



“ Council strategists now see an opportunity to create a lively residential community and cultural hub, anchored by Greenwich’s World Heritage Site status. ”

**Above:** The Cutty Sark, before the recent disastrous fire. Happily, it will be restored to its former glory – like Greenwich itself.

# Right time for Greenwich

CUTTY SARK, THE VICTORIAN TEA CLIPPER RECENTLY RAVAGED BY FIRE, IS SYMBOLIC OF GREENWICH BOTH OLD AND NEW. THE FAMOUS SHIP, ONE OF THE WORLD’S MOST IMPORTANT MARITIME TREASURES, IS EXPECTED TO RISE LIKE A PHOENIX FROM THE ASHES. IT WILL TAKE ITS PLACE ALONGSIDE ANOTHER, THOROUGHLY MODERN GREENWICH BEING BUILT ON THE FRINGE OF THE HISTORIC TOWN CENTRE.

Arguably, a derelict eight-acre site at the mouth of Deptford Creek is the best undeveloped riverside location in London. It occupies a commanding position on a bend of the Thames, with splendid views of Canary Wharf – and it is soon to be transformed into a dazzling new development called New Century Quay.

Up to 1,000 homes are to be built alongside new riverside bars and restaurants, a heritage museum, workspace, shops and galleries. About 630 of the apartments will be for private sale, with the first completions due in 2011, just in time for events at the nearby Olympics.

Galliard Homes, the developer, has a strong track record in the area and says New Capital Quay will be a prestige address rivalling Butler's Wharf, the upmarket residential quarter by Tower Bridge.

Greenwich and Deptford, previously divided by a derelict land buffer, are forging together. Greenwich High Road, which runs between Greenwich town centre and Deptford Bridge, has become a development corridor. At the Deptford end, by the DLR station, handsome Mumfords Mill has been split into loft apartments, while the old Seagar distillery is being transformed into 200 apartments, many in an eye-catching skyscraper. A 19th-century warehouse will become a gallery for Goldsmiths College.

One of the regeneration priorities is to open up the waterside so that it becomes much more of an amenity space. A footbridge

across the Creek is planned, which would provide a quick pedestrian link into Greenwich town centre.

Nearby, the prized Victorian edifice of Paynes and Borthwick Wharves are being redeveloped into 247 flats. With pedestrian access to the Thames blocked, few people have seen the impressive facade of the listed Paynes Wharf, built in 1860 for the manufacture of marine boilers which were loaded onto ships through magnificent Italianate arches.

The body of the restored wharf will be exhibition and commercial space, crowned by a line of 12 glass-walled duplex penthouses. An 18-storey residential tower (one- to three-bedroom flats) is being built alongside and a closed riverside promenade opened up.

All in all it is a well-located district, handy for Blackheath Village as well as Greenwich, and with fast transport connections – less than 10 minutes by rail into London Bridge and only 12 minutes on the DLR to Canary Wharf. No wonder bankers have already discovered the area.

Currently, new homes in the area cost between £500 and £600 per sq ft, relatively good value by London standards: Across the Thames on the Isle of Dogs top values are touching £1,000 per sq ft.

Several key developments are planned along Creekside, still an industrial waterway. The DLR runs parallel with the Creek and the station on Deptford Broadway has proved a development catalyst.

Laban dance centre, designed by Tate Modern architects Herzog de Meuron, has given this pocket an image boost. Moreover, a masterplan has been agreed by the two boroughs, Lewisham and Greenwich, to advance the piecemeal regeneration of recent years. Earlier proposals for a Canary Wharf-type office complex have been kicked into touch. Council strategists now see it as an opportunity to create a lively residential community and cultural hub, anchored by Greenwich's World Heritage Site status and wider Deptford's creative sector.

Planners have given the go-ahead to Creekside Village, a six-acre development adjacent to Laban. Most of the housing – 801 flats in total – will be in three eye-catching towers up to 23 storeys high connected by a podium with 225,000 sq ft of commercial space let to small creative businesses.

Another key piece of the regeneration jigsaw is Deptford High Street, one of the few in London not to be cloned by high street brands. Instead, it has a colourful street market and a collection of independent shops serving the needs of a multi-ethnic community.

Deptford railway station (one of the oldest in London) and its immediate surroundings are to benefit from a Richard Rogers-designed mixed-use development with Continental-style piazza. Streetscape improvements and traditional shopfront restoration are planned.

The eventual aim is to unite the high street with the riverfront by providing pedestrian-friendly flows across Evelyn Street to Deptford Strand, an exotic-sounding name, albeit a historically accurate one.

Until recently, this pocket looked much the same as it did 30 years ago – a neglected, post-docks waterfront of derelict wharves and industrial sheds blocking off access to the Thames. Pepys Estate, once infamous as a crime-ridden no-go zone, is benefiting from neighbourhood improvements. Council homes are being refurbished, private sales and shared ownership introduced.

Here too is Convoys Wharf – a giant 40-acre chunk of land where Henry VIII founded a Royal Naval Dockyard. Redevelopment proposals for a bustling riverside community (some 3,000 homes plus offices) are already in place.

Deptford and Greenwich were once among the hubs of London, if not the world. Gradually they are beginning to resume that role again. ■

**Below:** Four of the landmark schemes that will restore Greenwich and Deptford's waterside. Left to right: Creekside Village, Paynes & Borthwick Wharves, New Capital Quay and the Seagar Distillery development.

