

# People Shaping Places:

## LEA BRIDGE

A report commissioned by Waltham Forest Council.

May 2016



# Introduction

**W**altham Forest Council commissioned Kaizen and Social Life to carry out four engagement pilot projects in the borough in order to develop a better understanding of how it can engage with residents across the borough in planning and designing new developments.

This report summary sets out the activities carried out, key emerging themes and the implications for future community engagement in the Lea Bridge area.

The research strategy devised to structure this project was mixed in approach and included three different engagement methods: street interviews, pop-up focus groups and asset mapping. **In total, nearly 250 people were interviewed for this research.**

This research aimed to:

- Understand which services and facilities in the Lea Bridge area are used by residents and people working in the area.
- Identify the major challenges facing residents and businesses today.
- Help the Council, residents and organisations prepare for more comprehensive engagement in the future, especially in the areas to the north and south of the new Lea Bridge station that have been designated a Housing Zone (see Figure 2).

To receive a copy of the full report, please contact Waltham Forest Council at [consultation@walthamforest.co.uk](mailto:consultation@walthamforest.co.uk).

## RESEARCH TEAM

This report was written by Social Life with contributions and research by Kaizen and Social Life.

Kaizen is an award-winning social business that specialises in designing and delivering projects in the community sector.

Social Life was established in 2012 by The Young Foundation. All its work is about the relationship between people and places.

For more information visit:  
<http://wearekaizen.co.uk>  
<http://www.social-life.co/>



Figure 1: Lea Bridge Gateway sign

## The Lea Bridge area

“[Lea Bridge] doesn’t draw people in, rather it is a combo of what is on offer and what people can afford. It is an area that balances being the closest to London in terms of affordability, commute times and travel costs.”

-Lea Bridge resident

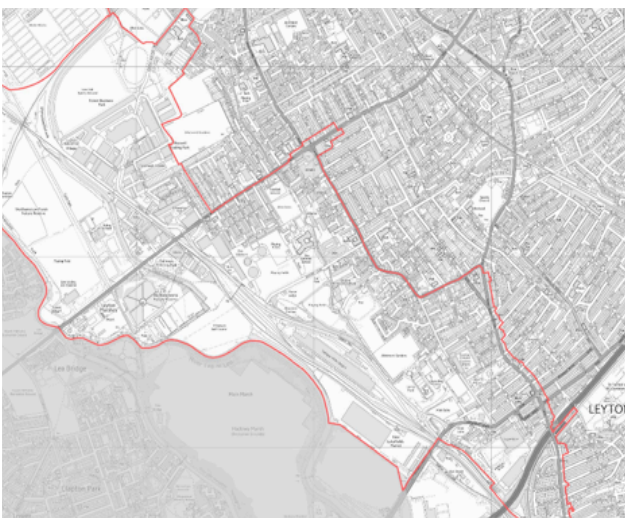
Lea Bridge is situated in the southwest of the borough of Waltham Forest. An important arterial road, Lea Bridge Road, runs from Whipps Cross roundabout towards Hackney. It is one of the main through routes from North East London to Hackney and the City and has taken its name from the Lea Bridge, which crosses the River Lea and the Leyton marshes.

Lea Bridge Road is a dividing line between E10 and E17 postcodes and between the Walthamstow parliamentary constituency and Leyton and Wanstead parliamentary constituency.

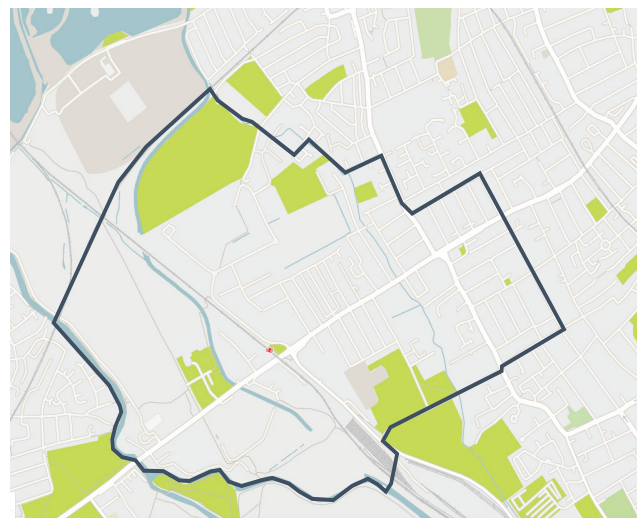
People living in the area described the area as a “*weird through-road*” and “*being a bit of all.*” The road’s heavy traffic throughout the day is seen to be one of its defining characteristics by local residents.

A new station will open in May 2016, connecting north to Tottenham and south to Stratford. The areas north and south of the new station have been designated as a Housing Zone, to help support the Council’s 2020-target of 12,000 new homes. The first development to take place in the area is planned on 97 Lea Bridge Road, a scheme of 300 mixed affordable and market rent homes.

The area has also received funding for the implementation of the Mini Holland cycling scheme. New junctions, bridges and footways will be created to support the increase in pedestrian and cyclist activity with the opening of the new station.



**Figure 2: The Lea Bridge new housing zone (left).** The red line denotes the housing zone



**Figure 3: The Lea Bridge survey area (right).** The highlighted part denotes the survey area for the Lea Bridge research

# Key findings

## *Feelings about Lea Bridge today*

1. **Many residents and businesses interviewed felt there is a lack of a Lea Bridge identity and sense of place.** The road acts as a key commuter route and there is nothing in the area to make it a destination. People interviewed described the area as a “crossroad.”
2. **Lea Bridge was described both as a “forgotten corner” and a “hidden gem.”** Residents interviewed felt that the area has lots of potential but needs major improvements.
3. **Most residents interviewed were satisfied living in the area.** However, nearly everyone felt there should be more investment in community facilities, services, youth activities, and public areas.
4. **Some local traders interviewed report that business has slowed and attribute it to changing demographics and larger economic forces.** Some traders said that their traditional customer base is diminishing as a result of many well-established communities moving away. They reported that the area is now more transient, more diverse, there are more rented properties and lower disposable incomes.

“[The area] is friendly, no trouble, everyone gets on.”

-Lea Bridge resident

## *Community and safety*

5. **Sense of community is strong.** Most people noted “friendliness” and “diversity” as key community strengths - but interviews revealed some social tensions exist, particularly between the longer-standing population and more newly arrived residents.
6. **Generally people interviewed felt safe but noted anti-social behaviour and crime as issues for residents.** People felt that more youth activities and local jobs could improve the situation, as well as a larger police presence and CCTV cameras.
7. **The nearby parks and open marsh areas were mentioned the most often as valued assets.** Interviews revealed that these green spaces were used by the broadest spectrum of the community in terms of ethnicity and age.



Figure 4: The new Lea Bridge station



### *Challenges facing residents*

8. **Flytipping, trash and general uncleanliness of public areas were noted as a nuisance for residents and businesses.** Most people interviewed noted the dumping practices in the area and how streets were full of rubbish like mattresses, fridges, and other large items.
9. **There was much frustration with the condition of the roads, the traffic and lack of parking in the area.** Many traders interviewed viewed the Mini Holland scheme in a negative light while some young residents and cyclists said they felt the streets are still not safe enough.
10. **High unemployment and the loss of local jobs have negatively impacted local businesses and sense of community.**
11. **Nearly all residents interviewed felt that Lea Bridge lacks community spaces.** The existing facilities reflect the diversity of the community but many people noted they cater to particular groups and do not build bonds across the wider community.
12. **People interviewed believe there is a need for a cultural hub.** Residents and businesses felt the need for a meeting place that is open and receptive to everyone in the community.
13. **Overall, the area has a large number of shops but people interviewed felt the quality could be improved.** People would like to see more independent cafés, restaurants, and retail but also more chains in the area.

### *Attitudes towards change*

14. **Residents interviewed felt the area is in the midst of substantial change.** There is also uncertainty what the change will look like, in terms of future demographic change as well as new housing and infrastructure.
15. **In general, there was excitement about the potential vitality that the new development and the new train station could bring.** However, there was some fear of gentrification and increasing rents.
16. **Most people interviewed said they have not been consulted about development in the area yet.** Some of those that have been consulted felt their opinions do not matter. However, there is a large group of people who want to be kept informed and involved with the council and developers in the future.
17. **There is a need for more information about what is going on in the area.** Most people interviewed prefer newsletters, leaflets, email updates, and Waltham Forest News for information. Many suggested a central bulletin board for the council, developers and community organisations to post events.
18. **Some residents interviewed felt that the council overlooks Lea Bridge and continues to focus resources in more central areas, like Walthamstow Central and the Village.** Many residents felt Lea Bridge is not a focus point of the borough and some felt like they “*don’t fit in*” in areas like the “*trendier Village*”.

“Jubilee Park is well used now that it has been tidied up with better play facilities and a café and that there is a broad mix of the community using it.”

-Lea Bridge resident

“When people go to the park they are very clique-y, everybody sits in their own groups.”

-Lea Bridge resident

## Asset Map



Figure 5: Lea Valley parks

Asset mapping is a tool used to visualise what a community considers valuable. For the Lea Bridge area, residents, traders, community groups and other local organisations were asked about which facilities and services they most use in the area and what the community feels is not currently offered.

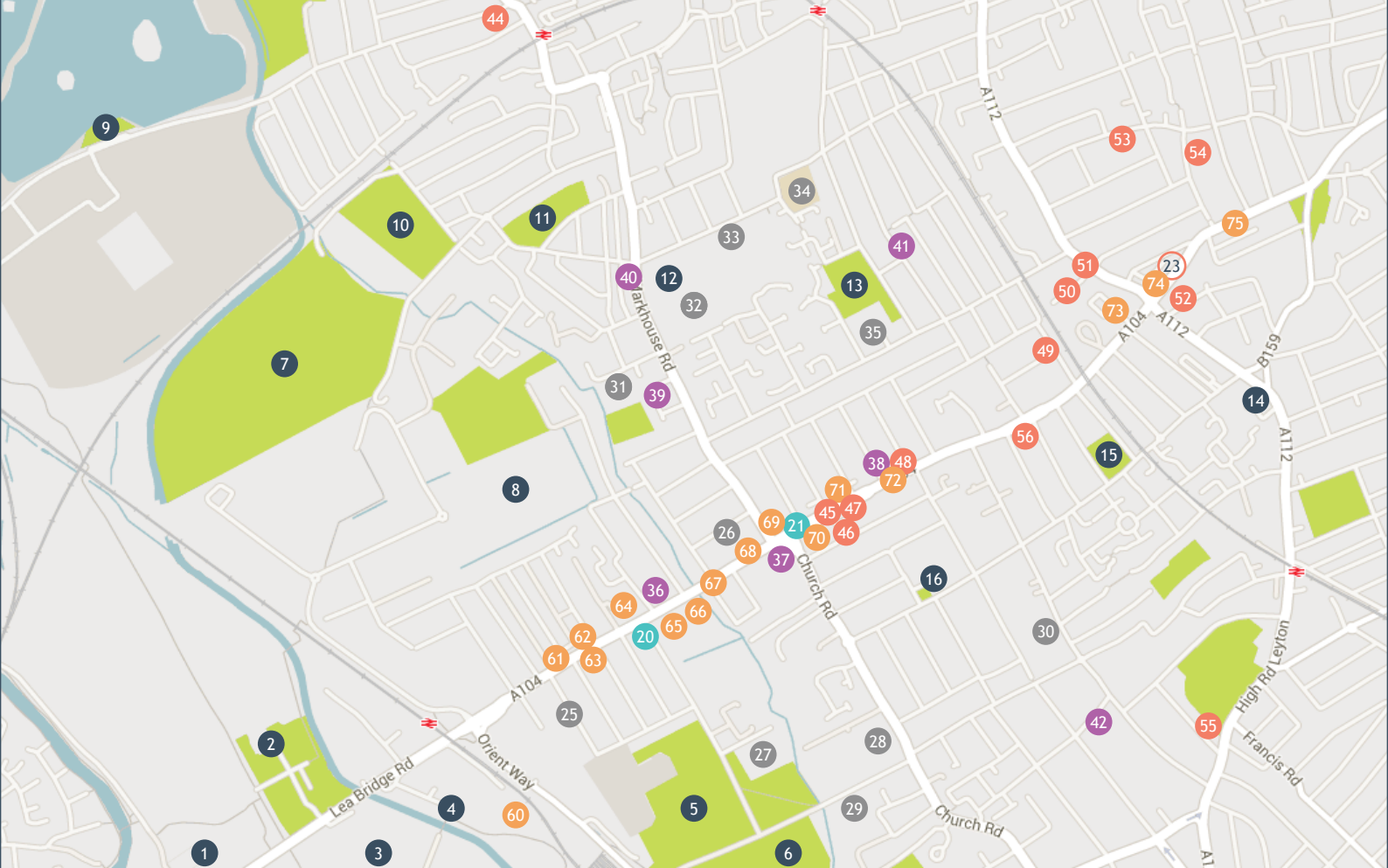
The asset map in Figure 6 shows the geographic location of the assets identified by residents, associations and organisations in Lea Bridge and creates an inventory of the resources, skills and offerings currently available in the area:

- The mosque, churches, parks, library, local shops, pub, and youth clubs were identified as the most valued assets in the area.
- The ACF youth club, Emmanuel Parish Church and the Hare and Hounds pub were cited the most by name.
- Other places like cafés, gyms, and shops were mentioned in general terms and as the primary places where residents interact daily with one another.

Online resources listed separately below are not included on the map given they are not geographic specific. These websites and the asset map are not exhaustive and should be updated as needed and on a regular basis.

### ONLINE RESOURCES

- **Markhouse Corner and Lea Bridge Road (Residents Association):** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/308417659348044/>
- **Lea Bridge Development Information:** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/134700503581286/?fref=ts>
- **Walthamstow Life FB-group:** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/walthamstowlife/?fref=ts>
- **Walthamstow Residents News FB-Group:** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/WalthamstowResidents/?fref=ts>
- **Eaton Manor Running Club:** <http://www.joomla.eton-manor.com/>
- **The New Lammas Lands Defence Committee:** <http://www.lammaslands.org.uk/>
- **Asian Women's Support Group:** <http://www.awsg.org.uk/>
- **Pak Cultural Society:** <http://www.pakculturalsociety.co.uk/index.php>
- **Salaam Peace football:** <http://www.salaampeace.org/>
- **Save Lea Marshes:** <http://www.saveleamarshes.org.uk/index.html>
- **Walthamstow memories:** <http://www.walthamstowmemories.net/home.html>
- **Waltham Forest Blind Association:** <http://www.wf-ba.co.uk/>
- **Lea Valley Cycling Club:** <http://www.leavalleycc.co.uk/>



**Figure 6: Lea Bridge asset map**

## **PARKS, GARDENS, PLAYGROUNDS, AND SPORT FACILITIES**

1. Lee Valley Ice Centre
2. Lee Valley Riding Centre
3. Leyton Marshes
4. WaterWorks Nature Reserve & Golf Centre (now closed)
5. Lammas Park
6. Our Parks (website)
7. Low Hall Sports Ground
8. Low Hall Farm Allotments
9. Lea Valley Park
10. St. James Park
11. Honeybone Allotments
12. Walthamstow Leisure Centre
13. Thomas Gamuel Park
14. Leyton Leisure Centre
15. Leyton Manor Park
16. Pocket Parks
17. Leyton Ryan FC Soccer School \*\*
18. Leyton Orient Football Club \*\*
19. Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park \*\*

## **HEALTH**

20. Dr. S Phillips
21. Anjis Dispensing Chemist
22. Whipps Cross University Hospital \*\*

## **SAFETY**

23. Safer Neighbourhood Team
24. Walthamstow Town Centre Police Office \*\*

**\*\* Outside the Lea Bridge asset map area**

## **EDUCATION / CHILDCARE**

25. Sybourn Early Years Excellence Centre
26. Sybourn Primary School
27. The Lammas School
28. Willow Brook Primary School Academy
29. Saint Joseph's Catholic Infant School
30. Saint Joseph's Junior School
31. Saint Saviour's Church of England Primary School
32. Kelmscott Secondary School
33. Low Hall Children's Centre
34. Edinburgh Primary School
35. Thomas Gamuel Primary School

## **FAITH AND RELIGIOUS**

36. Emmanuel Parish Church Leyton
37. Potters House Church
38. Lea Bridge Road Mosque
39. Saint Saviour's Church
40. The Lighthouse Methodist Church
41. St. Barnabas Church
42. Saint Josephs Church Hall
43. Blackhorse Road Baptist Church \*\*

## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

44. The Mill
45. The Bridge
46. Lea Bridge Library
47. Age UK
48. Active Change

49. Voluntary Action Waltham Forest
50. OrganicLea
51. Hornbeam Community Cafe
52. Phoenix Snooker Club
53. Elop
54. St. Stephen's Church Youth Ministry
55. Leyton Youth Centre
56. Farishte Trust
57. Walthamstow Assembly Hall \*\*
58. Waltham Forest Community Hub \*\*
59. Penrhyn Activity Centre \*\*

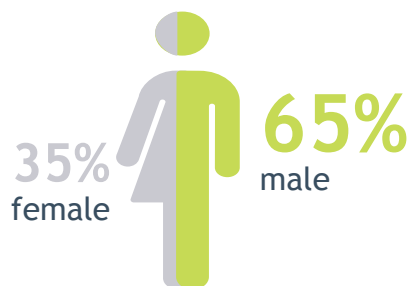
## **FOOD, SHOPS, AND MARKETS**

60. East London Brewing Co Ltd
61. Paga Cafe
62. Beydagi Food Centre
63. Turkish Corner Shops
64. B&Q (now closed)
65. The Hare & Hounds
66. Saffron Kitchen
67. Lea Bridge Road Shops
68. Bodrum Restaurant
69. Lea Bridge Post Office & Newsagents
70. Lea Car Services
71. Atlantic Fishbar (Captains Table)
72. Tesco Lea Bridge Rd Express
73. The Bakers Arms
74. Scrivens Opticians & Hearing Care
75. Proper Burgers
76. Ye Olde Rose & Crown \*\*
77. Asda in Leyton \*\*
78. KFC in Leyton \*\*
79. Mermaid Fish bar \*\*

## # OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

# 130

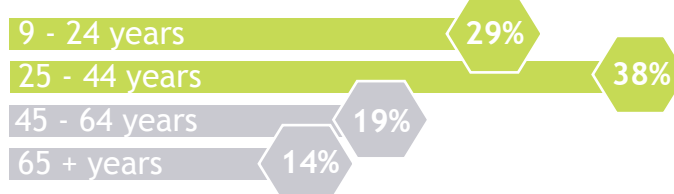
## GENDER



## ETHNICITY

30%	Black or Black British
22%	Asian or Asian British
19%	White British
12%	Other White
8%	Other
5%	Mixed
3%	Prefer not to say

## AGE

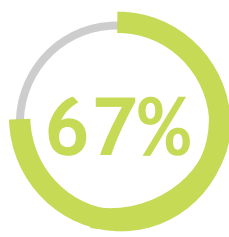


## SURVEY RESULTS

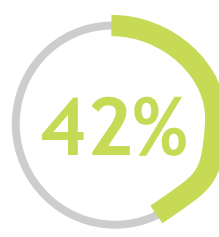
Said views have never been consulted



Are satisfied living in the area



Would call this area Lea Bridge



Would call this area Leyton



## CONNECTION TO AREA

22%	21+ years
20%	11-20 years
14%	7-10 years
14%	4-6 years
19%	1-3 years
11%	<1 year

## PREFERRED METHOD TO RECEIVE INFORMATION

45%	Newsletters
40%	Email updates
19%	Waltham Forest News

## FUTURE DEVELOPMENT PLANS

53%	Would like to LEARN MORE about development plans for the area
41%	Would like to be involved in INFLUENCING the development of the area

## THINGS WORKING WELL FOR AREA



**Friendliness**  
33%



**Diversity**  
33%



**Transport Links**  
32%



**Location**  
27%



**Shops**  
26%

18%	Parks/open spaces
15%	Feels safe
13%	Leisure facilities
10%	Schools
9%	Cultural facilities

7%	Health services
6%	Access to nature
6%	Cafes/restaurants/pubs
4%	Health provision
4%	Facilities for children

\* Due to rounding, some percentages may not add up to 100%. Some sections like 'things working well for area' and 'preferred method to receive information' allowed residents to select more than one answer. Not all residents responded to each question.