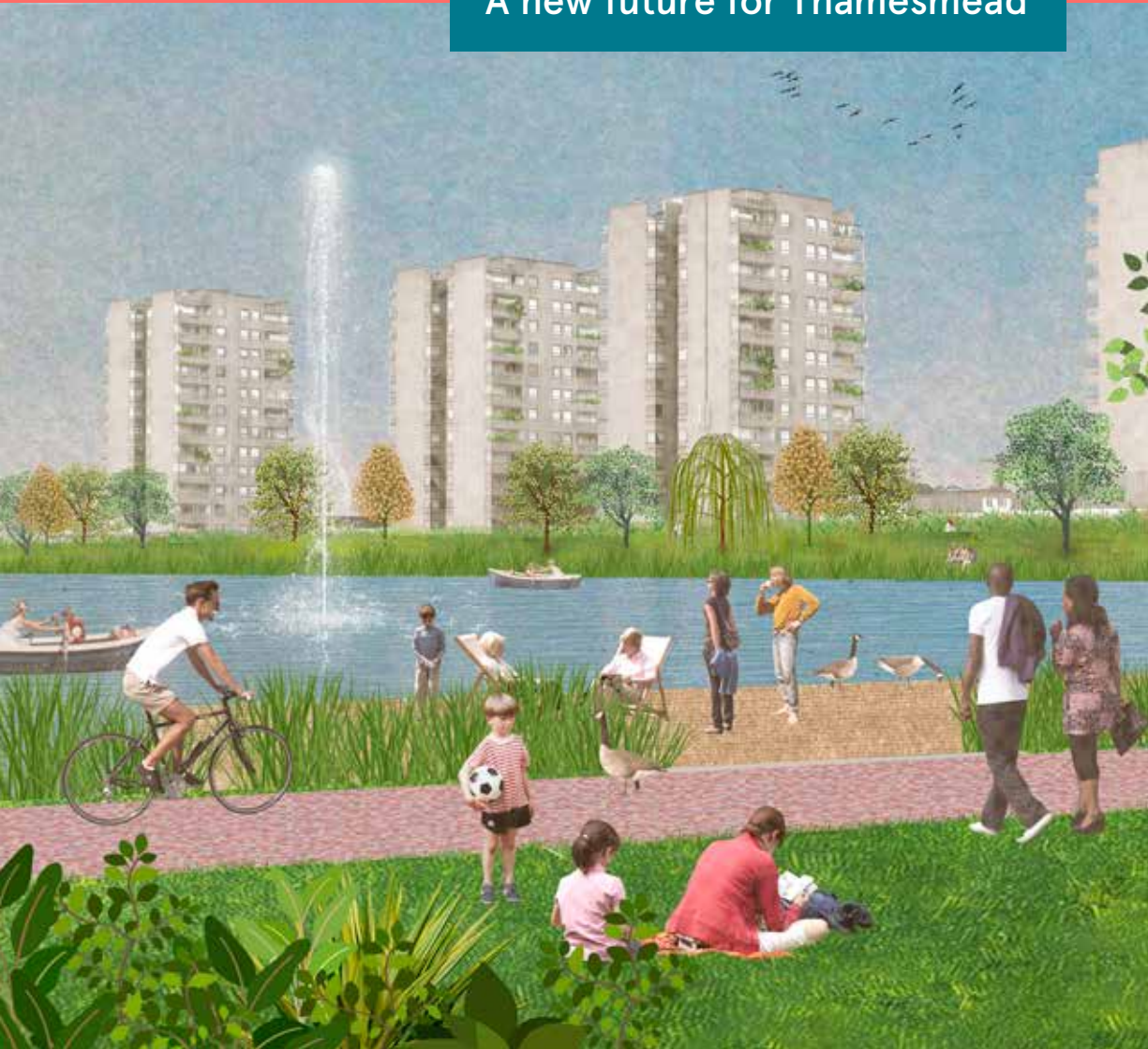


Living in the Landscape

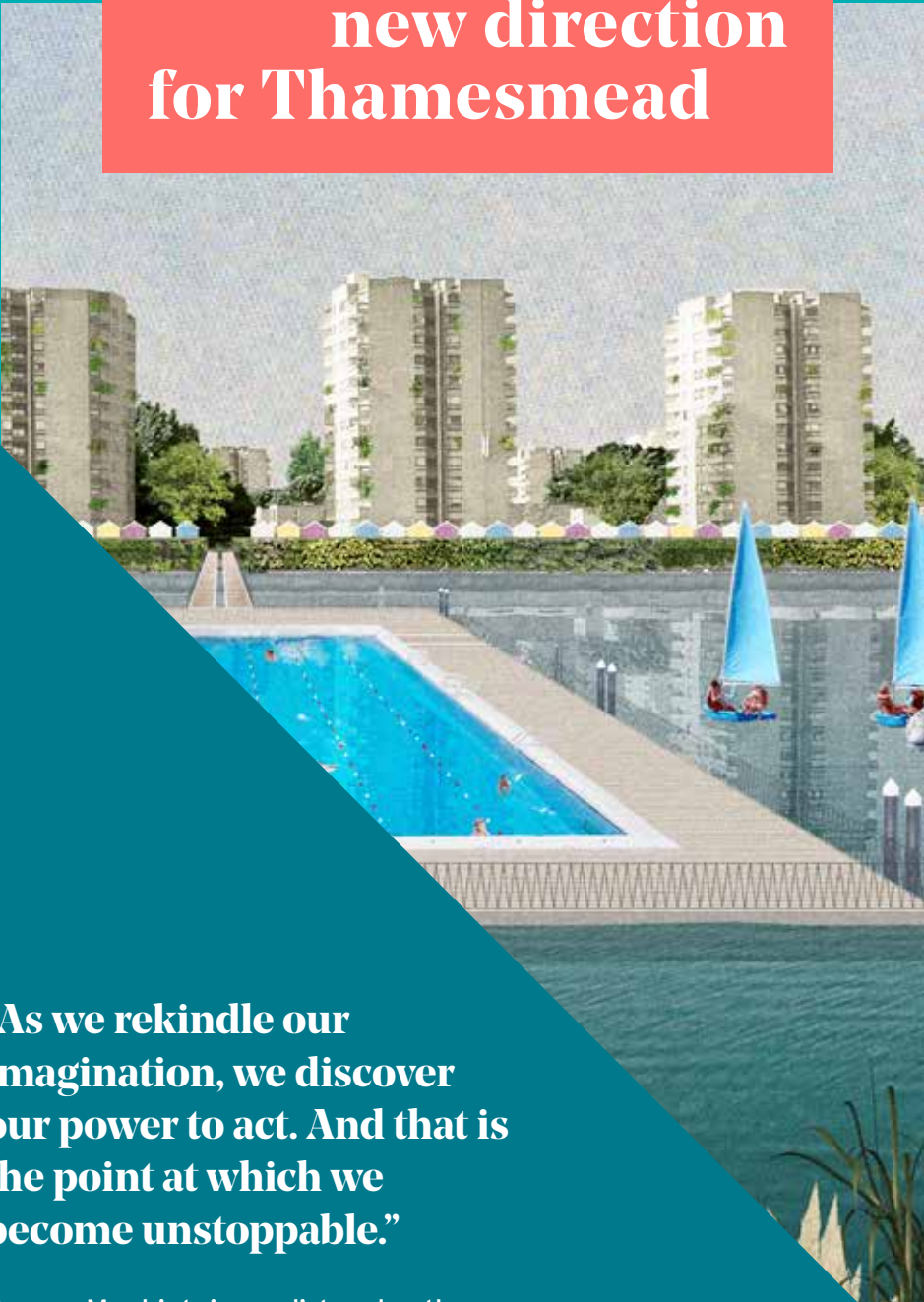
A new future for Thamesmead



THAMESMEAD TM

Peabody

Mapping a new direction for Thamesmead



“As we rekindle our imagination, we discover our power to act. And that is the point at which we become unstoppable.”

George Monbiot, journalist and author

Living in the Landscape is a new way of thinking about Thamesmead, and about place.

It creates a blueprint for how natural systems can - and will - change lives for the better.

This is the Executive Summary for Living in the Landscape, a green infrastructure framework for Thamesmead. The full report by LDA Design, commissioned by Peabody, can be found at: www.thamesmeadnow.org.uk



“Thamesmead was the best childhood ever; I wish I could give that experience to my grandson.”

Sheniz Bayraktar, former Thamesmead resident



Arms outstretched and running towards a new future

London’s biggest opportunity

Hope for a better future is the catalyst for Peabody’s ambition to make Thamesmead’s natural networks central to life and planned for in the same way as housing or transport. It’s a good place to start.

When people first moved to Thamesmead, it must have felt like another world so modern and different was it to inner-city London. Children settled in to roam and relish the generous outdoors, but parents felt adrift. Starting over knowing no one, like falling out of a nest.

By 2050, Thamesmead will have grown in size and confidence: it is special and distinctive, and at ease with what it has to offer. A place that Londoners reach for as a good day out, as they hop on Crossrail to wander the wetlands or have a family picnic by the water’s edge before popping into Bow Arts for a culture shot.

The population will have doubled and there will be 24,000 new homes but it won’t feel crowded, just lively and lived in. £10 billion has been invested in the town. There is a new beach and

canal, and three new parks. The main road through Thamesmead is a green spine, and many routes across the town are car-free.

For residents, it is a place of opportunity. Outdoor space is given new purpose and meaning. Adventure will still be a big part of children’s lives here, but now they can enjoy nature trails, BMX racing, horse riding and fantastic sports facilities.

The town centre is a hub for all ages, a place to meet friends for a class, a coffee or a bite to eat, rather than a retail park. There will be new training opportunities and a culture of food growing. Getting around the town will be straightforward, with good public transport, and cycling and walking made easy.

This is the promise of Thamesmead, a sustainable and cohesive whole – a new, new town. Peabody’s bold plan is creative at heart, and committed to making Thamesmead a place that feels valued and cared for. A place of hope, another world no more.

It is landscape that makes a place memorable, successful, more equitable and loved

Making a vision a reality

There was an idea, when Thamesmead was first developed, that you could punt to the shops. Innovative design and modern amenities were closely integrated with nature and green spaces. Homes were light and affordable. The landscape was monumental, and buildings responded to it.

Fast-forward 50 years and Thamesmead remains rich in natural resources, but investment is needed for these resources to properly benefit local residents. Success depends on developing a rich sense of belonging, bringing together communities new and old. High levels of creativity are required to retain the unique spirit of the place.

Living in the Landscape is a Peabody framework designed to harness the power of Thamesmead's natural networks to create a more equitable, healthier and more inclusive place.

The good news is that green infrastructure provides an extraordinary rate of return: investment of up to £100 million in capital costs and 30-year operating and maintenance

costs generates £850 million in health benefits to the people of Thamesmead, or savings to the NHS. Investing in Thamesmead's landscape makes the most sense, and Living in the Landscape sets out how that investment will protect Thamesmead from the generic and make the town special.

It rests on six tenets: that Thamesmead will be a place of choices; that life here is close to nature; that connectivity will be a game changer; that inclusion matters; and that Thamesmead will be resilient to climate breakdown, and well managed and cared for.

Living in the Landscape protects against the generic

A transformational programme for Thamesmead's shared spaces and waterways will make this vision a reality.

A Thamesmead Test has been designed to measure new developments and projects against this vision for a more biodiverse, sociable, safer and fairer Thamesmead.



Living in the Landscape builds on Thamesmead's distinctive character and rich tapestry of assets.

Thamesmead Today. Images by Paul Upward.



The lakes and canals of Thamesmead are to be celebrated. There's nothing like them across London.



By 2050, Thamesmead is a place of choices

Thamesmead is a place where new things happen. The ambition that first shaped the place now drives an exciting approach to the way it is designed and managed, avoiding generic solutions and seizing the opportunities offered by its unique spirit.

Thamesmead is an early adopter of environmental technologies, such as energy from waste, which support new skills and a good mix of jobs. Growth means there are homes to suit a range of needs, and sociable places add value.

The landscape facilitates a vibrant local economy, from market gardens to makers' yards. The green and blue infrastructure – the parks, the gardens, trees and water bodies – are the key building blocks of place, fundamental to the health and wellbeing of those who live there.



Left: Southmere's iconic towers will be set within a greener, more social landscape, with Southmere Lake a lively destination for the town.

Life is close to nature

Thamesmead makes the most of its varied spaces and its remarkable access to water. New development is planned and designed to provide people with more contact with nature.

Naturalised canals, and cleaned lakes are popular for recreation. There is a close relationship with the River Thames with new views and a reimagined waterfront.

Local people spend more time outdoors. Thamesmead feels tranquil but also diverse, playful, and free range: a place for cyclists, runners, walkers and kayakers.

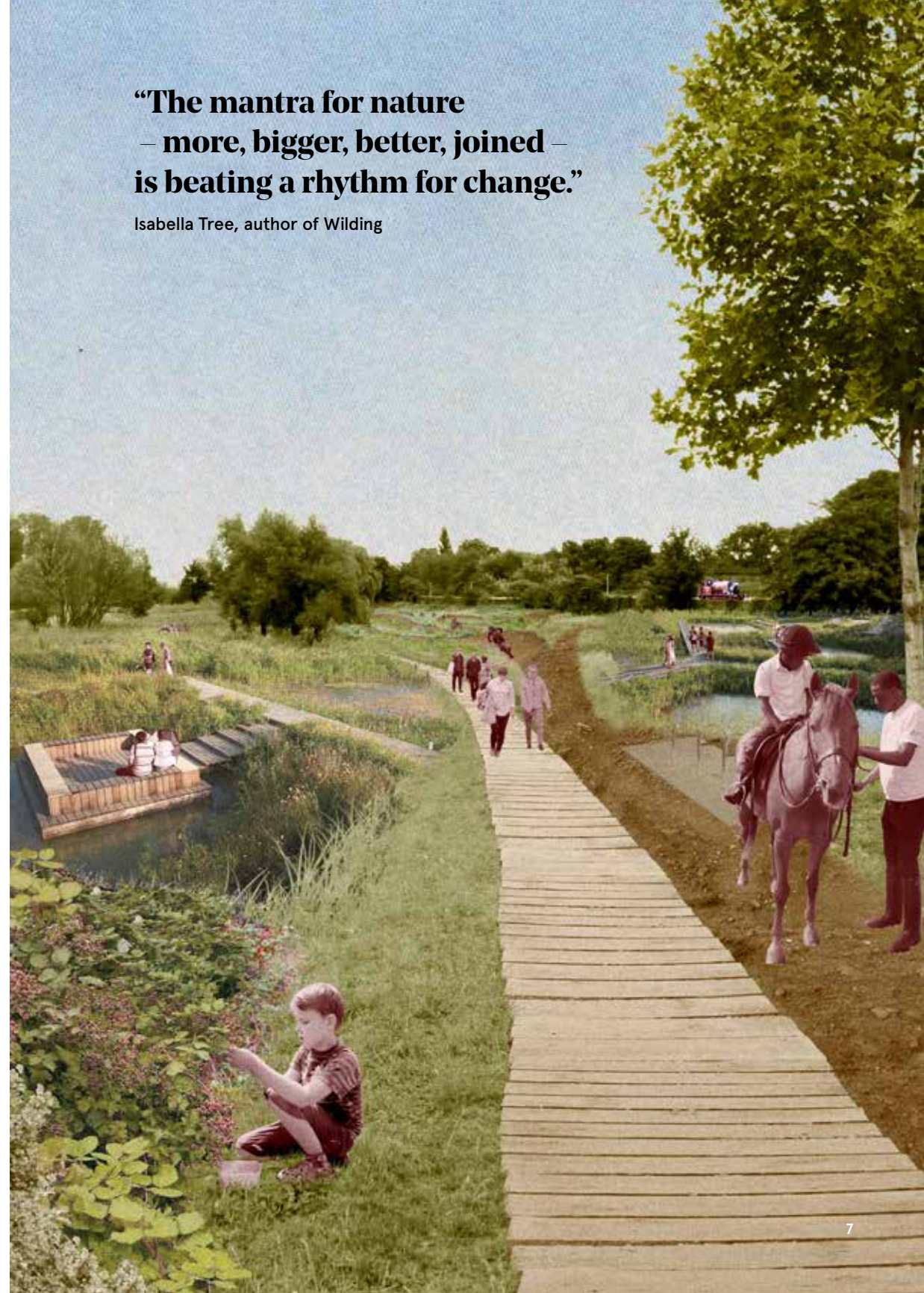
Thamesmead is London's largest new urban forest, with broadleaf trees providing a generous canopy. A strong urban ecosystem connects the habitats for a wide range of species, and importantly pollinators. Everywhere, nature is valued, and drawn on to inspire distinctive and inclusive design solutions.



Right: Crossway Community Park is extended to become a biodiverse wetland, a managed and resilient wilderness.

**“The mantra for nature
– more, bigger, better, joined –
is beating a rhythm for change.”**

Isabella Tree, author of *Wilding*



“If physical activity were a drug, we would refer to it as a miracle cure.”

UK Chief Medical Officer, 2019



Connectivity is a game changer

Originally designed largely for the car, Thamesmead is now a place where pedestrians and cyclists are prioritised, making it easier to live a healthy and active life. The roads streets and green routes feel distinctively Thamesmead.

Excellent public transport to central London and around Thamesmead itself means the place is well connected, edible bus stops and incidental play providing delight along the way. Well-lit and popular green routes and linear parks connect to transport hubs, as well as schools, homes, shops and businesses.

Thamesmead is a destination for leisure and recreation with a strong evening economy and great sporting facilities. Imaginative pop-ups, festivals and meanwhile use of space shows what Thamesmead can offer.



Left: Mead Riverfront and Tripcock Hill. A rediscovered Thames Path creates a safe and open route for pedestrians, cyclists and joggers.

Inclusion counts for a great deal

Thamesmead is a welcoming and diverse place to be: informal, spontaneous and quirky. The vulnerable come first. Equal opportunities are assured through partnership with the best providers of training for disadvantaged people and those living on low incomes.

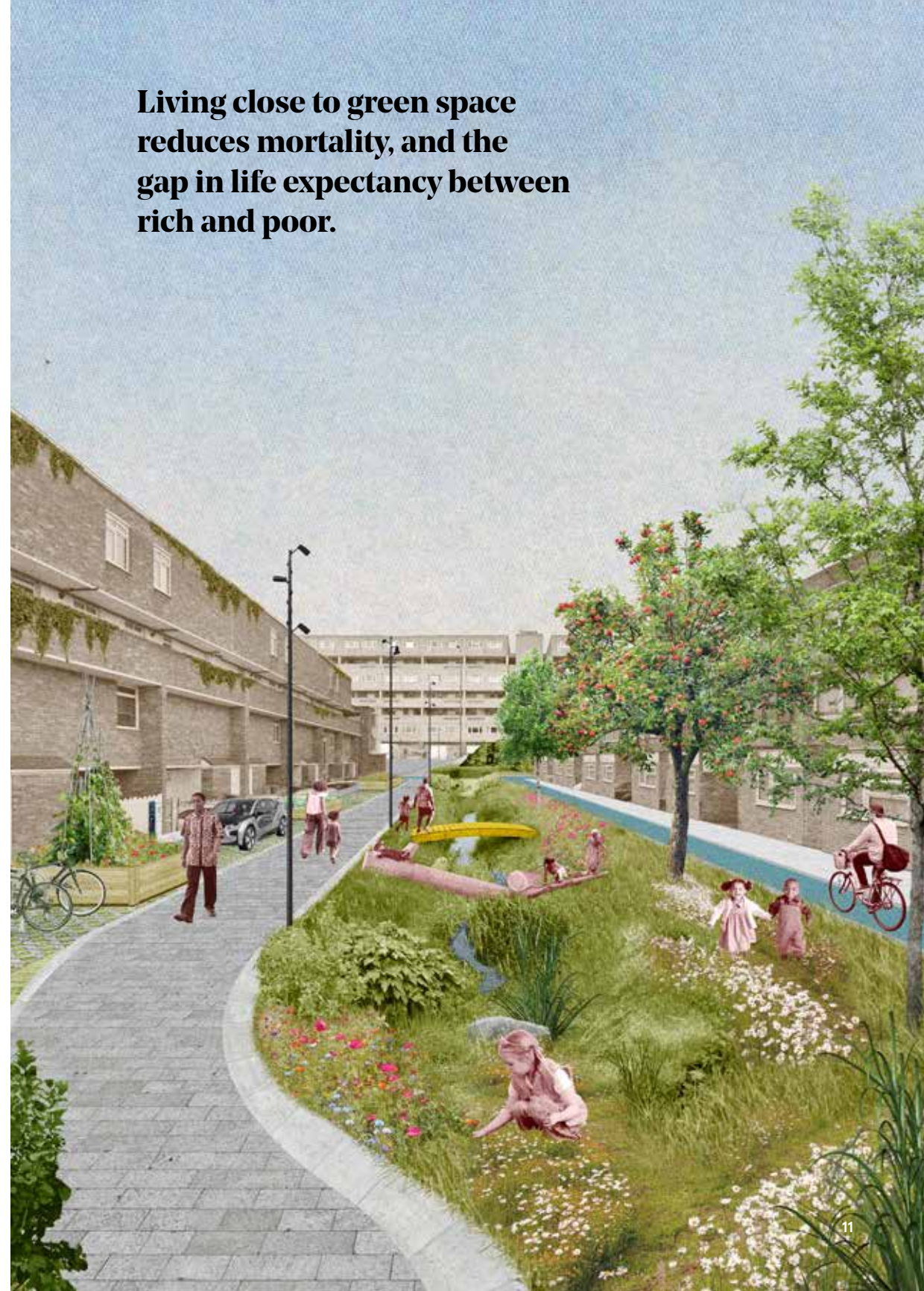
New development prioritises building community, with affordable housing and strong civic space. People feel safe because they are known. The town's green infrastructure supports cultural, sporting and informal recreation. An all-seasons programme of events creates a culture of inclusion, strengthened by an adaptable public realm.

The landscape with its new amenities and well-judged social infrastructure creates a place where lives easily overlap. Communities new and old find much in common. They shape the town together.



Right: The Moorings is distinguished by playable streets and an 'edible park' with micro allotments. Safer and more walkable for children to play outside, it is easier to live a healthy lifestyle.

Living close to green space reduces mortality, and the gap in life expectancy between rich and poor.



Thamesmead could become a pioneer in terms of biodiversity, connecting people more closely to nature.



Thamesmead is resilient to climate breakdown

Thamesmead pioneers highly sustainable living with carbon-free heat and power and buildings orientated for solar gain in winter.

Good design ensures Thamesmead meets the challenges of the day. Biodiverse roofs and spaces and waterways temper summer heatwaves.

There is an emphasis in all housing on the outdoors and on the spaces between buildings.

The restored canals and working landscape minimise flood risk with planting and bioswales, green pavements and floating gardens absorbing stormwater.



Left: Broadwater Dock and Wetlands. Redundant infrastructure is repurposed as lovely linear ecological wetlands with views of the Thames. The historic lock is around the corner.

Thamesmead is well-managed and cared for

In Thamesmead, there is a clarity of purpose. All change and development is designed to benefit local people.

Communities feel listened to and are equipped with the tools to cope with challenges and obstacles. Together, they shape facilities and places to suit their needs and ambitions.

They are supported by an able team of managers and maintenance staff. There are opportunities for volunteering and training.

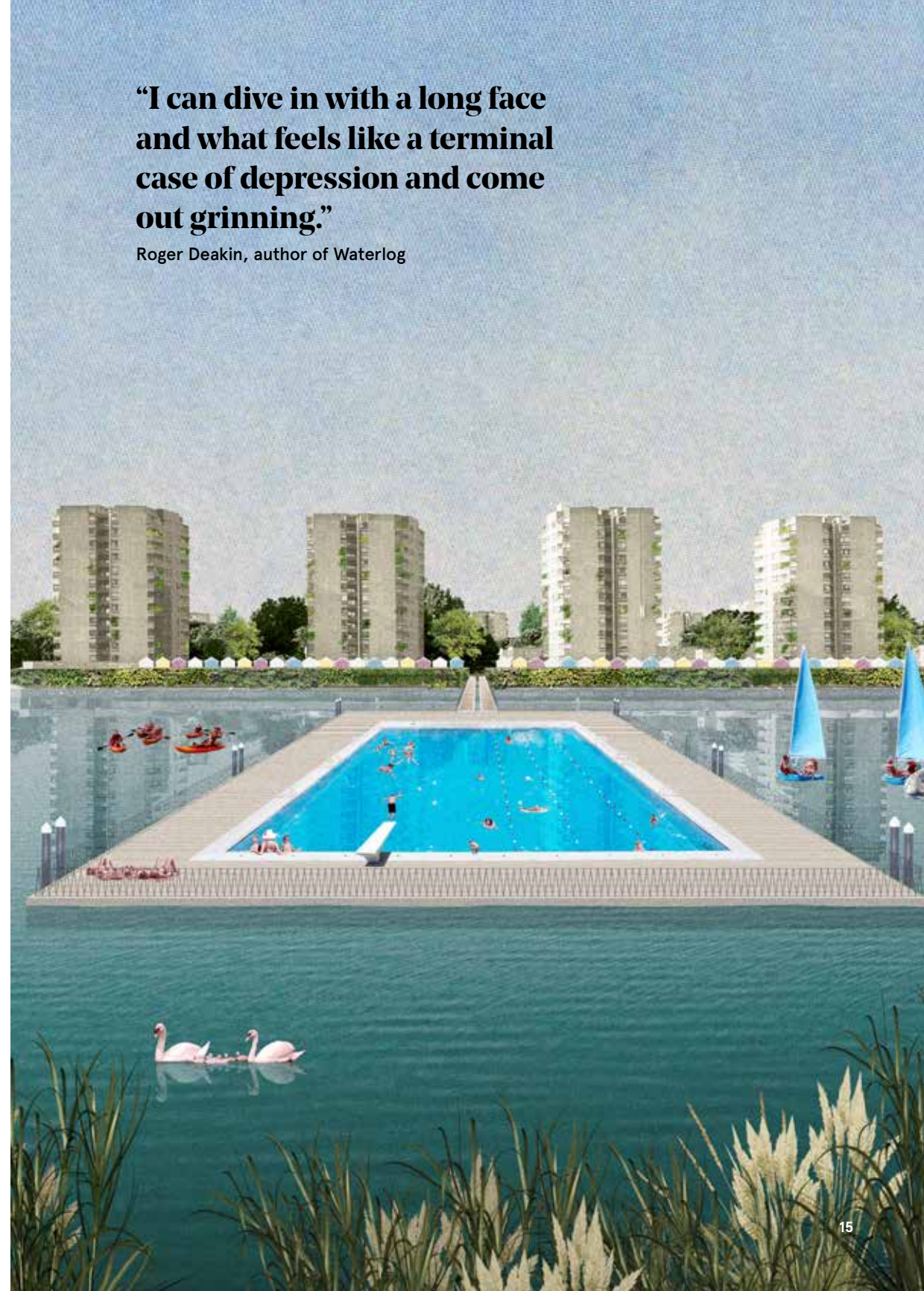
An energetic well-resourced team works closely with the people of Thamesmead. Management is funded sustainably and equitably. There is clarity of purpose behind all changes and transparency as to where monies are invested, and why.



Right: Southmere Village and Lake. Being able to enjoy an active life on your doorstep is what Thamesmead will become known for.

“I can dive in with a long face and what feels like a terminal case of depression and come out grinning.”

Roger Deakin, author of Waterlog



How we will bring new life to Thamesmead

Living in the Landscape's five Programmes for Change form an ambitious commitment to making Thamesmead a place of choices.

1. The Big Blue

Thamesmead's remarkable waterscape represents the town's biggest challenge needing the most investment, and offers the chance for greatest transformation. The river here has an untamed beauty and could provide a rich resource for bird and nature watching, and for cultural and social activity. The lakes and canals will become more central to daily life, once water quality is improved. This programme will balance improved access with ecological sensitivities and establish Thamesmead as a leader in climate change adaptation.

2. Wilder Thamesmead

Wilder Thamesmead will integrate biodiversity more effectively into the ways that Thamesmead is designed, managed, used and enjoyed. A Biodiversity Action Plan will protect natural habitats, enhance the waterways, green the grey, and ensure the full mitigation of loss through new development. Partnership will be the cornerstone of this programme, with input from key stakeholders including the London Wildlife Trust and Thames21.

3. A Productive Landscape

A working landscape in Thamesmead will provide vital points of connection, feeding enterprise and sociability and connecting people to nature. It is why this programme is critical to the Framework's success. Small moves can reap significant benefits.

4. Active Thamesmead

The town's residents currently visit green spaces less than the twice-a-week national average. Better facilities will encourage people to spend more time outdoors. This programme will create three new parks and build on the clubs and facilities already there to offer local residents more choice and better quality, within a distinctive setting, making Thamesmead a wider draw.

5. Connected Thamesmead

The most flawed part of Thamesmead's original design was the reliance it placed on the car. In a climate conscious world, and where health and wellbeing are such major concerns, this has to be addressed with urgency. Prioritising active travel and public transport will make Thamesmead a healthier, more navigable place to be. Our cultural events, venues and public art will also assist to create routes between well-used spaces and aid wayfinding.



The Big Blue

Thamesmead's relationship with the Thames is recast. The rediscovered waterfront is a lively destination, with access to the water's edge.

Naturalised man-made canals, lakes and ditches provide rich wild habitat for reed warblers and water voles.

Thamesmead is protected from sea level rises with flood defences that

work well, look good and provide multiple benefits beyond protection.

The full potential of Thamesmead's lakes and canals is realised. Clean water means they're enjoyed by all.

From rain gardens to SuDS that make for playful routes to school, rainfall is managed in a way that reconnects all to the water cycle.



Wilder Thamesmead

All of Thamesmead is London's largest new urban forest, verdant with street trees.

A Nature Recovery Network protects and conserves Thamesmead's key wild habitats and species.

Wildflower meadows brightly transform Thamesmead's featureless tracts of grassland.

There are new homes for bats, birds and bees across Thamesmead.

Thamesmead's buildings and structures go from grey to green, providing new spaces for wildlife.



A Productive Landscape

Food growing is central to life in Thamesmead, from window boxes through to hydroponics.

Thamesmead's green waste is put to good use. This is part of a credible circular economy of production, consumption and recycling.

Thamesmead's landscape is used to educate, from outdoor classrooms to learning environmental skills.

The Equine Country Park is a wonderful place for riding horses and learning new skills.

Lively markets and food stalls sell locally grown produce, bringing streets and squares to life.



Active Thamesmead

Enjoying an active life on your doorstep is what Thamesmead is known for.

The landscape is playful, and playable, creating a network that connects schools, nurseries and community centres.

Thamesmead's residents will shape play to suit their needs and tastes, from bike trails to splash pads.

The managed wilderness of Crossway Boardwalk and Wetlands is a focus for outdoor sports tailored to the unique natural setting.

The Lakes are places for anglers, summer lidos and wild swimming. Thamesmere Lakeside Hub, the transformed leisure centre, connects well to the water. Its new café makes for a sociable place to be.



Connected Thamesmead

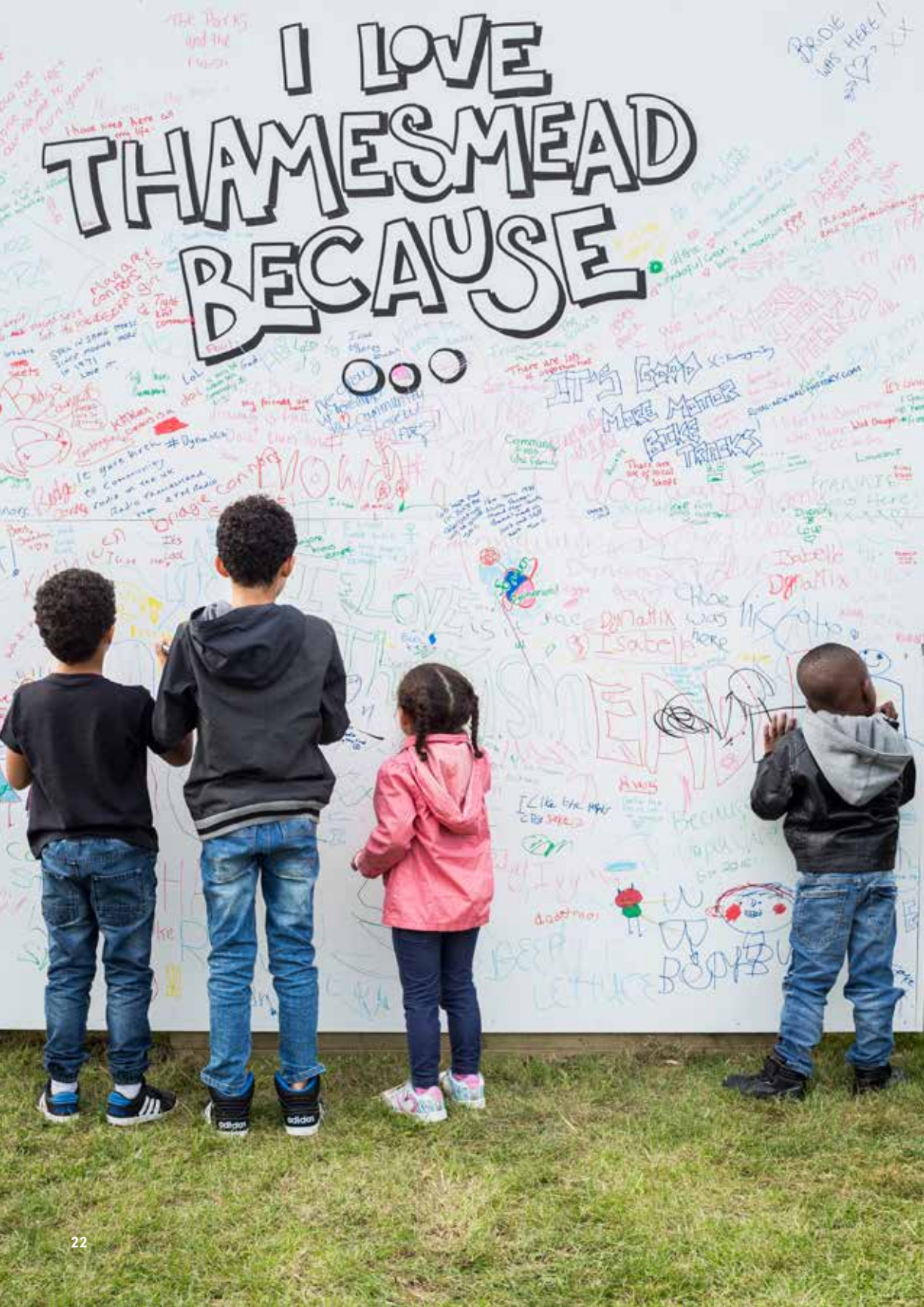
A year-round programme of cultural events and festivals, combined with permanent public artworks and cultural venues, connect Thamesmead's green spaces.

Active travel and public transport is prioritised across Thamesmead.

Gallions Reconnection is a new stretch of canal that honours the original design intent.

Cycling to the shops in Thamesmead is made easier with a 6km cycleway and footpath.

The main route through the town, which includes Western Way, is transformed into Thamesmead New Street, rebalanced for buses, cyclists and pedestrians. Framed by wildflower planting, it shows how even roads and streets can be made distinctively Thamesmead.



A promise made is a promise fulfilled

Critical to the Framework's success is a clear delivery plan: what, when, why, who and how. Peabody has always recognised that investing fully in green infrastructure was a priority for the people of Thamesmead, but it is only now in a position to see just how far the benefits can be shown to justify investment.

Investment in green infrastructure capital works, operations and maintenance is just one per cent of the estimated development budget for Thamesmead, but the benefits are huge.

The team behind Living in the Landscape includes environmental economists who have arrived at those benefits through natural capital accounting. They include physical and mental health and wellbeing of residents, as well as protecting the environment, for example through carbon capture. When it comes to health, physical activity in green space reduces the risk of diabetes, coronary heart disease and stroke. It also improves quality of life: as little as 15 minutes in green space four times a week is worth at least £900 a year to each user in terms of wellbeing.

In delivering this programme, Peabody will be guided by some key principles.

First, why this provides well evidenced value: this helps prioritise decision making.

Second, what ambitious commitment means: Peabody is accountable, and progress will be stringently monitored and publicly reported on using the Thamesmead Test.

Third, when the programme unfolds: it will proceed at pace to effect nothing short of transformation by 2050.

Fourth, how efficient delivery is central to what Peabody is doing: it is proposed that co-ordination is managed by a single dedicated organisation working collaboratively with a number of delivery partners.

Fifth, how it will be sustainably financed: an equitable and well-balanced long-term funding plan.

Improving the environment for the most vulnerable, in the most deprived areas, is a priority

No more false dawns

What did you think on your first visit to Thamesmead?

I joined a Peabody Thamesmead tour when I was CEO for Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation. Walking through the town, I soon realised what an extraordinary place it is, one of contrasts and surprises. I was expecting modernist towers and concrete, but not the mix of neighbourhoods and homes. I was struck by the absence of relationship between the town and the Thames, it felt like a huge missed opportunity.

You have a background in garden cities. Do you see any similarities between towns like Letchworth and Thamesmead?

There are parallels in terms of self-sufficiency, but most importantly, the power of green space.

The architecture of any place – be it Arts and Crafts or Brutalist – is a decision of its time. Land-use pattern and the provision of space and services, such as transport and leisure, are more important. These make a place. It's why Thamesmead has such potential.

How do you see Peabody's role in Thamesmead?

Thamesmead has experienced many false dawns over the last thirty years or so. But at Peabody, it is in our DNA to take a long-term view. Stewardship is something we take seriously. We want people to feel confident that the town will be well looked after. Our energies will go into new spaces knowing we can maintain and support them.

Our aim is to create a sustainable income model that can provide enormous benefits for residents and for the whole town. It is a 30-year vision that will help people make the most of their lives, especially the most vulnerable.

Thamesmead was built with outstanding green and blue assets – what do they bring to its future?

Our proposals will make Thamesmead's green infrastructure fully functional again. Costing a fraction of the anticipated overall development costs, this will bring disproportionately huge benefits, especially in health and wellbeing for residents. This is key to the town's success. Outdoors is where life is really lived, families enjoying play areas together, lidos, exercising.

John Lewis is Executive Director of Peabody. He leads the team delivering meaningful change for the people of Thamesmead.



There is so much pleasure and value in great views, and well-used and loved shared spaces strengthen civic pride. In our cities, access to quality outdoor space is precious, none more so than London. I would love the streets of Thamesmead to be overwhelmingly green. With a stronger incentive to be outside, it will be easier to live an active, healthier life here. It makes economic sense too. With people more invested in where they live, maintenance costs will come down.

This is an ambitious framework. What does success look like?

I'll know we'll have put Thamesmead back on the map when people reach for it as a natural first choice for a visit, for a long bike ride or family picnic, to sit by the river or enjoy a trip on a river boat. It should feel a comfortable, easy place to be. I want people to be proud of the waterfront and to enjoy a lively town centre.

Great work is already underway. Southmere is iconic Thamesmead, and it's going to feel reinvigorated and ready to face a new future. We're celebrating what is already there and complementing and enhancing it with distinctive new development. Bow

Arts by the lake shore, for example, is fantastic. Southmere Lake itself hasn't really been touched for decades, and we are investing £2.5 million to clean it. I am longing to see the boat club taken out of a basement and back beside the Lake. It's moves like this that will make people say, "Ah, that's what Peabody was talking about".

What are the challenges?

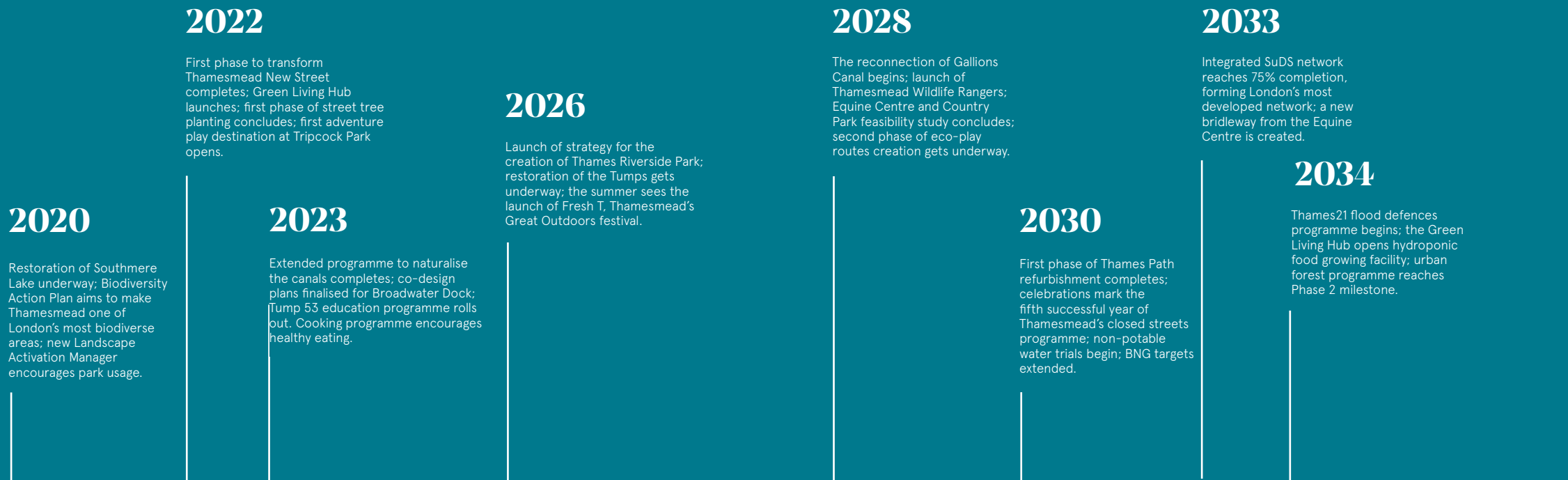
This is a long programme requiring deep pockets. We have to maintain pace and momentum while facing short-term pressures and project demands. But the plan we have is very strong. Key is a strategic approach to landscape, creating a place where people belong. This is not about piecemeal interventions but about building inclusivity and equality. We can bring much-needed cohesion, avoiding the pitfalls of incremental development.

What's 2050 Thamesmead like?

Connectivity will be transformed in Thamesmead – with Crossrail, and hopefully the DLR, gamechangers – and people will be able to move around the town, to London and back, and into Kent much more easily. This will make a huge difference to everyone here. It will open up economic opportunities that just aren't here now.

Thamesmead will also be a place of choices, one that people value because it has a lot more elbow room than almost anywhere else in London.

THAMESMEAD: HOW THE NEXT 15 YEARS COULD UNFOLD





Executive Summary of Living in the Landscape
Commissioned by Peabody from LDA Design

The full report can be found at:
www.thamesmeadnow.org.uk

Created in collaboration with: Continuum Sport
and Leisure, Green Infrastructure Consultancy Ltd.,
Land Management Services, Project Orange,
Robert Bray Associates, SNC-Lavalin Atkins
and Vivid Economics.