



# Rea Valley Urban Quarter

Draft Supplementary Planning Document

May 2019





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Waterside activity  
The Waterfront Promenade, at Aker Bridge, Oslo, Norway.  
LINK Landskap.  
Image © Tomasz Majewski



# Foreword

Birmingham is undergoing a renaissance. The city is experiencing unprecedented levels of investment with major development schemes on site and extensive infrastructure improvements planned and underway.

The continued strength of the city centre is a vital part of Birmingham's ongoing renaissance and through the Big City Plan we have a clear strategy to grow the centre as an important economic hub.

As the next phase in the delivery of the Big City Plan, the Rea Valley Urban Quarter will become one of the city's most exciting and diverse regeneration areas. The quarter will see a series of mixed use neighbourhoods created, accommodating over 5,000 new homes and integrating innovative space for businesses to develop and grow.

Building on the recent announcement of Lendlease as the City Council's preferred development partner for the £1.5 billion Birmingham Smithfield redevelopment, the Rea Valley Urban Quarter can become a thriving place for families and an attractive location for local businesses.

Central to the area's future success will be the delivery of high quality infrastructure including a network of high quality public realm, green spaces and pedestrian routes. The centrepiece of this network will be a reimagined River Rea. Running through the heart of the area the River Rea will be transformed into a green corridor providing an adaptable, resilient and ecologically rich environment. Together with a rejuvenated Highgate Park these two spaces will play a key role in supporting health and well-being benefits for local communities and achieving our overall aim for improved green infrastructure in the city centre.

By publishing this Supplementary Planning Document for the Rea Valley Urban Quarter the City Council is setting out a clear vision and framework for the regeneration of 73 hectares of the city centre. We will be working closely with our key partners, including the Environment Agency, to secure significant infrastructure investment that will enable us to realise the area's full potential.

I am delighted to be launching this document for consultation as a key step forward in our plans for the city centre and the continued drive to secure the inclusive and sustainable growth of this great city.

**Councillor Ian Ward**

Leader

Birmingham City Council

*Residential street with green infrastructure  
South Gardens, London, UK.  
Gillespies.  
Image © John Sturrocks*





# 1 Introduction

Waterside regeneration featuring enhanced biodiversity, planted terraces,  
footpaths and new pedestrian bridges  
The Ram Quarter, Wandsworth, London, UK.  
EPR Architects  
Image © James Newton



The Rea Valley Urban Quarter is the next chapter in the story of Birmingham’s regeneration, capitalising on the growth to be brought about by the proposed Birmingham Smithfield development. The vision is for well-connected, liveable mixed use neighbourhoods, providing high quality residential environments alongside employment opportunities and amenities.

The approach to the Rea Valley Urban Quarter will be focussed on celebrating the River Rea. Hidden from view and unloved, the river is arguably one of Birmingham City Centre’s biggest secrets. Away from the city’s streets, running behind industrial buildings and derelict sites, the river is confined to a modest brick lined channel, far below street level. By bringing it to life and creating a sustainable solution to managing water, it will become the centre piece for one of the most exciting and unique developments in the city in recent years. The wider area will deliver new homes, jobs, infrastructure and significant environmental improvements.

The Quarter is made up of part of the area allocated in the Birmingham Development Plan (2017) as the Southern Gateway, and the area of Highgate which is directly south and east of the Southern Gateway. It excludes Birmingham Smithfield, which although part of the Southern Gateway, formed the subject of a separate master plan published in 2016.

The Southern Gateway was identified as the largest ‘Area of Transformation’ within the Big City Plan.

This Supplementary Planning Document will provide an up-to-date framework with specific guidance for the whole Rea Valley Urban Quarter. It will expand on the vision for the Southern Gateway set out in the BDP Policy GA1.2 ‘Growth and Wider Areas of Change’, and set out a broad vision for the areas within Highgate Park and

Moseley Street. It is anticipated that further detailed proposals will be brought forward in the future for the areas not part of the BDP ‘Area of Transformation’ - potentially through collaboration with a development partner.

**Purpose**  
The purpose of this SPD is to set out a vision for the area, focused around the transformation of the River Rea corridor, offering a unique waterside development in the heart of the city centre.

The transformation of the Rea Valley Urban Quarter will be supported by a range of infrastructure and services, employment opportunities, enhanced public space, green infrastructure, and improved connections to Highgate.

The SPD will provide detailed policy and design guidance for the future transformation of the area, building upon the strategic policies of the BDP. It will be a material consideration in determining planning applications.

- The SPD will specifically:
- Introduce the area and explain the policy and development context.
  - Outline the ‘Big Moves’, the delivery of which will secure the vision for the Quarter.
  - Establish the over-riding development principles which will be used to guide the future layout and design of new development - resilience, design and connectivity.
  - Identify distinctive neighbourhoods within the Quarter, within which different approaches will be taken to development, reflecting local history, character and communities.
  - Set out the broad approach to the delivery of development, partnerships and the future procurement process.

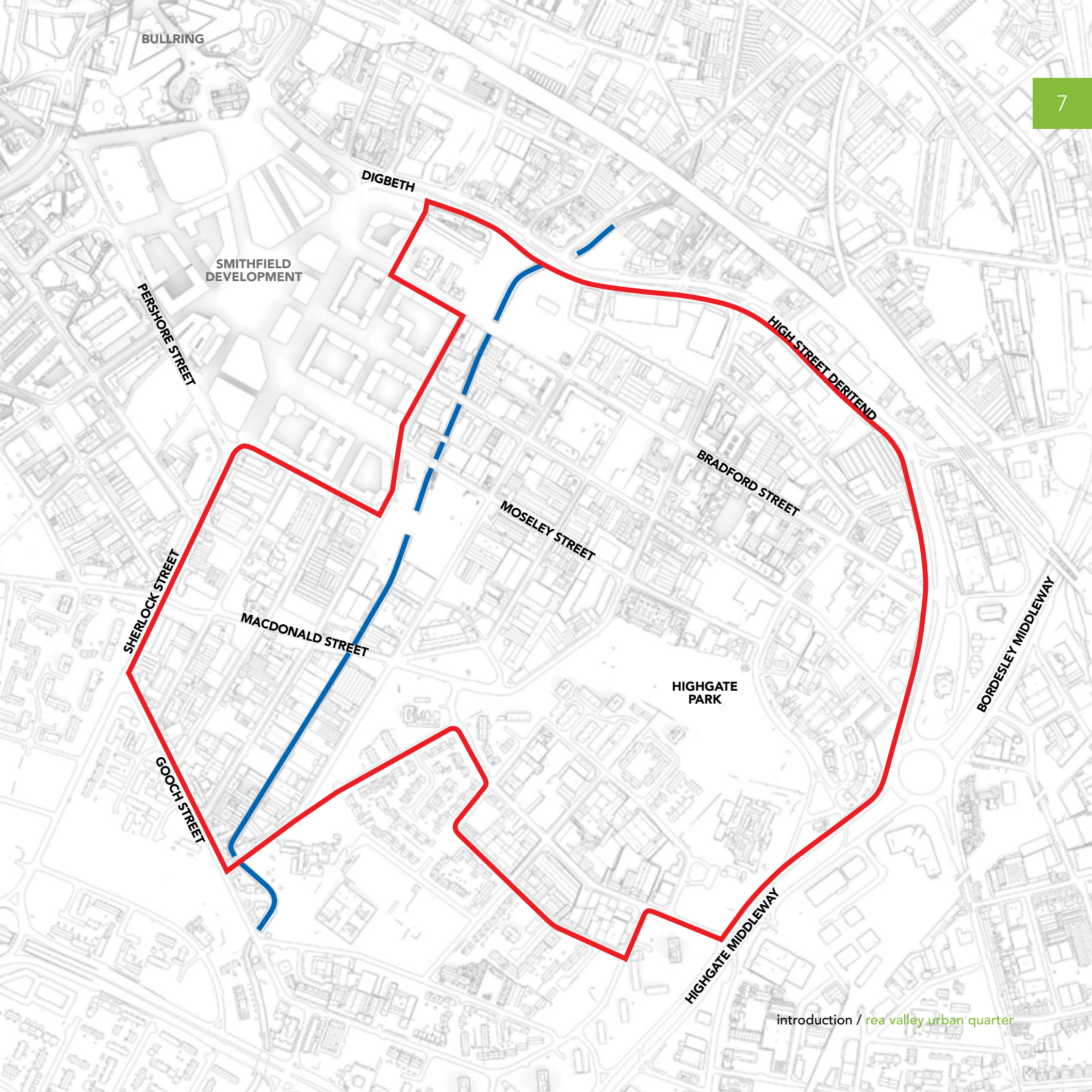
As a draft document the Council is consulting widely on the content of the SPD with the final version to be formally adopted by the City Council as supplementary guidance to the statutory Birmingham Development Plan.

PLAN 1 Boundary

- Key
- Rea Valley Urban Quarter boundary
  - River Rea



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# 2 Context

View towards the city centre across the SPD area



# Context

The Rea Valley Urban Quarter is one of Birmingham's oldest neighbourhoods, an area rich in social and industrial history.

Growing up at the crossing point of the River Rea, it is at the very heart of where Birmingham began in the 12th century. From its founding in medieval times, it became the first centre of industry in Birmingham, attracting iron merchants and skilled craftsmen to trade at its markets. A creative and industrious place at the outset, the energy and innovation which created the city hundreds of years ago is embedded in the area's DNA.

Although industrial today, the Rea Valley Urban Quarter was the product of an 18th century town planning exercise, when the Bradford Estate in Cheapside was formally laid out for housing plots. From here, a dense pattern of streets, courtyard housing, shops and pubs expanded rapidly southwards towards and over the River Rea. Then, during the 19th and 20th centuries, the area was redeveloped many times, and today it is predominantly industrial. However important local landmarks such as St Anne's Church, the Rowton Hotel, the White Swan, the Anchor and Market Tavern pubs hint at a much larger residential population in years gone by. Now, with an increasing number of residential conversions, the tide is turning again and the opportunity exists to reimagine a dense and vibrant community in the Quarter for the 21st century.

The River Rea flows north east into the Quarter from Birmingham's southern suburbs and passes in between Rea Street and Birchall Street, hidden behind buildings and car parks. Subject to grand engineering schemes in Victorian times, the deep brick lined channel has not stood the test of time. The Rea's flashy and unpredictable nature has led to Birmingham's often forgotten river producing some dramatic flood events over the last decade, holding back change and development of the area. However, with the right approach, the River Rea can become an opportunity and the catalyst for regeneration.

On the southern edge of the Quarter is Highgate Park, the first public park in Birmingham created by the Town Council and opened in 1876. It covers three hectares between Alcester Street and Moseley Road. At the top of the Rea Valley, its hillside aspect affords excellent views towards the city centre, and it has tree lined avenues and woodlands as well as children's play facilities. Although an important asset and breathing space for local communities, it is poorly connected to local housing in Cheapside and Highgate, and is in need of investment to truly reach its potential.

## PLAN 2 Context

Key

Areas of transformation





South of the park, the Rea Valley Urban Quarter includes part of the Highgate residential estate, which was developed in the 1960s as part of the post-war slum clearance programme, and this still provides valuable affordable housing today. The 1990s saw some investment, but there is a need to review the housing provision to meet changing needs, and create an improved environment for people to live which is popular, attractive and fit for the future.

The Quarter is surrounded by areas that are now experiencing unprecedented growth and investment. Following the redevelopment of New Street Station, the proposed High Speed 2 rail link is the next part of the story, with its future terminus just

five minutes' walk away. The Midland Metro, with a new stop on Digbeth, will reinvigorate public transport routes across the city.

The realisation of the Birmingham Smithfield Masterplan will provide an exciting new urban quarter that includes a new home for the city's historic Bull Ring retail markets, a unique family destination including a leisure and cultural offer, independent retail and business space, a new public square, integrated public transport and more than 2,000 homes with a public park and community facilities. The recent announcement of Lendlease as the City Council's preferred development partner for the site will now see the scheme move forward at pace. This will act as a catalyst for the wider area.

On the doorstep of the Quarter is Digbeth, an exciting creative quarter, which has become the centre for creative and digital businesses, with a unique urban and industrial character. Its distinctive retail and leisure offer has contributed to its young and vibrant scene and there is tremendous potential for it to grow. Just to the south, the charismatic and cultural district of Southside is another focus for entertainment and culture.

Despite its unique and pivotal location in the city centre, the potential of the Quarter is untapped, and areas of low intensity industrial premises make some areas feel underutilised and disconnected from the rest of the city centre.

The Rea Valley Urban Quarter has very close links with the Irish community of Birmingham, and along with Digbeth is often known as the Irish Quarter. The Irish Quarter, centred on St Anne's Church, has a long history of cultural traditions and a strong sense of community in its pubs and venues.

1



1 Bradford Court, an example of Digbeth's industrial character

2 The Market Tavern

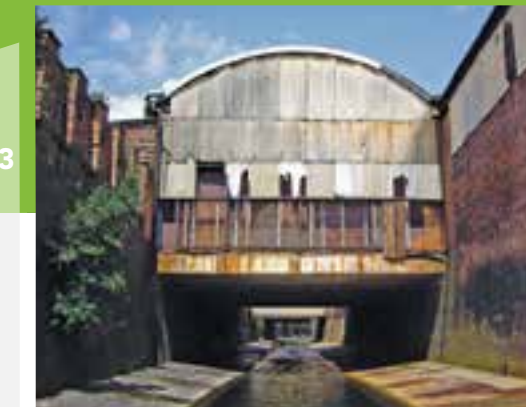
3 The culverted River Rea

4 Stratford House, one of the earliest surviving buildings within the SPD area

2



3



4



### PLAN 3 River Rea urban context

#### Key

— Main roads

— Other roads

— Water courses including River Rea

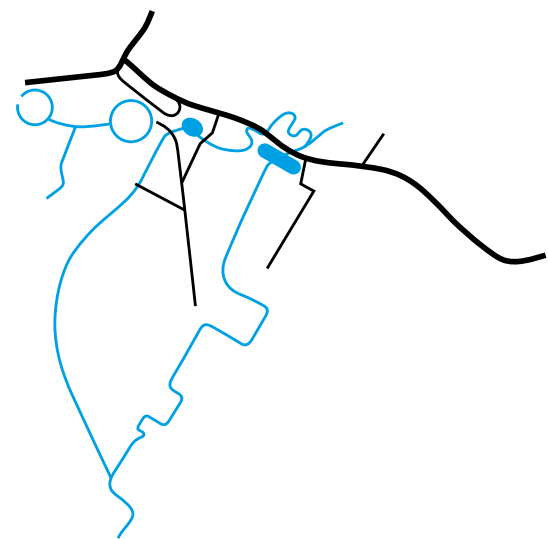
— River Rea in channel

Existing green space

Proposed green space, streets and squares

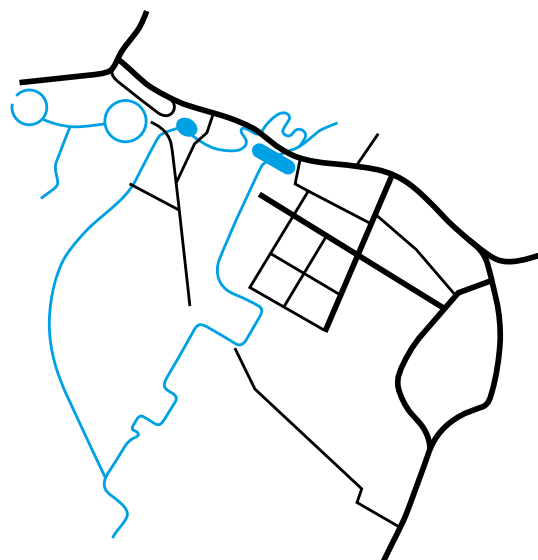
#### Medieval period until 1730

Settlement along Digbeth, river, pools, mills and meadows.



#### 1730 to 1780

Beginnings of the Bradford Estate.



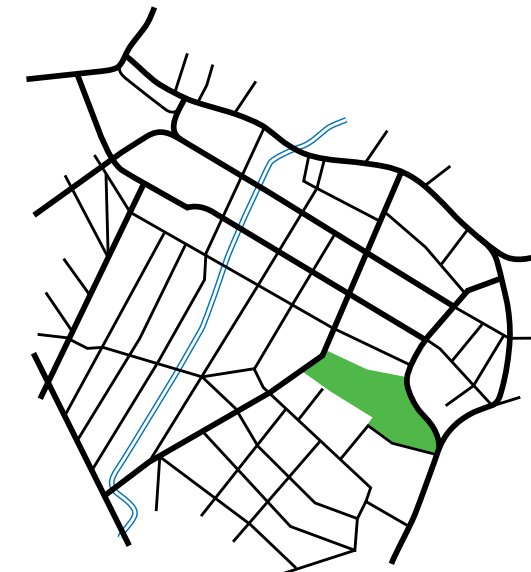
#### 1780 to 1830

Growth of Cheapside, River Rea straightened, new connections to the city centre.



#### 1830 to 1900

River Rea culverted, Highgate Park created.



#### 1900 to 2019

Industrial growth, wholesale markets, council housing.



#### 2019+ Rea Valley Urban Quarter

River transformed, streets connected, green routes, open space, mixed use communities, Birmingham Smithfield delivered.







# 3 Vision

Waterside activity  
Chicago Riverwalk, Chicago, USA.  
Sasaki Associates  
Image © Christian Phillips



# Vision

Through the creation of a series of distinctive neighbourhoods, the Rea Valley Urban Quarter will become a diverse and vibrant place to live, work and spend leisure time.

With the River Rea at its heart, a network of green routes and spaces will create a resilient environment, rich in biodiversity, promoting the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors alike. A variety of new and innovative housing types will attract a truly diverse community, which will benefit from a range of services and facilities and a dynamic mix of employment spaces.

This Vision will be secured through the delivery of a series of Big Moves and underpinned by key development principles:

## BIG MOVES

### Transforming the River Rea into a unique natural public space

A rich green and blue environment, it will be busy and attractive, overlooked by a range of active uses such as cafes, shops and bars with residential above. For the first time in over a hundred years, locals and visitors will be able to see and experience the river flowing through their city centre.

### Park Link

Forming part of a network of green routes and spaces, the Park Link will become a major pedestrian route linking Smithfield to Highgate Park.

### St David's Place

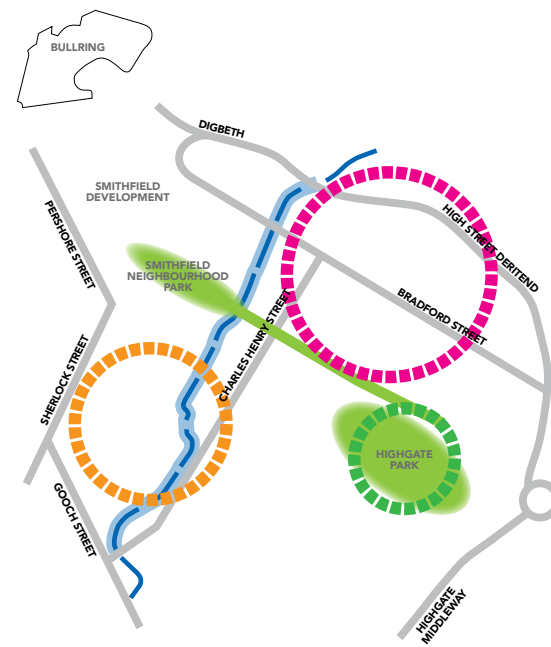
A vibrant mixed use neighbourhood, offering a mix of workspace and living in a high quality environment, around the transformed River Rea.

### Cheapside

Important local employment uses will be integrated alongside new city centre living, including a mix of apartments in new build development and converted industrial buildings.







### Highgate Park neighbourhood

Focussed around a transformed Highgate Park, this neighbourhood will become an attractive family housing area.



PLAN 4 Big moves

#### Key

-  River Rea
-  Park link
-  St David's Place residential led neighbourhood
-  Cheapside mixed use neighbourhood
-  Highgate Park
-  Major roads

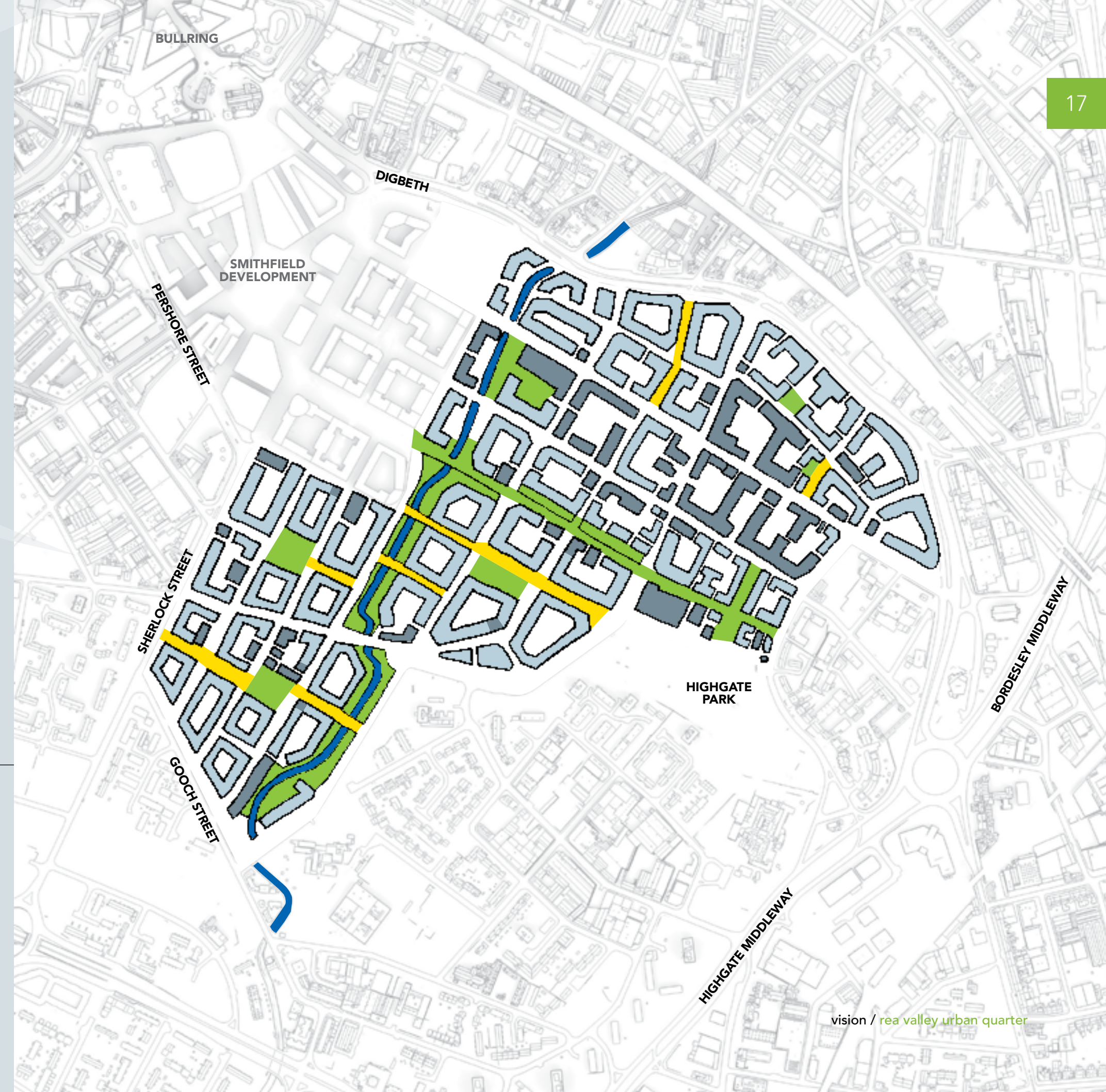
PLAN 5 Indicative layout

#### Key

-  River Rea
-  Existing buildings
-  Potential block layout
-  New connections
-  Linear park/green space



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DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

A set of development principles is central to informing the creation of a distinctive, high quality urban environment for the Rea Valley Urban Quarter.

Resilience

The Rea Valley Urban Quarter aims to adopt a pioneering approach, embedding resilience into all aspects of its regeneration. The focus, through delivery of infrastructure and development, will be to create a sustainable neighbourhood which will stand the test of time, adapting to future environmental challenges.

Design

The design of the Quarter's buildings streets and spaces, will take a 'place making' approach, focussed on delivering distinctive environments, putting the health and wellbeing of residents at its heart. The mix of uses throughout the Quarter will deliver a new sustainable residential community, supported by healthcare and education services, as well as local amenities and employment opportunities.

Connectivity

The approach to movement and accessibility will focus on promoting walking, cycling and public transport. This will mean enhancing existing streets and connections, introducing new links and legible routes, and creating a consistent and high quality public realm which is easy to understand and navigate.

1



1 High quality public realm with street facing entrances and public art  
Timekeepers Square, Salford, UK.  
Buttress Architects  
Image © Daniel Hopkinson

2



2 Green roofs used to reduce heat gain, delay water run off and improve quality of the amenity space  
Corner House, London, UK.  
DSDHA  
Image © Luca Miserocchi



3

3 Waterside terraced park contributing to flood defence and increased biodiversity  
Porter Brook Pocket Park, Sheffield, UK.  
Sheffield City Council



At the heart of the successful regeneration of the Rea Valley Urban Quarter will be the creation of an environment which is flood resilient, green, biodiverse, durable, energy efficient and adaptable to change.

### Green infrastructure

A network of green space running through the Quarter is an essential component of the overall vision. This will connect the Smithfield neighbourhood park, the River Rea corridor, Moseley Street Park Link and Highgate Park. This will then link up to the wider green infrastructure network including St Luke's, Park Central and Calthorpe Park, connecting the city centre out to the city's suburbs to the south.

As well as these strategic interventions, features at a more localised scale will include green walls, green and brown roofs, SuDS features, pocket parks and green spaces, as well as street tree planting, where space allows. Even in the highest density areas, shared private garden areas for apartments can be provided at deck level. Not only will all these elements add up to positive gains for natural capital, the green infrastructure will be multifunctional, with roles in enhancing the appearance of streets, spaces and buildings, improving air quality, delivering biodiversity benefits, providing shade and cooling, and creating places for people to enjoy. Planting should include wildlife and pollinator friendly planting, and be robust and low maintenance.



2

1 Terraced street with green infrastructure and amenity space  
University of British Columbia Public Realm, Vancouver, Canada.  
PFS Studio.  
Image © PFS Studio









2 High density planted amenity space  
One Central Park, Sydney, Australia.  
Aspect/Oculus.  
Image © Simon Wood

1



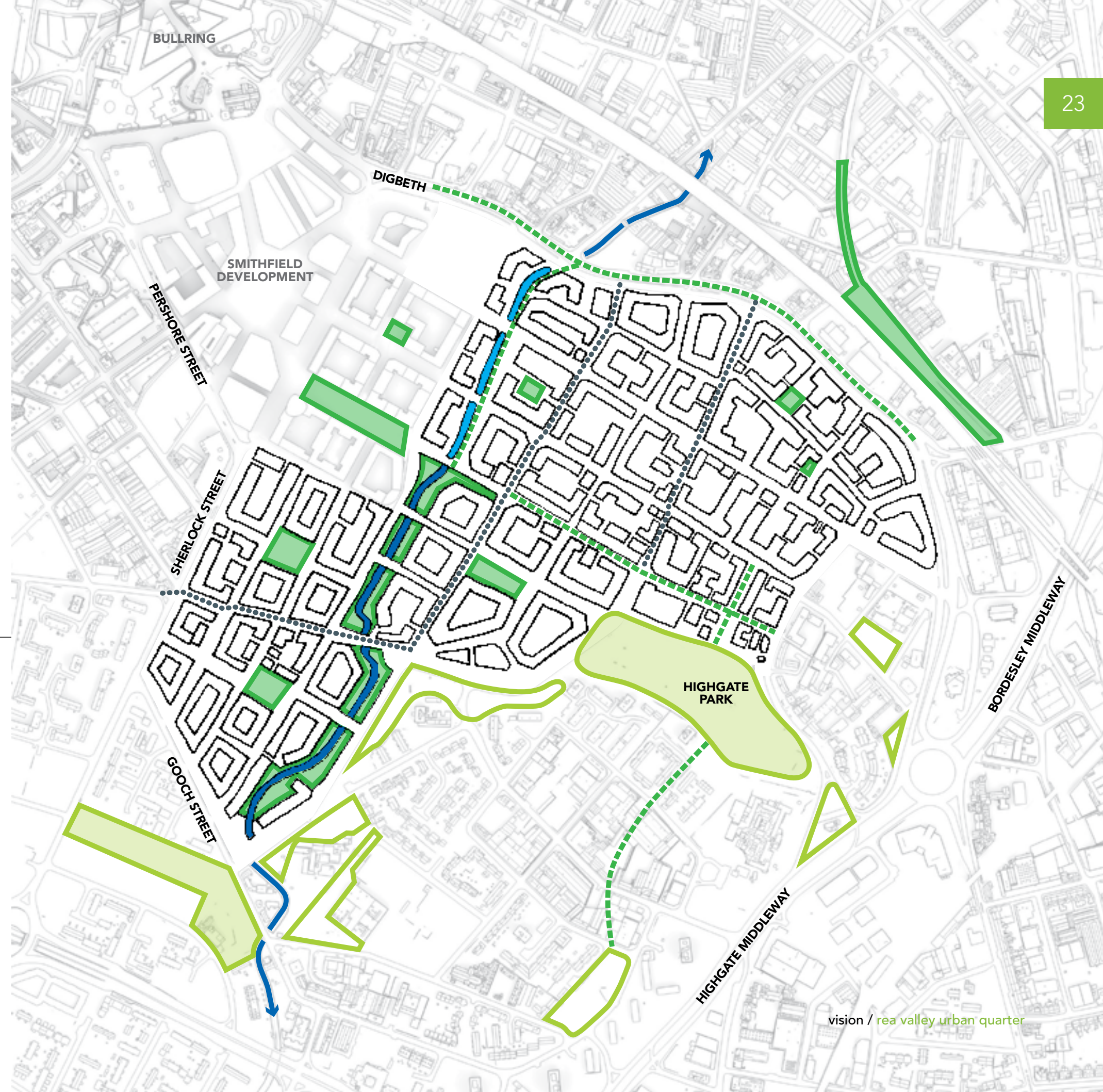
### PLAN 8 Wider green and blue infrastructure connections

#### Key

-  Existing River Rea
-  River Rea - improved water course with in channel mitigation and increased flood capacity
-  River Rea - naturalised water course
-  Existing green space
-  Existing green space to be enhanced
-  Proposed green space
-  Proposed green routes
-  Potential for local green infrastructure interventions



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### Water sensitive design

At the heart of the SPD is the need to address the current flood risk associated with the River Rea and its floodplain. A comprehensive approach is needed to enable the project to be delivered and maximise its benefits.

At the heart of the SPD is the need to address the current flood risk associated with the River Rea and its floodplain. Whilst this will require a whole catchment approach and a range of projects over a wider area, a major intervention to the Rea within the Quarter is an essential part of this package.

The Rea will be broken out of its narrow channel, restored, realigned and allowed to flow naturally within a 35 metre wide blue and green corridor. Transforming the channel will involve creating a naturalised two stage profile to increase the river's capacity by slowing water flow and allowing it to store water in times of flood. With a more sinuous course and shallow, safe, accessible banks, a natural river bed of gravels, boulders and cobbles will encourage aeration, regulate water speeds and help the formation of riffles, pools and beaches. The design will also include details such as native trees and riverside planting.

Terraces, mounding and low seating walls, integrated into the landscape design will form additional flood defences protecting nearby streets and development in times of high water flow, and building in resilience for the future.

There will be enormous biodiversity benefits. Linking the proposed park within the Smithfield development through to Balsall Heath and the green network in the south of the city, this significant new piece of green infrastructure will form a much enhanced corridor for urban wildlife and provide new habitats. It will also contribute to the city's ambitious air quality agenda and help with urban temperature regulation.

Step-free access will be provided within the new green space to ensure that it can be enjoyed by everyone. Suitable, sympathetically designed maintenance access to the river will be provided to allow upkeep and emergency works to be carried out safely.

Future climate change may increase the frequency, intensity and probability of rainfall events that could cause surface water flooding. A holistic SuDS strategy to manage on-site surface water, will ensure that buildings, streets and spaces are

protected during intense storms. A water sensitive design approach will need to be taken in all developments, and SuDS integrated into public realm interventions and projects. The Park Link will be a showcase for this, becoming Birmingham City Centre's first SuDS street. A variety of sustainable urban drainage solutions will drastically reduce the run off from highways and buildings entering the combined sewer. Features will have significant biodiversity benefits and range from attenuating rainwater planters, rain gardens, permeable paving and specially engineered tree pits. Planting will be low maintenance, with a bias towards native species and nectar rich plants. Elsewhere, new areas of green space, green roofs, and permeable surfaces will form part of the overarching SuDS strategy.

### Building sustainably

New buildings should be designed to be robust and adaptable to meet changing requirements. Sustainable design and construction needs to consider whole life costs. Ensuring that development is constructed in the most sustainable way will involve measures that reduce energy and water consumption, minimise waste and use sustainable, locally sourced building materials.



1



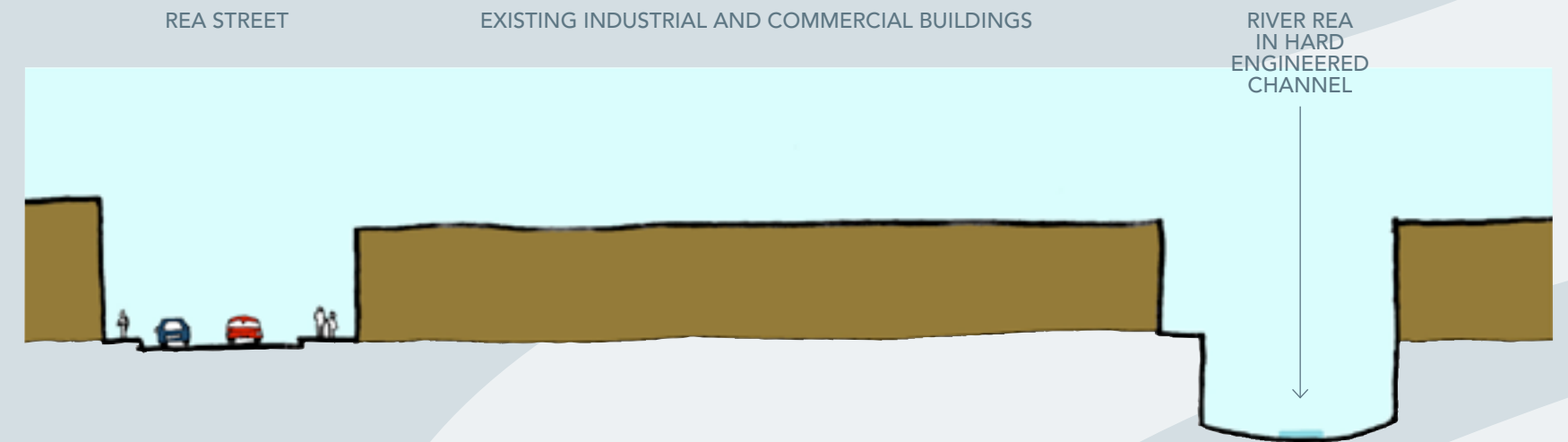
2

1 Naturalisation of the River Rea at Longbridge  
Longbridge, Birmingham, UK.  
Barton Willmore  
Image © Barton Willmore

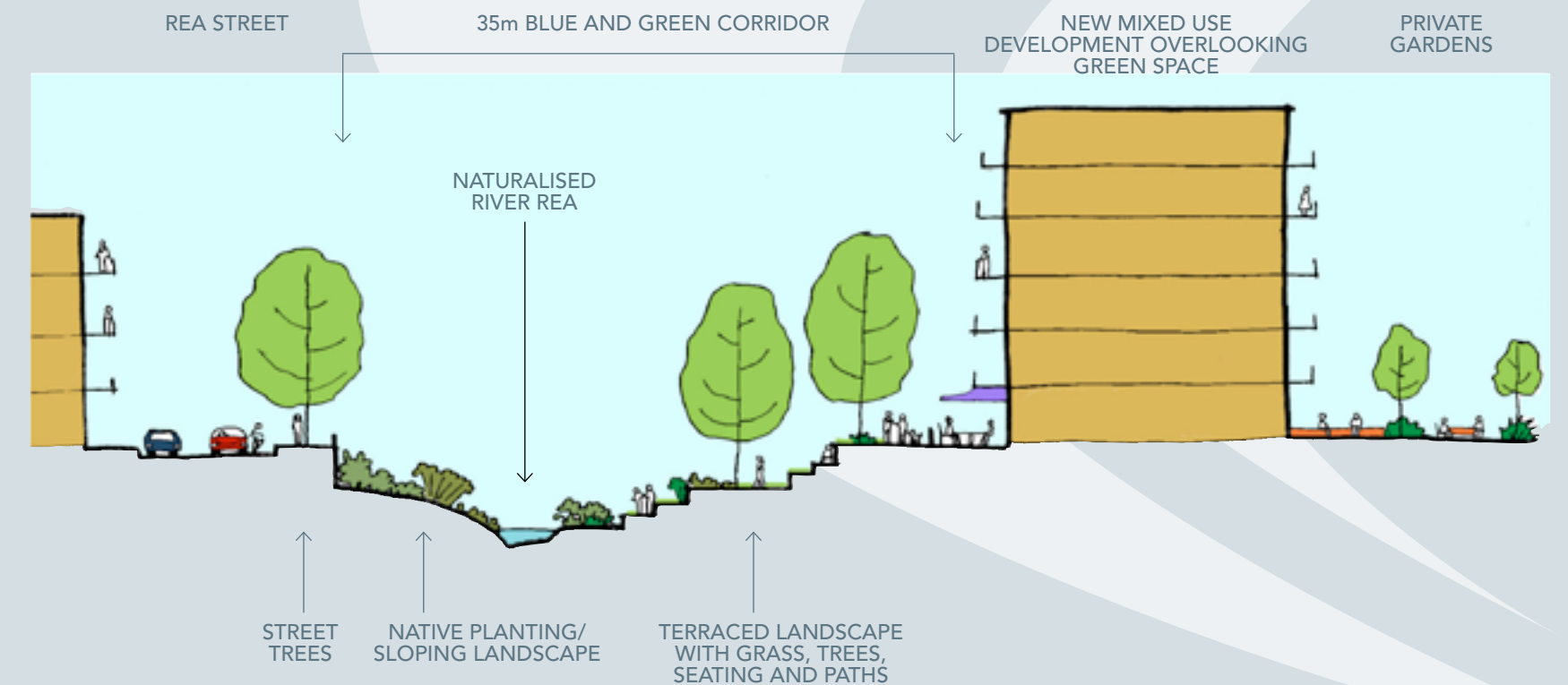
2 High quality SuDS detailing  
Deichmans Gate and Wilses Gate, Oslo, Norway.  
Asplan Viak  
Image © Asplan Viak

### DIAGRAM Section through the River Rea Corridor - proposals for river transformation

#### BEFORE



#### AFTER





The cornerstone of design in the Rea Valley Urban Quarter will be to create a vibrant and liveable environment, which marries the unique character of the local area with the best in modern design and place making.

#### Reflecting local character

The rich history of the Quarter should be reflected in the design of new development, retaining and enhancing what makes the area special and distinctive. This begins with retaining the area's traditional street grid, with the layout of new development reinforcing the scale and pattern of city blocks. There is also the opportunity to retain a number of attractive heritage buildings and frontages (statutorily listed, locally listed and non-designated heritage assets) which provide an authentic link to the past, creating a dynamic contrast between old and new. These should be refurbished, given new uses and a new lease of life. Existing buildings which detract from the quality of the place should be replaced with high quality architecture fit for purpose and fit for the future.

#### Scale and massing

Buildings should generally respond to the character of existing streets. The height of new development should take into account factors such as the relationship with retained buildings, existing urban character, street hierarchy, aspect, shadowing, daylighting, amenity, enclosure, and appropriate separation distances for residential privacy. A 'human scale' in the design of buildings will be important at street level. There will be opportunities for additional height in appropriate locations, for instance to enclose major public spaces, mark gateways, or create landmarks.

#### Building design and layout

Innovation in design and construction will ensure a truly exemplar development, to the highest standards in architecture, detailing and materials. The use of natural materials will be supported. Corners should be built positively to enhance legibility, and to provide definition and architectural interest. Designs will consider whole life costs and future maintenance. Perimeter block development within the existing street pattern will allow a clear distinction between public and private areas. Continuous active frontages (doors, windows and clear glazing) will face onto existing and new streets and public spaces, generating activity and natural surveillance that promotes public safety. Car parking, storage areas and private gardens will be provided to the rear.

#### Public art

There is enormous potential in the Rea Valley Urban Quarter for public art, to reflect local history and culture and contribute to place making. A strategy for public art will be developed, focussing on key locations such as along the course of the Rea, and within public squares and other green spaces. Different forms of public art including temporary and permanent installations, and cultural events, will bring people together and be enjoyed by residents and visitors alike.

1



1 Contrasting contemporary and historic buildings  
Vanilla Factory, Liverpool, UK.  
Urban Splash  
Image © Joel Chester-Fildes/Urban Splash

2 Communal courtyard amenity space featuring high quality play equipment  
Nørrebrohus, Copenhagen, Denmark.  
VEGA Landskab  
Image © Simon Jeppesen

3 Ground level commercial use with residential above providing active frontage and natural surveillance  
Burton Place, Manchester, UK.  
Glenn Howells Architects  
Image © Tim Crocker

4 Perimeter block housing with defined street frontage  
Portobello Square, London, UK.  
PRP Architects  
Image © David Banks

3



2



4





### Activity

At the core of the transformation of the Rea Valley Urban Quarter will be a new residential neighbourhood, supported by a mix of uses to create an attractive and appealing place to live. Varied housing types, sizes and tenures will attract a diverse demographic to create a balanced and vibrant community. Family housing will complement the apartment based residential development which will be established in Smithfield. This will include a mix of affordable homes, private dwellings and live/work accommodation. More people living locally will help support local facilities and services, and create demand for new social infrastructure.

New housing should be a model for modern urban living, at the forefront of sustainable residential design. Residents' needs for space, natural light, and privacy will need to be met, along with space for storage, waste, recycling and bicycles. All housing will require some outdoor amenity space; shared and communal gardens

and balconies will be provided where apartments are proposed. The River Rea will be a new focus of activity, with the potential for cafes, bars and restaurants overlooking the attractive new green space, with apartments above.

A mix of active uses at ground floor will be appropriate on key routes such as High Street and Bradford Street, where a cluster of cafes, retail and commercial uses is already developing.

Along with commercial uses, innovative solutions are needed to accommodate health centres and business units within ground floors of developments. An assessment of need for community facilities such as a primary school and health centre will be carried out, and potential locations for these uses will be identified. A clear approach will be taken to employment - any loss will need to comply with the Birmingham Development Plan, and a Relocation Strategy will be developed as part of the Delivery Plan.



1



2

1 Mixed use terrace featuring ground floor commercial space with residential above Godson Street, London, UK.  
Edgley Design  
Image © Jack Hobhouse

2 Waterside public realm providing a focal point of activity and walking and cycling routes Canal Corridor, Kings Cross, London, UK.  
Townshend Landscape Architects  
Image © John Sturrock

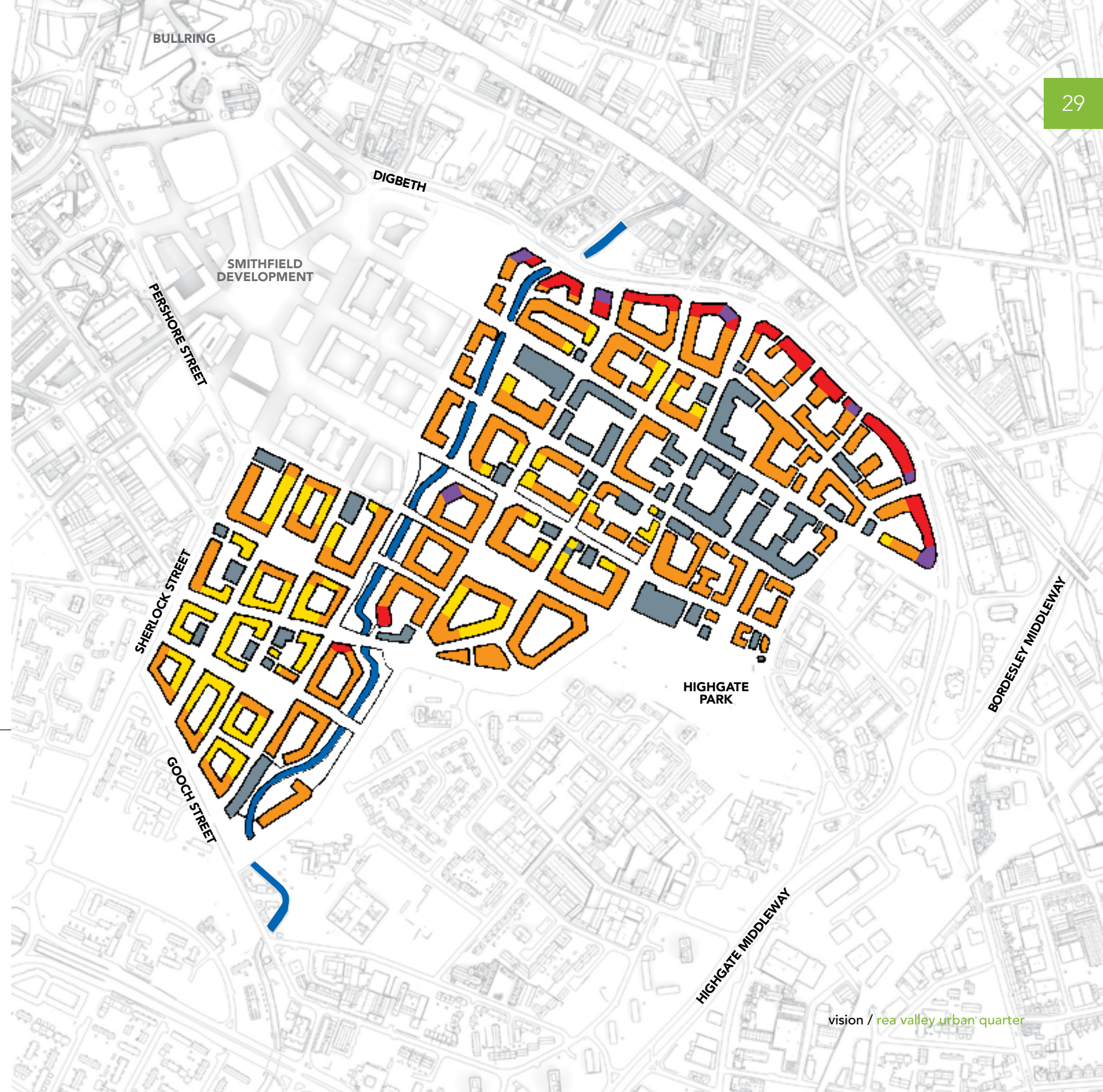
### PLAN 9 Building heights

#### Key

- Existing buildings to be retained
- 4 to 6 storeys
- 5 to 8 storeys
- 7 to 10 storeys
- 12 storeys plus
- River Rea



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### Streets and spaces - walking and cycling

The future success of the Rea Valley Urban Quarter will depend on improving its permeability and legibility, whilst reconnecting it into its wider context.

The reinvention of the wholesale markets site at Birmingham Smithfield will radically improve the accessibility of the Rea Valley Urban Quarter by re-creating the historic street grid and introducing new permeable and legible routes and connections through the development. Additional measures within the Quarter itself will strengthen further the connectivity of the area both to the city core, and to the wider city beyond the Middleway.

Pedestrians and cyclists will have priority within the streets of the Rea Valley Urban Quarter, and this will be reflected in their design, with wide footways provided where space allows. A clear street hierarchy will be established, with key routes identified for vehicular traffic, with the other streets

designed to facilitate access and servicing whilst discouraging rat running.

New and improved streets will be complemented by a number of smaller, more intimate public spaces, designed to be well overlooked, welcoming and provide opportunities for social interaction, outdoor relaxation and community activities.

Moseley Street, the 'Park Link' between the proposed Smithfield Neighbourhood Park and Highgate Park will be given pedestrian priority, whilst the opening up of the River Rea will allow for the inclusion of enhanced, safe cycle opportunities separated from vehicular traffic, connecting to the city's wider cycle network and public transport.

A number of new links will create connections through existing long street blocks, improving permeability. In particular, new east to west connections south of Moseley Street, including new crossings over the River Rea, will help unlock sites for development.

A consistent and high quality public realm shall be delivered or contributed to as part of new developments and projects with a robust, maintainable and distinctive palette of materials and street furniture. Investment in the long term management and maintenance of new streets and spaces will be vital to ensure the quality established at the outset becomes a long term legacy for future residents and generations.



1 New river crossing as part of a waterside regeneration scheme  
The Ram Quarter, Wandsworth, London.  
EPR Architects  
Image © James Newton

2 Shared space street with pedestrian priority  
St Andrews, Bromley-by-Bow, London.  
Townshend Landscape Architects  
Image © Townshend Landscape Architects

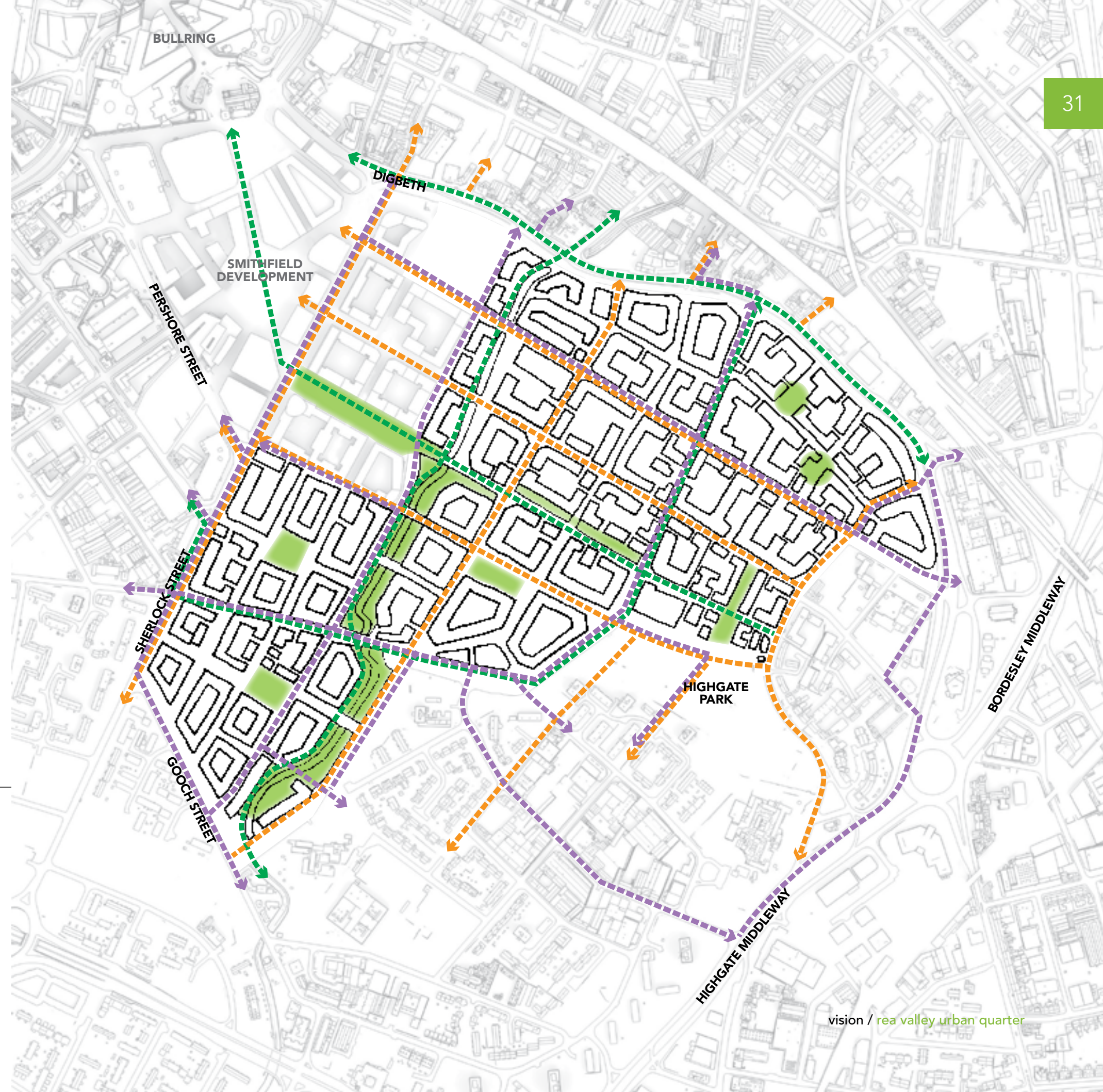
### PLAN 6 Pedestrian and cycle connections

Key

- ■ ■ ■ ■ Primary pedestrian route
- ■ ■ ■ ■ Secondary pedestrian route
- ■ ■ ■ ■ Linear park/green space
- ■ ■ ■ ■ Key cycle routes



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### Public transport

The Rea Valley Urban Quarter will benefit from significant improvements to public transport. Existing bus services will be complemented by the extension of the Midland Metro, and introduction of Sprint bus services along the High Street and through the Smithfield development. Potential options will be explored for routing a future South Birmingham extension of the Midland Metro through the Quarter, to provide quick and convenient connections to New Street, Moor Street and Curzon Street (HS2) stations and have access to the wider West Midlands network. Encouraging use of public transport will help reduce traffic congestion and carbon dioxide emission as well as improvements in air quality.

### Parking and servicing

Parking and servicing will not be allowed to dominate the environment in the Quarter. Within the tight street grids of Cheapside and St David's Place, all parking for residential properties will need to be provided within the block and not on frontages. In these neighbourhoods, whilst vehicular access for deliveries and servicing will be provided, a 'car free' approach will be encouraged. However, electric vehicle charging points should be planned for and disabled parking provided. Cycle parking will be provided as an integrated part of new developments.

1



2



1 Improved public transport services

2 Custom built cycle parking with ecological features  
Derbyshire Street Pocket Park, London, UK.  
Greysmith Associates  
Image © Luke Greysmith

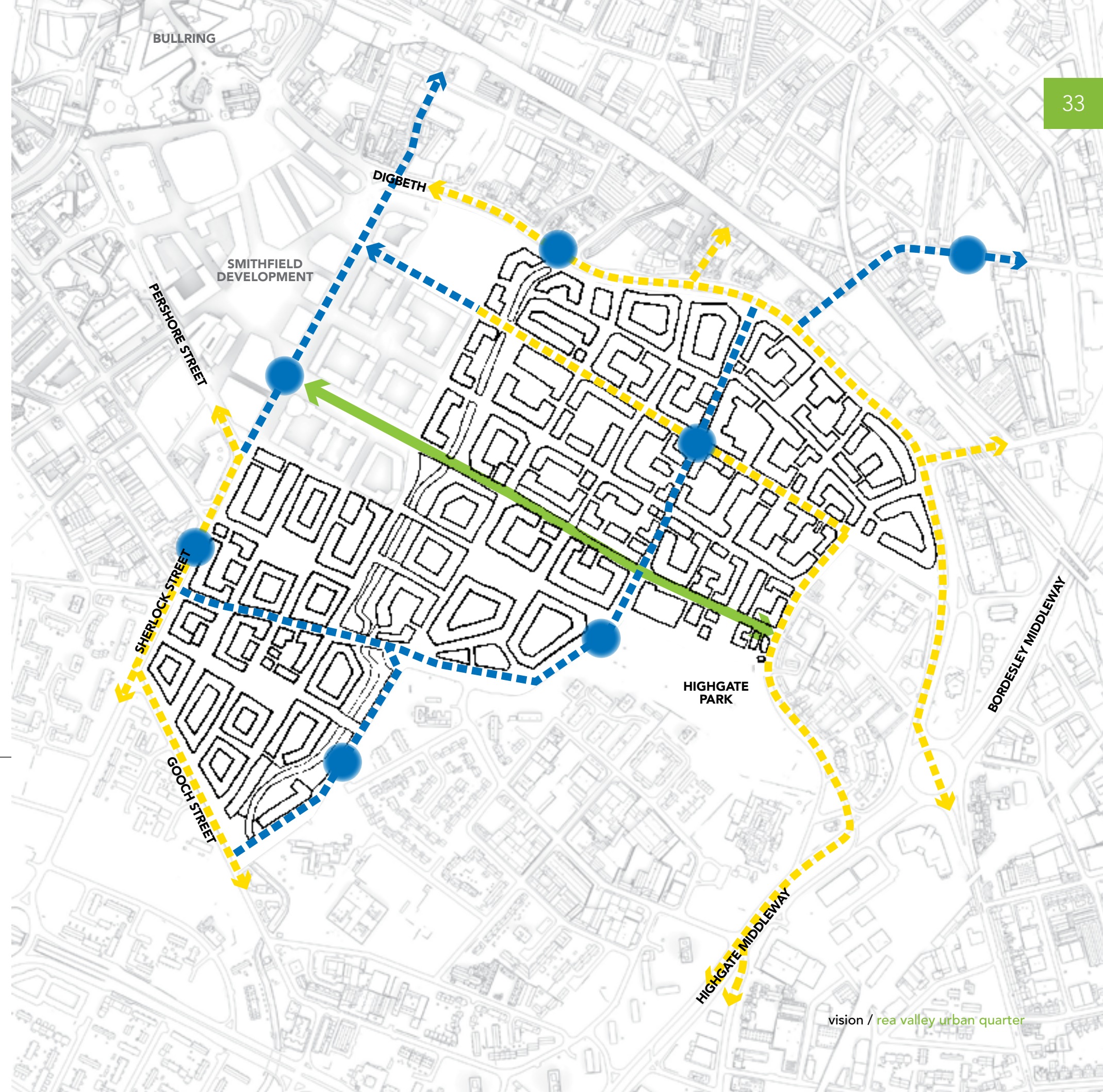
### PLAN 7 Public transport and access

#### Key

- Existing public transport corridor
- New public transport connections
- Key public transport interchange/destination
- Proposed pedestrian and cycle priority street



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DISTINCTIVE NEIGHBOURHOODS

Introduction

The transformation of the Rea Valley Urban Quarter will involve creating a series of neighbourhoods, responding to their local character and setting. Together these will create a cohesive and integral part of the city centre.

Each neighbourhood will have its distinctive character arising from the local context - the existing topography, natural features, street pattern, and heritage assets.



PLAN 10 Distinctive neighbourhoods



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The High Street (Digbeth, Deritend and Bordesley High Streets), a historic road of medieval origin, defines the northern boundary of the Rea Valley Urban Quarter, and presents the opportunity to create a street of city scale with a strong identity and character. Proposals in conjunction with the implementation of the Midland Metro Eastside Extension are set to transform this important route, introducing tree planting and creating an improved environment for pedestrians. Proposed developments at Connaught Square and Lunar Rise promise to bring new street activity and regeneration, and include new landmark buildings. However, there is the opportunity to build on these beginnings, with high quality contemporary architecture to complement the historic buildings on the opposite side of the High Street.

#### Design and layout

- A strong continuous frontage onto the High Street with a building line at back of pavement.
- Opportunity for additional connections between High Street and Bradford Street to integrate Digbeth more effectively into the Quarter.
- An active frontage onto the High Street, with a mix of active uses at ground floor (retail, commercial, restaurants and bars) with front doors and a high level of glazing to animate the street.
- A maximum 'shoulder height' of 10 storeys for development along the High Street.
- Potential for taller signature buildings at key corner locations. However proposals will be assessed on their own merits, and scale will always need to be justified taking into account the factors listed in the Development Principles.
- The opportunity for a landmark building on the corner of Camp Hill and Bradford Street.
- High density city living - a range of apartment types and sizes to meet the needs of a range of demographic groups.
- Protection of important sightlines towards the city centre.
- High quality contemporary architecture to complement the historic buildings on the opposite side of the High Street.
- Provision of residential outdoor space where possible.
- Opportunity for public art in key locations along this busy street.

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1 Active frontage  
Image © David Lock Associates (Australia)

2 High-density city living with winter gardens  
Chobham Farm, Newham, London.  
Pollard Thomas Edwards Architects  
Image © Stephen Arnold

3 High-quality communal amenity space  
South Gardens, Elephant Park, London.  
Churchman Landscape Architects  
Image © Allan Pollock-Morris



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Cheapside has a clear, distinctive character and identity, defined by its strong, permeable grid street pattern and dramatic topography. Although at present it is characterised by low intensity industrial and commercial premises, it will become a mixed use area providing the best in city living. Extending out from Birmingham Smithfield, there will be space for new enterprise, commercial and leisure activity, supported by appropriate infrastructure. Viable businesses will continue to be supported given the importance of jobs and services to the local economy and the aspiration to create a balanced community.

Over the last 15 years, there has been some regeneration of this area, with the conversion of large-scale historic warehouse and industrial buildings, as well as new build apartments, centred on Bradford Street, Cheapside and Moseley Street. In these locations a larger scale of development is now apparent and this trend is set to continue; however it is important that the special character of this area is protected and built upon.

Bradford Street is a wide primary route, with a distinctive and coherent character, with a concentration of significant and attractive 19th Century frontages. The slope of the Rea valley is a defining feature, with long views from Camp Hill towards the city centre sky line, but the river itself is largely hidden and is an untapped asset. New development will make the most of these unique features which define Cheapside's strong character and identity.

#### Design and layout

- A clear hierarchy of streets, with Bradford Street the primary route through the area.
- Retention refurbishment and re-use of the attractive heritage buildings and frontages, which bring authenticity to the area and reflect its rich history.
- Capitalising on the dramatic east-west views across the Rea Valley.
- Revealing the River Rea and opening it up to public access - as part of an ambitious flood alleviation and place making strategy.
- Transforming Moseley Street into the Park Link - an attractive, green and leafy pedestrian focussed route connecting Smithfield Neighbourhood Park to Highgate Park. As well as an enhanced environment for pedestrians and cyclists, small terraced pocket parks or 'city gardens' in setbacks along the street will be a haven for urban wildlife and provide new habitats. Capitalising on long views down the valley over the city centre, this will become a lively active environment overlooked by buildings, with places to pause and relax and the focus for public art and community events.
- Residential led regeneration of the neighbourhood, of medium to high density - creating a predominantly apartment-based residential community.
- Perimeter block development with strong built frontage at back of pavement, with windows and doors facing the street, and shared amenity space and parking to the rear.
- Treating corners differently, taking opportunities to create interest and enhance legibility, in the spirit of the local landmark corner pubs.
- Opportunity for a more vibrant mix of uses at street level along Bradford Street, to include retail, cafes and bars to serve the day to day needs of the expanding residential community.
- A scale of development in keeping with the recent residential apartment schemes in the neighbourhood. A range of 4 to 8 storeys is likely to be most appropriate, however proposals will be assessed on their own merits, and scale will always need to be justified taking into account the factors listed in the Development Principles.
- Opportunities to reflect local Irish heritage and culture in the regeneration of this area.

1 Community pocket park  
Derbyshire Street Pocket Park, London, UK.  
Greysmith Associates  
Image © Luke Greysmith

2 Apartments fronting green street  
Portobello Square, London, UK.  
PRP Architects  
Image © David Banks

1



3



3 Creative commercial premises with a strong  
relationship to the street  
Hawkins/Brown Manchester Studio, UK.  
Image © Hawkins/Brown

4 New public space integrated with a formally culverted  
water corridor  
Rega Leuven, University of Leuven, Belgium.  
Ontwerpbureau Pauwels  
Image © Studio Chloki

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Within a few minutes' walk of Smithfield and the bustle of the city centre, St David's Place has the opportunity to become a unique waterside residential neighbourhood with the River Rea at its heart. The re-imagined river corridor will be a driver of large scale change, breathing new life into the area, creating a vibrant place with a distinctive identity. This neighbourhood will become a focus for family housing, with a diverse mix of housing types and a variety of appropriate ground floor uses to create a balanced community.

St David's Place was once a densely populated residential area, but lost its status as a parish when it was zoned for industrial uses after the Second World War. Whilst there are some high quality Victorian facades, the hard urban character of the streets currently creates a poor physical environment, blighted by unattractive functional buildings and cleared open sites. A new vision for St David's Place will deliver a high quality residential area with attractive streets and pocket green spaces. New routes and connections will make the traditional street grid more permeable, creating a truly walkable neighbourhood.

To ensure this is achieved there is a need for a comprehensive, integrated place making approach. A Masterplan for the area will be required to deliver the vision for the River Rea, setting out clear proposals for layout and urban character, whilst making provision for employment and community infrastructure. Compulsory purchase powers may be employed to assist with site assembly and to ensure the appropriate relocation of non-compatible uses.

#### Design and layout

- The key intervention in this area will be the opening up, naturalisation and realignment of the River Rea. This scheme which will have multiple benefits in terms of flood risk management, creation of sustainable development plots, provision of an attractive new walking and cycling route, a high quality green setting for residential development, biodiversity enhancements and place making.
- New east-west aligned routes breaking the long impermeable blocks, improving connectivity and creating a more walkable neighbourhood. Combined with this, additional foot crossings over the Rea increasing opportunities to interact with the river.
- An improvement in connectivity to the River Rea corridor, Smithfield and the city centre, with the potential for a new strategic route between Pershore Street/Sherlock Street and the western entrance to Highgate Park on Alcester Street.
- Perimeter block development with front doors facing the street, and private amenity space to the rear.
- Commercial units for a range of retail and compatible business, health or community uses on ground floors on key routes.
- In terms of scale and massing, a scale of four to eight storeys is likely to be appropriate. However, proposals will be assessed on their own merits, and the height of development will always need to be justified taking into account the factors listed in the Development Principles.
- Retention of heritage buildings of value, maintaining an authentic link to the past.
- The potential for street tree planting to enhance the environment of MacDonald Street, a key route to Southside, Bristol Road and Park Central.

1



1 Perimeter block housing with front doors facing the street  
Timekeepers Square, Salford, UK.  
Buttress Architects  
Image © Daniel Hopkinson

2



2 Amenity space with flood resilience features  
Chevron Parkland and Stadium Park, Perth, Australia.  
Hassell Studio  
Image © Robert Firth

3



3 Communal amenity space within residential block  
Nørrebrohus, Copenhagen, Denmark.  
VEGA Landskab  
Image © Simon Jeppesen





The Highgate Park neighbourhood has the potential to become a popular and successful place to live. A comprehensive approach to development will unlock the opportunity in this area. A future masterplan will deliver a well-connected place with public and private spaces that feel secure and attractive. New and remodelled housing will be provided as part of a mix of uses focused around a refurbished and extended Highgate Park. Varied housing types, sizes and tenures will attract a diverse demographic to create a balanced and sustainable urban family neighbourhood.

Highgate Park will become a destination green space attracting not only visitors from the immediate area, but also from Birmingham Smithfield, Digbeth and across the city.

Development in this area will need to ensure the necessary infrastructure and facilities are in place to support the community. The future development strategy will include procuring an investment partner to ensure the neighbourhood is comprehensively developed.

#### Design and layout

- Investment into the historic Highgate Park, including a potential extension, and additional facilities to meet the recreational needs of the future residential population. Creation of new street frontages to improve access and visibility, repositioning it as the centre of the community.
- Rationalisation of existing 'left over' open space would provide the opportunity for new high quality family housing, whilst retaining as many mature trees as possible, creating a green and leafy setting.
- Relocation of the commercial businesses in the anomalous industrial pocket should be considered as part of the masterplan, in order to expand the quantity of family housing in Highgate.
- Development will need to satisfactorily link to and address existing properties outside the plan area.
- Potential interventions to the Shawbury Estate to create a better connected layout based on a perimeter block form, with clear definition of public and private space, with well overlooked, active streets.
- A medium density will be the predominant form for residential development, focussing on traditional family housing typologies. A greater scale of development may be appropriate on the streets overlooking Highgate Park, capitalising on views into the open space and creating enclosure. In terms of scale and massing, proposals will be assessed on their own merits, and building heights will always need to be justified taking into account the factors listed in the Development Principles.
- The potential for a cluster of retail, cafes and community uses, arranged around a public space at the junction of Mc Donald Street, Charles Henry Street and Alcester Street should be considered as part of the masterplan. This would provide facilities and services for the day to day needs of the residential community, and also serve the St David's Place neighbourhood.
- In this more intimate and suburban character neighbourhood, street tree planting will be appropriate, and reference the leafy environment of Highgate Park.
- Opportunities for permanent and temporary public art in Highgate Park and other public spaces.

1 Residential development overlooking park setting  
Buccleuch House, Hackney, London.  
Levitt Bernstein  
Image © Tim Crocker

2 Street with intimate character and green infrastructure features  
Jaktgatan and Lövängsgatan, Stockholm.  
AJ Landskap  
Image © Helena Wahlman

1



2



3



3 High density housing fronting public open space  
Arundel Square, London, UK.  
Pollard Thomas Edwards Architects  
Image © Stephen Arnold

4 Sensitive restored and upgraded public park  
Civic Park, Warragul, Australia.  
Fitzgerald Frisby Landscape Architecture  
Image © Andrew Lloyd

4







There is the opportunity for some high quality residential infill to expand the housing offer in this location. Bounded by the Ring Road, Moseley Street and Bradford Street, this neighbourhood feels quite separate from the rest of the Rea Valley Urban Quarter and contrasts with the industrial character of the surrounding area. There is a disparate mix of community uses, including two schools, a church, a pub, offices, and a Police Station. South of Ravenhurst Street it is more residential in nature, with a range of housing types, and some attractive buildings including the listed Lench's Trust Almshouses and Housing Association properties. Along Moseley Road there is a fine and distinctive row of listed Regency villas overlooking Highgate Park.

#### Design and layout

- The Grade II listed Regency villas on Moseley Road must be retained and protected, as they create a positive sense of place which contributes to the setting of the park. There is the opportunity for further residential development and infill along this street, and it must respect and complement this character, including set back from the street frontage, scale and grain.
- Residential development must overlook the street, have secure amenity space to the rear, and accommodate parking within the plot.
- Any development should relate in scale to its surroundings.
- Additional street tree planting will be encouraged.
- The Grade II\* 17th Century Stratford House is currently isolated and surrounded by highway. Reconsideration of the road layout in this area will provide the opportunity to enhance the setting of this important landmark, improve its relationship to Highgate Park, facilitate appropriate development, and knit it back into its urban context.
- New and enhanced pedestrian crossings are needed to create safer and more attractive connections for pedestrians and cyclists across the Middleway and into Highgate.

1



1 Street planting within historic streetscape  
Ekka Plaza, Brisbane, Australia.  
Image © GreenBlue Urban

2 Regency villa on Moseley Road

3 Stratford House

2



3







# 4 Delivery

Amenity space with flood resilience  
Chevron Parkland and Stadium Park,  
Perth, Australia.  
Hassell Studio  
Image © Robert Firth



In order to achieve the quality of development and place that is required by the BDP and this SPD, a comprehensive approach to the sites planning, development, delivery and long term management and maintenance is needed. Due to the site’s size a phased approach to development is anticipated and an appropriate delivery model will need to be developed to ensure the delivery of essential infrastructure across the whole site.

**Delivery Plan**

To deliver the vision, the adopted Rea Valley SPD will be supported by a comprehensive Delivery Plan which will focus on steps to implement the strategy including: funding, flood risk mitigation, infrastructure programme, business relocations and Investment Strategy, utilities coordination and social infrastructure. It is anticipated that a working group will be set up to identify funding streams and take forward a site-wide delivery and infrastructure phasing plan.

Developers will need to contribute towards the site-wide plan and individual schemes will need to demonstrate how they deliver the overall plan for the Rea Valley Urban Quarter. To enable a comprehensive approach and to deliver the change anticipated there is a need for a Property Acquisitions and Employment Relocation Strategy to identify key strategic sites and to consider the potential use of Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO’s). Businesses will be supported with relocation, or assisted with integration into future development.

**Partnership working**

There is a history of partnership working in Birmingham and the implementation process is anticipated to continue to be driven forward and co-ordinated through joint working between Birmingham

City Council, West Midlands Combined Authority, Homes England, the Environment Agency, landowners, developers, local residents, business communities, service providers and other key organisations who have a stake in the future of the area.

**Flood Resilience Management Scheme**

Birmingham City Council and the Environment Agency (The EA) have been working in Partnership to assess the opportunities to reduce flood risk within the area to support the ambitious transformation of the river corridor. In 2018 the EA commissioned a flood risk study to understand which measures would be required to support the delivery of land that would be outside the floodplain, which removes flood risk from areas of development. A combination of the provision of flood storage areas and channel improvements would manage flood risk within the Rea Valley Urban Quarter.

The measures require a whole catchment approach to managing water including a network of flood storage areas in the south of the city to reduce flows through the river in the city centre, and a new river corridor that contains high flows within a green channel, including passive flood defence structures which can be incorporated into the urban design which are not visually intrusive. Once the SPD is adopted all new

development will support the enhancement of the River Rea corridor to facilitate the delivery of a comprehensive flood risk management strategy and contribute to the construction of flood storage areas within the wider catchment.

Until these measures are fully implemented planning applications within the Rea Valley Urban Quarter in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided and where development is proposed in such areas, the development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere. The EA are working with partners to secure funding and this includes a collaborative approach with Birmingham City Council to ensure that the SPD supports the delivery of a business case for the River Rea Enhancements (anticipated to be completed before 2021). This will provide a detailed assessment of the opportunities to sustainably manage water and maximise the enhancement of blue and green infrastructure.

**Infrastructure planning**

Infrastructure is an essential part of the plan making process. Planning policy recognises that in order to create sustainable communities it is not sufficient to provide housing and employment opportunities alone; we also need to ensure that development is supported by the necessary physical, social and green infrastructure.

The City Council will be working with developers, house builders, public sector agencies and businesses to bring forward developments and the supporting infrastructure. Infrastructure to be adopted by the City Council must be built to appropriate standards. Where infrastructure is not adopted by the City Council, the developer will need to demonstrate that City Council standards have been applied, it meets recognised quality standards, and it has long-term management and maintenance arrangements in place. The costs of infrastructure will be met by developers and landowners, including the City Council from the value generated by the development. These are expected to be secured through Section 106 Planning Obligations and in the long term Community Infrastructure Levy where appropriate.

**Social infrastructure**

With the creation of a significant number of new homes in the Rea Valley Urban Quarter and Birmingham Smithfield investment will be required to ensure the appropriate services are in place so that they become functioning and sustainable neighbourhoods. This will need to have regard to existing facilities in the area and demonstrate how the proposals will complement this provision. Clear trigger points to provide this infrastructure will

need to be made to ensure that essential services are provided. Funding will support educational, health, digital and community facilities and social initiatives including skills and training that are vital to creating attractive places to live and supporting both new and existing communities including businesses.

**Green infrastructure**

Green Infrastructure in the Rea Valley Urban Quarter will be a planned adaptable network of green spaces and routes which can provide a healthy and rich environment. The Delivery Plan will include site specific projects, significantly including an improved Highgate Park and mechanisms for delivery.

**Sustainable transport and movement**

A key requirement of the SPD is to improve movement throughout the area with walking, public transport and cycling routes prioritised. The strategy will cover all movements from the development, both on and off-site, including links to shops, schools, green space and other facilities. Future transport assessments and travel plans will inform the Rea Valley Urban Quarter transport modelling work. At the heart of creating an accessible destination in the city will be the integration of public transport. Discussions are ongoing with Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), to

identify potential options to run the Midland Metro extension through the area and beyond, towards Selly Oak, the University of Birmingham and the QE Hospital.

**Next steps**

Following public consultation on this draft SPD, comments will be considered and any necessary changes made prior to its adoption as a formal planning document.

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The images included in the SPD are taken from other projects in the UK and abroad to illustrate similar exemplar developments and key projects. They are shown as examples of the quality that can be achieved on the basis of good design principles set out in this SPD, with the design of place and buildings in the Rea Valley Urban Quarter having their own site specific response.

**The Rea Valley Urban Quarter Masterplan Document produced by**  
Birmingham City Council, Planning and Development, Inclusive Growth Directorate.



