

Proximity of buildings - street hierarchy

A hierarchy of streets and routes through this major new mixed use masterplan was established very early on in the design process.

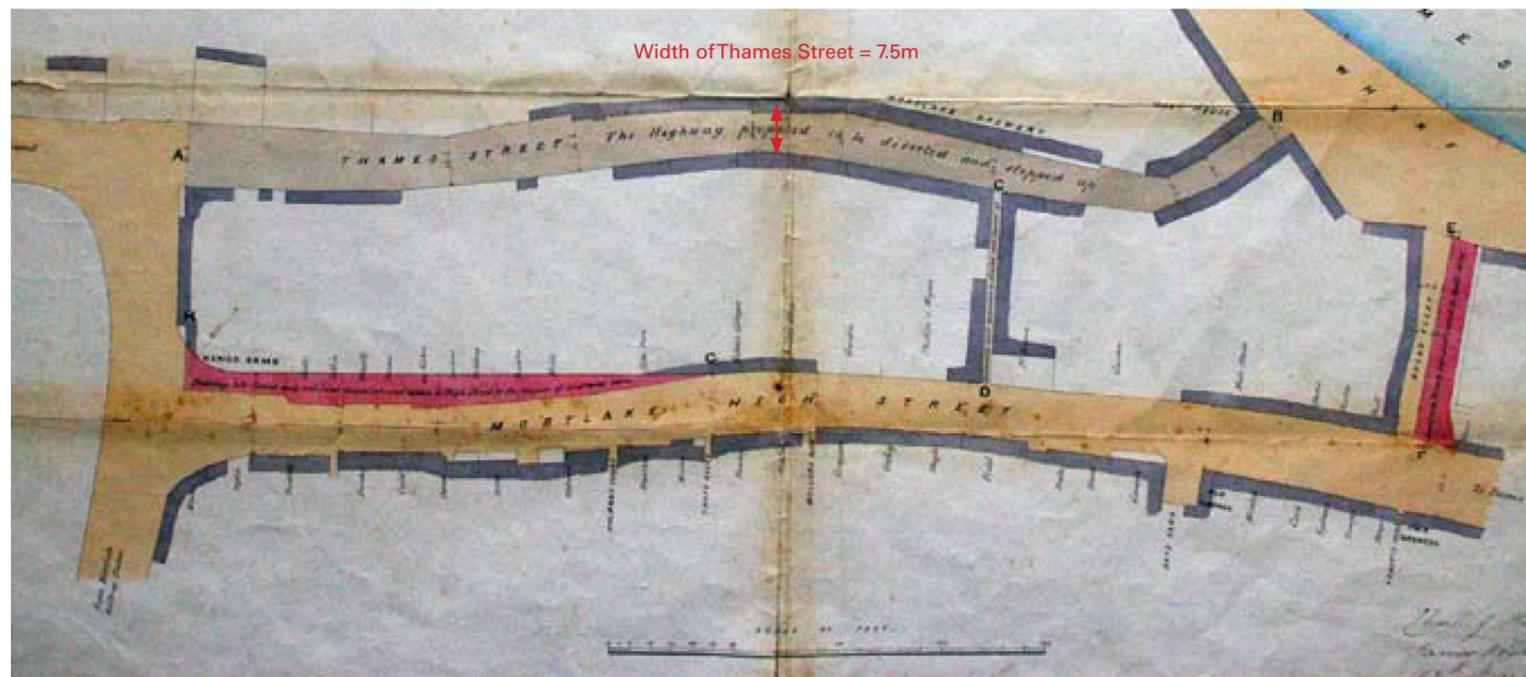
In accordance with the Planning Brief for this strategic site, the 'Green Link' has been a primary focus in terms of public realm and as a means of connecting Mortlake to the Thames waterfront. This 30-metre-wide pedestrianised route should not be considered a 'street'. Instead it should be considered an accessible 'public realm' – providing much needed amenity to local residents in the form of landscape features and a continuous frontage of flexible use space at ground floor level.

The new 'High Street/ Thames Street' is envisioned as another important public thoroughfare, animated by flexible use frontage as well as a range of different architectural typologies. The location of this new street follows the path of a historic riverside route referred to as 'Thames Street' on OS records. It is proposed that this much narrower street (13.5 metres) is a more intense experience more akin to the nature of streetscape found at Shad Thames. This new route will be pedestrianised (with limited controlled access for service and maintenance vehicles) in a similar manner to the historic Shad Thames route that runs parallel with the river Thames. Originally a utilitarian route serving the surrounding riverside warehouse buildings, the Shad Thames route has been re-purposed in recent times as a walkway punctuated by a series of notable restaurants, bars and shops at ground floor level. The narrow width of the street in combination with the dominant height of the buildings creates a unique character that focuses the eye on the ground floor level animation.

Other routes that cross the new High Street are considered secondary routes that provide choice of route towards the waterfront. These streets will be lined with a mixture of residential use and ground floor level flexible use. These streets are proposed as being less formal and as a consequence a narrower width of 15m was established for these routes.



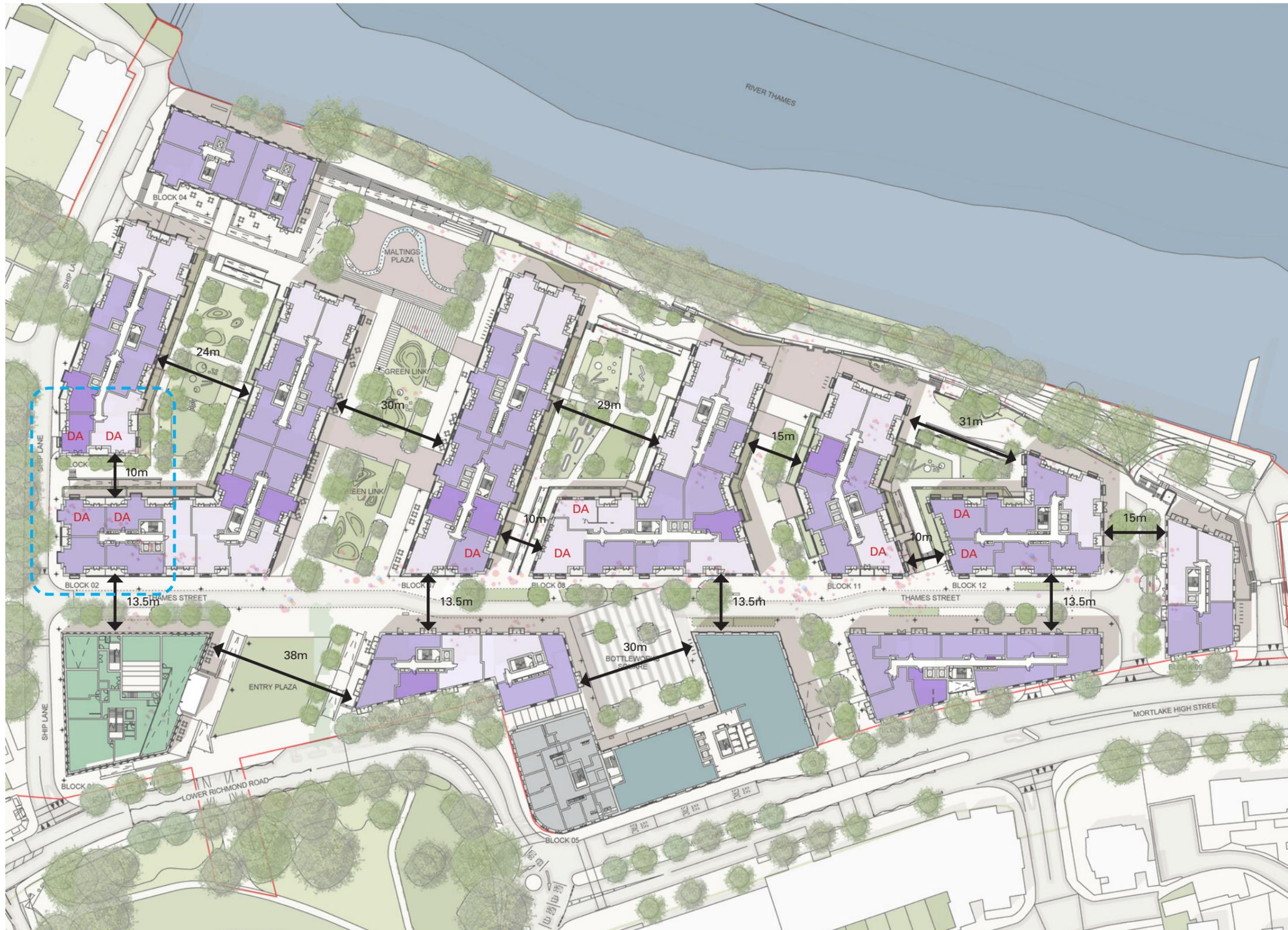
Revised visualisation of Thames Street



1865 plan showing former route of 'Thames Street'



Revised visualisation of new 'Green Link'



Proposed typical floor plan of Development Area 1 - showing separation distances (DA denotes dual aspect apartments)

Proximity of buildings - policy

To more clearly justify the setting out of these streets, it is worth referring to local planning policy as well as GLA guidance and other focused studies.

Policy 4.8.8 of the adopted Local Plan:

‘Whilst there will be some impact from any new development, the test is one of harm in relation to the impact on habitable rooms, which includes all separate living rooms and bedrooms, plus kitchens with a floor area of 13sqm or more. The minimum distance guideline of 20 metres between habitable rooms within residential development is for privacy reasons; a greater distance may be required for other reasons, or a lesser distance may be acceptable in some circumstances. These numerical guidelines should be assessed on a case by case basis, since privacy is only one of many factors in site layout design; where the established pattern of development in the area (layout and height) may favour lesser distances. The distance of 20 metres is generally accepted as the distance that will not result in unreasonable overlooking. Where principal windows face a wall that contains no windows or those that are occluded (e.g. bathrooms), separation distances can be reduced to 13.5 metres. Where the impact of a building is on another within the same development site, measures can also be applied to minimise overlooking, such as splays, angles of buildings, obscured glazing etc. A Supporting Planning Statement should set out justification for a reduction in these distances.’

Policy 3.2.5 of Supplementary Planning Document ‘Residential Development Standards’:

‘Generally rooms needing less privacy such as kitchens and living rooms can face the street. Frosted windows can be used for bathrooms and smaller windows for bedrooms. Landscape planting can also help screen ground level rooms.’

Section 5.1 of the London Housing Design Guide (LHDG):

‘In the past, planning guidance for privacy has been concerned with achieving visual separation between dwellings by setting a minimum distance of 18-21m between facing homes. These are still useful yardsticks for visual privacy, but adhering rigidly to these measures can limit the variety of urban spaces and housing types in the city, and can sometimes unnecessarily restrict density.

Instead, designers are required to demonstrate how the design as a whole uses a variety of measures to provide adequate visual and acoustic privacy for every home. Designers should consider the position and aspect of habitable rooms, gardens and balconies, and avoid windows that directly face each other where privacy distances are tight. It will often be beneficial to provide a set-back or buffer where habitable rooms directly face a public thoroughfare, street, lane or access deck.’

While local planning policy (4.8.8 of the adopted Local Plan) advises that a ‘distance of 20 metres is generally accepted as the distance that will not result in unreasonable overlooking’ it does acknowledge that ‘a lesser distance may be acceptable in some circumstances’. This is most likely because historically, the 20 metre yardstick for visual privacy was loosely based on **‘the distance at which an accidental glimpse of nudity would be blurred enough to protect standards of decency’** as outlined in ‘Recommendations for living at Superdensity’ by Design for Homes.

Policy 3.2.5 of ‘Residential Development Standards’ elaborates on the interior use of overlooking spaces and explains that ‘generally rooms needing less privacy such as kitchens and living rooms can face the street’. GLA policy in the LHDG re-inforces the need for flexibility in consideration of proximity distances and points towards techniques such as providing set backs as a means of mitigating overlooking issues in tighter streetscapes.



Visualisation showing balustrades screening windows along Thames Street



Visualisation showing screening to upper levels by balconies in oblique views

The London Housing Design Guide references a report prepared for Popular Housing Group: Perceptions of Privacy and Density in Housing, by Mulholland Research and Consulting. This report examined a series of case studies where residential dwellings face one another within close vicinity. The report drew attention to a number of advantages as a consequence of closely built relationships, including:

- Social interaction between neighbours
- Feeling more secure
- Discouragement of vandalism and other crime

Interestingly, the mansion precedents that were examined in the study, incorporated tight courtyard spaces. These were not perceived to be problematic in terms of privacy because the rooms facing one another were used for the same purpose - for example kitchens facing kitchens.

Section 2.5.6 of Perceptions of Privacy and Density in Housing:

'Overlooking less private space

The mansion flats in our sample had an internal courtyard within each block which served as a large stairwell to bring extra light into the flats. Windows faced one another across the courtyard but there were no privacy problems. This is because they were, in the main, kitchen windows where privacy was not of primary concern; also the neighbours were on friendly terms and unembarrassed to acknowledge one another.'

The study explained that privacy problems could be as a result of overlooking from neighbouring properties and/or from people moving through streetscape and/or landscape.

Most of the areas of concern highlighted in the report related to overlooking into ground floor, street facing dwellings. However, an conclusion of the study was that where windows face one another directly, they would benefit from waist height screening (see Section 3.3.2 of the report).

Units within the Stag Brewery proposal will largely benefit from this type of screening since the building typologies have been carefully designed to incorporate balustrades and set backs that serve to screen view into the apartments. A more detailed explanation of this is provided overleaf.

Proximity of buildings - set backs to mansion typology

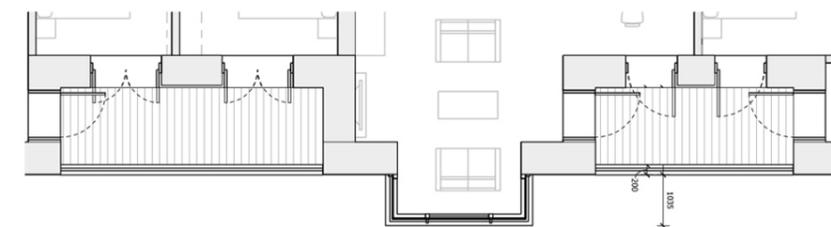
The internal layouts of facing buildings on the narrower streets of the proposed Stag Brewery masterplan, have been carefully configured to avoid overlooking issues. Within the mansion typology buildings, living rooms are generally provided within the projecting bay and gable elements and bedrooms are located on the set back areas of façade (behind projecting balconies). This means that the bedrooms are generally separated by an increased distance and are largely screened from view by the balconies and balustrades. We understand that it is likely that the design of the balustrades will be conditioned and therefore balustrades could be carefully designed in future to provide optimum screening to rooms. There are many examples of historic balustrades that incorporate dense decoration in varied positions and manners across balconies in facades. The intention would be to design contemporary versions of these decorative balustrades.



Perspective visualisation of mansion typology



1 GABLE BAY STUDY - ELEVATION
1:50



Proposed mansion bay study - bedrooms set back behind balconies and balustrades