



**31 January 1997**

**LDDC AND TOWER HAMLETS COUNCIL SIGN AGREEMENT  
ON WAPPING & LIMEHOUSE**

**The London Docklands Development Corporation's (LDDC) task in Wapping and Limehouse is completed today (31 January 1997) with the Corporation handing on its regeneration responsibilities to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH).**

**The Council takes over the LDDC public realm in Wapping and Limehouse in return for LDDC assets. The arrangements are set out in a Statement of Agreed Intentions, which includes the following:**

- The freehold of the Wapping Dock Estate will transfer to the Borough following the leasing of the watersports centre at Shadwell Basin to the Shadwell Basin Project. The LDDC will set up a fund of £458,000 to maintain the centre and the basin waters.**
- The Council takes over the Corporation's interest in the Helling Street playground, an open space at Raines Mansions and the bridge at Glamis Road.**
- The LDDC will transfer to the Borough a site at Blackwall Goods Yard, valued at £900,000 for a central transport depot. The LDDC will also contribute £789,000 towards the building costs.**
- The LDDC is contributing £350,000 to social housing refurbishment schemes.**
- The Corporation will fund various community projects in Wapping, yet to be agreed, to the value of £441,000.**
- The LDDC will fund a project to improve the Wapping Canals making them more ecologically sound and cheaper to maintain.**

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- The pedestrian bridges at Limehouse Cut and Limekiln Dock have been offered to British Waterways. If they have not been accepted by 30 June, 1997 they will go to the Council.
- LBTH resumes ownership of Ropemakers Fields, the open space at Three Colt Street and the riverside walkways at Paper Mill Court and Blyth's Wharf.
- LBTH will maintain the cycle/footbridge to be built by the LDDC at St James's Gardens.

**LDDC Chief Executive, Eric Sorensen, comments: "The LDDC's task was to bring Wapping and Limehouse back into the mainstream of metropolitan life. We believe that close attention to quality, maintained through all aspects of the regeneration programme, has helped create prosperity in an attractive area that can be enjoyed by residents and people who work there."**

**Cllr Michael Keith, the Council's Chair of Regeneration, said: "Much has been done in Wapping and Limehouse in terms of physical infrastructure and economic development and we welcome the LDDC's achievements in these areas. But much also remains to be done in carrying forward the regeneration process.**

**"In particular we have to ensure that the maximum number of local people gain employment in the new firms in the area. We must also work towards achieving sustainable community development in terms of housing conditions for local people and continue to improve the social infrastructure and community benefits in the area. The environmental benefits of the canal and docklands system must also be preserved and enhanced into the future.**

**"We look forward to taking forward the process of regeneration from here and working with our local partners and the local community."**

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### The Achievements in Wapping & Limehouse

Wapping and Limehouse covers over 139 hectares of land and water, approximately 6% of the Urban Development Area. Since 1981 the population of Wapping and Limehouse has doubled from 5,226 to 10,490. More than 3,600 new homes have been built of which 3,000 were for owner occupation. In addition, 380 housing association properties and 236 Council homes have been built.

Wapping and Limehouse provides employment for nearly 10,000 people compared to 3,400 in 1981. Office space totalling 155,000 sq metres has been built, along with 15,300 sq metres of hi-tech and workshop space and 133,600 sq metres of retail, printworks and other uses.

### Wapping

By 1981, when the LDDC was set up, the Port of London Authority had begun to fill in the docks in Wapping. A large number of 19th and early 20th century warehouses had also been demolished and an air of dereliction hung over the area. However, Tower Hamlets Borough Council had made a significant start in regenerating the area with new housing around the former Eastern Dock, the reclamation of Western Dock, a new sports centre, open spaces and a health centre. Work on revitalising St Katharine Docks was well advanced, the Tower Thistle Hotel had opened in 1973, and shopping and office developments were starting to emerge along with the development of the News International printworks.

The LDDC's strategy for Wapping was to preserve and enhance its unique character. A key element was to encourage private housing with the conversion of the area's many fine warehouses and new build schemes on derelict sites. In 1981 over 90% of housing in London Docklands was Council owned. More private housing was seen as crucial to creating a balanced community. As much as 40% of all new housing was offered at affordable levels to local people, as well as interest free loans of up to £10,000.

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The proportion of owner occupation has risen from 2% in 1981 to approaching 50% in 1996.

A strong landscape infrastructure was designed around the system of canals linking Shadwell Basin with Hermitage Basin, the two parts of the London Docks which had not been filled in. The Wapping Wood and Western Docks Canal scheme created a walkway from St Katharine Docks through Wapping to the Shadwell Basin at a total cost of £1.77 million. The network provided not only a strong visual link through the heart of Wapping but a pedestrian route which connects parks, schools and shopping facilities that have been developed to serve the residential population.

Commercial development has focused on the western area next to the City and building on the early success of St Katharine Dock in attracting new companies, Swedish developers Skanska built the 77,000 sq metre Thomas More Square including a Safeway supermarket. Smaller commercial schemes were developed, such as Sovereign Court on The Highway, and the Grade I listed warehouses at Tobacco Dock were restored.

The LDDC has supported the community and voluntary sector in Wapping and funded training and education initiatives including Hermitage Primary School (£356,000), Bluegate Fields School (£278,00), St Peter's School (£292,000), St Patrick's School (£62,000) and a new training unit at Shadwell Adult Education Centre (£637,000). The LDDC wholly funded a major £445,000 refurbishment of Wapping Health Centre.

### Limehouse

Limehouse Basin was among the first docks to close in the late 1960's and by 1981 Limehouse shared the Docklands-wide physical, social and economic decline.

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Major local problems included the impact of heavy road traffic along Narrow Street, lack of public transport and large areas of vacant and derelict land in Limehouse Basin and Free Trade Wharf in particular. Two large estates dominated the eastern part of the area, the inter-war St Vincent's and the post-war Barley Mow; St Vincent's was in a particularly run-down condition.

The key to realising the potential of Limehouse lay in removing through traffic from the area. The 1.8 km Limehouse Link Tunnel which opened in 1993, was designed and built by the LDDC in just over seven years. This, combined with a number of traffic management measures in Narrow Street, has removed the traffic problem from Limehouse.

Blocks of social housing in the area - mostly on the St Vincent's Estate - had to be demolished to build the Limehouse Link. As part of an agreement with the Council the LDDC provided new replacement housing association properties for tenants, refurbished existing Council properties and provided £35 million for social, economic and community initiatives to benefit the local area.

The LDDC has contributed over £10.5 million to the refurbishment of 635 Council homes in the area, including comprehensive improvements to the Barley Mow Estate and John Scurr House. Limehouse has benefited from the development of 764 new homes, notably 240 at Free Trade Wharf and over 100 at Limehouse Basin.

The Corporation has spent over £1 million on conservation projects in Limehouse. Much of this has focused on St Anne's Church, which is now in the best condition of all of Hawksmoor's churches. A similar amount has been spent on environmental improvements, including the creation of new open spaces and a pedestrian network throughout the area.

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A major park has been created at Ropemaker's Fields - complete with bandstand - using land above the Limehouse Link Tunnel, at a cost of £1.3 million. A further £500,000 of Corporation funding went to build a pedestrian bridge across Limekiln Dock on the riverside Thames Path.

The LDDC have also made grants to a range of community projects including £136,000 for play areas at St Vincent's and Barley Mow Estate. Limehouse Youth Club has been replaced at a cost of £1.2 million, an annexe built at Cyril Jackson Primary (£185,000) and Limehouse Arches Day Nursery extended (£185,000). In line with the LDDC's plan to have a new or refurbished health centre for all Docklands residents by 1998, the Corporation contributed £280,000 to the cost of extending Gill Street Health Centre.

#### The Dedesignation Process

The order which has been laid before Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Environment to exclude Limehouse and Wapping from the LDDC's boundaries (Section 179 of the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993) comes into effect today (31 January 1997). The LDDC's development control powers in Wapping and Limehouse will transfer to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

The LDDC has eight weeks to complete determination of planning applications it received on or before 30 January 1997. Any outstanding applications at that date will transfer to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. From today all new planning applications should be submitted to Tower Hamlets Council.

#### Notes to Editors

1. To date the LDDC has dedesignated the following areas: Bermondsey Riverside (31 October 1994), Beckton (31 December 1995) and Surrey Docks (20 December 1996)
2. The LDDC will complete its remit on the Isle of Dogs later this year and in the Royal Docks on 31 March 1998, at which date it will cease operations.