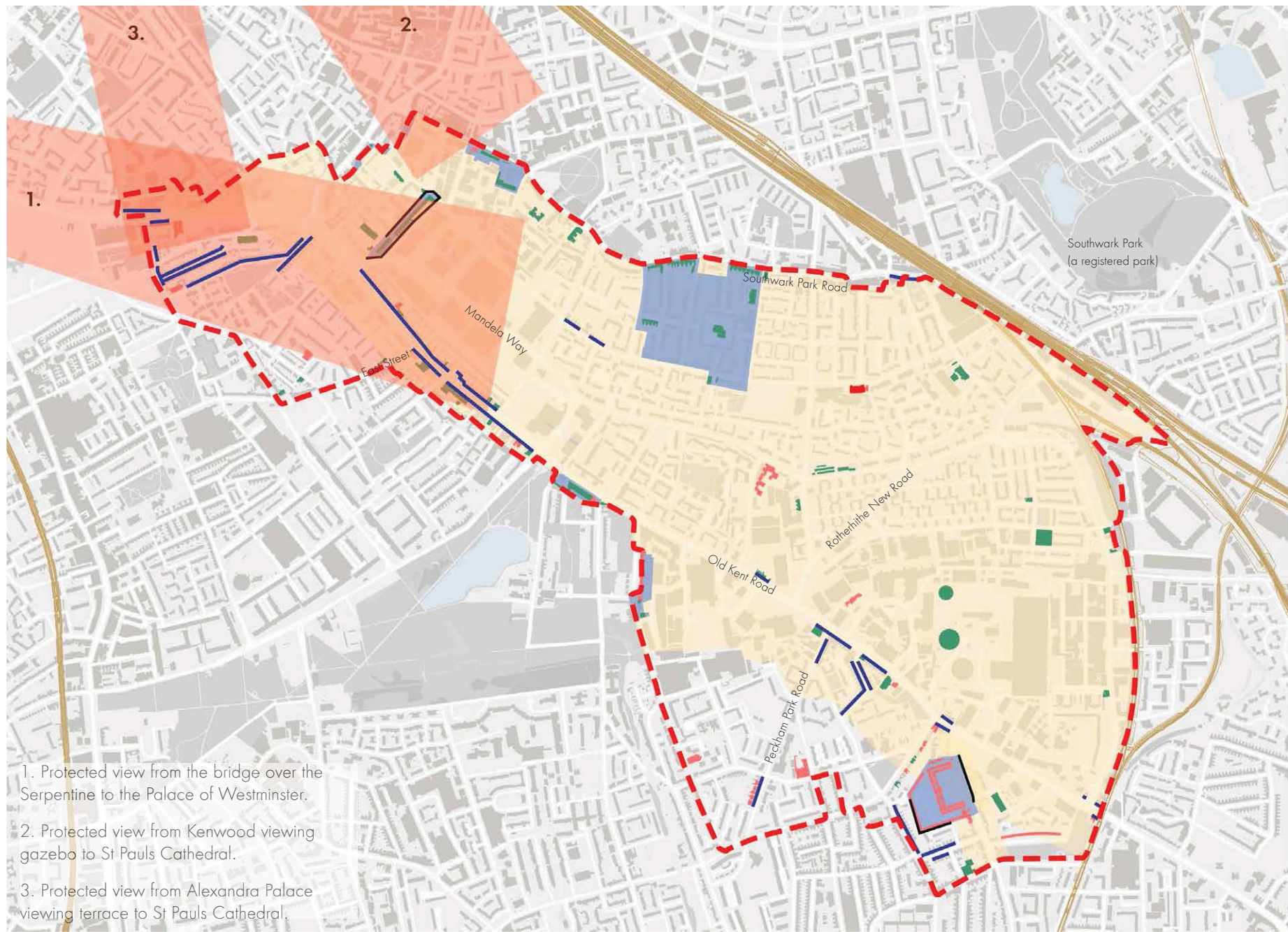
Source: Historic England



Old Kent Road, 2015



Thorburn Square, 2015



**Heritage designations**

### Historic fabric

Given its long history, the area is sparsely represented through formal designations. Few buildings are listed and the small number of conservation areas have their boundaries quite tightly drawn around the most significant buildings.

The Conservation Areas not only include some of the most attractive historic built sections in the area, but also some of the best examples of public realm.

The Old Kent Road Characterisation Study identified a number of heritage assets which should be protected and enhanced. There is also scope to use many of the heritage assets to inform change and ensure old and new sit comfortably together.



Page's Walk Conservation Area



Bermondsey Street Conservation Area



Thorburn Square Conservation Area



Trafalgar Avenue Conservation Area

### Heritage designation recommendations

— Historic frontage survival (pre 20th century)

#### Existing heritage designation

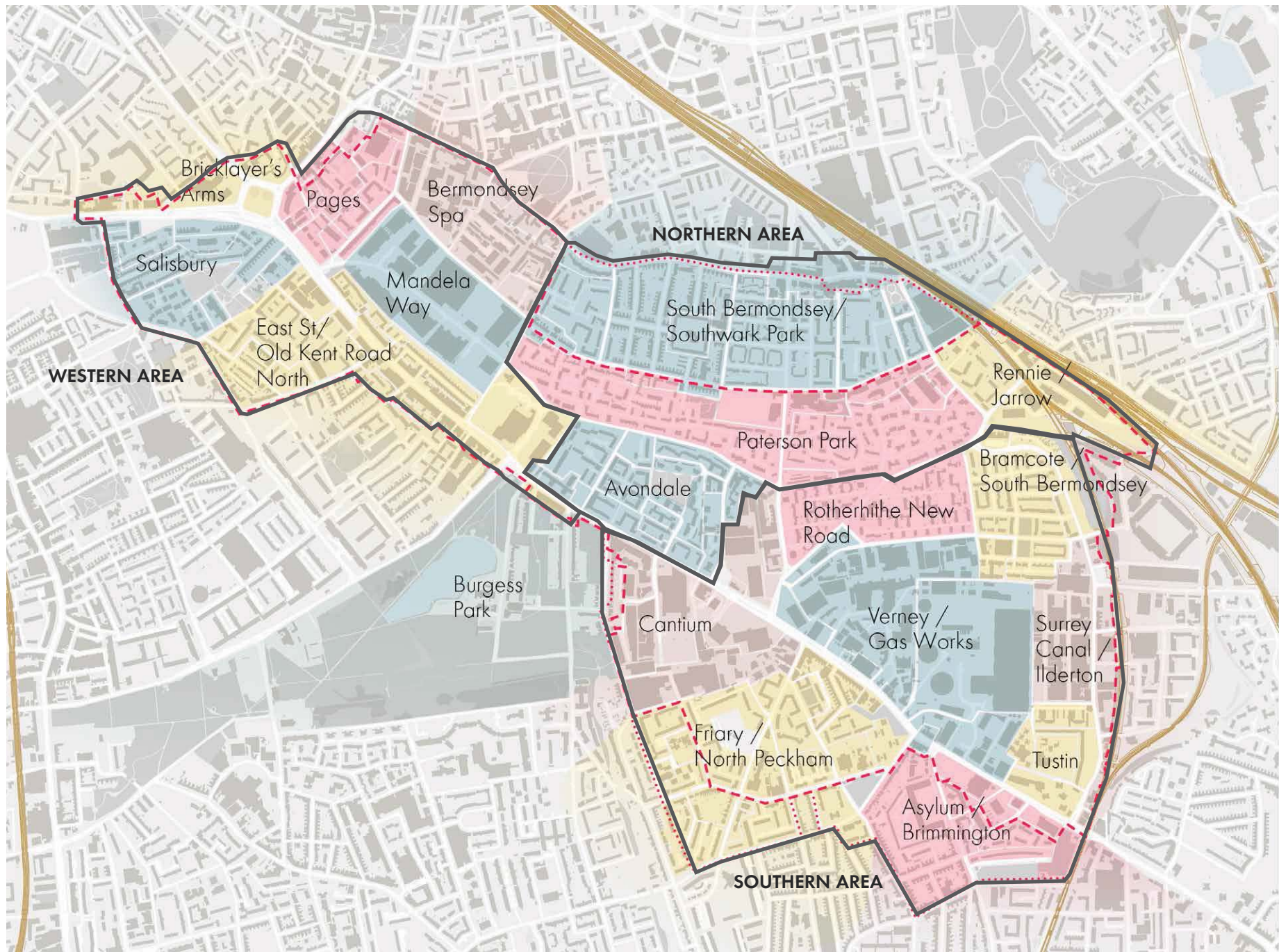
- Listed building Grade II
- Listed building Grade II\*
- Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest
- Archaeological priority zones
- Conservation area



Caroline Gardens Conservation Area



Glengall Road Conservation Area



Neighbourhood character zones within the three broad areas

### Western section

This part of the study area bears the historical imprint of the old Bricklayers Arms goods station which dominated and divided the locality for more than a century. Most of the area formerly occupied by the station and sidings is now taken up by the Mandela Way industrial estate, with its large, deep plan sheds, although their low profile masks their impact in most views.

The intersection with the New Kent Road, Old Kent Road and Tower Bridge Road manifested as a lozenge-shaped roundabout, a patch of grass and trees bounded by five lanes of traffic. This island combines with the flyover that sweeps across it to create an intensely urban experience.

Traces of the pre-industrial character of the area are evident in the late 18th century terrace houses on New Kent Road, the beginnings of speculative growth. Fragments also survive on the Old Kent Road itself. These initiatives were followed in the mid to late 19th century by the terraces of Henshaw Street and Chatham Street area; then the LCC Board schools, several of which survive to serve as local landmarks. This area is being consolidated by individual, small scale residential development, contemporary in style but generally maintaining the fine grain of the area.

East Street threads between the Old Kent Road and Walworth Road and includes a mix of local shops and flats, with intensive retail use (including the East Street market) at the Walworth end.

### Northern section

This part of the area is characterised by low-rise housing, terraces and apartment blocks, but historically has looked towards Bermondsey, with its former factories for food processing and leather working, as well as the Surrey Docks. Lynton Road is the curving spine of the area and serves as a threshold between the rectilinear grid of Victorian houses around Thorburn Square and the much looser, more dispersed layouts to the south, built after the closure of the railway sidings. To the north the serpentine Southwark Park Road, a busier road, has local shops at the top of St James's Road and at its eastern end. Most of the houses are mid or late 20th century but there are early Victorian villas north of the Square.

There is a contrast in form as well as age between the various housing. The Victorian streets are laid out as straight terraces, back to back, with private gardens between. The fronts of the terraces are highly unified in their scale, style and materials, establishing strong rhythms. Even the rebuilt Thorburn Square maintains this disciplined arrangement, but with the flats facing outwards, as well as into the Square.

More recent housing is consciously looser and informal, reflecting an effort to reduce through-traffic and lower vehicle speeds. Aesthetic considerations – perhaps a reaction against the modernist, large scale expression of the 1960s estates – may have been another factor.

### Southern section

The character and form of this sub-area is influenced by the shape of the canal, governing the location of industry in the 19th Century especially the gasworks. Burgess Park, itself shaped by the canal and the streets that once stood here is another defining factor.

The area includes an historic enclave around the former Licenced Victuallers Asylum and Caroline Gardens, which has a pronounced collegiate character with low ranges of dwellings enclosing lawns. Asylum Road is part of the historic identity, with 19th Century houses and street trees making an important contribution to the amenity of the area.

The “big box” retail units on both sides of the Old Kent Road are fronted by shapeless, vehicle dominated spaces, uninviting for those on foot. With their big illuminated signs, the development is more strongly associated with out-of-town retail parks.

Ilderton Road, a thread of industrial buildings following the curve of the railway line, interspersed with residential development and a scatter of historic buildings including two churches.

The Southwark Integrated Waste Management facility (IWMMF) is a very large building, generating significant traffic with access from the Old Kent Road, and is a substantial footprint, presenting an impermeable element in the townscape.

## 1.5 LOCAL VIEWS

The team has worked closely with officers across the departments of the London Borough of Southwark and the Greater London Authority. Together, there is a significant bank of knowledge of the area which has provided an invaluable layer of detail to support the analysis. In addition, this project has been particularly fortunate to benefit from a wealth of knowledge assembled by local people.

In order to test the early findings of the study, two events were convened. The first was a workshop focused on the vision for the Old Kent Road, the second on a design exercise for local people creating their own schemes.

### First workshop

Main topics from the first workshop focused on the following elements that should form part of the vision:

- a balance of new and existing housing;
- familiar town centres with plenty of facilities;
- a mainly cycle and pedestrian route, a lot less traffic dominated;
- for the people not the developers;
- plenty of green spaces;
- more local employment opportunities;
- more links that reflect the history of the area;
- one big area of neighbourhoods that complement each other while being sensitive to existing historical buildings and places of worship;
- affordable solutions;
- re-develop Mandela way sites, add new employment opportunities;
- new council houses with community facilities;
- combination of low and high rise buildings; and
- high rise buildings of a high architectural quality.





First workshop - vision for the Old Kent Road



First workshop - group vision example



First workshop - vision for the Old Kent Road



First workshop - group vision example



Second design workshop



Second design workshop

## Second workshop

The second workshop was a "Planning for Real" style event which challenged local stakeholders to identify where growth and change should happen. Each of the five groups created their own version of a development scenario. The accumulation and comparison of the different solutions reveals common ideas on where the new stations should be located and land uses distributed. The outcome has provided an invaluable steer for the framework outlined in the following chapters. Common themes were:

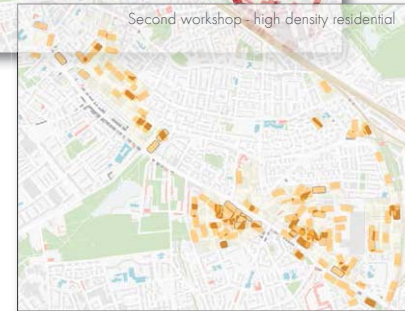
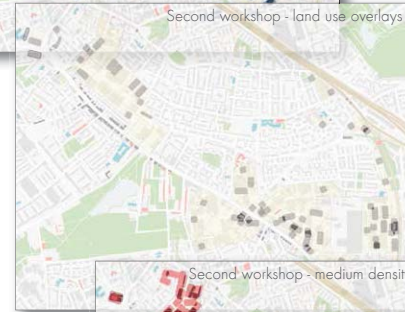
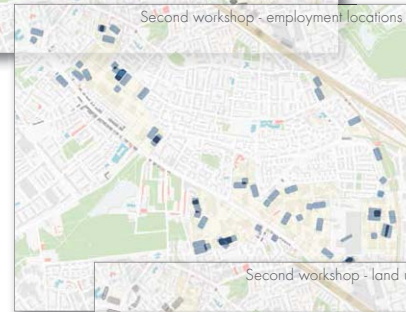
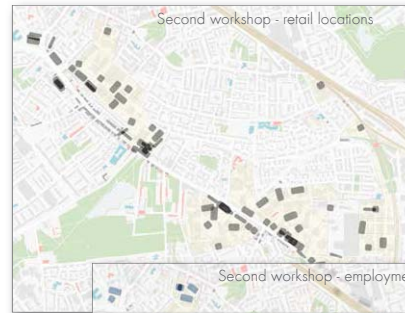
- The road itself should be a more attractive place for cyclists and pedestrians - a "lot less traffic dominated";
- Development should be "for the people not the developers";
- The creation of a new route on the historic path of the Surrey Canal was strongly endorsed by all groups;
- The creation of generous new parks on the gas works site and Mandela Way were also well supported;
- High density residential development was often placed with open space, suggesting the consultees see this as an important part of the trade-off decision;
- A number of groups placed high density residential development on the Old Kent Road itself, with some locations indicated by multiple groups such as Cantium Retail Park and Tesco / Southernwood Retail Park; and
- Retail on the Old Kent Road was strongly supported, alongside a desire to see active ground floor uses and local services throughout area.



Second workshop - combined suggested station locations



Second workshop - combined suggested green space locations



Second workshop - land use overlays

## 1.6 ECONOMIC CONTEXT



High Street retail on the Old Kent Road



New residential development on the Old Kent Road - L&Q's OKR scheme

The Old Kent Road represents a diverse neighbourhood within Southwark, including uses which encompass both private residential and significant social housing estates of varying ages and quality, a variety of industrial and distribution uses, extensive retail warehousing units and retail parks, as well as local retail and A3/service uses, and community uses such as schools, faith establishments etc.

Change is already underway within the Study Area, with residential and residential led mixed use developments either underway (for example the Bermondsey Works scheme, Rotherhithe New Road) or being proposed for example Berkeley Homes' emerging proposals for sites at Bianca Road, Acorn Wharf and Surrey Wharf. While this process of change is already underway, if the Bakerloo Line Extension (BLE) is confirmed, then it seems likely that this will accelerate the rate of development and add further stimulus to the market.

### Residential market

Delivery of the BLE is likely to have a positive impact upon the residential market from a number of perspectives – including potential increases in residential sales values, the speed of sales and marketability of individual units. These factors may potentially influence both the density and quantum of development which is brought forward on individual sites and across the study area as a whole. While the likely impact on residential sales values is hard to quantify, an uplift of between 10% and 20% on residential sales values does not seem unreasonable. It seems likely that confirmation of the BLE will also have a positive impact on the private rental sector.

This exists within the study area at present (e.g. the OKR scheme close to the junction of the Old Kent Road and Glengall Road), but improved public transport accessibility, and connection into the tube network, is likely to increase interest from Private Rented Sector (PRS) developers/investors. While confirmation of the BLE is likely to have a positive impact on the residential market, developers will, for example, need to take a view on the extent to which any uplift on residential sales values is “eroded” by a tariff (e.g. CIL) required to fund the BLE. In addition, building at higher densities may lead to increased construction costs, if taller buildings are delivered.

### Retail market

The Old Kent Road retail market is characterised by a mixture of retail parks (e.g. Cantium Retail Park), stand-alone “Big Box” retail units (e.g. Toys-R-U’s), as well as some high street retail/A3 units and local/independent operators, such as those interspersed along the Old Kent itself, and in locations such as East Street.

At present, the retail market is very volatile, as evidenced, for example, by the changing fortunes of a number of mainstream national retailers, such as Tesco, by the emergence and increasing role of new retail channels such as internet and mobile shopping, home-delivery, click-and-collect etc. While these factors are leading to ongoing changes in the retail sector, we believe that demand for traditional retail warehousing within the study area is likely to remain strong at least in the short term. However, a number of traditional “bulky goods” retailers are looking at more “high street” style concepts, or toward a more showroom style of trading which is potentially more compatible with mixed use/residential development. Indeed we understand that some of the existing owners/investors within the study area are considering bringing forward redevelopment proposals which reflect this sort of concept.

Implementation of the BLE is likely to accelerate this trend, and facilitate a greater move towards “town centre” type uses (and away from car-borne/bulky goods retailing), particularly if development incorporates high quality public realm, ancillary A3/commercial leisure uses, as well as other potentially

appropriate uses such as a hotel. There may also be scope to attract other uses to the study area such as a major cultural user, institutional occupier or university. Such a use could provide additional benefits in terms of place-making and supporting other town centre-type uses. That being said, some owner-occupiers of existing retail units (such as Tesco/Asda) are perhaps less likely to contemplate such wholesale change to their trading formats, given that they are likely to have a need to focus (at least in the short term) on their core retail business, rather than upon property development.



Big box retail on the Old Kent Road



Cantium Retail Park



Modern industrial space off Old Kent Road

### Employment market

The Old Kent Road is an important employment location, and includes a number of specific employment locations and industrial areas, such as Ilderton Road (characterised by smaller, more flexible units), the Six Bridges Industrial Estate (light industrial and trade uses) and Mandela Way (which includes large scale distribution/storage uses - a number of which are regionally significant - for occupiers such as Royal Mail, DPD and London Buses). There are also certain special uses such as the Southwark Integrated Waste Management facility (IWMF). Intensification of some of the existing employment sites is already underway, and there is also pressure for redevelopment for higher value uses such as residential.

Again, implementation of the BLE may reinforce this trend and increase the pressure for residential led redevelopment of employment sites due to rising residential values and increased developer interest in the area. Ideally proposals for the Study Area as a whole should encompass a range of employment opportunities. This may include space for those uses which can potentially be accommodated on the ground floor of mixed schemes (for example some local office uses, requiring a “front door”); other uses (e.g. micro-businesses/SMEs) may require a degree of clustering in discrete blocks. There are also likely to remain certain more “industrial” type uses e.g. those uses requiring 24 hour/HGV access, which may need to remain physically separate from residential parts of the study area. This may include the retention/relocation of certain strategically important occupiers, such as those which directly support the CAZ.

While the employment offer of the Old Kent Road is likely to change and intensify over the medium to longer term, and particularly if the BLE is implemented, we consider that large scale office development, leading to the creation of a distinct major office quarter, is perhaps unlikely. This is due to a number of factors such as the quantum of competing development currently being brought forward/proposed (e.g. Kings Cross, International Quarter Stratford, Wembley Park, Old Oak Common etc) as well as the quality of environment which is likely to be available within the study area, for office uses. We also consider that the existence of only a single tube line (post BLE) within the area, and the presence of mainline rail services only on its fringes, will place the Old Kent Road at a disadvantage relative to other competing locations. In any case, experience elsewhere suggests that major office development is perhaps most likely to occur after the implementation of transport infrastructure, whereas other uses (for example residential) are capable of being brought forward in advance of BLE.

However, there is growing evidence of the area’s increasing attraction to SME type occupiers, for example in the form of managed workspace and smaller flexible office provision. There is scope for this trend to increase, particularly if the place-making objectives are achieved, and transport accessibility

improves.

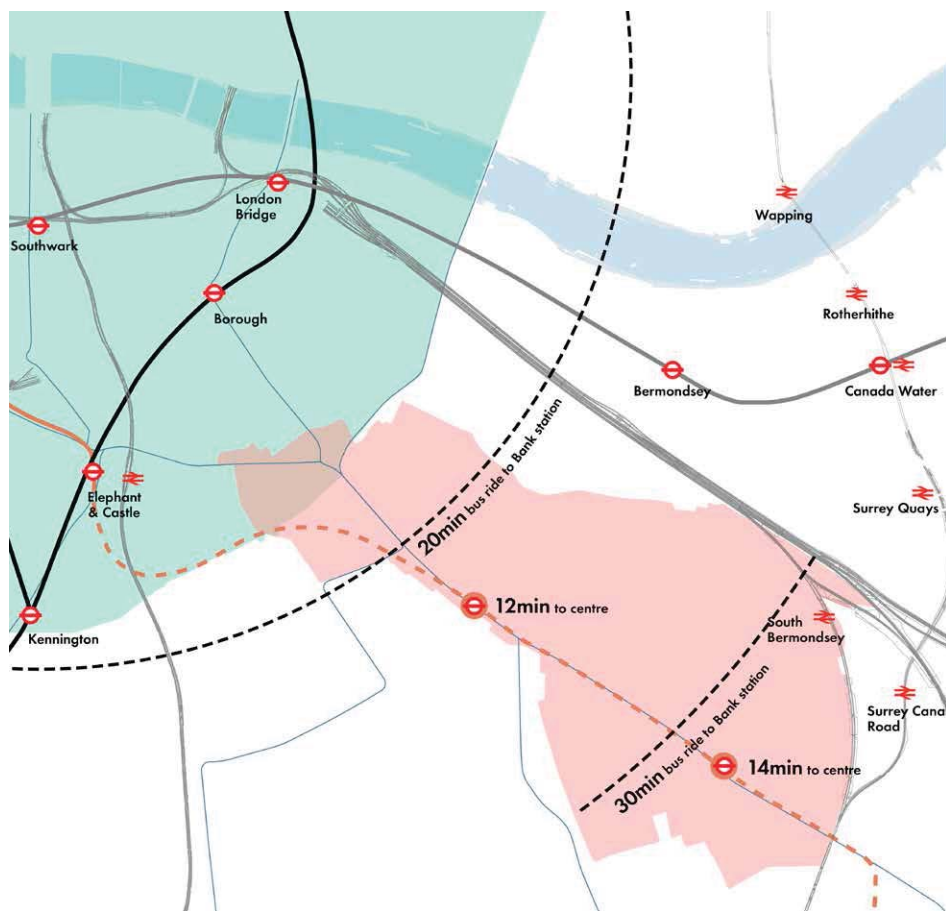
### **The pace of change**

Maintaining the successful delivery of a high quantum and quality of residential development (as a key value driver) across the study area will be dependent upon a range of factors. These may include capacity/skills within the construction industry and the number/scale of competing projects across London and elsewhere, as well as place-making initiatives such as the inclusion of appropriate high quality public realm and delivery of an attractive mix of uses including retail/A3/leisure and social infrastructure. These factors will also be important given that individual developers are likely to be active on different sites and at different price points within the Study Area; the inclusion of PRS within the development mix may also be relevant (as this will not compete directly against private for sale units), as may other innovative solutions.



The Rich Estate work space cluster

- Central Activities Zone
- Jubilee line
- Northern line
- Bakerloo line
- Bakerloo line extension
- Bus line
- ⊖ Tube station
- ≡ Train station



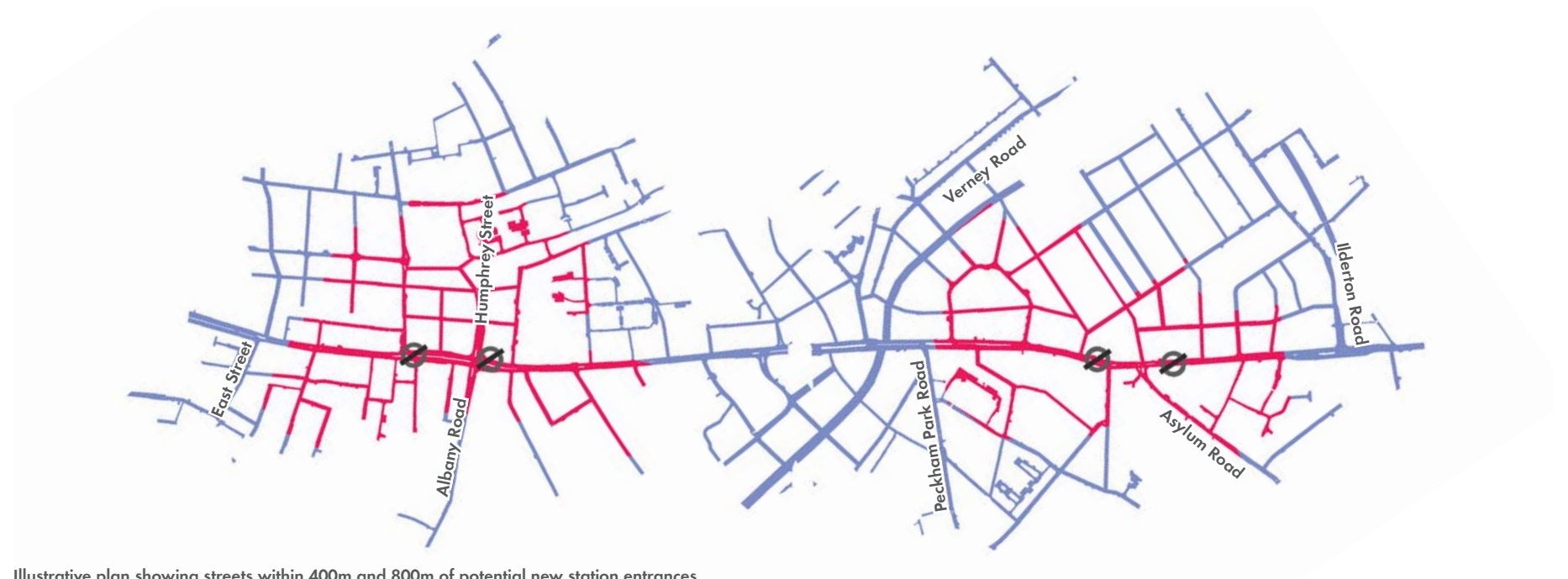
Proximity to central London

### 1.7 A GAMECHANGER IN ACCESSIBILITY

It is proposed that as part of any extension of the Bakerloo Line along the Old Kent Road there would be two new stations on the line between Elephant & Castle and New Cross Gate. The locations of the stations should support the development of town centres on the Old Kent Road.

The locations have been explored as part of the options development (see Chapter 4). The locations chosen will maximise the impact on accessibility to existing and new residents.





Illustrative plan showing streets within 400m and 800m of potential new station entrances

# VISION AND FRAMEWORK

2







## 2.1 VISION

The emerging vision for the Old Kent Road Opportunity Area has been informed by its long history, the current context and the scale of opportunity now available.

A series of consultation events with the local community forum has been particularly useful in informing the vision, as has analysis of the historic evolution of the area, its character and current issues.

Local residents and businesses have helped inform the vision, and there is a palpable sense that the area is on the verge of a major transformation.

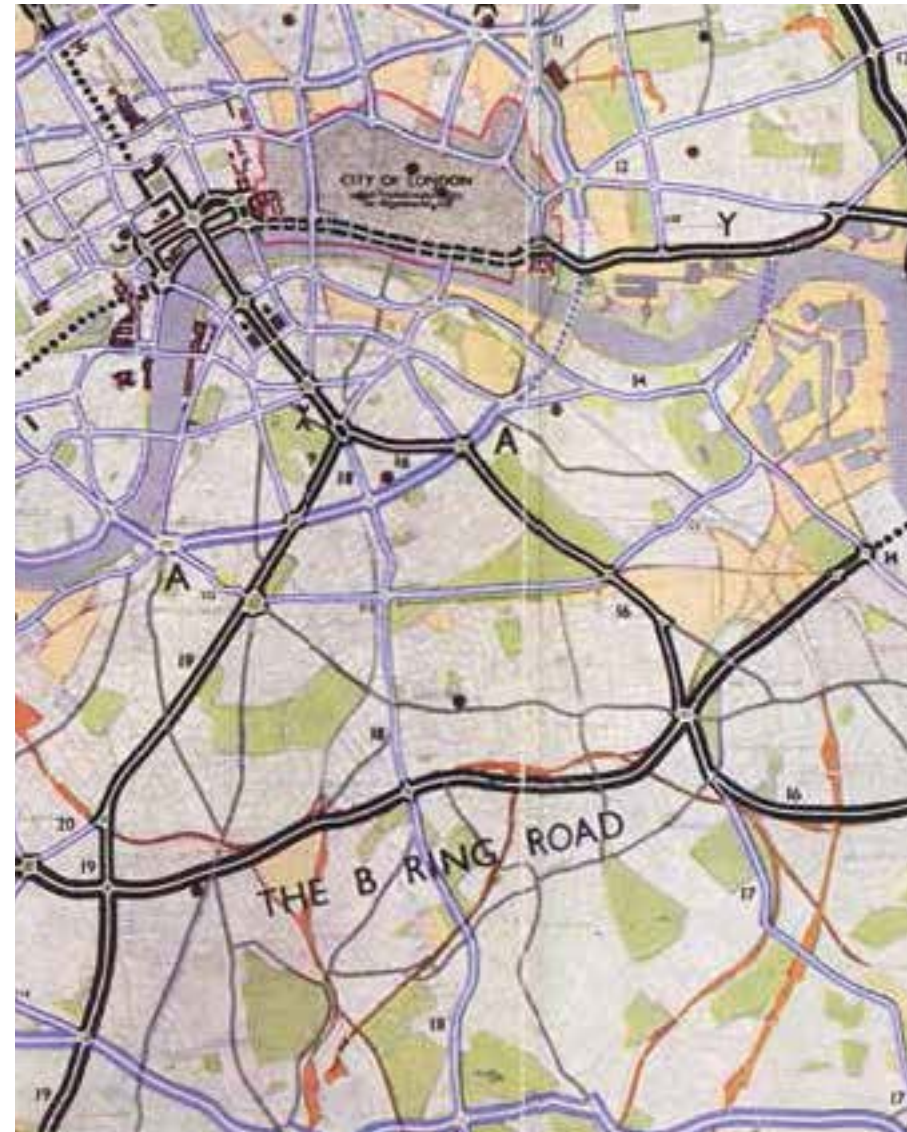
### A brave and bold approach

After the Second World War, the Old Kent Road area was the part of a radical approach to rebuilding London. The 1943 Abercrombie County of London Plan proposed bold changes in the area, including carving out Burgess Park, the introduction of major new roads and junctions and a major programme of residential building on sites ravaged by bombs.

Significant parts of the vision were achieved over the proceeding decades, most notably Burgess Park. However, other aspects were not implemented, and in many ways the problems they were seeking to resolve still exist today. Arguably we need a comparably brave and bold vision to address past and present challenges.



County of London Plan – Patrick Abercrombie, 1943



Road and open spaces plan, from County of London Plan – Patrick Abercrombie, 1943

### Emerging vision

The emerging vision for the Old Kent Road should provide a comprehensive place-making approach for this significant part of London, an approach that spearheads innovative urban design solutions to meet the growing demand for homes and jobs. Key elements of the vision should include:

- A place that sees the Old Kent Road reinvigorated as a thriving 21st Century high street – with an intensified range of activities and uses to support existing and new communities.
- The Old Kent Road's strategic position as a place in London and a place that is important to serving inner London and the wider London economy.
- A place that is better connected – repairing existing linkages and making new ones for pedestrians, cyclists and road users. The plan will promote the opportunity presented by the BLE and will allow for interchange with existing and new bus routes and rail services.
- Reveals and restores existing characteristics and grows what is working well – including heritage assets, the social, growing creative and making industries and open spaces.
- A place that accommodates an ambitious number of jobs and homes – a mixed use approach that encompasses cultural uses, community infrastructure and clusters of employment activities – with highly sophisticated typologies developed for a range of jobs and homes.
- A place which reflects London's diversity - providing a diverse range of workplaces and homes, including affordable housing and council housing.
- All of which should be supported by an innovative and pioneering approach to planning and exemplary architecture and urban design solutions.

## 2.2 HEADLINE PRINCIPLES

### Introduction

Delivering the vision for the Old Kent Road area will require concerted effort and commitment on the part of all stakeholders - landowners, politicians, officers, businesses and residents. In order to ensure the aspiration captured in the emerging vision translates into strong neighbourhoods and places on the ground there are some important principles which need to be abided by. This section sets out the headline place-making principles which should guide the physical change across the area.





### Responsive to context

All change should be responsive to its context - strategic as well as local. The area's proximity to central London and the Central Activities Zone means the change here must support both Central and Inner London. A step change in the accessibility of the area brings with it a responsibility to respond in the scale and character of interventions.

At the same time, the local and historic context should steer how the step change is manifested. This is not any old road, this is the Old Kent Road. As one of the oldest roads in London it must be respected. It is special and has an important role to play now and in the future.

Being responsive also means responding to need. There is a significant local and strategic need for housing and jobs. The area must play its part in delivering a balance of uses to help meet this need.

### Robust in structure

Major change brings with it the opportunity to address the negative effects of previous development. For the Old Kent Road area a major issue is the lack of connections through the area caused by large scale development over the last 50 years. A key principle must therefore be to establish a strong web of routes and connections throughout the area. Connections to and across the Old Kent Road will be particularly important.

The layout of new development blocks should support a healthy street structure. The block structure should learn from the context. The dimension of new blocks should be informed by existing successful blocks, such as the mansion blocks of the Waleran, Kingsley and Dover Flats or the terraced street blocks around Thorburn Square.

The new pattern of land uses should revive the road and its role. Retail activity should be focused on the road itself, supporting the Old Kent Road as a high street with town centres.

### Sustainable in the long term

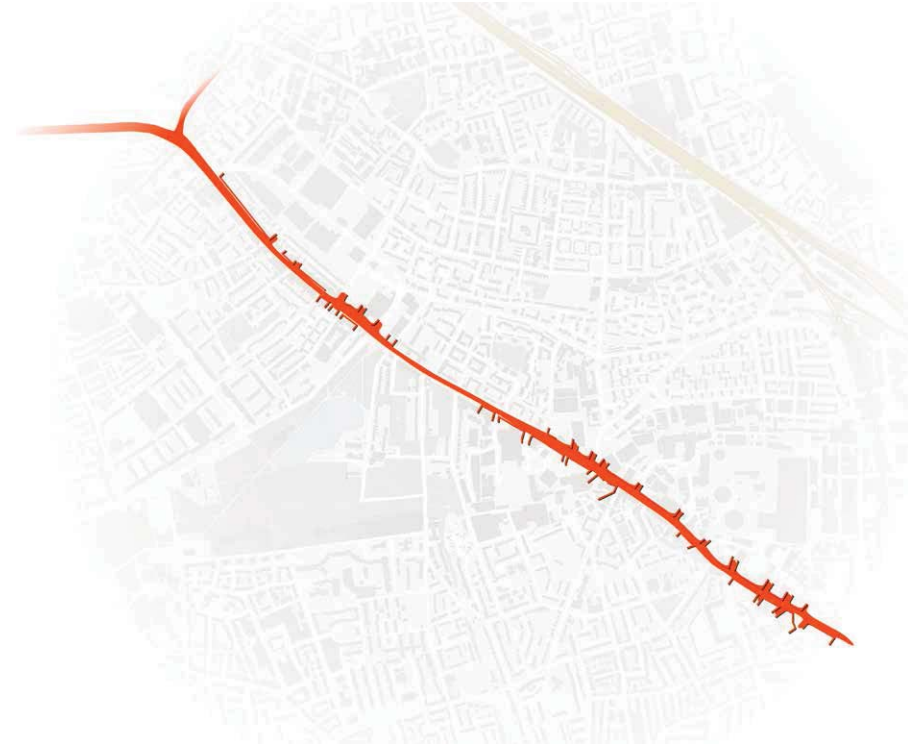
A key principle for change in the area is to build in flexibility. The framework structure should be flexible to allow for changes in fortune and opportunity. Preferred locations for key uses have been identified, but this does not mean they cannot move. The important thing is that they happen and are not lost from the vision.

In addition, any intervention should build in greater adaptability to the area. Buildings should be capable of adapting to new uses and demands. Open spaces and streets should have a keen eye on the future and support adaptation to climate change.

The vision presents a once in a lifetime opportunity to mend an area ravaged by external pressures for infrastructure and large format economic activities. In the future, the Old Kent Road will be much stronger in the face of economic and environmental challenges, able to adapt and change easily to support its local communities.

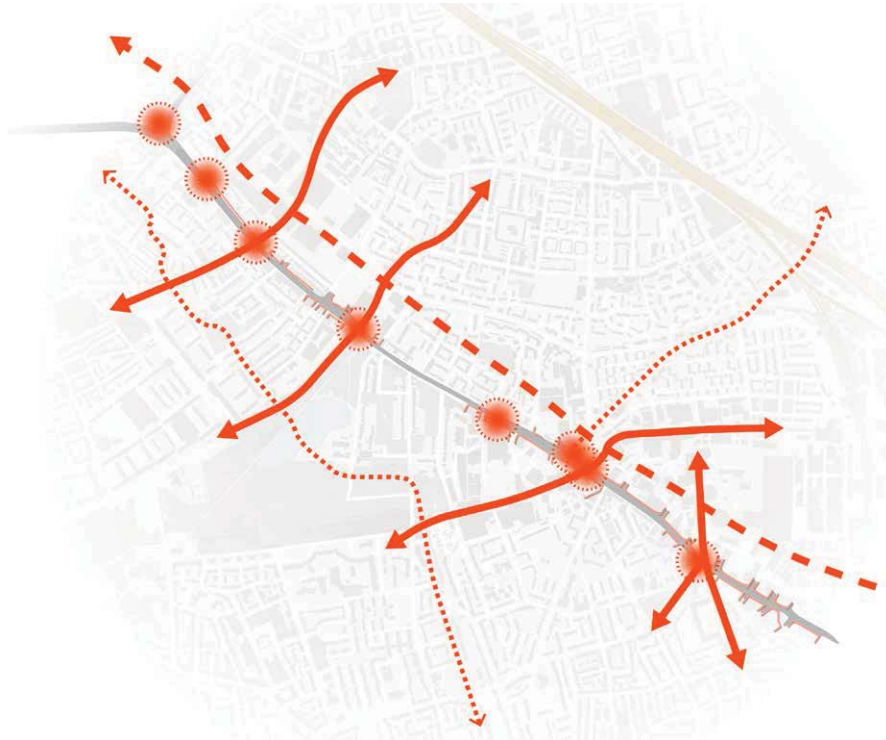
## Concept

The headline principles are supported by a 7 step concept for the area. Each aspect outlines a key intervention or physical shift which will underpin how the area operates and the way it is perceived in the future.



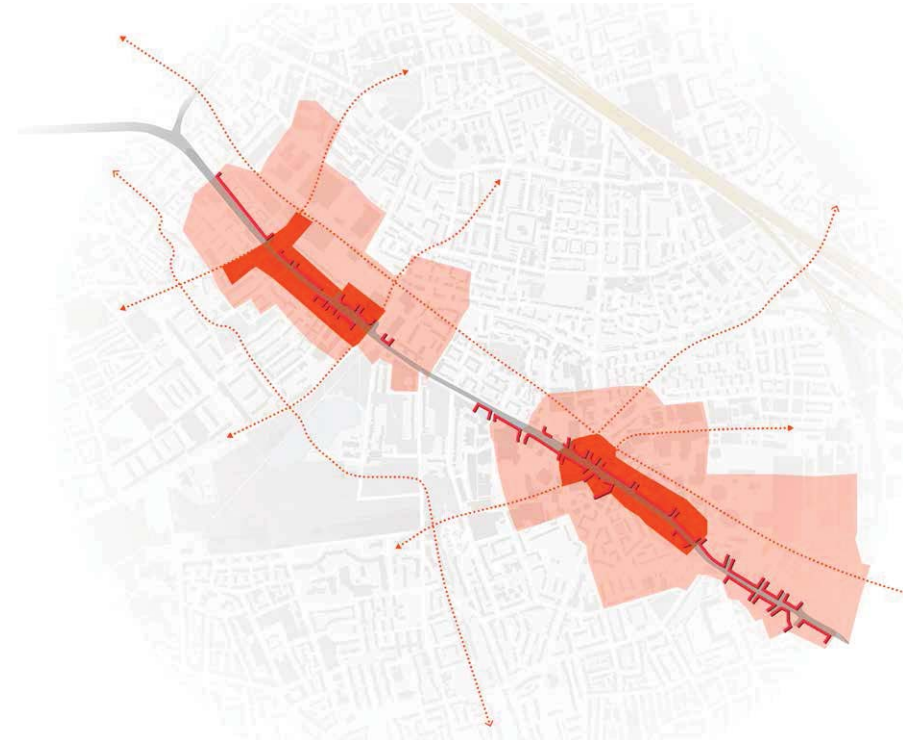
## 1 THE JOIN

The Old Kent Road should become the join rather than the barrier it currently represents. It should be the focus of activity and interchange. There should be a strong rhythm to the route. As one moves along it, one should have a clear impression of passing through a series of defined places - old and new.



## 2 THE STITCHES

At key points along the route, new routes and interventions will stitch the two sides together and create clear moments. New routes will be forged to physically link areas north and south of the road and supporting east-west routes will be reinforced to ease the operation of the Old Kent Road as a high street.



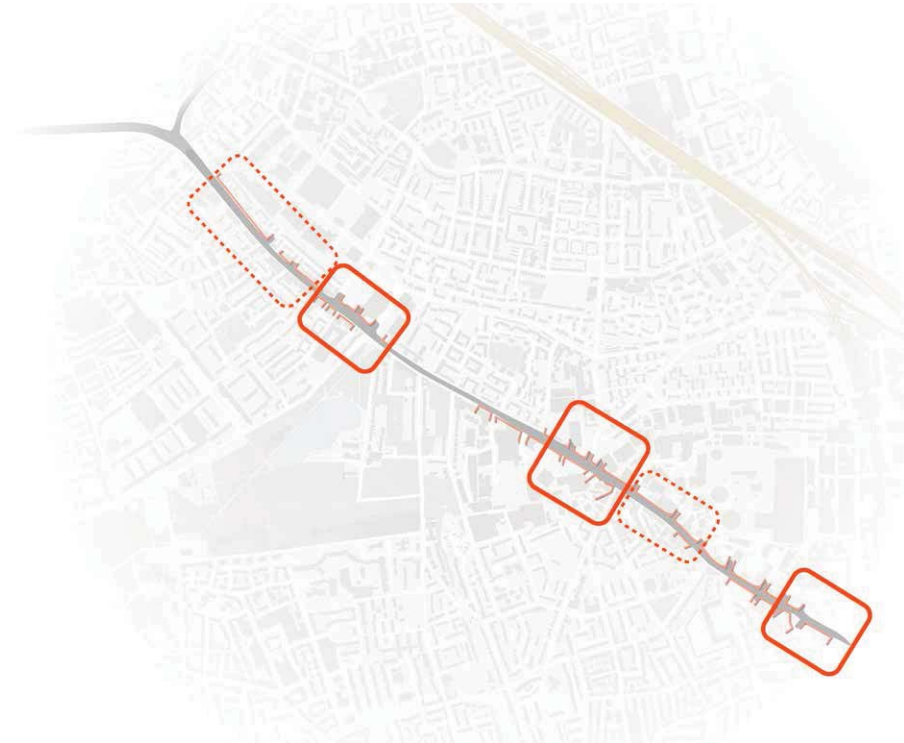
## 3 THE HIGH STREET

Retail activity will be heavily focused on the road, transforming the offer to a high street character. Two core areas of retail will grow from the surviving high street sections, supported by a denser network of links serving them.



## 4 MIXED-USE NEIGHBOURHOODS

There will be a major shift away from mono-use blocks. New development and investment will support the evolution of some of the finer grain employment areas to support the diverse range of industries already emerging. Development will be required to deliver an appropriate mix of uses to support an active street environment and the need for homes and jobs.



## 5 HUMAN SCALE

Interventions in the area will range from repair to reinvention. The scale of development will see a significant uplift, particularly in terms of building height. There will be a number of zones of transformation, and these will be punctuated by taller buildings. Across the area, a datum height of 6 or 7 storeys is advised to maintain streets of a human scale. Taller elements should be introduced sensitively and ideally set back within blocks.



## 6 THE PARK AND SPACES




Burgess Park represents an important but underused asset. A key part of the concept is about supporting links to Burgess Park and increasing its presence and influence on the area's character. A wider network of green infrastructure including a range of sizes and types of spaces will be introduced. Three key new spaces will be Mandela Green in the north and Gasworks Park and the former Surrey Canal route in the east.



## 7 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

An uplift in population of the proportion envisaged for the area requires a correspondingly substantial uplift in community infrastructure. The existing provision will be supported, and new provision embedded alongside other infrastructure within new and existing neighbourhoods. The doubling of population will require one or two new secondary schools and seven new primary schools, as well as health centres, community facilities and cultural institutions.



-  Existing Connection
-  Indicative proposed routes and connections
-  Indicative public realm network

Public realm network

## 2.3 PUBLIC REALM NETWORK

### Objectives

The change across the area will be first and foremost about a fundamental shift in the role and function of the public realm. Streets will be attractive and inviting places to spend time, existing and new parks will form the hearts of neighbourhoods and new green links will be forged through the area opening up a web of connections across the Old Kent Road. Some headline objectives underpin this intention:

- To transform the Old Kent Road into a thriving high street which draws people to the road rather than funnelling them along it.
- To enhance connections to existing parks and introduce new spaces into a complete green network across the area.
- To create major new public realm assets as part of the redefinition of key areas.

### Public realm principles

Establish common basic elements of attractive streets along the Old Kent Road

- Widen pavements where these have been constrained, so as to accommodate comfortable pedestrian movement and the introduction of street trees in locations where these are lacking.
- Introduce more frequent and less staggered pedestrian crossings across the main street and side roads.

Support Burgess Park as a key asset for the local area and London

- Improve the park's presence on the Old Kent Road.
- Enhance existing, and create new, links to the park.

Introduce new types of spaces to form the focal points of new neighbourhoods

- Mandela Green - a major new open space at the heart of a transformed Mandela Way area.
- Gas Works Park - a new neighbourhood park that enables the retention of one of the gas holders as an important local landmark and feature of the new space.

Open up historic connections as attractive routes for pedestrians (alongside other modes)

- Re-introduce the Surrey Canal as a green route through the southern part of the area.



Routes and connections framework



## 2.4 ROUTES AND CONNECTIONS

### Objectives

Opening up the Old Kent Road area will require the introduction of many new streets and connections. Large parts of the area currently limit access and require local people to make significant diversions. Making it much easier to get from local neighbourhoods to the Old Kent Road will be a priority.

At present, local residents and businesses have limited access to public transport, significantly less than comparable areas. Extending the Bakerloo Line through the area would transform the lives of existing residents, business owners and employees. It would also fundamentally change the future of the area and its role in London. Some headline objectives underpin what is required:

- To open up the area with new street connections - every street must connect.
- To make all streets comfortable for all modes - with varying degrees of prioritisation for pedestrians, cyclists and buses.
- To significantly improve the access to public transport - with a new tube line through the area, new underground and overland stations and improvements to bus services.

### Connection principles

Break down the perception and character of the Old Kent Road as a barrier:

- Re-apportion space on the route to better cater for the future balance of users.

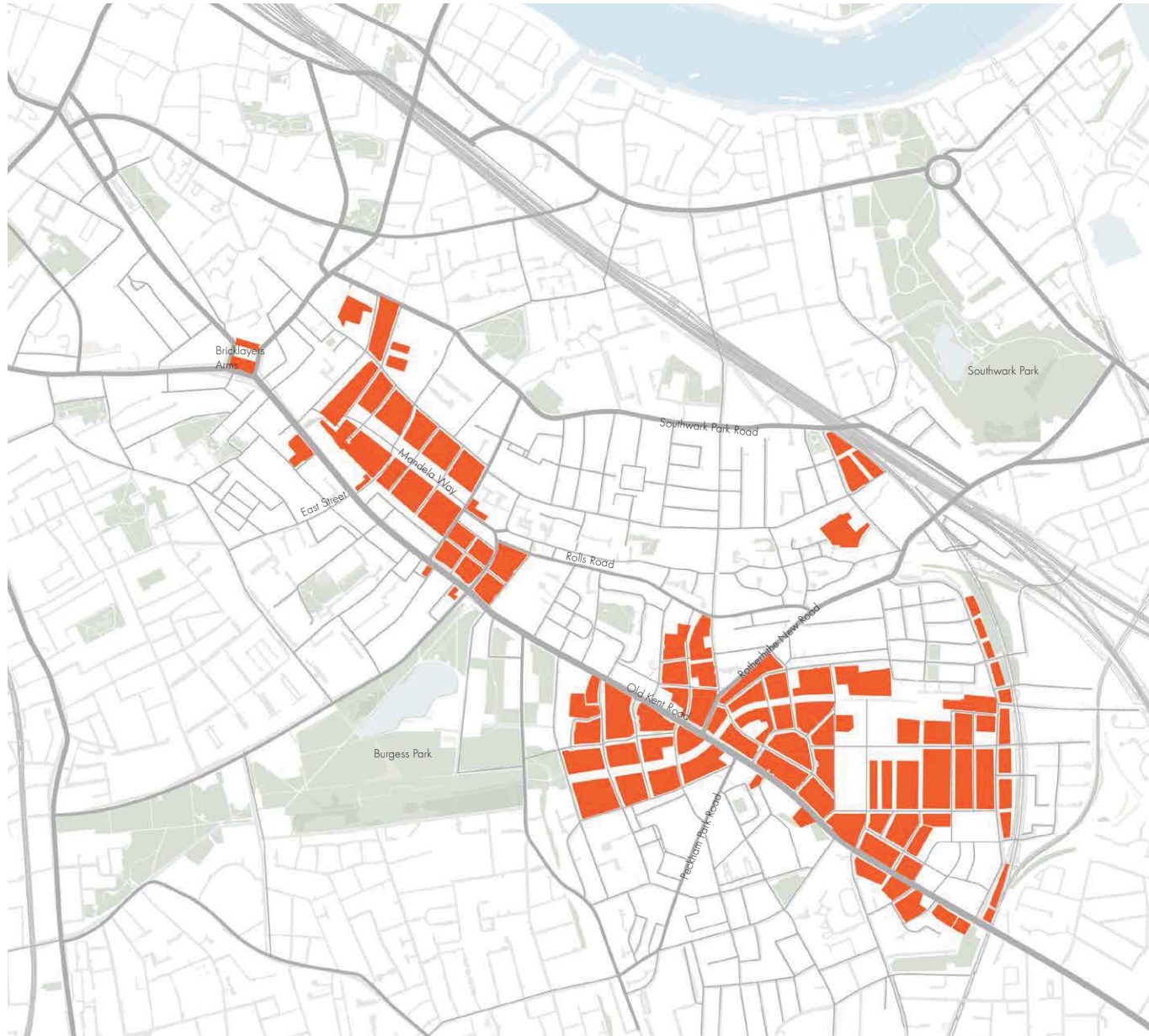
- Introduce new routes which cross the Old Kent Road:
  - East Street - Hendre Street, creating a new junction and access into the northern town centre.
  - Surrey Canal route crossing between Rotherhithe New Road and Peckham Park Road junctions, and serving the southern town centre.
- Establish a denser network of streets around key nodes:
  - two core High Street sections; and
  - within these the two potential locations for new tube stations.

Re-connect streets within and between neighbourhoods

- Create better links between the Old Kent Road and areas to the north, such as Southwark Park Road and The Blue.
- Create new routes at the heart of new developments which knit them into the existing structure, such as Acorn Wharf to the south of the Old Kent Road.
- Support the opening up of routes which provide longer connections across the area, such as the former Surrey Canal route and the route parallel to the Old Kent Road which includes Rolls Road.

Give greater emphasis to pedestrians and cyclists in the layout and design of streets

- Resolve the pedestrian and cycle environment for people commuting through the area into the City.
- Introduce attractive routes between the area's parks and green spaces.
- Provide high quality facilities at transport interchanges and nodes, such as the new stations on the Bakerloo Line extension.



Development block structure

↑ lower building heights  
 ↓ taller building heights



Illustrative examples of residential city blocks with different densities

## 2.5 DEVELOPMENT AND LAND USE

### Objectives

New development in the area must learn the lessons from the past and ensure it leaves the area more flexible to future change and demand. Some headline objectives underpin what is required:

- To maximise the potential for new development to meet demand.
- To build in flexibility to the block structure to adapt to changing demand and priorities.
- To optimise the capacity of blocks in proximity to potential new transport hubs.

### Development and land use principles

Establish a robust block structure

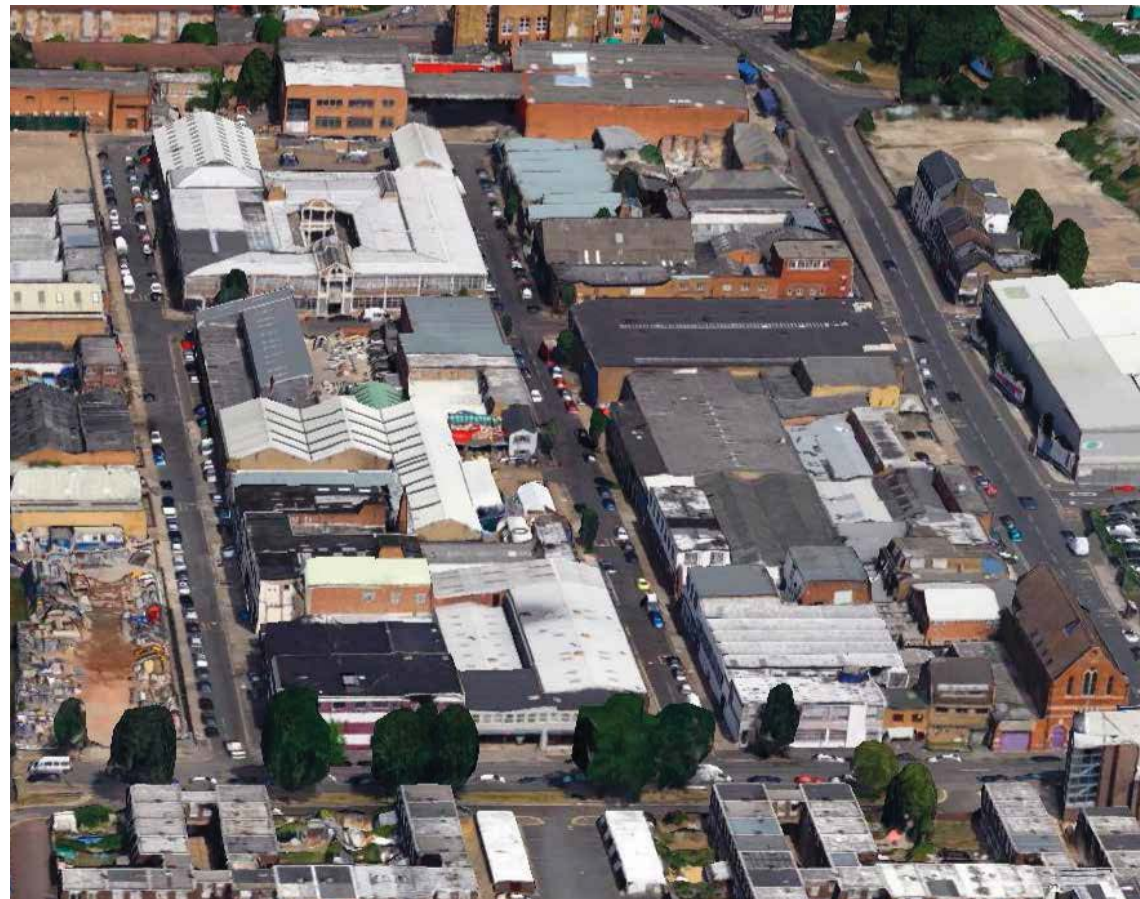
- The assumption should be to create strong street blocks in a perimeter block format i.e. fronts addressing the street and backs contained within the block.
- Create blocks with the right dimensions - the size of street blocks should take their cue from successful blocks found in the local area and should be capable of comfortably accommodating a mix of uses and range of densities.

Introduce mixed use blocks

- New blocks should be capable of accommodating different uses, as needs change over time.
- The ground floor represents an important opportunity for activities to support the street environment.
- Every home should have a street address.
- Residential entrances on to the street should be frequent.

A range of employment types should be provided for that support a healthy high street and employment uses should be encouraged

- Replacing the existing and creating new jobs necessitates a range of types of employment space - there should be a mix of typologies to support office-based activities, work space and workshops, as well as industrial activities.
- Employment uses should be clustered where possible to support their viability and the long term success of businesses. Existing successful locations should be supported in situ as far as possible.
- Employment space should be mixed vertically and horizontally in blocks, allowing for stand-alone employment buildings as well as work space within mixed use buildings.
- Employment uses appropriate in the area should include leisure and hotel development, as well as arts and culture. There is potential to re-use existing built assets such as the Livesey Building and draw on the growing number of arts organisations and businesses to improve the cultural offer of the area.



Hatcham Road industrial area - home to a growing range of businesses



Land use strategy

- Proposed green areas
- ▬ High street uses
- Employment mix led by industry and warehousing
- ▨ Employment mix including light industrial space, workshops, studios etc.
- Employment mix led by offices