



ISSUE 2 2007

THE OFFICIAL
REGENERATION
MAGAZINE OF THE
LONDON BOROUGH
OF CROYDON

CITY 3



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Croydon – new development of London?

capital

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Quality in Croydon by Berkeley Homes

Wellesley Square, Wellesley Road, Croydon, Surrey, CR0

"Berkeley Homes are delivering an exemplar scheme that will breathe new life into the Wellesley Road Gateway Site, adding to Croydon's economic and social renaissance and giving it a new sense of identity."

The Wellesley Road Gateway Site has lain fallow for over 10 years and we are committed to bringing it back to life. We are proposing a high quality mixed use development, Wellesley Square, incorporating an iconic 44 storey tower and new public town square. The scheme will comprise commercial uses on ground and part first floor levels with 738 residential units on the upper floors.

As a major contributor to the renaissance of Britain's towns and cities, we are committed to improving the quality of life in the communities in which we develop. In keeping with this commitment, Wellesley Square has been designed to be of a quality never before seen in Croydon. The overall design and nature of the proposed materials are intended to respond to the prominence of the site and to create a sense of identity. As such, Wellesley Square will act as a catalyst to stimulate the further regeneration of central Croydon, providing huge benefits to the local community.

In keeping with our care for the environment, sustainability is a key feature of the design, with many green initiatives having been built in at the earliest possible design stage. A significant proportion of the site's energy requirements will be met by on site renewable energy sources and we have introduced extensive green roofs to increase the ecological value of the development and to reduce heat loss and rainwater run-off.

This exciting scheme will add drama and excitement to the Croydon skyline and positively respond to Croydon's aspiration as a key London destination.



The New Public Realm

At the heart of Wellesley Square is a new landscaped public square that will be flanked by cafes, bars and shops. This high quality open space will offer a safe and attractive environment for people to engage, rest and play. The new square has been designed so it is accessible to all and will provide a range of functions and hence increase vitality in this part of Croydon.

Vehicular access into the development has been redirected to Bedford Park which will ensure minimum interference with the intended pedestrian activities along Wellesley Road.



Computer generated image

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What's been happening in the world of regeneration in London's third city

Update

Croydon in pole position

Croydon's search for a joint-venture developer for its ground-breaking initiative, the urban regeneration vehicle (URV) (see the first issue of City3), has taken a step closer. A shortlist of eight developers has been drawn up, from 19 expressions of interest, following an advertisement in the Journal of the European Union.

The URV takes the form of a long-term partnership with a chosen developer to kick-start the regeneration of the borough, bring improved civic amenities, and generate better value for residents and taxpayers, while maximising the value of publicly owned assets. The council will share the profits 50:50 with the development partner, and have control over when and how regeneration happens. Croydon will be the first council to use the system, a formula commonly used by regional development agencies. It is hoped that this approach to maximising the use of public

assets, something encouraged by central government, could establish a formula for other councils.

It will also help to solve the council's accommodation needs, as one of the first projects will be to develop four council-owned sites - including the council's 40-year-old, 20-storey headquarters, Taberner House, and its 1960s Fell Road offices. Next in the first five-year phase will be the Fairfield/College Green site, and the Tamworth annex site in West Croydon. All the buildings have a limited life in their present form, and are becoming expensive to maintain, but have an estimated long-term gross development value of about £450 million.

After Taberner House has been redeveloped (perhaps as housing), and the council provided with 20,000sq m of office space on a new site, the council's surplus funds can be used to support wider regeneration schemes, particularly in the

district centres. The developer will then be asked to match the value of these assets in cash.

Tim Pollard, cabinet member for regeneration and economic development, says: "With the right set-up, the council's significant land holdings across the borough could be a catalyst to kick-start a new wave of regeneration. We don't have funds to undertake development ourselves, but our research leads us to believe that setting up a public/private regeneration company with an investment partner is the way to realise our ambitions for the borough and to secure a replacement HQ for the council.

"The council has for some time sold sites to the highest bidder only for developers to take all the profit when land is developed. Our proposed solution will ensure we share benefits and make a lasting contribution to Croydon's regeneration."

A preferred bidder will be selected in February 2008.



Top man

Croydon Council has a new chief executive - Jon Rouse, the former chief executive of the Housing Corporation. Only the council's sixth chief executive in 70 years, and one of the youngest top appointments in a major unitary authority, Rouse succeeds David Wechsler who retired after 37 years at the council.

As well as his time at the Housing Corporation, Rouse's impressive CV includes four years as chief executive at the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, secretary to the Urban Task Force, and policy and communications manager at English Partnerships.

He said of his new role: "I am delighted at the prospect of becoming Croydon's next chief executive and look forward to working closely with elected members, officers and residents to make the borough an even better place in which to live and work.

"I hope to use my skills and experience in economic and social regeneration to help the council improve the borough's town and neighbourhood centres, expanding our housing offer and attracting more jobs."

For an in-depth interview with Jon Rouse on his plans for Croydon, see the next issue of City3, out next March.

Gateway fate in balance

A decision about what will happen to the vital Gateway site in central Croydon is one step nearer, with the announcement that a public inquiry will start on 18 September. It will answer long-running questions over the future of the site and resolve the council's compulsory purchase orders of the site, which have already been issued.

Croydon Council is backing the arena development, by Arrowcroft, which it considers will best serve the town's interests, over other plans for the strategically vital 3ha site.

Said Tim Pollard, council cabinet member for regeneration and economic development: "We welcome this early opportunity for a final resolution of all matters relating to the redevelopment of this important town-centre site. We have never wavered in our belief that this one-off opportunity for an arena-led mixed-use scheme is crucial to retaining Croydon's advantage in an increasingly competitive commercial world."

Arrowcroft's £600 million scheme includes a 12,500-seat arena, grade-A offices, homes,



a health and fitness centre, shops, cafes and bars. For a detailed look at the scheme, and what it can offer the community of Croydon, see page 14.

■ Frogmore Real Estate Partners has joined Arrowcroft as funding partner for the Gateway site.

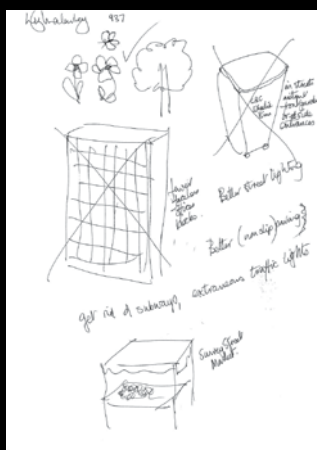


■ One of Croydon's oldest assets has been given a new lease of life. Conservation work has recently been completed on the Tudor Arch in Howley Road, a scheduled ancient monument, which had been on English Heritage's register of buildings at risk.



Where there's a Will...

Will Alsop has completed his series of workshops with local residents (see City3 issue 1), which will contribute to his vision for central Croydon and be incorporated into the area action plan. Aims for the vision include an enhanced public realm and improved green links through the town. For more on Will Alsop's vision, and Croydon's green spaces in general, see page 18.



Popular joint workshops with young and old residents came up with some innovative ideas for the borough's future.



Dragon fired up

The Croydon Enterprise programme has been named the most innovative and successful such scheme in London by the London Development Agency. CE won the regional round of the 2007 Enterprising Britain Awards, and will go on to compete with the other regional winners in the national competition. As Dragons Den's Peter Jones said when visiting for the judging process: "You have some real little entrepreneurs here. I'm quite impressed."

DEVELOPMENT UPDATE



SALES OF FLATS in

Howard Holdings' conversion of the former telephone exchange on Charles Street got off to a flying start this summer, with 11 units (worth £2.25 million) sold in only two hours at the launch. The Exchange, in the heart of 'Old Croydon', will be the centrepiece of a new cultural quarter, with a new piazza and bridge linking the site to the high street.

PLANNING PERMISSION HAS

been granted for Terrace Hill's 15-storey office development at 100 George Street. This 15-storey landmark development will enhance the pedestrian link between East Croydon station and the town centre, and has secured £500,000 towards improvements to the public realm, sustainable transport measures and health facilities.

EXPLORATORY WORKS ARE

continuing in and around the Queen's Garden and Park Place site as part of a thorough investigation of ground conditions, such as water bores, in order to minimise the disruptive impact of construction activities at a later date.

WANDLE PARK IS to be the subject of a £3 million Heritage Lottery Fund bid, to match the £1 million committed to the park by Barratt Homes, developer of New South Quarter. The project will reinstate one of Croydon's oldest, and most central, parks and improve the River Wandle. Another new green space for the borough is Addiscombe Railway Park. For more on these and other green spaces, see page 18.

BERKELEY HOMES HAS

submitted its detailed planning application for its 44-storey Wellestley Square Tower, and hopes to start on site April 2008.

SOUTH NORWOOD POOL will reopen this month, clad in more than 70 vividly coloured panels. Inside, the whole interior has been refitted to feature a new foyer, gymnasiums and better disabled facilities.

FURTHER OUT OF CROYDON

Many new schemes are on site, including Fairview New Homes' conversion of the grade II-listed Queen's Hospital into a mixed-use scheme; the upgrade of Central Parade at New Addington and the redevelopment of the former Philips building on London Road.

For the full story of what's going on in Croydon's district centres, see page 28.



LENNIG HOUSE IN central Croydon is undergoing a major facelift to transform it into the 'Bauhaus', by Durkan Estates. The former 1960s office block is being converted and extended to provide 190 apartments, five two-bedroom mews houses, and two three-bedroom penthouses, above two levels of car parking. The development is centred on a landscaped courtyard which the architect, Bryden Wood Associates, has created as a link between private and public space. Work has just started on site.



■ Thirty-seven eco-friendly, high-spec homes, with solar panels and wind turbines, have been given planning permission. The three-four- and five-bedroom houses in Broad Green will be the first council houses built in Croydon since the 1980s. See page 51.



Above: Councillor Tim Pollard points out Croydon's highlights to Michael Heseltine, head of the Conservative Regeneration Task Force.



On show

Croydon's regeneration plans have been on display in the town, in the form of a roving Expo. Starting off in the Whitgift Centre, and travelling around the district centres, the display of plans for the borough, including a 1:500 scale model, is proving popular with visitors. Comments and points of view noted during the week will form an important part of the continuing engagement with the community.

For more details on both the Expo and Croydon's time in the spotlight at this year's MIPIM, see page 54.

■ The council has embarked on a series of district regeneration strategies to improve quality of life. Initiatives will concentrate on asset development, employment, training and enterprise, cultural services; transport and planning.



Green on the screen

Croydon's green spaces will, it is hoped, have a starring role in December, as one of six finalists in a public competition for millions of pounds of Big Lottery Fund cash. The borough's hopes rest on a project by Sustrans, the UK's leading sustainable transport charity, called Connect2, which was submitted for Big Lottery Funding in May. Connect2 is designed to improve walking and cycling links in areas that really need them, by overcoming obstacles, and creating accessible green spaces for communities. It covers 79 areas of the UK, including Croydon, all of which will benefit if Connect2 wins the TV vote later this year.

It is being considered alongside five other projects: the Eden Project's Dry Topics Biome, Somerset Waterlinks, the National Museum of Science & Industry Collections Centre, the Black Country as Urban Park, and Sherwood Forest: the Living Legend.

The Big Lottery Fund's, 'The People's Millions' competition, to be shown on ITV, will be decided by a public vote.

For more on the Connect2 project, see www.sustransconnect2.org.uk

■ Happy Valley, a 100ha area of downland and ancient woodlands in the south of the borough, has been awarded a Green Flag. The scheme, now in its 11th year, recognises and rewards the best green spaces in the country and encourages others to achieve the same high standards. Much of Happy Valley is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and is much used by local residents. Recent achievements which impressed the judges include the introduction of conservation grazing, dormouse monitoring, coppice management, hedge-laying and charcoal production.

For more on Croydon's green spaces, see page 18.

Open doors

Croydon buildings will be opening their doors during London Open House weekend in September. Over a 48-hour period visitors will be able to explore such architectural gems as Croydon Palace, Heavers Farm Primary School, Shirley Windmill, Taberner House, The Whitgift Almshouses, Croydon town hall and clocktower and Airport House.

In business

Businesses of Croydon voted for the introduction of a BID, which started on 1 April 2007 and will operate for five years. The BID will raise more than £1 million per year, via a small levy on each eligible business unit. This funding will go towards developing Croydon's position as a commercial centre, and deliver projects and services voted for by the businesses, such as making the borough safer, cleaner, and more accessible.

£427,827

Virtue is its own reward

Croydon has been awarded the highest allocation of planning delivery grant in the country, reflecting the performance of the local authority. The £427,827 grant, which will be used to improve planning services, reflects past performance across the planning spectrum, such as turnaround in planning control decisions, plan-making and e-planning.

One of the department's greatest successes has been the introduction of online planning services in December 2005. Since facilities were introduced to submit, view and comment on planning applications online, the service averages around 58 applications a month.

■ A £1 million community centre opened in July in Thornton Heath, providing residents with an activity hall, ICT learning suite, information foyer and café. The Joseph Centre was partly paid for by six years of fundraising by the Beulah Family Church.

Croydon market report

Modernising Croydon's economic infrastructure, much of it a legacy of the office boom of the 1950s and 60s, is the target of the £3.5 billion investment programme over the next 10 years. The town centre, with its excellent links to central London, has been designated an opportunity area in the London Plan.

ECONOMY

The local economy is already very diverse. It has more than 20,000 businesses, and the high rate of new VAT registrations suggests Croydon is a good place for start-ups. It is also an important employment centre, with many of its 140,000 workers commuting in daily.

POPULATION

Croydon is home to 342,700 people in 139,000 households. More than 80% of the population is economically active, significantly higher than the London average, and there is a high level (11.6%) of self-employment. The working population is overwhelmingly in the service sector (91.7%), with proportionately low involvement in manufacturing (4.2%) and construction (4.9%). Work is especially concentrated in finance, IT and public administration and there are also more than the average number (for London) of skilled trades workers. Unemployment is 7%, less than the London average.

The ethnic background of the population is broadly in line with the rest of Greater London. The 2001 census reported 70.2% white, 3.7% mixed race, 11% Asian, 13.3% black and 1.5% Chinese/other. Household car ownership is 70.2%, which is higher than the London average of 62.5% but little different from the national figure of 72.5%. One area where Croydon scores highly is in the quality of its local

schools – only 11% of students leave without any qualifications, compared to the London average of almost 15%.

HOUSING

Croydon has shared in the wider London rise in house prices, although at a lower rate than inner London. According to Halifax, prices went up 15% in the year to June 2007 and reached an average of £256,000, with the strongest growth in terrace properties. Figures from the Land Registry give average prices in the borough for detached houses of £498,300, with £298,200 for semi-detached, £229,300 for terrace and £188,400 for maisonettes and flats.

The housing stock consists of 139,000 dwellings, of which 10.2% are owned by the council and 6.4% by registered social landlords. These proportions are considerably lower than the London average (14.6% and 9.7% respectively). However, Croydon's housing, both public and owner-occupied, does have a problem with its current condition – 7.2% of stock is officially classified as unfit and needing £60 million in immediate investment.

Affordability is also a concern. It is being addressed in schemes such as Barratt's New South Quarter in Purley Way, where at least one-quarter of the 800 new homes are for affordable access. There is certainly strong local demand for housing. Numerous cur-

rent developments include high-rises by Howard Holdings (such as Altitude 25, below), Phoenix Logistics and Berkeley Homes. One interesting trend in the area is the conversion of commercial buildings into flats, such as Exchange House by Howard Holdings or Durkan Estates' Bauhaus scheme.

OFFICES

Croydon is zoned by the London Plan as one of two strategic office centres outside central London. The borough's office stock runs to 7.8 million sq ft, compared with 87 million sq ft in the City and 6 million sq ft in Hammersmith and Brentford, two comparable and competitive areas in West London. All forecasts suggest healthy growth prospects, especially for grade-A accommodation in high-rises, which is still lacking in the current market. The area has traditionally attracted blue-chip companies and public sector organisations (Nestlé, British Telecom, Inland Revenue, Home Office), but the stock is mostly of outdated buildings from the 1960s and 70s.

Rejuvenation and upgrading is now very much under way. Jones Lang LaSalle estimates that more than £300 million worth of stock was transacted

in Croydon in 2005/2006 and that there is now considerable potential for rental growth. Big schemes in the pipeline will bring 4 million sq ft on to the market, with achievable rents of £28 per sq ft. As this is lower than the West End, City and Docklands, it reinforces Croydon's longstanding attraction of low operating costs. Many major organisations are said to be looking for space here, such as Direct Line, Schlumberger, Transport for London and the Immigration Office.

RETAIL AND LEISURE

Croydon's retail and leisure offer, like its office stock, has suffered from outdated facilities and a lack of investment in recent years. Radical improvements are now at last on the way, with mixed-use developments such as Park Place or the Gateway scheme also bringing improvements to the public realm and transport infrastructure.

The demand for shops has already been proved by the successful retail park on Purley Way.



Park Place

A new destination for Croydon

Anchored by a full line department store, Park Place will create a one million square foot development with 130 retail shops, restaurants and cafes. Park Place will revitalise the town centre and create a new district for downtown Croydon. Innovative public realm improvements will see Queens Gardens completely re-modelled, together with the construction of a fully integrated public transport hub to include a new bus interchange and tram stop.



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Open for business

THE FUTURE OF THE STRATEGICALLY VITAL GATEWAY SITE HAS LONG HUNG IN THE BALANCE. THIS AUTUMN WILL SEE THE END OF THE UNCERTAINTY, AND THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA FOR COMMUNITY LEISURE IN CROYDON

First-time visitors to Croydon arriving at East Croydon station, could be forgiven for thinking that building work is about to start on the prime site next door, an impression reinforced by its construction-type hoardings. But as those more familiar with the town centre will testify, appearances can be deceptive.

For the site, known as the Croydon Gateway, has been the subject of a protracted planning battle, which has both frustrated Croydon Council's efforts to see the site developed and held back the town centre's regeneration.

The Gateway, part-owned by Croydon Council, has long been earmarked for a major mixed-use scheme anchored by a state-of-the-art multi purpose arena. At last, a major public inquiry this autumn will determine whether or not the council can move forward with its development partner Arrowcroft's proposals for such a development.

The site has a dramatic history. The council's policy for the Gateway site began back in 1995, when forward-thinking Croydon councillors embraced the concept of an arena as an attractive new focus for the borough, which would contribute something really useful for residents and businesses as well as encouraging visitors. The Gateway site, then in receivership, was identified as the ideal location, partly because of its easy accessibility by public transport for people coming both from south-east London and from as far afield as Brighton.

The council made several thwarted attempts to realise this ambition before selecting Arrowcroft Group as its development partner, which drew up plans placing the arena in a vibrant mixed-use scheme including shops, offices and apartments. It was at this point that developer Stanhope and funding partner Schroder came forward with an alternative,

arena-less, proposal. Although it was rejected by the council, Stanhope and Schroder, perhaps mindful of the greater financial returns of an office-led development, approached the receiver and other Gateway landowners and managed to either buy or secure options over large chunks of the site before preparing their own planning application.

This inadvertent 'twin-tracking' of rival proposals for the same site has been a thorn in the side of Croydon Council ever since. "Stanhope and Schroder were late on the scene," says Phillip Goodwin, director of planning and transportation at Croydon Council. "There is a perception both in Croydon and further afield that the council has obstructed the Stanhope Schroder team for no better reason than sheer bloody mindedness, but the opposite is true. We have the legitimate aspiration of securing the Gateway site so that the arena-led project, which has huge potential benefits for Croydon, can go ahead. Stanhope and Schroder have attempted to deny us those aspirations. In contrast to this, our partner Arrowcroft has remained steadfast in its commitment both to the council and to the arena through some very difficult times."

Despite numerous efforts to resolve this situation amicably, Croydon Council has taken the bold step of issuing a compulsory purchase order (CPO) against the site so that Arrowcroft can deliver its project. The CPO will be the subject of a public inquiry in September 2007 which will resolve, once and for all, this long-running planning dispute.

Behind Croydon council's commitment to securing a major entertainment and sports





“The council has the legitimate aspiration of securing the Gateway site so that the arena-led project, which has huge potential benefits for Croydon, can go ahead.”



venue on the site is the conviction of its major benefits for the borough. Not only will it bring thousands of people to the town who would not otherwise visit, it will also provide a range of opportunities for local people, including employment, training and community programmes enabling young people, and others, to participate in sport and other activities.

It is this aspect of the arena that the council feels has been misunderstood, or ignored, by its detractors. “Stanhope and Schrodgers have made much of the supposed benefits of the public park included as part of its proposal,” says Tim Pollard, the council’s cabinet member for regeneration and economic development. “But at best, this will serve local office workers and those who buy flats right next to the open space. No-one travels into a town centre to use a park. The arena, on the other hand, will have a robust community outreach programme which will develop activities to ensure the interests of the local population are taken into account.”

The arena’s community-based initiatives will be the responsibility of a charitable or non-profit making organisation, provisionally entitled the

Croydon Arena Foundation. The CAF will run the outreach programme as well as events at the arena to raise funds for its chosen charity partner, Nordoff-Robbins, the UK’s largest provider of music therapy. A Nordoff-Robbins music therapy centre is currently being developed in Croydon, as part of the Brit School for Performing Arts and Technology, which could benefit from another arena objective — to become a centre for arts and technology work experience in the community.

Daniel Carter, development director of Arrowcroft, is keen to stress that the community benefits of the Gateway scheme extend well beyond the arena itself. “The scheme includes a covered pedestrian plaza, which will improve links between the station and the town centre, and new public spaces, as well as restaurants, bars and cafes which will be perfect for relaxing either before or after an event, or just during a visit,” he says. “As this summer has made clear, there are only a handful of days when one can be confident enough about the weather to plan a day in the park. The arena complex will be active day and evening, 365 days a year.” ■

Bridget Rosewell, a director with consultancy Volterra, is one of the most respected and influential economists in the UK, providing advice to the Greater London Authority, Transport for London, the London Development Agency and the Mayor of London. She has worked as a consultant for Arrowcroft since 2005.

City3 asked her some questions on the arena’s economic viability and business plan, its main areas of controversy.

C3: Town and city centres throughout the UK are being regenerated without an arena, so why does Croydon need one?

BR: Croydon is a special case. While in its heyday it was the country’s fastest growing borough, and even now is the country’s sixth-largest commercial metropolitan centre, by the mid-1990s it was experiencing an image problem and its economy was suffering accordingly. At the same time, with people wanting more from where they work, town centres have to offer an environment that really makes a difference to their quality of life, work and relaxation in order to remain economically strong and culturally vibrant. Croydon Council was ahead of its time in recognising the need to ‘rebrand’ the town centre to attract more investment. The arena proposal grew out of this.

C3: How will an arena help?

BR: Both by changing the way the town centre is perceived, and by giving more people a reason to visit! We have studied models of similar schemes in Europe and North America, and have no doubt that the Croydon Gateway Arena – as part of a development which includes a mix of uses including offices, homes, shops and places to spend leisure time with friends and family – will attract the audiences it needs to be a huge commercial success. It has the tremendous advantage of enjoying excellent transport links, up to London, down to Gatwick Airport, to the coast at Brighton by mainline rail, or via tram to Wimbledon in south-west London. It would be difficult to find a better location for a major entertainment venue.

C3: How will it be funded, and what if it fails?

BR: The arena will be a purely commercial venture, funded by revenues from catering and ticket sales and other elements of the scheme. Given Croydon’s premier infrastructure, it will be London’s best-located arena, easily accessible to a massive market place, so it just won’t fail!

C3: It has been said that it is precisely because of these excellent transport links that the Gateway site should be used as the location for a commercially led scheme, such as the one proposed by Stanhope and Schrodgers. What do you say to this?

BR: Regional planning policy clearly states that metropolitan centres should aim for the vibrancy and vitality that can only come with a complementary mix of uses. Office-led developments provide nothing for families and are deserted by early evening, and during weekends. Croydon needs to provide something in its town centre for all sections of the community. This is the only way to curb anti-social behaviour and encourage a greater participation in the life of the town by everyone. Also, don’t forget Arrowcroft’s scheme includes 50,000sq m of grade A offices to bring new businesses to Croydon, and meet the expansion needs of companies already here.

Berwin Leighton Paisner LLP has continued to be part of the regeneration of Croydon town centre where we have been actively involved since 1998. We have led legal planning for the successful 900,000 sq ft Park Place scheme.

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Space odyssey

AS PART OF ITS TRANSFORMATION, CROYDON IS ENHANCING AND CONNECTING ITS MANY OPEN SPACES. **KIRSTY MACAULAY** FOLLOWS THE BOROUGH'S JOURNEY FROM GREY TO GREEN.

With its unfortunate concrete jungle image, you could be forgiven for thinking that Croydon is lacking in green spaces. In fact, it has an abundance of them, with more than 120 parks and a surprising 1,750 hectares of open spaces, ranging from urban parks and formal gardens, to woodland and open countryside. The problem is that some of these green spaces are not easily accessible, as Andrew Beedham, head of urban design at Croydon Council explains. "People can't just easily walk to their parks: they have to contend with busy roads, train tracks and large swathes of inaccessible land," he says. "It is essential to improve access to our green spaces to encourage their use."

To this end, the council undertook an analysis of the provision and quality of the borough's open spaces, and began a series of 'greening projects' to improve access to nature and leisure recreation. The ultimate goal will be to encourage healthy lifestyles, reduce anti-social behaviour and provide a sense of community.

Complementing this programme, Space Syntax was recently commissioned to look at how people move around Croydon. The report confirmed the need for better pedestrian access, particularly with such a busy main road running through the middle of the town centre. But Alan Chiaradia, director of Space Syntax, believes that success depends on more than good pedestrian links. "It's not just about being able to get to the parks, but making sure



the parks are pleasant enough that people want to spend time there," he says. "Places are made by people and the demand they create, and the confidence they have in their hometown is what makes it a better place. It doesn't take so long to change a place if everyone is in agreement."

One of the greening projects, called Connect 2 Croydon, is part of a nationwide Lottery bid by Sustrans to encourage people to use sustainable modes of transport such as walking and cycling. The project aims to link some of the borough's more

densely populated areas to green spaces, and provide comprehensive east-west and north-south access routes, by establishing pedestrian-friendly paths between Wandle Park and the Addington Hills in the east of the borough, between the park and central Croydon, and between Addiscombe Railway Park and South Norwood Country Park. Barry Lambton, the council's green spaces manager, says: "Open spaces are becoming more and more significant and can certainly improve quality of life. Linking open spaces through green corridors is the



way to go — we want to encourage local people to walk to their parks.” These sentiments are echoed by councillor Chris Wright, who claims the car-free corridors are a vital aspect of Croydon’s green agenda.

Another element of the scheme is an extension of the Wandle Trail, a 24km riverside path that runs from Waddon Ponds, right up to the River Thames. This off-road trail encourages people to explore further afield into the Wandle Valley where they can find wetlands, a city farm, working watermill and viewing platforms

that extend out over the river. Further pedestrian links are already being prepared through the Wandle Links project, widening, resurfacing and planting a tram corridor to offer a pleasant pedestrian walkway and cycle path from Valley Park to Wandle Park. The second phase will lead to central Croydon, and eventually right through to Ashburton Park.

It’s hoped that providing greater freedom to travel by foot or bicycle, through the Connect 2 Croydon scheme, will encourage the adoption of such methods on a regular basis. Local

schools are keen to promote the use of such paths — which don’t cross any busy transport routes.

Integral to the council’s ambition to create a greener Croydon is linking Wandle Park to the town centre. The 8.5ha Victorian park is within easy walking distance of the town centre and could provide much-needed extra green space for the downtown district, but is currently cut off by roads. “Croydon is not known for its natural environment, but we’re planning to bring it right into the heart of the town. Wandle Park will be upgraded to create an iconic

Left, top: Cowslips in Happy Valley.

Left, below: South Norwood Country Park.

Above: Wandle Park, a green gem, currently cut off from the town centre.





Above: Park Hill, central to Croydon, but currently inaccessible.

Opposite: The difference uncovering a river can make to a park.

space bringing about a major change in its use," says Tom Sweeney, senior urban design officer at Croydon Council.

Although popular, especially its football pitch and skateboard park, Wandle park is not used to its full potential, which the ambitious regeneration plans should rectify. A vital part of the project will be uncovering the river, which runs beneath the park in a 9m tunnel. "We want the park to become a destination, and hopefully reinstating the river will facilitate that," explains Beedham.

Exposing the river, mooted since the 1990s, will be a direct result of the adjoining development by Fairview New Homes on a former British Gas site. Funding for the project, which will include new access routes, seating, play equipment, a lighting and public art scheme, and planting along the river to encourage wildlife, relies on a

section 106 agreement and a lottery heritage bid.

Sweeney points out there are two obvious ways to improve access to open space: either create a new space, which is often not possible until development clears the way, or provide better connections to existing spaces.

The new Addiscombe Railway Park combines both these options. Funded through a section 106 agreement, the park, which opened this summer, has transformed a section of a disused railway line into a leafy walkway.

More than 1,500 plants and trees have been planted to encourage wildlife to the previously derelict space, railway artefacts relating to the park's heritage are displayed, and old railway sleepers have been given a new lease of life as signposts. Eventually this new green path will run from the built-up residential district of Addiscombe

to the wide open spaces of South Norwood Country Park.

South Norwood Country Park, which opened in 1989, is one of the borough's largest open spaces. Its 50 hectares incorporate a visitor centre, duck pond, child's playground, wildflower meadows, golf course, viewing mound with vistas across central London and cycle path. Designated a local nature reserve, it is an important wildlife conservation site with a dragonfly pond and wetlands area, which attracts over 100 different species of bird.

The borough has nature reserves, bird sanctuaries, wild flower meadows and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), where it is entirely possible to forget you are in the big smoke. One such SSSI can be found in Happy Valley's 101ha of ancient woodland, a green flag award winner, with several examples of rare plants, including orchids.



There are two obvious ways to improve access to open space: either create a new space, or provide better connections to existing spaces



Increasing biodiversity is high on the council's wish list, but not just in the large out-of-town parks. There are plans to upgrade and increase the green space in central Croydon with the redevelopment of Queen's Gardens, and although a design has yet to be agreed, it will reaffirm the site as the green oasis at the heart of the town.

Plans to increase the number of green spaces easily reachable from the town centre include proposals to improve access to nearby Park Hill for Croydon's shoppers and workers. This hidden gem is currently difficult to access due to a set of railway tracks, which form a barrier between the park and the town. Beedham expounds: "It is an ideal spot and should be transformed into a destination for local people and visitors to the town centre. While it lacks an attraction, something to draw people to it, the key problem at

the moment is actually getting to the park."

One of the main barriers to pedestrian access in the town centre is Wellesley Road, a busy dual carriageway acknowledged to need significant changes. The council is determined to improve this urban environment and plans to 'green' the area have been mooted.

All these green regeneration schemes are critical to Croydon's Vision 2020 plans. "The quality of the public realm and open spaces doesn't meet aspirations of users or developers," explains Beedham. "Our aim is for big projects like Wellesley Road to convince big developers to invest in Croydon." These views are echoed by Tim Naylor of the council's urban design team, who believes it is the transformation of Wellesley Road that will finally rid Croydon of that stubborn 'concrete jungle' reputation. ■

Working it out

Over the spring and summer of 2007 international architect Will Alsop has been meeting the residents, businessmen and politicians who make Croydon what it is to find out what they want from the proposed regeneration programme. The sessions were a great success and confirmed that the architect and local people have similar ambitions for Croydon. Alsop says: "Almost without exception everyone with an association with Croydon loves it. But despite their civic pride they were realistic and acknowledge that large chunks of the town are past their sell-by date."

The general consensus was that East Croydon station is not impressive as a gateway to the town and that Wellesley Road is problematic as it divides the town and has lots of empty offices with no interaction at ground level. Another issue is the 'betwixt and between' retail centre, with a lack of high-quality, speciality shopping, and more comprehensive mainstream shopping available at the enormous Bluewater shopping centre.

Open spaces are well loved by Croydonians. Bringing the River Wandle back to the surface was high on the list of things people want to see, alongside the upgrading of the Queen's Gardens, seen by many as the heart of Croydon and the only place in the centre of town to get away from it all. Alsop notes: "There are very few resting places in Croydon. Nearby Park Hill could provide the perfect space for a public attraction. It is very beautiful but people don't use it because they aren't aware of it — it's not on a natural route from town. We need to bring it into the centre and make it an urban, rather than suburban, park, and an added attraction for downtown Croydon." Plans for Park Hill include a botanical garden in a landmark structure at the north of the park that could be seen from the town centre to attract people in.

Alsop was particularly impressed with one idea conceived at the workshop for a green footpath forming a boundary around downtown Croydon. "I'm a great believer in edges — you need them to know where you are and when you are in the middle."

Perhaps surprisingly, both young and old wanted to see more unusual and iconic buildings: something different to make their home town unique and somewhere they could be proud of. Alsop understands this desire: "Croydon was actually incredibly brave architecturally in the 1960s and it did work for a while. Croydon will continue to be unique in a 21st-century way".

The final results from the workshops will be fed into Croydon's metropolitan area action plan.

"I'm a great believer in edges — you need them to know where you are and when you're in the middle"



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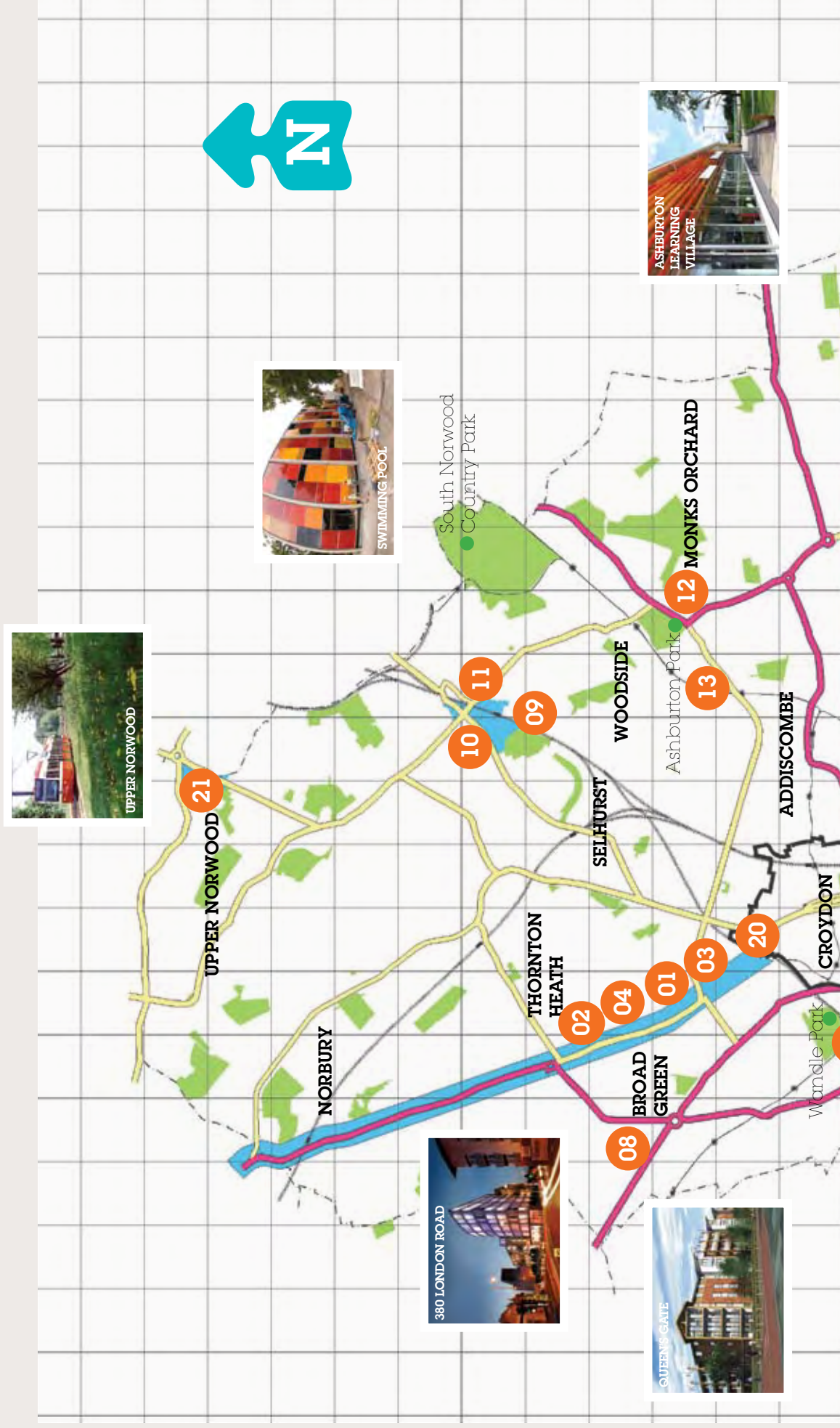
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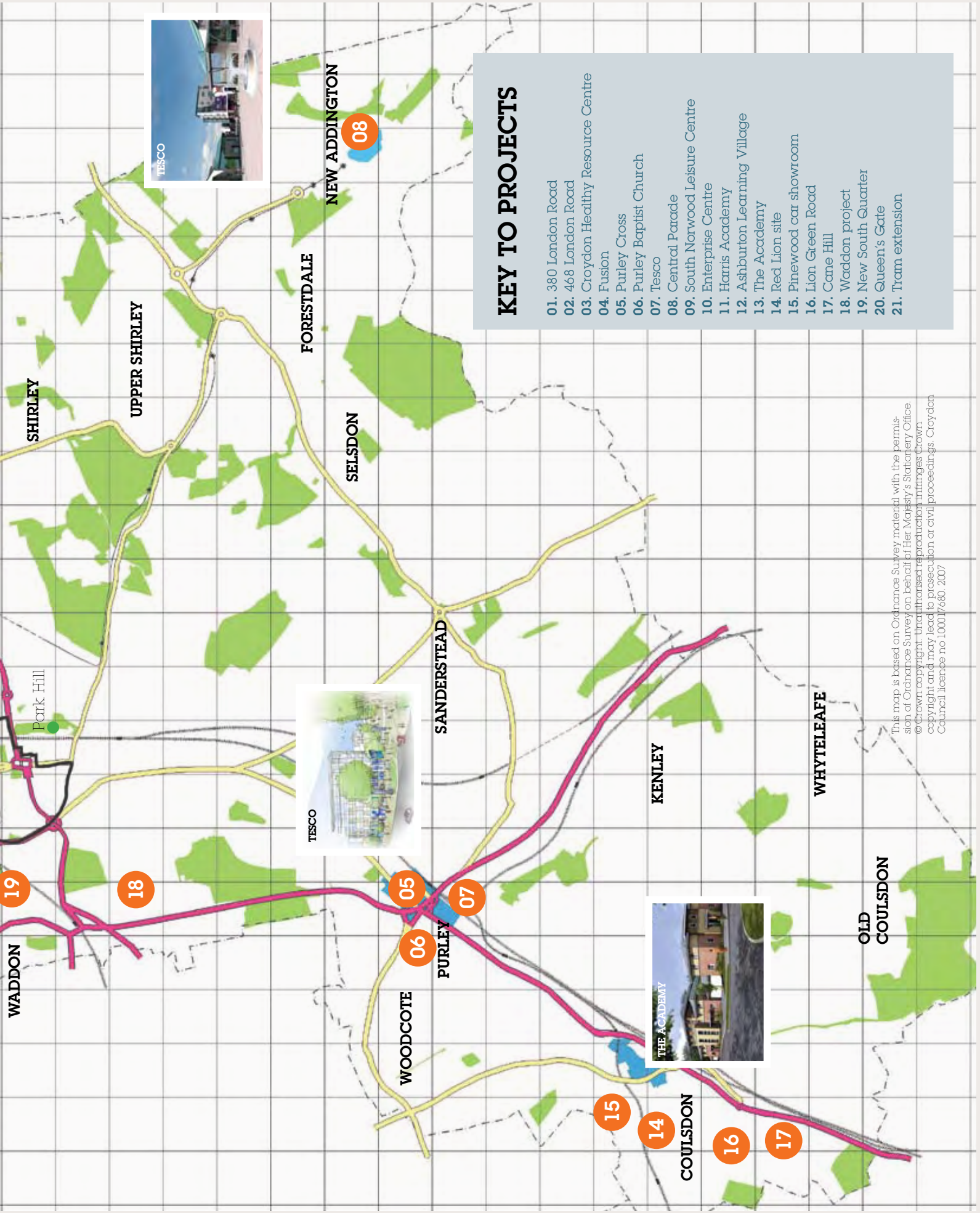


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Outer borough

Wider Croydon is like a collection of villages, or district centres. Here, all sorts of development is going on, from community projects to whole new residential centres





KEY TO PROJECTS

01. 380 London Road
02. 468 London Road
03. Croydon Healthy Resource Centre
04. Fusion
05. Purley Cross
06. Purley Baptist Church
07. Tesco
08. Central Parade
09. South Norwood Leisure Centre
10. Enterprise Centre
11. Harris Academy
12. Ashburton Learning Village
13. The Academy
14. Red Lion site
15. Pinewood car showroom
16. Lion Green Road
17. Cane Hill
18. Waddon project
19. New South Quarter
20. Queen's Gate
21. Tram extension

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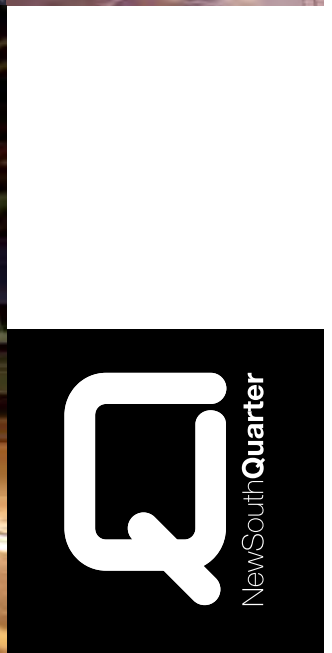
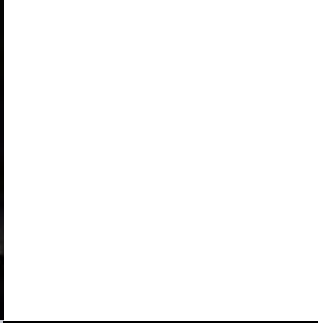
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Local heroes

AWAY FROM THE TOWERS AND BUSTLE OF CENTRAL CROYDON'S REGENERATION, THE EQUALLY IMPORTANT, BUT SMALLER-SCALE, DEVELOPMENT OF THE BOROUGH'S DISTRICT AND TOWN CENTRES IS SET TO BRING A WHOLESALE CHANGE FOR LOCAL RESIDENTS

Regeneration is about more than putting up lots of new buildings. Just as important is transforming the physical image of an area and upgrading or developing facilities previously lacking, to build community spirit and create somewhere residents are proud to call home. While Sharon Baldwin, district centre development manager, hopes that the 'trickle down' effect of the regeneration of central Croydon will raise the quality of developments in the district centres, she is also very aware of the need to raise standards and build respect for Croydon's suburban areas from within. "We're encouraging people to take an active role in their district, enabling local people to take ownership and have a say in how their area is developed through business partnerships, which bring together the business community and residents."

Will Tuckley, deputy chief executive at Croydon Council, agrees. "We have to put the needs of the people first and then apply the resources to address their concerns through district centre regeneration strategies," he says. "In some areas it is pretty clear what the problems are, but we'll be talking to local people and presenting the options. The intention for the district centre regeneration strategies is for a more locally based report, taking into account local demographics and economy. There is a lot of potential in the borough and there will be some big, exciting developments in the district centres in due course. We recognise that in the past the growth of the town centre has overshadowed some of the districts, and we need to make sure they can fulfil their potential."

This district-by-district approach is reflected by the appointment of district centre managers, all of whom are reassuringly enthusiastic about the future of their area, as we'll see later, and the strategy of using a business-orientated approach to support and encourage local businesses. By doing so, they will help to build a strong economy that will inspire inward investment and ultimately benefit the wider community.

As Baldwin explains: "District centre regeneration strategies will identify opportunities at a local level, we need more meaningful developments in the right areas. All the district centres have an identity and a definite place within Croydon's bigger picture, they offer great diversity and have something for everybody – whatever you need can be found in Croydon's district centres."

London Road

The proposed extension to London Underground's East London line has attracted a series of small-scale developments, which are set to transform Croydon's London Road and create homes for up to 800 new residents.



380 LONDON ROAD

Developer: **Affinity Sutton**
 Architect: **Darling Associates**
 Construction: **September 2007**
 Completion: **December 2008**

This striking residential development of 99 apartments, set to create a new landmark on the corner of London Road and Bensham Lane, is described by the architect as 'an exciting addition to Croydon'. The building is in two sections – one of eight storeys, stepping down to one of six – with a curved glazed façade. Set back from the road to create a visual break in the street frontage, it will include a landscaped zone with tree planting to improve the public realm.



468 LONDON ROAD

Developer: **Wandle Housing Association**

Architect: **Horace Architects**

Construction: **On site**

Completion: **January 2008**

This £3.8 million commercial and residential building (above) will offer two storeys of office space above 40 residential units on the ground floor and extensive roof terraces for communal use. Nine of the one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments will be in shared ownership, while the remainder will be rented by Wandle Housing Association. Environmentally friendly features of the building include 82 solar panels to power the lighting and heating in communal areas, rainwater irrigation to the roof garden, water butts for each residential unit and permeable paving to limit run-off.

CROYDON HEALTHY RESOURCE CENTRE

Developer:

Metropolitan Housing Trust

Architect: **Dunster/Metropolis Architectural Studios**

Construction: **Spring 2006**

Completion: **Mid 2008**

Part of Croydon's old general hospital site is currently under development. The mixed-use project will include 16 one- and two-bedroom apartments, community facilities, work-spaces and conference facilities. The centre will be developed and managed by Croydon Voluntary Action.

FUSION

Developer: **Fairview New Homes**

Construction: **On site**

Completion: **2009**

This redevelopment and extension of the former Philips building will create 319 new homes, nursery and a few retail units. The studio, one-, two- and three-bedroom properties will be available under three different tenures — private, shared ownership and rented.



PURLEY

The Purley town centre regeneration strategy, completed in 2004, is due to be updated in 2008. It aims to create a 'healthier and more pleasant place to live, work and visit that is well-integrated and pedestrian friendly'. Key problems that need to be overcome include both heavy traffic in the town centre and a declining business sector, which it's hoped will be improved by attracting more inward investment through the development of vacant and under-used sites and improving parking availability.

The main focus of the plan is to put the heart back into the town centre, making it more pedestrian-friendly, upgrading the public realm and creating a public space. To do this the road network will be restructured, removing the gyratory system of main roads and a roundabout that form a barrier between the Tesco store and the rest of the town. As Iain Sim, divisional director of urban regeneration at Croydon Council, explains: "Purley town centre is up for major change. The creation of a public space is a must. It is our ambition to secure significant public space that would unite Purley town centre with Tesco, its biggest store, and provide a new focus for the town."

District centre manager Helen Dumbleton agrees: "The town was built on its transport links. Now, however, most people recognise that a step change is needed to turn it around as a town centre. We need to find our niche. The Tesco store dominates the town and has taken some of the balance out of the retail offer, so we need to attract more independent retailers and big names to create diversity."

Dumbleton hopes the Purley of the future will have recovered its energy and vibrancy to become a "thriving, unified town centre with a busy square. Investment and regeneration will be key to that vision."

PURLEY CROSS

Plans to address the gyratory system, which would involve re-routing the A22 and A23, in the heart of Purley first emerged in 2002 alongside the proposed Coulsdon bypass. Initially drawn up by Transport for London plans have since been revised, and will need further updating due to the increased traffic flow resulting from the recent Tesco expansion. Croydon Council and Tesco have now joined TfL in the scheme.

PURLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

The idea behind this mixed-use development in the heart of Purley town centre is to provide a focal point for Purley. It will include 65 flats, a new Baptist church, parking and community facilities, within an innovative design. The site, part of the Purley gyratory, is currently home to several vacant properties in poor repair.

TESCO

Purley's largest store is hoping to include an extension as part of the proposed redevelopment of Purley Cross. Tesco has published an aspirations document based on local working party meetings on the Purley Cross development and intends to undertake further public consultation this autumn to help finalise plans for the store. Initial designs are for a mixed-use scheme to include housing.



NEW ADDINGTON

Just outside central Croydon, New Addington is surrounded by golf courses, woods and farms. It is this isolation from the rest of Croydon that has created a strong community feel, as district centre manager Ken Sherwood explains. "I've never experienced such a close community, and they deserve the investment planned for the area. If we can get the regeneration right it will be an area people want to come to."

The regeneration of New Addington and Fieldway is focused on Central Parade, where existing shops and community facilities are being redeveloped and rebuilt and a new Tesco store is proposed, in a scheme Sherwood believes will be an exciting development for local people, and "real regeneration for the community".

To bolster trade, the business partnership has begun a 'think local, shop local' campaign, and is also helping local businesses concerned about the Tesco development to get in shape ready to compete, or work with, the superstore when it opens. Sherwood explains: "We need healthy competition and Tesco will undoubtedly increase the footfall to the area, in the same way as the market currently held on the parade every Tuesday and Friday does."

As well as community elements of the development, to be completed mid-way through the project, new public buildings will be created and, hopefully, the public space at the centre of the parade extended and upgraded.

The Tesco development is expected to create 200-300 jobs, so will go some way to easing unemployment problems in the area. A new training centre, currently under construction at the other end of the parade, will ensure local people have necessary job skills to take advantage of a regenerated neighbourhood. Additionally, a construction centre on the nearby industrial estate is already teaching people building skills enabling them to get involved in Croydon's regeneration, and part of the deal with Tesco is that it uses local builders on the scheme.

Local people are also being encouraged to start their own businesses. Providing incubator space for start-up companies on the industrial estate has been mooted, but as Sherwood puts it: "What we really need is a big business to move to the area and employ local people. Tesco will start that ball rolling."



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SOUTH NORWOOD

South Norwood has a strong heritage and good mix of cultures, which the planned regeneration can only enhance. A feeling of pride is already returning to the area, which has 'energy and vibe', according to Nadia Jones, South Norwood's district centre manager. "I feel very positive about the district's future," she says. "It's like a second coming. South Norwood always used to have a flourishing high street and it is slowly starting to develop again. I believe it will return to form in three to five years."

Jones's vision for the district is for an area full of character, reflecting the creative vibe of local businesses. "The East London Line will bring people to the area and we'll be driven by the needs of a wider resident base. I think we'll be able to compete with the likes of Crystal Palace."

Portland Road is at the heart of the programme of upgrading retail premises that will eventually be rolled out to include the High Street and Station Road, and transform the stretch of road that runs through South Norwood into a high-class area of independent shops. The regeneration programme also includes the creation of a new enterprise centre for small businesses.

Jones believes the district's success is reliant on being more business-minded and harnessing residents' shopping power: "There are quite a few premises that have been vacant for some time. We're working on ascertaining who the freeholder or owner is and working with them to get the property back on the market and introduce new businesses into the area."

It is obviously working – three units are due to open within the next three months and Jones reports serious interest in six of the premises on the High Street, illustrating perfectly how fast things are actually happening. "It's an amazing turnaround since the project started in January 2007," admits Jones. "The type of businesses setting up in the area are really varied, and we are already developing an artistic, artisan-style business community."

Although residents were initially sceptical about the regeneration, they can see that things are already changing as the empty shops start to fill up. Also helping to change hearts and minds are the efforts being made to improve the public realm. "A lot of planting has been put in place and cosmetically it's looking better," says Jones. "These things matter to people and shoppers are more likely to spend time in a place if it looks nice and cared for."

Commitment to the area's modernisation is demonstrated by the new Harris Academy, which opens this September, and is described as 'a real asset' by Jones, who hopes the school entrance on South Norwood High Street will liven up the area and improve the economy.



SWIMMING POOL

Completion: **September 2007**

The £4 million refurbishment of South Norwood's leisure centre (above) is certainly brightening it up. More than 70 coloured panels will line one wall of the leisure centre, which will feature a new reception foyer, two newly equipped gyms and new changing rooms. The existing viewing gallery for spectators has been upgraded, the exterior landscaped and car park extended.



ENTERPRISE CENTRE

Still in the early stages of planning, this scheme on Portland Road will provide business incubator units, community space and residential units. The project designs will be finalised in September.



HARRIS ACADEMY

The new school (above) on the site of the former Stanley Tech college opening in September, has a sixth form college.

ASHBURTON LEARNING VILLAGE

Opened last year, this £25 million environmentally friendly learning village accommodates 1,200 pupils in a three-storey building, with laboratories, large hall, sound-proof music rooms, recording studio and all-weather floodlit sports pitches and games areas. The library will stock over 25,000 books, DVDs and talking books and be the base for community activities and groups.

The 'beacon of excellence' building has the largest solar panels installed in the UK, movement-sensitive lights, toilets and sinks served by a rainwater tank and sun tubes.



THE ACADEMY

Developer:

Fairview New Homes

This development of 29 one-, two-, three- and four-bedroom homes is located alongside Ashburton Park and the new Ashburton Learning Village close to the new Croydon tramlink stop at Addiscombe.



COULSDON

The opening of the long-awaited Coulsdon bypass last year is only the first phase of the regeneration programme for the town. Phase two, which will start at the end of next year, will focus on making it pedestrian-friendly, by widening pavements and turning the main road into a tree-lined boulevard, bringing life back into the centre.

"Coulsdon used to be blighted by traffic, and then, when the bypass opened, it was blighted by a lack of traffic. But it will build again and there are already several interesting development sites and opportunities under discussion," says Tim Naylor, of the council's urban design team.

District centre manager Christine Samson admits that initially after the bypass opened the town centre was very quiet, but plans to get people back to the town are well under way. "People's habits change and we have to coax shoppers back into the town," explains Samson. "We've already implemented several initiatives, including free one-hour parking and an Italian market, which was a great success with many of the local shops getting involved. We're hoping to make it a regular thing.

"The community always supports local events, they are what drives Croydon. Residents love family days and fun days, so if you want to promote things here the best way is to hold an event. Our 'Celebrating Coulsdon' day to mark the opening of the bypass was a great success."

The community feel of the area is one of its great assets. Samson explains: "As people shop more regularly in Coulsdon their experience will be enhanced – it's still the sort of place where shopkeepers say hello, so residents don't feel like a faceless person in a crowd."

Coulsdon has retained a good mix of businesses, with big-name and speciality shops, creating a good base to attract further retailers. As more quality-brand name shops open, Samson hopes that the knock-on effect will encourage neighbours to update their shop fronts. "There is potential to really grow the town centre, so it is an exciting time for Coulsdon. Regeneration will breathe new life into the town by improving roads and providing a more pedestrian-friendly environment, which is very important."

Many residents hope the regeneration programme will address the lack of a town square, but the business community wants to concentrate on developing more retail space to bring people into the town.

The main sites of proposed redevelopment in Coulsdon, still in the early stages of the process.

THE OLD RED LION SITE

Owned by Aldi, which wants to establish a supermarket with residential elements.

THE OLD PINWOOD CAR SHOWROOM

Proposed site of a Sainsbury's supermarket with residential element.

LION GREEN ROAD CAR PARK

Owned by Croydon Council a proposal is yet to be made for the site, which could well have a joined-up design strategy with nearby Cane Hill.

CANE HILL

Owned by English Partnerships. Previous hopes for a science park are being considered alongside a residential component.

AND ELSEWHERE...

**WADDON PROJECT**

Developer: **Hyde Group**
 Architect: **Levitt Bernstein**
 Movement has been made towards finalising the terms of the development on the former Waylands site. It will provide a youth centre, adult learning centre, leisure facilities, café and community centre plus 418 residential units (an additional 115 units will be constructed on two nearby sites). Demolition of the existing buildings is under way and planning permission should be submitted by the end of the year.

**NEW SOUTH QUARTER**

Developer: **Barratt West London**
 Architect: **Stanford Eatwell Associates**
 Construction: **Starting 2008**
 Completion: **2010**
 This mixed-use development on the edge of Wandle Park will be set around the newly reinstated River Wandle and will provide nearly 800 residential units, townhouses and start-up business space. The village will include bars, restaurants, nursery and health facility and will be linked to the nearby park.

**QUEEN'S GATE**

Developer: **Fairview New Homes**
 Construction: **On site**
 Completion: **Mid-2008**
 Work has started on converting parts of this grade II-listed building, which dates back to 1865. The central tower and impressive façade have been restored and form the exterior to 12 two-bedroom apartments. The rest of the site will provide 360 properties comprising one and two-bedroom apartments and three bedroom houses. The £57 million development incorporates energy-saving micro-renewable technology such as solar thermal water heating, photovoltaic cells and 20 micro-wind turbines, as well as recycled rainwater.

**UPPER NORWOOD**

Feasibility work was carried out last year on the three route options for the tram extension from Upper Norwood to Crystal Palace. The proposed extension will run from Harrington Road increasing the number of homes within 800m of a tramstop to 11,000 and reducing journey times between Croydon and Crystal Palace to 18 minutes.

Funding for the project has not yet been finalised, but Transport For London hopes to apply for a transport and works act order in 2009. A public decision should be made by 2010, when work will then start. If all goes according to plan the tram extension should be up and running by 2013.

Iain Sim, divisional director of urban regeneration at Croydon Council, says: "There is a high level of support locally for the tram extension, particularly from the business sector in Upper Norwood, and 78% of local residents. Crystal Palace Park is expected to be upgraded, so it will be good to have better public transport serving improved sport and leisure facilities."



Peter Jones of Dragons Den investigating the entrepreneurs of Croydon

Spirit of enterprise

HELPING CROYDON'S ECONOMY TO REALLY TAKE OFF, ITS LATENT ENTREPRENEURSHIP IS BEING NURTURED BY A NUMBER OF INITIATIVES. **SARAH HERBERT** REPORTS

Croydon, with the third largest office sector in London, is traditionally seen as home to a mixture of big company HQs and service economy, served by a daily army of commuters. Who would have imagined, therefore, that Croydon is, in fact, one of the most enterprising boroughs in the country? Least of all, perhaps, Peter Jones of Dragons Den fame, who pronounced himself 'seriously impressed' by his investigations and visits as part of a government contest to find the most enterprising place in Britain.

This is all grist to the mill for the council's cabinet member for regeneration and economic development, councillor Tim Pollard. "Croydon's economy has traditionally been based on back-office services, resulting in a low-wage economy, with 30% of jobs in the public sector. A transformation is needed to create a more entrepreneurial culture. The built environment is undergoing rapid change — the economic environment needs to change with it."

Doing just that is Croydon Enterprise, a three-year programme to create opportunities for local



The built environment is undergoing rapid change – the economic environment needs to change with it



people to start their own business or expand existing enterprises, boosting the borough's economy. The programme is funded to the tune of £20.3 million, the first phase of a 10-year Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI) grant. Provided Croydon meets its targets, and there are no major rethinks at the Treasury, it can expect a total of £77 million.

The programme is delivered by a range of organisations, including Croydon Business, Croydon College and the private sector. While the economy of the whole borough will benefit from the enterprise boost, the focus of the spending is in the more deprived areas, such as New Addington and North West Croydon, and those people currently under-represented in business and self-employment, such as minority ethnic communities, the over-50s, women, people with disabilities, lone parents and young people not in education, training or employment.

Since it began a year ago, progress has been impressive: 600 people have taken part in workshops on anything from financing to mental health; £116,000 has been spent combating crimes that affect trade; one local firm has secured a £1m contract thanks to a series of international trade missions; and 2,000 pupils have taken part in enterprise activities in schools.

The number of initiatives started is enormous (see box). But perhaps the flagship project,

and certainly one Cllr Pollard is most proud of, is the Building Enterprise Centre in New Addington. The centre teaches practical and entrepreneurial skills, enabling local people to take advantage of the £2 billion-worth of construction going on in Croydon's town centre. The students are also being made aware of how their new skills equip them for becoming self-employed and the next steps they need to take to start their own businesses in the future. Since it opened in March 2007, 36 people have enrolled, many of whom would otherwise be receiving benefits with no long term prospects or training.

As Pollard says: "This is a holistic approach. As well as the physical regeneration, we're working on the skills of the population. And, crucially, sparking the idea in young people that they can start up and run their own business, as well as teaching them how to manage businesses and people. While it will be several years before some of the buildings are on site, when they are, local people will be there with the appropriate skills to take the jobs created."

Also coming to New Addington is a Business Enterprise Centre, to provide start-up space and incubator facilities for small businesses, alongside an adult and community learning service, creating a one-stop shop for employment. The community side of this Tesco-led development will be ready in 2009.

But all this has to fit into a strategy. As Pollard says: "We need to ensure that what we are doing to the built environment conforms to plans for the economy of Croydon. However, until recently, the town had no formal economic strategy, making it difficult to provide the right kind of built environment, and to train young people appropriately." Earlier this year the council created an economic development partnership comprising JobCentre Plus, the council, college, and local businesses.

This will also help with marketing. "Croydon, it has to be said, doesn't have a great image," says Pollard. "A stronger direction will give us a stronger brand." ■

TO BOLDLY GO...

The aim of Croydon Enterprise is to ensure Croydon's economy is dynamic and thriving by 2016, based on a climate of enterprise and entrepreneurship. It will regenerate deprived areas, and use entrepreneurship to narrow the gap between them and the rest of the borough.

THE PROGRAMME HAS FOUR MAIN THEMES:

- Encouraging latent and potential entrepreneurs
- Creating and growing businesses, and increasing self-employment rates
- Creating a more dynamic business environment
- Improving the supply of business premises

INITIATIVES INCLUDE:

■ Advice hotline

This popular service, set up by Croydon Business, acts as the main entry point for people wanting to get into business, or become self-employed.

■ Ideas into business

A programme of activities to help new and existing businesses turn new ideas into commercial success.

■ Trade missions

Run by Croydon Businesses, these subsidised trips to Prague, Warsaw, South Africa and Holland encourage local companies to export goods and services and grab new trade opportunities.

■ Financial help

An 'enterprise ladder of finance' helps companies grow from an idea, to a start-up to beyond. It starts with test trading grants of £250 to enable the viability of a new business proposition to be explored; credit union enterprise loans, of between £250 and £2,000, can help increase a business's capacity; and 'finance for enterprise', a loan fund scheme, can lend between £2,000 and £5,000 to local companies which find it hard to gain finance from mainstream sources.

■ Business angels

Local businessmen and women with the financial resources and expertise to invest in new enterprises.

For more on Croydon Enterprise and its initiatives, see www.croydonenterprise.com

OTHER INITIATIVES

Croydon's economy, of course, relies on existing businesses too. Croydon Business gives guidance on all aspects of relocation, development and expansion, offering a complete site and premises-finding service, advice on planning, and an introductory service to other agencies. And for those businesses already in the borough, its business retention programme helps with property, planning, business support, breaking into new networks, and both provide advice on dealing with local problems and lobbies at a local and regional level.

DISTRICT CENTRE MANAGERS

A team of six district centre managers – responsible for Thornton Heath, South Norwood, Norbury, Crystal Palace, New Addington Purley, Coulsdon and the London Road – give local business a voice in shaping the future prosperity of their areas, and act as a communication link between them and the council and other agencies. For more on the district centre managers, and what they're up to, see page 28.



Transport of delight

QUIET, FAST AND EFFICIENT, TRAMS HAVE BECOME SYNONYMOUS WITH REGENERATION. OF COURSE, CROYDON'S KNOWN THIS FOR YEARS...
DAVID BLACKMAN
 REPORTS

Twenty years ago, trams were largely regarded as a footnote in the history of public transport. With the notable exception of a few cities like Melbourne and San Francisco, outside the Eastern Bloc they had largely been put out to grass.

That all changed in 1987, when the first of a new breed of tram networks opened in the French Alpine city of Grenoble (see box opposite). The scheme was such a success that a string

of cities across France have built their own tram networks. What really helped trams take off was the breakthrough of giving them dedicated roadspace. This solved, at a stroke, the problem of slow running, which had led to their initial demise.

Trams are now synonymous with modern urban living, and often the badge of a successful city. And, indeed, part of regeneration itself. For the first time in 50 years the rumble of trams has become a familiar sound in towns



and cities, including Croydon where Tramlink has been operating for the past seven years.

However, trams haven't had a smooth ride. Seven years after it opened in the late 1990s, the Sheffield Supertram was carrying just 12 million passengers — 45% less than projected. Several cities' proposals for tram networks have been vetoed in recent years, including those planned in Leeds and Liverpool. This isn't helped by the Whitehall view that the humble bus is a more cost-effective and flexible way to boost public transport use: while trams cost around £10 million to build per kilometre, buses work out at £4 million.

But tram enthusiasts argue that this narrow bean-counting approach to trams ignores the

wider benefits that they deliver — which include regeneration. Transport engineer Steer Davies Gleave (SDG) recently carried out a study of the UK's new breed of tram services for umbrella group Passenger Transport Executive (PTE). It says: "All UK schemes have had a positive effect on the images of the cities in which they have been built, which has brought benefits in terms of attracting inward investment as well as business and tourist visitors." One such example is Manchester, where the Metrolink has become such an integral part of the city's image that it features on the opening credits of 'Coronation Street'. One study found that the development of GMEX conference centre was

ON THE MOVE

Much of the recent wave of enthusiasm for light rail has been spurred by the impact that modern tram systems have had on European cities. The small French city of Grenoble, near the Swiss border, led the way in the mid 1980s, laying down tracks when many cities had barely finished ripping theirs up.

Nowadays, Grenoble's two-line network carries 30 million passengers a year in a city with a population of just 380,000. Compare that to the 19 million journeys taken on the Manchester Metrolink, which serves a conurbation of 2.6 million people. Both networks cover approximately the same distance.

The success of the tram network is credited with playing a key role in the regeneration of Grenoble's ancient city centre. The National Audit Office report into light rail, published earlier this year, says that the city's environment also benefited from extensive landscaping along the route during the tram's construction.

It also points out, however, that French tram networks like Grenoble's benefit from much higher subsidies than those enjoyed by their UK equivalents, which must pay their own way.



Opposite: Trams beat buses on speed and efficiency... **Below:** ... and are at the heart of Croydon's public transport network



influenced by Metrolink, and quotes Barclays Bank's decision to relocate its back-office activities to Salford Quays as a consequence of the extension of the Metrolink Line Two through the area.

The SDG study concludes: "Tram schemes have played an important part in delivering regeneration and shaping how and where it occurs." The best example of this is probably the Docklands Light Railway, widely credited as playing a key role in the regeneration of East London. Now, more than 70,000 people work in the DLR area, of whom nearly 90% travel to work by public transport.

As the SDG survey says: "Development of this scale would never have been achievable or sustainable without the access provided by the DLR, and the relatively high numbers of workers it could deliver to the buildings there." A survey of residents buying new homes in the Beckton area of Docklands showed that 31% decided to invest there on the back of the DLR extension to the area.

Trams have tangible effects on property, too, according to SDG's study. "Beneficial effects on property values, both commercial and residential, have, without exception, accompanied implementation of tram schemes in the UK." Research from across

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Tram schemes
have played an
important part
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where it occurs

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the world indicates that residential properties within 1km of a tram station (or commercial developments within 400m) are likely to benefit from an increase in value. This is borne out in Croydon, where a study carried out by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors showed that the 'tram effect' has added 4% to the value of properties.

The tram has also boosted investors' confidence in Croydon, according to Martin Simmons, former chief planner at the Greater London Authority. "It has attracted investors, reflecting the higher level of accessibility that (the tram) gives. People can now get into Croydon more easily from the east and



west, and that is reflected in the investment going into retail-led development in the centre of Croydon. This will hopefully revive its office market." Arrowcroft, the council's preferred partner for the Croydon Gateway site, has said that a tram stop next to the site is one of the key factors in investing in the site.

Light rail can also combat social exclusion by improving access to jobs, community facilities and shopping for those living in poor areas. A case in point is the New Addington council housing estate, a Tramlink terminus. The construction of Tramlink has turned getting into Croydon town centre from a 90-minute bus journey with two changes

into a 40-minute direct trip. Perhaps it's no coincidence that unemployment has fallen by 35% in the New Addington ward of Fieldway. "It's been hugely important in improving the job search for people living in the suburbs and wanting to work in central Croydon," says Iain Sim, Croydon Council's divisional director of urban regeneration.

As New Addington illustrates, light rail is much more reliable than the bus (mainly because it is less likely to get held up in traffic jams). It's partly this reliability, but also their greater comfort, that attracts people to trams who wouldn't be seen dead on buses. As the GLA's Simmons comments: "Trams have a higher so-



Studies show that light-rail schemes reduce traffic by six times that of major improvements to bus services... At weekends, up to 50% of light rail passengers in Croydon used to travel by car



cial cachet." A view echoed by a study of the Tramlink's impact by consultant Colin Buchanan and Partners, which finds that, unlike buses, the tram is used by all socio-economic groups. Sim agrees: "Bus passengers tend to be from lower income groups and train passengers tend to be from higher income groups, but everybody seems to use the tram regardless of social background. It's an egalitarian form of transport."

As a result, people are more likely to swap their car for the tram. Studies estimate that light rail schemes reduce traffic by six times that of major improvements to bus services: around 20% of Croydon's rush-hour tram users have switched from the car, compared with between 4% and 6.5% for bus improvement schemes. At weekends, up to 50% of light rail passengers used to travel by car. And across the UK, the SDG report calculates that 22 million car journeys are currently being taken off the roads as a result of new tram services.

But trams need to be planned to fit into wider plans for land use. The main reason why the Sheffield Supertram ran into difficulties was that much of the

housing along the line was demolished around the same time that the tram was built, slashing the number of potential passengers. And they have to work with the existing transport networks: transport campaigners say that the UK has much to learn from German and French cities on integrating light rail with other forms of public transport, including buses.

Now, Croydon is seeking to apply these lessons as it battles to turn what is currently a light rail corridor into a network. Transport for London is conducting a feasibility study into extending Tramlink to Crystal Palace, where it would connect to the East London Line underground extension, with a view to submitting a planning application next year. Other spurs are being mooted to Tooting, Morden, Purley and Streatham, where the dream is that one day the Tramlink will link up with the Cross-River Tram due to run up as far as Camden. It's still a tough fight to secure funding, but the evidence shows light rail and urban renaissance can go hand in hand. ■

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REGENERATION INEVITABLY CAUSES DISRUPTION. BUT CROYDON IS DRAWING ON ITS OWN, AND OTHER BOROUGH'S', EXPERIENCE TO HELP REDUCE THE INCONVENIENCE TO BUSINESSES AND TO THE PUBLIC. ADRIENNE MARGOLIS REPORTS

Work in progress

Croydon town centre is due for major upheaval, with new construction projects coming on stream at the same time as Thames Water's extensive pipe renewal programme. But the council's not panicking. It's using the lessons it learned when building Croydon's tram system, Tramlink, to minimise disruption.

"You never get a good response to digging up a street," says Iain Sim, Croydon Council's divisional director of urban regeneration, who reckons that the key to minimising inconvenience is to put out as much ad-

vance publicity as possible. "For Tramlink we used local papers and magazines. Because it was special we had a full-time project team working on it for a couple of years, and we opened a shop staffed by that unit and by the contractors. It is still there as an information centre.

"You have to keep reminding people what it is all about," he adds. "If there is disruption and people can't see why, it is more difficult. You have to make clear what's at the end of the project – such as a new and better shopping centre, or new transport."

When Croydon built Tramlink the council decided to keep traffic management arrangements in-house. "It was a very complex process," Sim recalls. "We had to work with statutory undertakings ('stats') on electricity, drain and pipe movements, and make sure that the project team on the scheme were liaising properly with the stats companies." →



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If there's anything worse than digging up a street once, it's digging it up twice

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When Tramlink was under construction, there was a huge psychological shift in public perception when they saw the tracks actually going down. Altogether, the new transport system took three years to get up and running, including nine months for safety testing. "It is striking how quickly it has taken off. There were 15 million passengers by the end of year three, which is a huge uptake in such a short time," Sim says. "It is now hugely popular, carrying 23 million people a year."

Large-scale building work always creates traffic management problems, which can change from week to week. Sim believes it is essential to keep people informed. For current projects, the council has set up a helpline and distributed publicity material. "It is never a happy experience — you have to grit your teeth and get through it," he says.

When it came to the pipe-renewal scheme, council members were so concerned about the potential impact that they become directly involved, and now meet Thames Water regional directors on a regular basis. "The right lines of communication to the right people are crucial," Sim comments.

The scale of the work is unusual. "They only dig up this many roads once every 120 years. They are entitled to do the work, and we have to handle it under the Traffic Management Act and the new Roads and Street Works Act," Sim explains. But this does not mean that the utility company has carte blanche. "Because



the work is highly disruptive, Thames Water has to justify it. For example, just before Christmas, it proposed renewing pipes in the high street, in the heart of the town centre, but rethought this timing after we challenged the need. We also ask that they disrupt busy roads in quieter periods like the school holidays."

If things get badly disrupted, the council can legally impose fines. "We try to be reasonable but do have to keep the town centre functioning," Sim says. "We fined Thames Water for delays to work near East Croydon station, but this is a stick to use as a last resort." Things should get easier from early next year, when new legislation comes into effect enabling councils to impose conditions on utilities to co-ordinate all roadworks.

The council is using its regeneration experience to advise Thames Water on its approach to the community. "We've been talking about advance publicity," Sim reveals. "Its approach tends to be last-minute, and does not tell the good news story about the renewal of the mains. We also want them to co-ordinate work with developers. If there is anything worse than digging up a street once, it's digging it up twice."

Another tactic for persuading Thames Water to work in the least disruptive way was to ask more questions than usual, an approach which is now benefiting other communities. "We have used this as an opportunity to raise the issue across London councils. Everyone accepts that the work is needed, but we hope that there will be a more questioning approach from other boroughs," Sim says.

The council is currently planning construction work for the Park Place shopping centre with developers Minerva and Lend Lease. One lesson from Tramlink being applied here is using just one point of contact. Hitesh Wahder, acting group

engineer, highways and signals at Croydon Council, explains. "I co-ordinate the Park Place works. We've gone through stat diversion and done exploratory work to put services underground, rerouting telecoms cables, sewers, and water and gas pipes. It has involved digging massive trial holes," he explains.

"If Park Place had been tackled in the traditional way, one contractor would have followed another to reroute services. We have avoided that by appointing a main contractor to work on all the utilities together. We did this with Tramlink and it worked really well."

At Park Place, Croydon is fortunate in working with developers experienced in regenerating urban areas. "We are used to working in town centres. The key is to be transparent and to provide information," says Mark Boyes, senior development manager at Lend Lease. But he warns that expectations need to be managed. "Building sites are not pretty things and this project will be going on for a long time — four to five years. Work starts next year, and it is important that people can actually see things happening."

To reduce disruption, the developers will use a programme of works that can be carried out in phases. "We do not want a mess everywhere. We also want to let people trade as long as possible," Boyes explains.

The main conduit of information about Park Place for businesses will be the Croydon business improvement district (BID), started at the end of last year. Lend Lease is also talking to the council about how to keep the public informed. "It's not enough just to put a sign up on a building site," Boyes argues. "We need to have an innovative education programme. We have hired Linda Ewing, who handles the closure of Oxford Street for its annual pedestrianised shopping day, to help. We

will be holding events in closed areas of the site and taking education tours around schools and colleges. We will also place advertisements in the local papers to get the message over to the public."

The developers will hold regular focus group meetings to understand community reaction. "Feedback so far from the local authority, retailers and landlords has been very positive," Boyes says. "They like the way we are open with them." Lend Lease is also hiring a communities liaison officer. "All this is costly, but for a £500 million scheme, you have got to get it right."

Park Place is a large project, but it's small fry compared to the £5.1 billion Channel tunnel rail link, a nine-year project stretching from Folkestone, along a 68-mile rail route, to London's St Pancras. Due for completion this year, it has set new standards on minimising disruption, according to Lisa Doughty of construction company London & Continental Railways (LCR), because of stipulations in the Channel Tunnel Rail Link Act.

"We started work in October 1998 on a project which affected 14 borough councils. We have done so well that there has been no major impact on the community and no negative coverage," Doughty says. So how did they do it? The biggest impact was felt in Camden and Islington, near the St Pancras terminal. "It has been sensitively handled. We have taken the communities affected very seriously. If you develop a relationship of trust and change the things that you can change, then when you can't change something, the community understands it better."

Right from the start, LCR has had up to 30 people talking to communities along the route. "With every contract along the route we asked the contractor for a nominated community representative. Although they were all employed by different

people, they worked together," Doughty says. "A key to the success was a 24-hour public helpline, with a manager filtering the complaint to the site. A representative would get back to the member of the public directly," she adds.

She thinks another important element was setting up community forums that met regularly. "We took construction managers along so that the top man was thinking about how the work would affect the community. We also went further than the legislation required in informing people about utility work and road works."

One innovative part of the project involved going into schools. While it was ostensibly to talk about the hazards of train lines, the children were encouraged to talk about the past, the present and the future of their areas, and the environmental approach to LCR's construction work. "In London this became one of the most important community tools," Doughty says. "Because people speak so many different languages but the children all speak English, they could take the information home and pass it on to their families."

Another important part of the strategy had been to show long-term commitment. "This is not about being around and then vanishing," Doughty insists. "We have joined in festivals and used them to educate people on how their area is changing."

As a measure of LCR's success, companies involved in other major infrastructure projects, like Heathrow's Terminal 5, have come to it for advice.

Minimising disruption can, however, be costly. Boroughs with fewer resources are taking a different approach. Wandsworth town centre, for example, is undergoing a radical makeover, but disruption is largely dealt with as and when problems arise, according to Dave Clark in the council's planning

department. "People who see major change as a benefit tend not to complain about disruption — we tend to only hear from the people objecting," he says. "So, residents who moved into a housing development in the town centre are very concerned about noise, because they were the first into the area that is being regenerated and are bearing the full brunt of the disturbance."

Finally, there's the internal communication to think about. It's not easy, Clark admits. "Town centre managers are best placed to work across departments. Although minimising disruption is something that Wandsworth Challenge, our public/private regeneration partnership, could also tackle." ■

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Building sites are not pretty and this project will go on for a long time. It is important people can see things happening

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Wembley National Stadium Limited

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Craig Dorrington courtesy of Heritage/Spinnaker Tower

4

Did you know that...

1. Heathrow's Terminal 5 – covers an area the size of London's Hyde Park and is Europe's largest construction project involving 60 000 people in its construction.

2. Wembley Stadium – has the world's longest single span roof structure at 315 m and the London Eye could fit between the top of the arch and the pitch.

3. Manchester Civil Justice Centre – is the largest court complex in the UK incorporating environmentally sustainable features, such as borehole cooling, to reduce carbon emissions by an estimated 505 317 kg per annum.

4. Spinnaker Tower – is the UK's tallest accessible building outside London and is founded on piles, the longest being as deep as Nelson's Column is tall.

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DURING REGENERATION, CROYDON IS NOT FORGETTING ITS MOST VULNERABLE RESIDENTS. **ALI JONES** REPORTS ON MAJOR NEWS FOR BOTH COUNCIL RESIDENTS AND THE ELDERLY

Homes sweet homes

In July 2007, a collective cheer from UK local authorities greeted housing minister Yvette Cooper's announcement that they'd now be allowed to build more council houses, thanks to the government's initiative to increase housing supply.

Such positive action could not have come soon enough for Croydon residents, some of whom have been stuck on council house waiting lists for years. Critics say little has been

done to combat the ongoing problems of dwindling council houses since 1997, with recent figures showing that waiting lists have grown to 1.63 million people in the UK, with only 300 new council houses built in 2006. Croydon alone has 5,000 people who need housing.

July's government pledge of £3 billion for affordable housing translates as 70,000 affordable homes being built each year, which should go some way to easing the crisis. At that



rate, three million new homes will be built by 2020, with two million of these by 2016.

Councillor Dudley Mead is Croydon Council's cabinet member for housing. A self-assured entrepreneur, with many years' experience of housing in the private sector, he says that the recent announcement 'sounds interesting', but is adamant that since the Conservatives took over Croydon Council in 2006, there has already been significant change for the better in terms of social housing. 'Our most pertinent issue is that during the 12 years under Labour control the amount of social housing dropped by a significant amount. We're going to build it up again, and use the private sector to do it,' he says, with the confidence of a man used to overcoming hurdles to get what he wants.

He is not wholly dismissive, however, of the recent government pledge. 'In principle I will welcome anything that enables local authorities to get on with the job, but what I really want is for the council to be treated the same as a housing association,' he explains. 'On that basis we could build up to 100 units a year. There's plenty out there — and there are plenty of landlords out there — we just need to get on with it.'

So what is the scale of the problem? 'We have about 5,000 families looking for homes,' he says. 'After years of inaction, we already have planning permission for our first batch of houses. The houses are the most eco-friendly you could find, using wind turbines and green energy. Green issues are very important — it's costing us a bit more, but you get the payback,' he concludes.

Cllr Mead's monthly bulletin (issued by all cabinet members to keep the executive and residents informed) sets out some of the key areas in housing to be

addressed by the council, and it's not all about building new houses.

Delivering the Decent Homes Standard also plays a key role in the council's commitment to improving health and social care by ensuring decent affordable social housing in the borough. For example, £2.5 million is being spent on improving properties on the Northborough Road Estate, which had failed the standard due to inadequate space and layout in the kitchens and very small bathrooms.

The council has also secured funding of £600,000 to extend existing council properties to create homes for larger families. This project will provide approximately 26 additional bedrooms and new amenities, such as larger kitchens and/or bathrooms, by building one- and two-storey extensions.

Demographic time bomb?

Croydon is the second largest London borough in geographical size, but has the largest population of older people, with around 45,600 over 60, making the issue of the changing demographic of society in the UK, namely the increase in the number of older residents, especially relevant.

There are already more than 9.4 million people aged 65 and over in the UK, and by 2021 more than one in five people will be over 65. Some 30% of households are already headed by someone aged at least 60, and according to the Housing Corporation the largest projected growth is in households headed by people aged 55 or over.

A number of government-sponsored reports have put the housing, social care and health policies of older people — an area often all too easily overlooked — firmly in the spotlight. One of the main concerns is to help older people remain more independent in their home life.

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After years of inaction, we have planning permission for our first batch of houses, the most eco-friendly you could find

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Croydon councillor Margaret Mead, the Conservative member for Heathfield Ward, is the council's cabinet member for health and adult social care and a passionate advocate of implementing policies that enable more elderly people to stay in their own homes.

'Through questionnaires and getting out there and talking to people in the community, we have had a lot of feedback,' she explains. 'We feel that what people want is to stay in their own homes. With the older population increasing, we have adapted and extended our services, making them more streamlined and user-friendly. For instance, many older people are using IT services, so we have extended our online presence. Again, working on feedback from the community, we are looking to improve and enhance meals-on-wheels and to cater for people from different ethnic groups.' It's all part, she explains, of 'moving things forward.'

The council is certainly making progress: the groundbreaking signing of the £38 million New4Old contract



Above: Coleby Court residential home, before and after its improvements

with a PFI consortium is hoped to transform care for frail, older people in Croydon with first-class facilities across four new sites. The consortium, called Caring4Croydon and formed solely to deliver the New4Old programme, comprises contractor Geoffrey Osborne, Eldon Housing Association and UME Investment. Geoffrey Osborne acted as consortium bid manager and will also be undertaking the construction.

The four new centres in the scheme, funded by PFI credits, will provide 150 residential and nursing places, 40 extra-care flats and 128 day-care places. Designed around landscaped courtyards — a safe external environment for gardening, etc — the buildings will use the latest environmentally friendly power sources, including biomass plants, solar panels and wind turbines, and a combined heat and power plant.

Building work is already under way on the Heavers Farm and Coleby Court sites. The new development at Coleby Court, ready in July 2008, will provide an extra-care sheltered housing facility along with day-care services delivered to elderly people's homes, to help promote their independence.

"Residential and nursing homes are a last resort for a lot of people," explains Margaret Mead. "We can offer support so people can stay at home. The effect is twofold: greater independence, health and well-being are probably more cost-effective, and people are often happier being independent."

For older people who need nursing care, Heavers Farm will provide nursing, residential and day-care facilities for older people with mental frailties. The centre, which will include specialist clinics, day centres and office accommodation for the administration of related services, will be the first of its kind in the country in providing a

'one stop shop' for older people and their carers and relatives. It is due to open September 2008.

Steps have also been taken to secure the future of Croydon's older residents suffering from dementia (more than 3,000 Croydon residents aged 65 and over have dementia, with almost twice as many women as men suffering from the condition). The Croydon Memory Service has been highlighted in the UK as an area of good practice, and Croydon Council has backed a London-wide call for government help with meeting the costs of elderly care. Facilities at Addington Heights in New Addington and Langley Oaks in Sanderstead are planned to open in 2010, created by experts in designing for dementia.

So, young and old, it seems that residents of Croydon can be assured that a combination of changing government policy, and strong council initiatives, really are "moving things forward" in ensuring a secure and settled future. ■



Above: Sumner Gardens council houses, complete with wind turbines.
Left: Heavers Farm residential home

Putting on a show

FROM THE SOUTH OF FRANCE TO LOCAL CENTRES, CROYDON IS SPREADING ITS REGENERATION STORY



MIPIM, the world's premier property show, gets bigger and better every year, with more people, more networking and taller models. And Croydon's presence there gets bigger too: this year, its sixth outing to the springtime do in the South of France, its stand attracted nearly 1,300 visitors, of a record 26,210 delegates. Much of this can be put down to the spectacular 1:500-scale model of the town centre, prepared especially for the event, which showed the scale and intensity of development in the borough.

The model, with the major schemes illuminated, was constantly surrounded by interested admirers, and while some were casual passers-by on their way to the terrace bar next door (the advantage of a well-chosen spot!), others showed serious interest, which has continued beyond MIPIM and looks like translating into some more actual development in the future.

The terrace next door was also the venue for talks highlighting the development opportunities in the

borough, from Will Alsop on the town centre masterplan, Steven Norris on the Gateway site, and councillor Tim Pollard on the urban regeneration vehicle. Inside, on the London stand, Ken Shuttleworth of Make spoke about the Cherry Tree Road site next to East Croydon station.

Back home, the model has been put to good use as the centrepiece of the Croydon Expo, a travelling exhibition showcasing the future of Croydon. Starting in the centre of the borough, with stints at the Clocktower and the Whitgift shopping centre, Expo is now doing the rounds of the district centres, showing residents and businesses what it will be like to live in Croydon over the next 20 years, illustrating current and future developments.

While Expo is more of a showcase than a consultation exercise, there are opportunities for visitors to give feedback to the council, either to those there at the time, or in writing later. It even attracted Michael Heseltine MP with the Conservative Regeneration Task Force.

Sponsorship of both MIPIM and the Expo ensured that costs were kept to a minimum. ■



As CEO of Croydon Business, I represented the borough's business community at MIPIM. Of the 1,400+ visitors to the stand, I particularly recall the serious interest in Croydon from developers in Sweden, France, Denmark and South Africa. Even local property companies were surprised by the extent of ongoing and planned developments in their borough shown on the model. But the icing on the cake was news that the Liverpool and Manchester stands were beginning to worry at the high level of interest Croydon was attracting.



ANGELINA PURCELL
CROYDON BUSINESS



MIPIM facts and figures

Q When was it this year?

13 to 16 March

Q What does MIPIM stand for?

Le **M**arché International des **P**rofessionnels de **L**Immobilier

- 26,210 delegates, a 22% rise on 2006
- 6,687 (29%) end-users and investors
- 2,523 companies exhibiting, a 69% rise on 2006
- 8,537 companies attending
- 83 countries represented
- 24,460sq m exhibition space

With more than £3 billion worth of development now under way or planned for the next three years, Croydon continues to have one of the UK's largest and most exciting town centre regeneration agendas.

Some of the leading schemes are illustrated below, and will be showcased on Croydon's stand at the international real estate exhibition (MIPIM) in Cannes next March.



In the interim, to find out more about these exciting proposals, Croydon's emerging Metropolitan Area Action Plan and Will Alsop's vision for the centre contact Keith Briars, on **+44 (0)20 8726 6800, keith.briars@croydon.gov.uk**



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