

3.0 THE OLD OAK NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA – DEMOGRAPHY AND SPATIAL CHARACTERISTICS

3.1 Until a few years ago, very few people outside the rail industry used the name ‘Old Oak’ for a part of London. ‘Old Oak Common’ has been a historic name applied to tracts of railway land and rail depots adjoining the Grand Union Canal and has come into wider use in recent years as the location for the HS2/Elizabeth Line interchange now under construction.

3.1. Since the original vision of Old Oak was published in 2015, there have been major changes to OPDC’s plans. One of the concerns of the Forum is the continuation of claims that the area will have *unprecedented connectivity* and that OOC station will act as *catalyst* in creating an area *which will surely be one of London’s most exciting areas in which to live, work and play*¹. In the form now being modified, few local people are persuaded that the OPDC Local Plan will deliver this future vision.

3.2 As of 2021, a significant proportion of the existing residential population within the OPDC boundary lives within the four residential enclaves within the OONA. North Acton (a separate area) is seeing rapid growth in population.

3.3. This neighbourhood plan addresses the character and needs of each area within the OONA as series of separate brief chapters. Details of the history of each area are given in each chapter.

3.4 Running from north to south these five component parts of the Old Oak neighbourhood are

- The Wesley Estate
- The streets of Railway Cottages off Old Oak Lane (often known as the TITRA area or the Island Site)
- Atlas Road junction
- Midland Terrace and Shaftesbury Gardens, off Victoria Road
- Wells House Road

3.5 A new designation application is being submitted to the OPDC in early 2021, to extend the boundaries of the area designated in 2017 and to include the major sites at Atlas Road and at Channel Gate. If this application is supported at consultation stage and approved by OPDC, this sub-area would be called ‘Atlas Town’ rather than ‘Atlas Junction’.

3.6 The area around the Atlas Road roundabout saw in 2016 the arrival of the Collective, a major co-living development of 700 privately rented studio units aimed at ‘New Londoners’. This building alone has added significantly to the current residential population in the neighbourhood area. Other potential developments are noted in each relevant chapter.

3.7 The map overleaf (Figure 6) shows the boundary of the Old Oak neighbourhood area, as designated by OPDC.

3.8 A detailed study of the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the Old Oak neighbourhood area (OONA) has been undertaken by the consultancy Navigus, to a brief prepared by the Forum. The resultant document forms a significant part of the evidence base for this neighbourhood plan.

¹ Terminology from Boris Johnson Mayor of London’s foreword to the 2015 OAPF for Old Oak and Park Royal.

3.9 Based on 2011 Census data, the population of the OONA was at that date 2,140 persons. Compared with the surrounding OPDC area, the neighbourhood has a somewhat higher proportion of older people - 8% were aged 65 or over in the OONA compared to 6% across the OPDC area. This however remains below the wider London average of 11% (see Figure 2.1). This also shows that the profile of children, young people and families, i.e. ages 0 to 44, are in line with the London average.

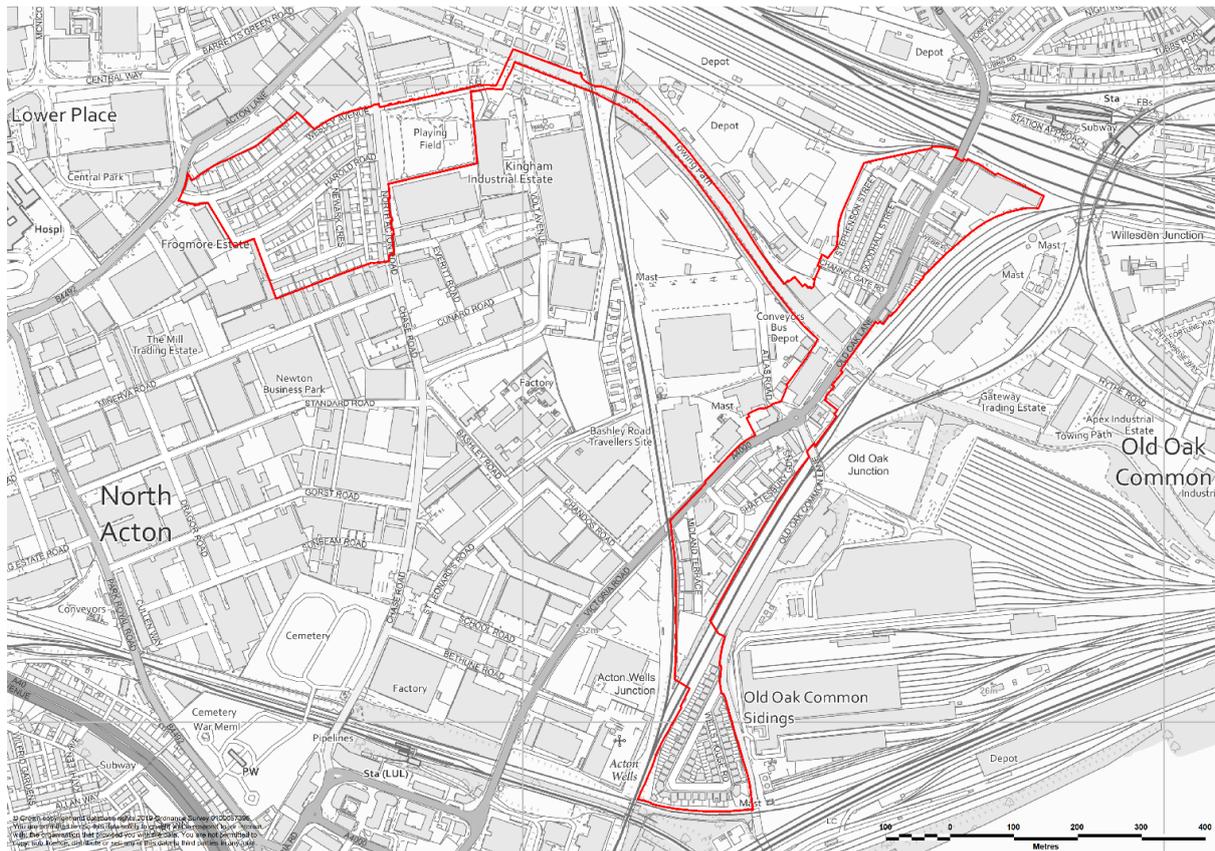


Figure 6 boundary of the Old Oak designated neighbourhood shown in red

3.10 The opening of the Collective building has added a significant number of residents to this 2011 total, most of whom are in the 23-30 age group. This will have counterbalanced the slight preponderance of older people in the area in 2011. It will also have impacted on the historic slow growth in population in the area between 2001 and 2011 compared with the rest of London (only 8%).

3.11 GLA population projections have been disaggregated to the OONA level. Projections predict increased population of all age groups. In particular, strong growth is forecast up to 2036 in the age groups covering 20-64, i.e. those of working age. Despite this growth in people of ‘family age’, the population of children and young people (ages 0 to 19 and particularly ages 10 to 19) is not forecast to grow much and is expected to flatline by 2036. This suggests that the population of working age will be forming households that have fewer children.

3.12 A very strong and sustained growth of people in the earlier period of retirement, i.e. 65 to 84 years of age was also forecast in the Navigus research. Whether this trend will come about remains to be seen. The impact of disruption from HS2 works (which extend well beyond the station site

itself) mean that those relocating to the area, whether housebuyers or renters) will experience negative environmental effects for a decade.

3.13 The area has long experienced pollution. The OONA scoping research (see Evidence Base) gave details of the concentration of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) recorded in the air in 2016. The legal annual limit is 40 micrograms per cubic metre (µg/m³). This shows that the whole OPDC and surrounding area is close to – or possibly above – the legal limit. Within the OONA, there are levels which are above the legal limit along the main vehicular routes of Victoria Road and Old Oak Common Lane. This is most pronounced along the route to the north of the junction of these two roads.

3.14 The key message from a comprehensive analysis of data on the OONA are

- There has been moderate growth in the OONA working age population and strong growth in this group is forecast to 2050.
- Strong growth of ‘younger retirees’ (65-84) is forecast to 2050.
- The health of residents in the OONA is generally good and has been improving.
- Air pollution is an issue along the main road routes in the OONA.
- Crime levels are relatively low in the OONA.

3.15 The physical fabric of each of the residential communities including the nature of the housing stock is specific to each small area and is described in the relevant chapter of this neighbourhood plan.

VISION AND OVERALL OBJECTIVES OF THE OLD OAK NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

3.16 The Forum’s updated vision for the 22 hectares of the OONA reflect its location lying at the heart of what OPDC now refers to as the ‘Western Lands’. When this neighbourhood area was originally designated by OPDC, it was seen as part of a transitional zone between the industrial/commercial area of Park Royal and what was then proposed by the Development Corporation as a ‘high-density transit-oriented’ zone at Old Oak North and South.

3.17 The resultant ‘vision’ for the neighbourhood area (as published by the Forum in a first version of this plan in late 2019) was based on these assumptions, which effectively vanished overnight as a result of the Inspector’s findings in September 2019,.

3.18 The OPDC’s ‘change of direction’ in November 2019 and its proposed modifications have now placed the neighbourhood area at the heart of the OPDC’s new focus on the ‘Western Lands’. This was never expected by either the OPDC or by the Forum. Hence the proposals for an extended boundary which would allow for a more coherent neighbourhood plan area.

3.19 The vision for the neighbourhood has needed to be rethought as a consequence. Because the availability of any sites for new development has always been very limited, within the tight neighbourhood boundary drawn up in 2017 by OPDC planning officers, the site allocations and new policies in this neighbourhood plan have from the start been heavily constrained.

3.20 Our specific proposals for the sub-areas of the Wesley Estate, the Railway Cottages, Midland Terrace/Shafesbury Gardens, and Wells House Road have therefore changed little to what was

included in the first draft of our plan. But the position for OONA sub-area 3 at Atlas Junction is now very different.

3.20 The level of ambition of this neighbourhood plan now depends entirely on eventualities beyond the Forum's control. Should OPDC agree to the idea of extending the boundary and a 'Plan B' being worked up for 'Atlas Town', to take effect if OPDC's 'Plan A' comes unstuck, a final version of this neighbourhood plan could play a major part in setting site allocations and policies. This scenario would come about in circumstances which could otherwise leave this area in a planning void, with no OPDC or LB Ealing Local Plan to guide development.

3.21 Hence we have modified the overall 'vision' for our neighbourhood plan as follows:

To respond to a planning context in which either a 'major new town centre' or a significant 'neighbourhood hub' is created at Atlas Road/Channel Gate, and to achieve successful integration of the surrounding existing residential enclaves. To create a coherent neighbourhood that offers the quality of life of many of London's 'urban villages'. A new 'Atlas Town' will offer the job opportunities, housing, and all amenities that Londoners need within a 10-15 minute walking distance, and which respects the urban grain and built form that exists at present.

3.22 OPDC Policy P8 in the 19.2 OPDC Draft Local Plan reads *Old Oak Lane and Old Oak Common Lane will be a place that sensitively integrates transport routes, existing neighbourhoods and new development. It will be a place that mediates between the comprehensive redevelopment of Old Oak and the industrial intensification in Park Royal and Channel Gate.* This previously intended role of 'mediation' or 'transition' between Park Royal and Old Oak will no doubt change in the 2021 modifications yet to be published in any detail.

3.23 Whatever new OPDC 'vision' emerges for the Western Lands and Atlas Junction, this will only command support amongst the existing communities in the area if it based on well planned integration with the longstanding residential enclaves currently in place. The imposition of building typologies and housing densities completely alien to the area is no more likely to achieve a successful and sustainable local community than was the case for failed examples of post war comprehensive redevelopment.

3.24 Building on the above overall vision for this neighbourhood plan, ten more specific objectives have been set as below. The Plan aims to fulfil these objectives wherever possible, through site allocations, non-strategic planning policies, and supplementary design codes where these will prove effective.

Objective 1 ***To integrate successfully the existing residential enclaves within the designated neighbourhood boundary, within a 'walkable neighbourhood' that meets the majority of needs of local residents in terms of shops, services, health care and other facilities.***

Objective 2 ***To establish a vibrant and successful neighbourhood centre at Atlas Road Junction***

Objective 3 ***To enhance the public realm and quality of open spaces especially in these underperforming areas***

- ***Wesley Playing Fields***
- ***Grand Union Canal towpaths***
- ***Midland Terrace/Shafesbury Gardens***

Objective 4 *To deliver an allocation of new housing that reflects development capacity within the neighbourhood area, commensurate with London Plan policies on Good Growth and Building Heights.*

Objective 5 *To ensure that new development encourages pedestrian and cycle movement and modal shift to sustainable form of transport.*

Objective 6 *To provide locally specific conservation policies for the neighbourhood, protecting heritage while reflecting contemporary lifestyles in the potential for adaptation of homes.*

Objective 7 *To mitigate adverse impacts on environmental quality, including air quality, arising from construction activity and works to the local transport network.*

Objective 8 *To widen and improve the range of local shopping, health and social facilities in the area, encouraging building owners to make use of E class premises to meet changing local needs and demands in a post 2020 London.*

Objective 9 *to ensure that new development within the OONA meets high standards of quality of urban design, meets 2019 National Design Guidance, and is sensitive to the character, built form, height and massing of neighbouring buildings.*

Objective 10 *To reduce traffic congestion in the area, encourage modal shift towards cycling and walking and mitigate where possible the impact of HS2 construction traffic.*

3.25 These broad objectives are the basis on which specific policies and site allocations have been drawn up for each of the five smaller areas within the designated neighbourhood boundary. These policies and site allocations are set out in the five subsequent chapters of this draft neighbourhood plan. A further set of generic policies will apply across all five OONA areas.

DRAFT POLICIES APPLYING TO OONA AREAS 1-5

3.26 There are eight policies proposed in this neighbourhood plan to apply to all five of the sub-areas within the neighbourhood boundary. The context for these policies is set out in the preceding parts of this draft neighbourhood plan.

Policy OONA 1 – Housing density

a) Housing densities of new infill residential development within the neighbourhood area should reflect levels in immediately surrounding areas and the principle of ‘gentle density’ underpinning New London Plan policy D9.

b) Densities in any new housing developments above 10 units should take account of emerging policies in the OPDC Draft Local Plan, with these policies gaining significant material weight in decision-making only at post examination stage.

Reasoned justification: Policy 3.4 in the Ealing Development Management DPD states that ‘appropriate density ranges in Ealing will normally be; Central in Ealing Metropolitan Town Centre, Urban in Acton, Greenford, Hanwell and Southall Town Centres, and Suburban in the rest of the Borough’. This range of densities refers back to the 2016 London Plan Density Matrix, within which ‘Suburban’ densities ranged from 50-150 units/hectare depending on PTAL levels of the

locations involved. OONF strongly supports the planning principle that density levels should take account of access to public transport, in areas where new development will be 'car-free'.

Draft policy b) is worded as such because there can be no certainty that the proposed 'modifications' to the OPDC Local Plan, and especially the concept of a 'major new town centre' at Atlas Road/Channel Gate will prove to be found to be 'sound' at examination stage.

Policy OONA 2 – Building Heights

OONA Area 3 at Atlas Junction is recognised in this neighbourhood plan as a location appropriate for tall buildings (i.e. above the New London Plan definition of 'not be less than 6 storeys or 18 metres measured from ground to the floor level of the uppermost storey').

In other parts of the neighbourhood area new development will be resisted unless of a height and scale, mass and volume that reflects surrounding buildings.

Reasoned justification: to ensure that new development within the neighbourhood area is integrated with the urban grain of the existing residential settlements.

Policy OONA 3 – Affordable Housing

All residential developments, with the capacity to provide more than 10 self-contained units (or have a gross internal residential floorspace of more than 1,000 sqm) will be required to provide affordable housing, subject to viability, in accordance with the overarching 50% target set out in the London Plan, OPDC Local Plan, and Ealing DPD Policy 3A.

Reasoned justification: to achieve 'general conformity' with affordable housing policies in the London Plan, LB Ealing Local Plan, and OPDC Draft Local Plan.

Policy OONA 4 – Purpose built student housing

In the interest of retaining a balanced community within the OONA, to resist proposals for large and small scale student housing developments within the neighbourhood (but not co-living schemes).

Reasoned justification: North Acton, near the OONA, has seen a severe over-concentration of purpose built student housing. This does not achieve a balanced and sustainable community, and where over-concentrated at specific locations leads to a transient population with insufficient stake in long-term quality of life in the area.

Policy OONA 5 – Houses in Multiple Occupation

Where planning permission is required for change of use from residential to sui generis (more than 6 occupants in a House of Multiple Occupation) to resist proposals for HMOs within the neighbourhood area.

Reasoned justification: the construction workforce required to build the HS2/QE Line interchange is already creating unusually high demand for low cost privately rented accommodation. Coupled with planning blight this is leading to transfer of existing housing to poor quality HMO accommodation inadequately managed by landlords to the detriment of quality of life for neighbours.

Policy OONA 6 – Construction Activity

Development proposals should be designed in a way that minimises their impacts on amenity, public health and the environment through dust and emissions, light pollution, noise and vibration during deconstruction and construction. Appropriate mitigation for such impacts will be sought through the use of planning conditions, use of Construction Management Plans or section 106 agreements.

Reasoned justification: Over the neighbourhood plan period, existing residential areas within the OONA are likely to be subjected to intensive levels of construction activity. All mechanisms for mitigation of such impacts need to be applied.

Policy OONA 7 – Enabling Active Travel

New development should provide new or improve existing infrastructure and facilities which support and encourage safe active travel to assist cyclists and pedestrians and thereby encourage more cycling and walking

Reasoned justification: the existing road network in the OONA is already very congested and an objective of this neighbourhood plan is to encourage modal shift to cycling and walking.

Policy OONA 8 – Healthy Air

Development should not damage the health of the air by increasing emissions of harmful pollutants and should aim to be at least 'air quality neutral' and not cause or contribute to worsening air quality. On major development this should be demonstrated through an air quality assessment and, if necessary, proposed mitigation measures.

These eight policies are framed so as to assist the achievement of the broader objectives within this neighbourhood plan. They are considered to achieve general conformity with the strategic policies of the existing London Plan, the new London Plan, the Ealing Core Strategy/Local Plan and those policies which can legitimately be defined as 'strategic' in the OPDC Local Plan. They also take account of policies which have been accepted as meeting the 'basic conditions' for neighbourhood plans in other parts of London.

