

Poplar Connect

Paco Pui Chong Chan, Cecilia Hiu Ying Lam, Man Pok Leung and Ka Hei Kristin Leung redesign the public realm to improve connectivity



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Large-scale development has taken place in the Borough of Tower Hamlets in the past three decades, with Canary Wharf being transformed into one of London's financial centres. Just north of Canary Wharf, Poplar has been seemingly disconnected from the massive redevelopment of its neighbouring ward, detached both physically and socially from the fast-paced and rapid development. Poplar has various ongoing development projects, and it is vital that connectivity and public spaces are integrated to harness the opportunities brought with them.

PROBLEMS

The wide high-speed A road and the DLR tracks separate Poplar from Canary Wharf, which makes Poplar inaccessible and difficult for pedestrians to find their way to Poplar. The streets are quiet with low levels of activity due to several underutilised and scattered green spaces and unwelcoming street layouts.

OPPORTUNITIES

Poplar has a rich history with many listed buildings and heritage that create local and tourist attractions. Large-scale commercial and residential regeneration projects include the redevelopment of Crisp Street Market.

OUR VISION AND AIMS

- Ensure that Poplar is lively, connected and sustainable for the fulfilment and enjoyment of its communities
- Boost connections between Poplar and its

surroundings

- Enhance the living environment and public spaces for local residents to make the area safe and friendly
- Promote the history of Poplar and improve awareness of the background of the area.

THE PODIUM

The Podium is designed to integrate the two areas with a public space over the highway, as it was identified to be the main cause of Poplar's isolation from Canary Wharf. It builds a connection between the residents and the white-collar workers in Canary Wharf by enhancing accessibility from the future Crossrail station and Poplar DLR station to Poplar. It will provide a 'doorstep recreation space' for white-collar workers

working in the skyscrapers of the financial centre. The interactive water fountain will create a soundscape to reduce noise from the traffic on the A road and the DLR.

To attract activity and interaction between the employed community of Canary Wharf and the residents of Poplar, a market has been proposed on the platform of The Podium to provide employment for people of Poplar as well as affordable and varied meals for people who work in Canary Wharf, and to contribute to the internationalism of the area.

RECLAIMING THE STREETS

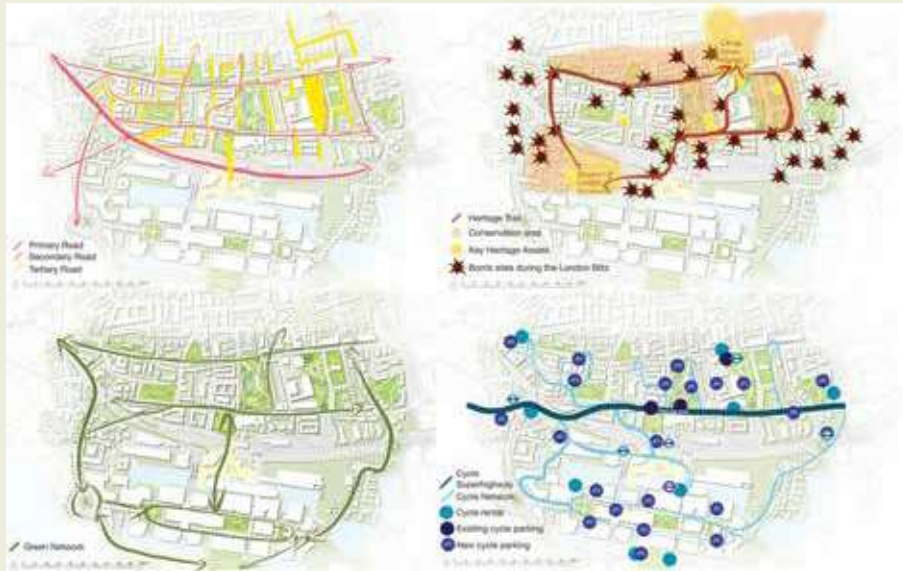
The streets and blocks are restructured to prioritise pedestrian movements and cycling. Primary roads have been designed with wider pavements to provide a safe and pleasant walking environment. Planters are added to secondary roads to make the area more aesthetically pleasing. Tertiary roads would be for pedestrians and cyclists only to discourage car use and enhance the place status of local streets. Speed cushions will be added to maintain the speed of vehicles in the area at 20mph. A reduced traffic flow would make it safer for pedestrians and children, and enhance the walking experience in Poplar. It therefore creates a more pleasant public realm with a safer walking environment for all.

The current cycle highway in Poplar is along Poplar High Street, sharing the same lane as all-purpose traffic, which poses a high risk of collision. The new cycle highway will be segregated, providing a safer cycling environment and improving the cycling experience. The wider network of cycle routes on tertiary streets in Poplar will improve cycling accessibility in Poplar. More cycle

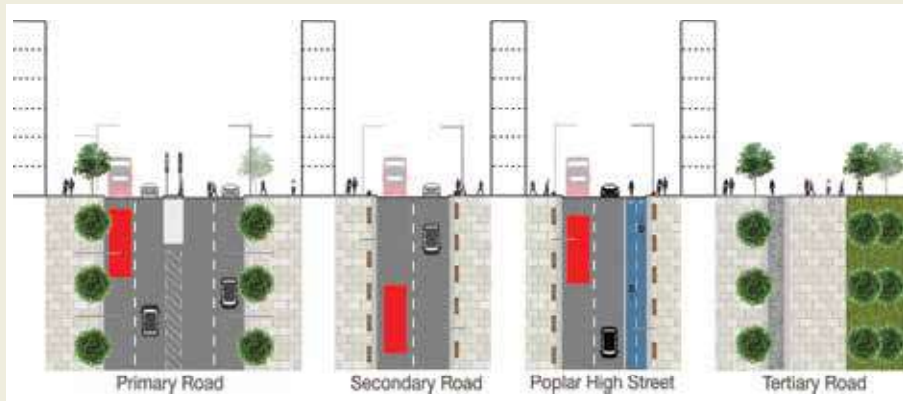


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- 1 Masterplan
- 2 Visualisation of The Podium
- 3 Connectivity Plan
- 4 Road sections
- 5 Heritage Imprints at Lansbury Heritage Hotel



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parking will be added throughout Poplar, allowing residents to park their cycles near their homes and popular destinations such as the Podium, the Chrisp Market and the DLR stations to park and ride.

GREEN NETWORK

The green network will connect the scattered green spaces in Poplar and Canary Wharf by planting trees along the route, making the area greener and more aesthetically pleasing and attracting people to visit and explore Poplar from Canary Wharf. The greener walking environment will also encourage people to travel on foot, which is more environmentally friendly. A variety of recreational facilities have been proposed on the green network to provide an area for residents to relax and improve the aesthetics of the area.

A green landscape will be constructed over the All Saints DLR station and DLR

tracks to utilise the space and create a better environment. It will also provide space for families to spend time together for picnics and sports activities.

HERITAGE TRAIL

A heritage trail has been designed to increase awareness of the history and heritage of the area. Starting from the Museum of London Docklands, bomb imprints will be added to locations where bombs were dropped during the Blitz to make people aware of the history around them. Similarly, there will be listed building signs to mark the many heritage assets, such as the Grade II listed Chrisp Street Market Clock Tower, Richard Green’s 1866 statue and the Lansbury Heritage Hotel. Heritage information boards will be integrated into Legible London signs to provide visitors with historical information on various stops of the heritage trail.



Bomb imprint



Listed Building imprint

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The heritage trail will connect the past to the present by showing the history along the route, creating a sense of place and promoting local pride. This will encourage visitors to discover the history of the local areas in a more fascinating and intriguing way.

LESSONS LEARNED

We learned that it is important to use various analysis techniques to identify problems and development opportunities at the initial stages of the design process. It allowed us to come up with creative and innovative solutions, alleviating the problems through improving the public realm and other design strategies. It is also crucial to look at the wider context of the site during the design process to respect the local characteristics of the area. This project could be further developed through consultation with the local community to create a design that better serves the public interest. ●