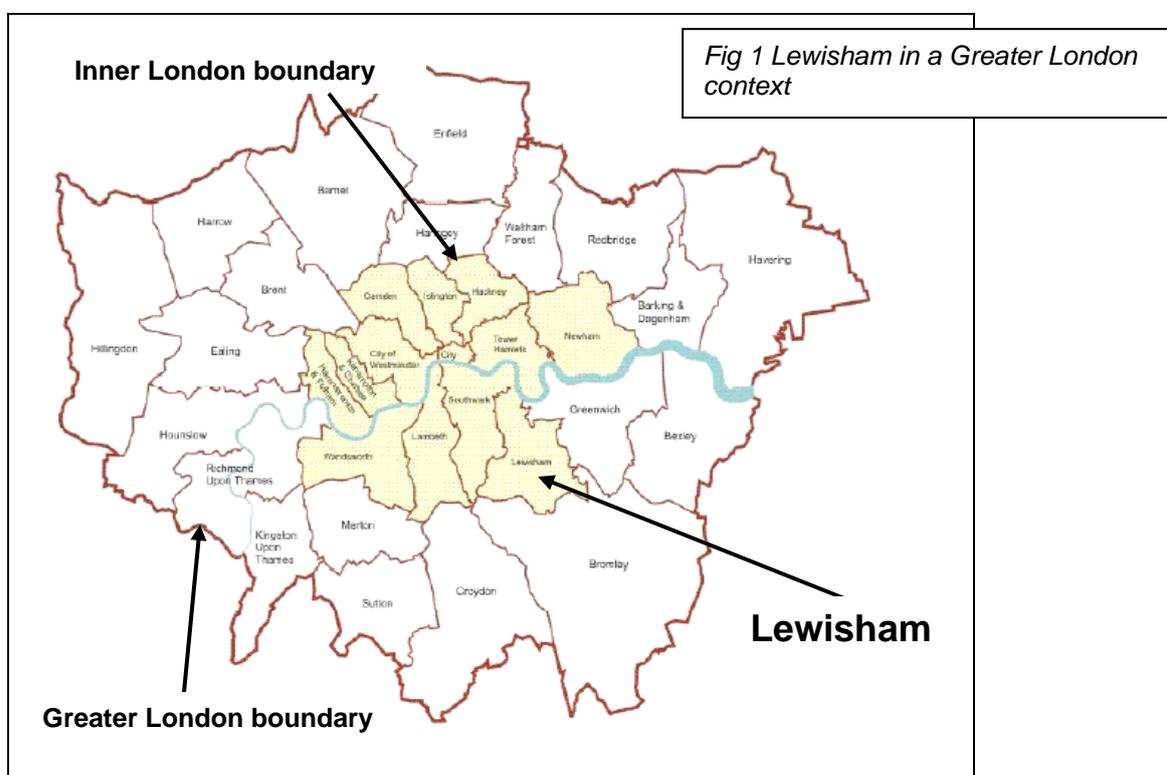


# EUROPEAN RIVER CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT PLANS BASELINE REPORT FROM LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM June 2012 / Updated May 2013

## 1. Background

### 1.1 Overview of the London Borough of Lewisham

The London Borough of Lewisham is a local government administrative region in Greater London and is located south-east of central London. Lewisham is home to over 270,000 people of many different ethnic backgrounds, living in an area of approximately 20.5 square kilometres. It is Inner London's third largest borough in terms of population and area.



1.2 Strategically the north of the borough, encompassing the localities of Lewisham, Catford, New Cross and Deptford, forms part of the Thames Gateway, a nationally recognised growth area stretching east to the Kent and Essex coasts along the Thames Estuary. This is where major development and regeneration plans will take place to provide for the borough's growth in population and housing. Between 2006 and 2031 the overall population of Lewisham is projected to increase by nearly 18% or an additional 47,483 people, and the number of households to increase by 20% from approximately 112,400 to 137,600.

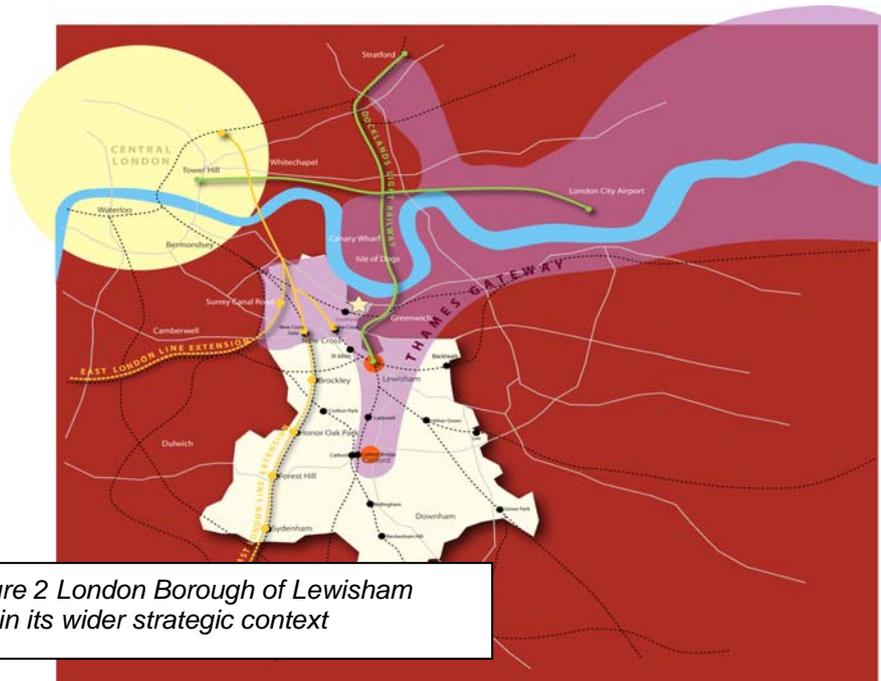


Figure 2 London Borough of Lewisham within its wider strategic context

- 1.3 Lewisham is located within the catchment of the river Ravensbourne and its tributaries (Quaggy, Pool, Spring Brook), which flow to the river Thames and provides a green corridor through the centre of the borough. The land adjoining these rivers falls within an area of flood risk and at least one-fifth of all residential and non-residential properties (21,000) in the borough are at some risk of flooding, although flood defences, including the Thames Barrier, protect most of the borough.

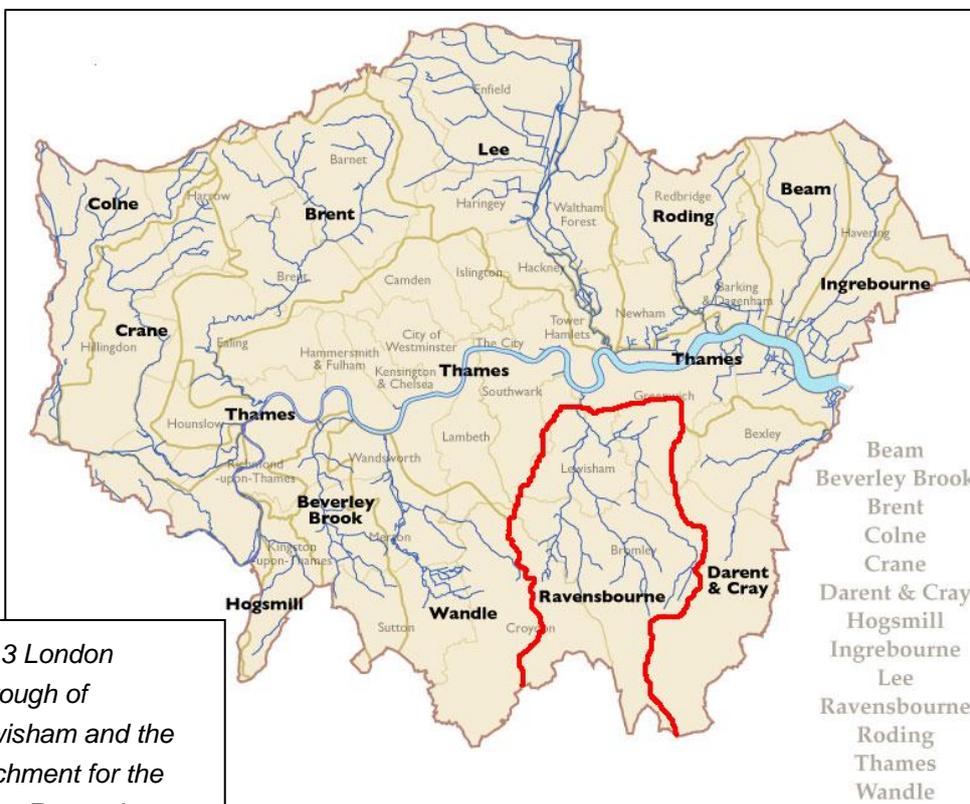
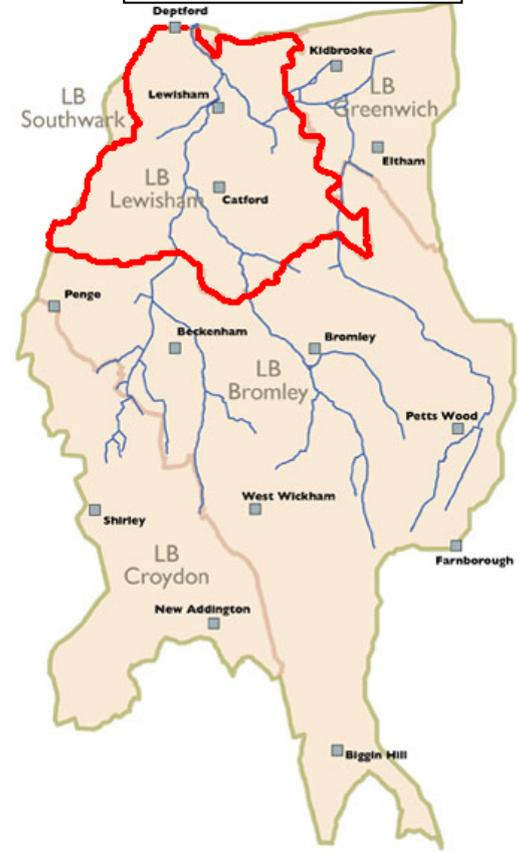


Fig 3 London Borough of Lewisham and the catchment for the River Ravensbourne

- 1.4 The Ravensbourne catchment is 180 square kilometres in size; the Ravensbourne River 18 kilometres long and passes through four Greater London local government areas (Lewisham, Greenwich, Bromley and Croydon).
- 1.5 In the 1960s and 1970s the river was placed in concrete channels and underground culverts to address flooding and as a result it is the most 'engineered' river in Greater London. Recent works over the past 20 years have sought to naturalise the river and improve its environmental quality.
- 1.6 There have been seven (?) river restoration projects completed along the River Ravensbourne and its tributaries in the last 20 years. This includes work carried out along the River Quaggy at Chinbrook Meadows in 2002, which recreated the natural floodplain to use as a storage area to alleviate flooding, and reintroduced native flora and fauna to promote natural channel processes and make the area attractive. Another example is Ladywell Fields in 2008 where the watercourse was restored to a more natural state, the quality of habitats for wildlife increased and an attractive space for the public to use in this urban environment created.

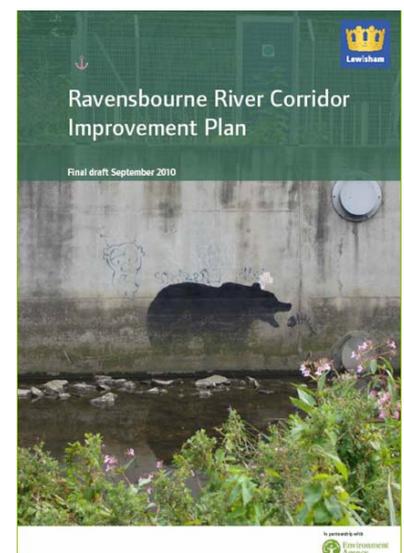
Fig 4 Ravensbourne catchment



**1.7 Current river corridor management processes**

To address these issues, and to support and promote the river naturalisation works completed to date, LB Lewisham in conjunction with the Environment Agency for England and Wales (EA) published a Ravensbourne River Corridor Improvement Plan (RRCIP) in September 2010. The RRCIP is the guiding document used to inform proposals for works to and along the river corridor. Design guidance and key issues for consideration are provided along with a guiding vision to bring the Ravensbourne back to the heart of Lewisham whilst reducing flood risk. The RRCIP seeks to use opportunities from regeneration and positive planning to:

*Bring the Ravensbourne River back to the heart of Lewisham, becoming a distinctive and attractive focal point that brings together not only wildlife but also local communities, promoting healthy living whilst reducing flood risk and the impacts of climate change.*



By working in partnership with stakeholders the following objectives will help deliver the vision:

- enhance and maintain the unique image and identity of the Ravensbourne
- reduce and manage flood risk and deal with a changing climate
- ensure an attractive, safe and secure river corridor for people and wildlife.

1.8 The RRCIP assesses the river environment from Catford to the River Thames at Deptford. The environment is characterised by areas of open space (parkland) as well as more urban areas where significant development is proposed. The plan identifies how development and local initiatives can enhance its quality while contributing to the objectives of flood alleviation. The overall requirement is that all works along the river corridor are to be of the highest quality and ensure that amenity issues are a guiding factor in all works rather than just engineer-led proposals.

1.9 There have been seven river restoration projects completed along the River Ravensbourne and its tributaries in the last 20 years. These include projects conducted at Ladywell Fields in 2008 and 2011 to restore the watercourse to a more natural state, increase the quality of habitats for wildlife and create an attractive space for the public to use in this urban environment. Another example is the work carried out along the River Quaggy at Chinbrook Meadows in 2002. This project recreated the natural floodplain to use as a storage area to alleviate flooding, and reintroduced native flora and fauna to promote natural channel processes and make the area attractive.

## 2. ROLES OF ORGANISATIONS

### 2.1 London Borough of Lewisham

LB Lewisham is the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and lead partner for the ERCIP project. In its role as LPA, Lewisham is responsible for determining planning applications in the borough and preparing local statutory planning policy documents that are used in the assessment of relevant planning applications, including those located along the river corridor. For the ERCIP project LBL will be responsible for and contribute to:

- leading on the preparation of a river corridor improvement plan for the borough using the RRCIP as a starting point
- working with the EA to ensure key issues are included within the plan
- undertaking public consultation events with the EA to ensure local community and other stakeholder involvement and support and
- taking the plan to adoption.

### 2.2 Environment Agency (EA)

The EA for England and Wales is an Executive non-departmental public body responsible to the UK Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

and a Welsh Government Sponsored Body responsible to the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development. The EA plays a central role in delivering the environmental priorities of central government and the Welsh Government through its functions and roles. The principal aims of the EA are to protect and improve the environment for people and wildlife, and to promote sustainable development. This includes:

- acting to reduce climate change and its consequences
- protecting and improve water, land and air
- working with people and communities to create better places
- reducing the risks from flooding and the impact of floods on people, households, businesses and communities.

2.2.1 The EA is a statutory consultee in the planning process. This includes the preparation of LPA plans and supporting documentation as well as individual planning applications and schemes where land is located within 8 metres of a water body and/or high risk flood zones. Its comments and decisions are binding on a LPA and an applicant. For the ERCIP project the EA will be responsible for and contribute to:

- working with Lewisham on the preparation of a plan to ensure its responsibilities are covered and key requirements incorporated into the plan
- undertaking public consultation events with LBL to ensure local community and other stakeholder involvement and support
- raising awareness and seeking compliance of the plan within the EA whenever works are proposed along the river corridor
- taking a proactive approach to delivering local Water Framework Directive and Floods Directive targets through continued partnership working
- sharing the positive approach in Lewisham other EA planning teams nationally as good practice and promoting links with other 'river based' EU projects such as RESTORE.

### 2.3 Inter-relationships

Both partners will look to promote their work and statutory responsibilities through the ERCIP project. The partnership with the EA will continue to ensure LB Lewisham can effectively impact regional policy. The LB Lewisham Planning Service, hold regular meetings with the EA and worked together to produce the existing RRCIP, which provides a direct route into shaping and influencing local policy decisions. It will also provide a stronger policy document to ensure those proposing works are clear of the specific requirements that apply to their land as well as those applicable to the wider river corridor.

### 3. Technical Problems – What are the main reasons for developing an RCIP in your region?

#### 3.1 Main issues to address through project

The RRCIP provides the evidence base for adopted relevant statutory local planning policies set out in the Lewisham Core Strategy (the name of the local planning policy document) and also forms an action from the Environment Agency's Thames Catchment Flood Management Plan to successfully manage flood risk. However, the RRCIP is not itself a statutory document. The following will be addressed through the ERCIP project:

- widening the coverage of the plan to ensure it applies to all rivers within Lewisham e.g. Quaggy and Pool - currently it only applies to the River Ravensbourne, not its tributaries
- exploring ways to extend the ERCIP to the wider catchment and neighbouring local authorities
- providing more site specific design advice and requirements for key areas along the river corridors
- providing more technical river restoration / naturalisation advice and identification of short, medium and long term priorities, including funding
- specifically address issues arising from the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and Floods Directive
- preparing the document within the formal planning policy framework – so that it is prepared with public involvement and consultation, and can then be adopted through the formal planning process.
- listening to local communities and groups ideas and feedback from across the Catchment to inform the plan
- ensuring the ERCIP remains 'live' and can be adapted and refreshed depending on local circumstances, environmental and flood risk evidence – it should be regularly updated to include good practice sites and ways of working
- exploring ways to create a regular 'Rivers Forum' for the diverse range of groups and local communities involved in activities across the Ravensbourne catchment to co-ordinate approaches and deliver maximum environmental, social and economic outcomes.

3.2 In doing so, Lewisham will be dealing with the complex interests of environmental protection and enhancement; flood risk and food defence/alleviation; and housing provision, which will see a government target of 10,000 new homes needing to be built by 2021, most of which is to be located within an area at significant risk of flooding.

### 4. Aims Of Project Interventions

4.1 In order to address the abovementioned issues it will be essential to strengthen the current co-operative working relationship between LB Lewisham and the EA. The first step is to agree the scope of the plan, its relationship to other plans and

programmes and a timetable for preparation. Part of the process will involve setting up a project group with representatives from both organisations to manage the timely preparation of the plan.

- 4.2 There will need to be an understanding of what the development opportunities are along the borough's river corridors to identify where interventions are likely to take place and what these interventions are likely to be. This will also involve the identification of areas for protection and enhancement and of site specific methods to address river naturalisation or embankment improvement. This will initially be done by staff at LBL the EA and be subject to public consultation and comment.
- 4.3 Within LB Lewisham the following departments will need to be involved.
- Planning Policy
  - Development Management
  - Conservation and Urban Design
  - Environment, Green Scene (Parks and Gardens)
- 4.4 Within the EA the following departments will need to be involved.
- Sustainable Places (Planning team)
  - Environment Investment Team
  - Partnership & Strategic Overview (Flood risk management).
- 4.5 Wider involvement will need to include a range of community groups and individuals with an interest in the river corridor, environment and Lewisham's parks. Land owners along the river corridor and developers will also need to be involved. The expectations of each group will need to be considered and managed with a primary objective being to understand and agree a long term goal for the improvement of the river corridor.

## 5. Who Needs To Be Involved?

In addition to the Environment Agency (Section 2.2) who are responsible for managing water quality and flood risk across England there are a number of other regional and local organisations with an interest in the river Ravensbourne.

- 5.1 London Boroughs of Greenwich, Bromley and Croydon: the river Ravensbourne flows through these boroughs.
- 5.2 Thames 21: An NGO with responsibility for organising local river clean ups and community events as well as chairing the newly formed Catchment Improvement Group for the Ravensbourne which includes most of the organisations in this list as members.
- 5.3 London Wildlife Trust: A charity that focus on protecting wildlife and wildspaces.
- 5.4 QWAG  
QWAG is a local volunteer environmental group, which aims to help protect and raise awareness of the River Quaggy.

- 5.5 GLA – provides regional policies and guidance such as the London Plan, the London Rivers Action Plan, the Mayor of London's Better Green and Water Spaces.

## 6. Methodological Approach to Reaching Goals

- 6.1 LB Lewisham has already taken the initiative with the EA to respond to the challenge of considering the future potential and threats of its rivers in a multi-disciplinary and integrated way by producing the RRCIP. The plan responds to the European Water Framework Directive and regional guidance such as The London Rivers Action Plan and the Mayor of London's Better Green and Water Spaces by translating European and regional objectives to locally specific conditions, accepting that the river has a significant role to play in Lewisham's social, environmental and economic development.
- 6.2 The two organisations would like to prepare a river corridor plan with firm statutory weight that applies to all of the borough's rivers. The goal is that by the end of the ERCIP project a draft plan has been prepared and publically consulted and agreement is reached between the LB Lewisham and the EA on a final plan that can then be adopted by the Council as a Supplementary Planning Document under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act.
- 6.3 The issues that need to be addressed and solved to reach this goal are outlined below.

### Year 1 Agree scope and content of the SPD

- Preliminary / informal consultation with the community and interested groups
- Identification of short, medium and long term priorities
- LBL and EA officers start plan preparation

### Year 2 Preparation of a draft plan

- Technical input into the plan by LBL and EA officers
- On-going involvement with the community and interested groups

### Year 3 Public consultation of the draft SPD

- Adoption or at least a final plan that is ready for adoption

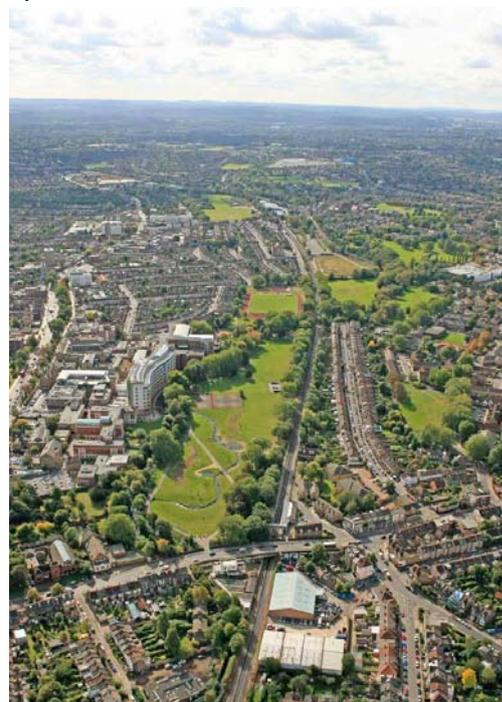
## 6.4 Issues

### 6.4.1 Local

- agree the scope of content
- community engagement and establishing/building relationships
- ensure right level of detail (site vs. wider river corridor)

### 6.4.2 Regional

- conformity with the London Plan



- integration with a range of Mayoral studies and strategies
- implementation of the London Rivers Action Plan
- integration with Thames River Basin Management Plan
- integration with Catchment Flood Management Plan

#### 6.4.3 National

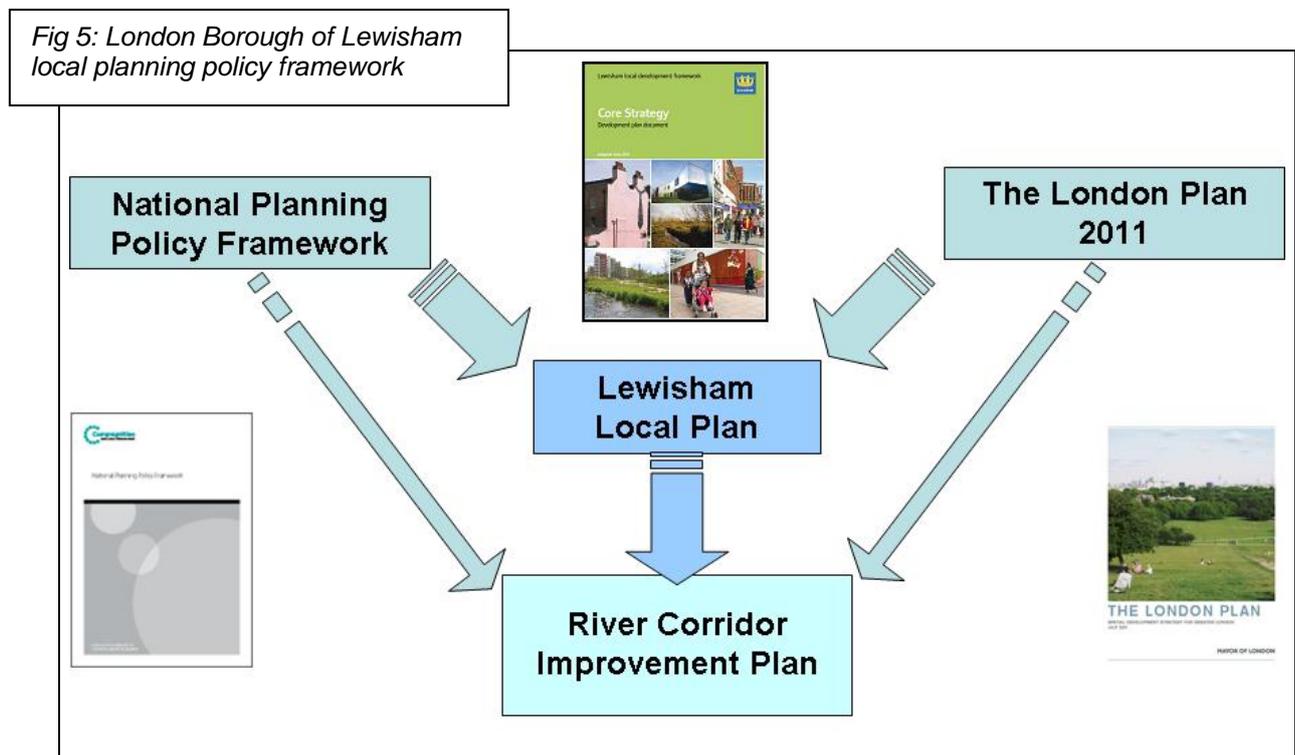
- compliance with the National Planning Policy Framework
- implementation of EA objectives
- integration with Thames River Basin Management Plan

#### 6.4.4 EU

- compliance and implementation of the WFD and Floods Directive
- compliance with a range of other Directives such as undertaking a Sustainability Environmental Assessment

## 7. Legal Framework Within Each Country/Region

7.1 The preparation of a Lewisham river corridor improvement plan will be known as a supplementary planning document (SPD) as its content is supplementary to the primary statutory local plan called the Core Strategy. The SPD will need to reflect national policy, be in general conformity with the London Plan (regional policy) as well as implementing the Lewisham Core Strategy.



## 7.2 National

7.2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the government planning policies for England and how they are expected to be applied. It applies to all local authorities and must be taken into account in the preparation of local plans and the assessment of planning applications. The focus of the NPPF is on a *presumption in favour of sustainable development* and positive growth, which is based on 12 core planning principles that should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking.

7.2.2 The EA has published the Thames River Basin Management Plan. This covers all the waterbodies within London. It includes actions, which aim to improve their ecological status and potential. This is an action to implement the Water Framework Directive.

## 7.3 Regional

7.3.1 At the regional level, the London Plan is the overall strategic plan for London. It sets out an integrated economic, environmental, transport and social framework for the development of the capital to 2031. It forms part of the development plan for each local authority in Greater London. A legal requirement is the need for London boroughs' local plans to be in general conformity with the London Plan, and its policies guide decisions on planning applications by councils and the Mayor of London.

7.3.2 The London Plan establishes the Blue Ribbon Network which is London's strategic network of waterspaces. Within Lewisham this includes the Ravensbourne and Quaggy rivers. The Blue Ribbon Network is multi-functional. It provides a transport corridor, drainage and flood management, a source of water, discharge of treated effluent, a series of diverse and important habitats, green infrastructure, heritage value, recreational opportunities and important landscapes and views. The starting point for consideration of development and use of the Blue Ribbon Network and the land alongside it must be the water. The water is the unique aspect and consideration must initially be given to how it can be used, maintained and improved.

## 7.4 Local

7.4.1 The principal statutory planning document is the Lewisham Core Strategy and this is known as a 'local plan'. The Core Strategy implements national and regional policy and the preparation of any subsequent additional plans at the local level needs to implement the Core Strategy objectives and policies.

7.4.2 The RCIP will support the Core Strategy as it will provide supplementary policy that is more detailed than that contained in the Core Strategy in order to provide site specific information. The SPD will need to be subject to consultation with various statutory authorities, interested groups and the wider community. Its preparation will also need to be accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal incorporating a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

7.4.3 The process for preparing a SPD is shown below. Certain stages are inter-related.

- Engagement with EA and LBL staff
- Establish scope of project and prepare sustainability appraisal scoping report
- Preliminary / informal consultation with community and interested groups
- Identification of short, medium and long term priorities
- Scoping report sent to statutory consultees
- Prepare draft SPD and sustainability appraisal of the SPD
- Further informal consultation with community and interested groups
- Finalise draft SPD for formal public consultation
- Report to Lewisham Mayor and Cabinet and Council to approve for public consultation
- Consult on the draft SPD
- Review consultation comments
- Internal review by LBL and EA officers
- Feedback and further consultation with community and interested groups
- Prepare final SPD
- Report to Lewisham Mayor and Cabinet and Council for adoption
- Publish adopted SPD

## 8. Target Groups for the 'Plan'

The RCIP will be a statutory planning document prepared under relevant planning legislation and government policy and adopted by the Council. It will provide general and specific design requirements for land and activities along Lewisham's river corridors. The plan is aimed primarily at those who wish to undertake development activities along the river corridor (private developers and the EA) and as such it is a technical document. However, a summary document or pamphlet can be prepared to promote its key messages for a wider audience.

## 9. Vision For The ERCIP

### 9.1 Format

ERCIP will provide best practice examples on how to manage a range of activities along a river corridor in an urban, semi-urban and rural environment as well as the key lessons learnt from this ERCIP project itself. The ERCIP, as a minimum, would include information relating to the following matters.

- How to establish, manage and maintain a co-ordinated approach to river corridor management
- Technical river restoration / naturalisation advice
- How to identify and agree short, medium and long term priorities
- Funding options to ensure implementation
- How to consult and engage with a diverse range of groups and local communities involved in activities across catchments to co-ordinate approaches and deliver maximum environmental, social and economic outcomes

- Guidance on how to address issues arising from the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and Floods Directive.

9.1.2 It is crucial that the ERCIP remains 'live' and can be adapted and refreshed responding to policy changes – it should be regularly updated to include good practice sites and ways of working. This may mean a web-based document/tool rather than a hard copy document.

## 9.2 Contribution

LB Lewisham and the EA will provide knowledge and experience on the practical aspects of developing and delivering a jointly owned local river corridor improvement plan using the RRCIP. Knowledge and experience will also cover:

- community consultation and engagement
- implementation of EU directives within the planning and environmental fields and
- application of EU, national and regional policy within an English context.

## 9.3 Benefits

An ERCIP will provide a clear framework for the river corridor. An agreed vision will set out the expectations and requirements for the range of activities that occur along the river corridor. It can address in a co-ordinated manner the complex interests of environmental protection and enhancement, flood risk and food defence/alleviation, housing provision and other development pressures, and recreation and leisure needs and demands, that take place in an urban setting subject to significant risk of flooding.

This report has been compiled by the UK ERCIP partners. For further information please contact Paul Chapman at: [paul.chapman@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:paul.chapman@lewisham.gov.uk)

Please visit: [www.ercip.eu](http://www.ercip.eu) or ERCIP on Facebook for further information, project news and updates.

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