

Old | Newham

Re-generating the eastern part of the Royal Docks

BU1 – Transforming Local Areas

Exercise in London Borough of Newham

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Phase 2: Design Response

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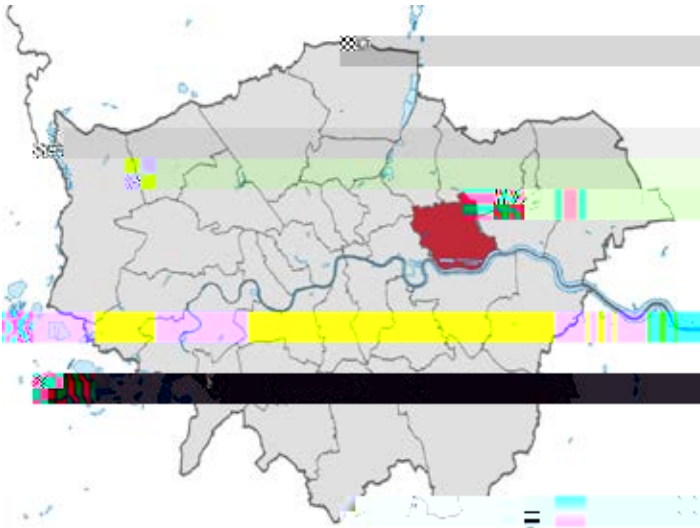
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the five other study groups in BU1 for their work in developing the lenses of analysis, our professors Giorgio Talocci and Camilo Boano for guiding us through this process, the members of the Newham Council's regeneration department whose invaluable feedback helped direct our response, and to the people of North Woolwich, Albert Island and Beckton, who gave us their time to help us better understand the area.

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North Woolwich, Albert Island and Beckton, an area carved out the eastern Royal Docks, has lying at its somewhat shaky foundations, a paradox: although well connected to London through its various transport links, at the local level it is



This design response aims to address this fundamental challenge by building new connections, drawing new networks, exploiting existing nodes and creating new ones. We recognise the singular challenge that the Airport presents – in terms of noise pollution and of its impact on land use – and try to come up with a plan, particularly for Albert Island that works within those limitations. As such we look at the eastern Royal Docks as a whole, and through its constituent parts, looking to reinvigorate the area considering themes of connectivity, everyday life and regeneration.

This document is organised in the following way: first, we develop a synthesized analysis, filtered through six lenses of analysis, which brings an overview of the main attributes of the area. Next a SWOT analysis captures the

the connection

redo



Figure 1. Real estate south of Albert Island



Figure 2. Empty lot near the Crossrail site



Figure 3. King George V DLR station

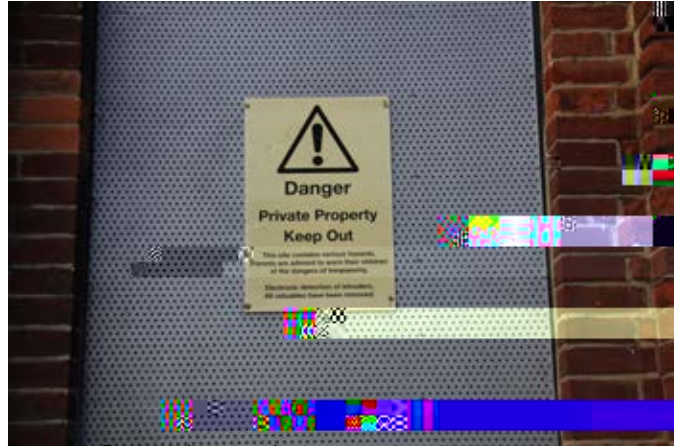


Figure 4. Danger sign on private property gate



Figure 5. Housing in North Woolwich



Figure 6. Pier Road



Figure 7. Abandoned pier



Figure 8. Historic station and railway museum near the pier



Figure 9. Aerial view of the Royal Docks from east (from: Vision for the Royal Docks)



Figure 10. Embodiment map (from: Urban Analysis - In

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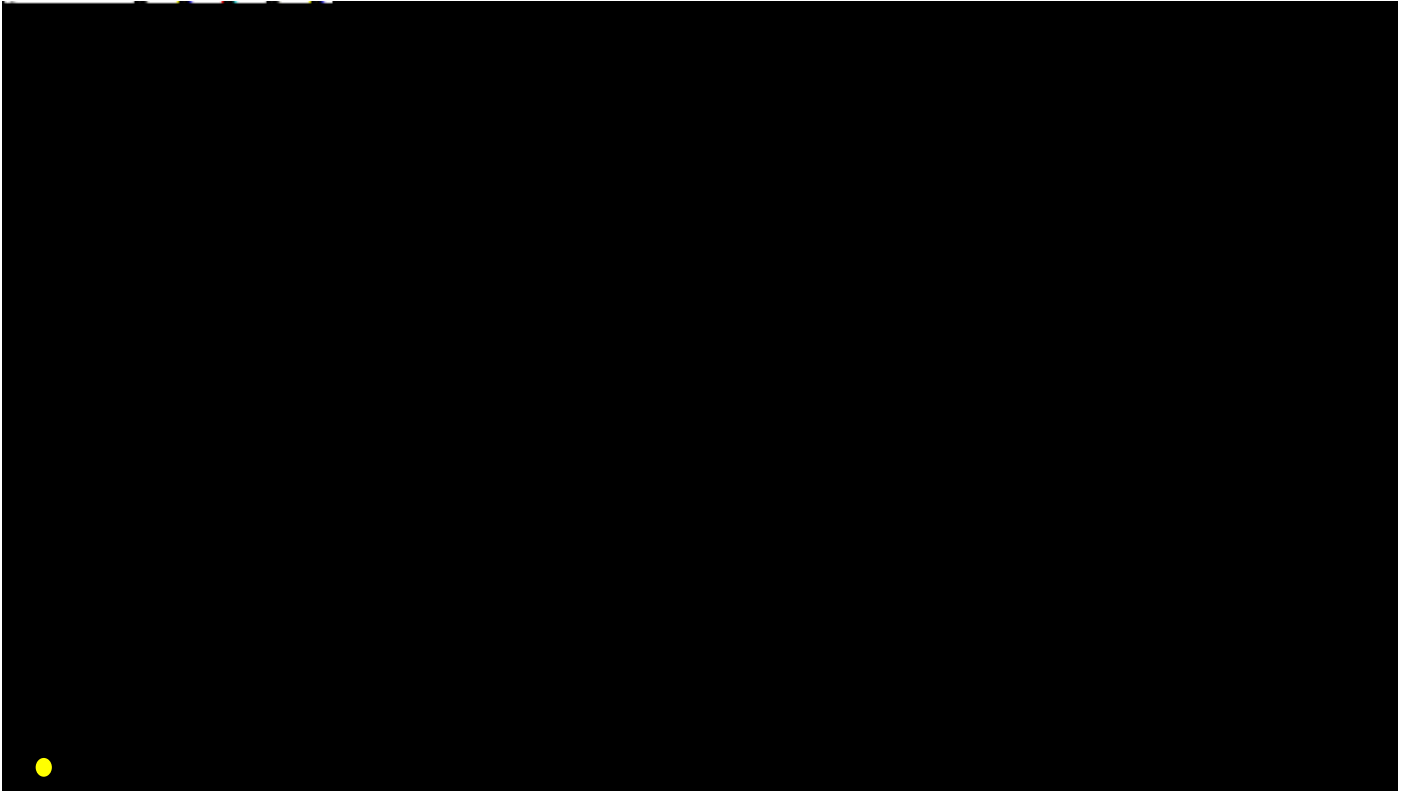


Figure 12. Map of abandoned buildings (from: Urban Analysis - Housing and Dwelling)



Figure 13. Built up, vacant and open spaces (from: Urban Analysis - Housing and Dwelling)

This idea of social disjointedness, established through interviews and observation, was a common theme. Though it must be said that the area was observed during a wet and cold London midwinter, few found evidence of a vibrant public life. Pier Parade, witness to a failed market, is bordered by empty shopfronts and contains little life. Royal Victoria Gardens and the park in Beckton provide a green respite, though views on the gardens, in particular, were mixed. Some see the space as a strong community asset, while others talked instead of muggings, street drinking and assaults.

Further disrupting the area are left over spaces, both empty land and buildings. The study area is pockmarked with empty brownfield sites, some of which are residual spaces left over by development, others, in particular Albert Island, are large swathes of neglected space. In the wake of the area's de-industrialisation and changing residential communities, a number of buildings – industrial, heritage, and others – have been left empty, symbols of an increasingly forgotten history and economic stagnation. The sheer quantity of empty and neglected space and buildings can generate feelings of disharmony, which is further compounded by the difficulty in getting around (Lynch 1960).

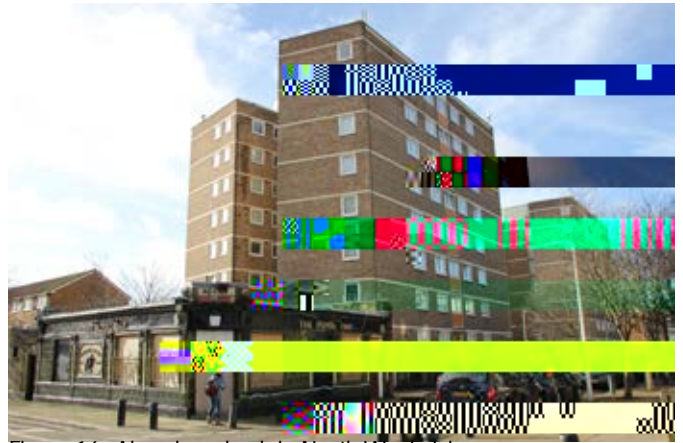


Figure 16. Abandoned pub in North Woolwich



Figure 17. Pier Parade square



Figure 14. Street signs and barriers on Pier Road



Figure 18. Walls at Royal Victoria Gardens



Figure 15. River bank in the new real estate area



Figure 19. Path along the river near Royal Victoria Gardens

Meanwhile regeneration efforts have been driven by large single-purpose developments, such as the airport and University of East London, motivated by commercial and industrial growth, with little consideration for and tie-in to the locality. Other developments on the horizon, notably the Asian Business Park, seem to follow along that vein. The lack of integration is not helped by the multiple actors influencing the area. From a planning perspective it falls within both Newham Council and the Greater London Authority's remit,



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- Strong support from London Development Agency and London Borough of Woolwich
- Existing investment to the area
- Existing well-planned open and public spaces (Royal Victoria Park)
- Land available (150 with public ownership and 250 hectares of brownfield)
- Some inhabitants consider it as a quiet area, there are some indications of a sense of community
- Levels of green spaces, the concrete, the
- Strong social mix of high cultural diversity
- Strong transport links
- Existing quality housing in relatively good condition

STRENGTHS

O

- Playground: potential to be a social interaction point
- Existing cultural centers and economies, networks and interventions
- GLA 'Green Enterprise Zone': classification should warrant investment in the local area
- Perceived as the future "world-class business center"
- Culture
- UEL
- Young diverse population
- Link between industrial and residential areas
- Existing landmarks with historical weight
- Reducing the importance of the vehicular presence of Abney Road
- Existing landmark
- Green branches from the park towards the rest of North Woolwich
- Semi public spaces





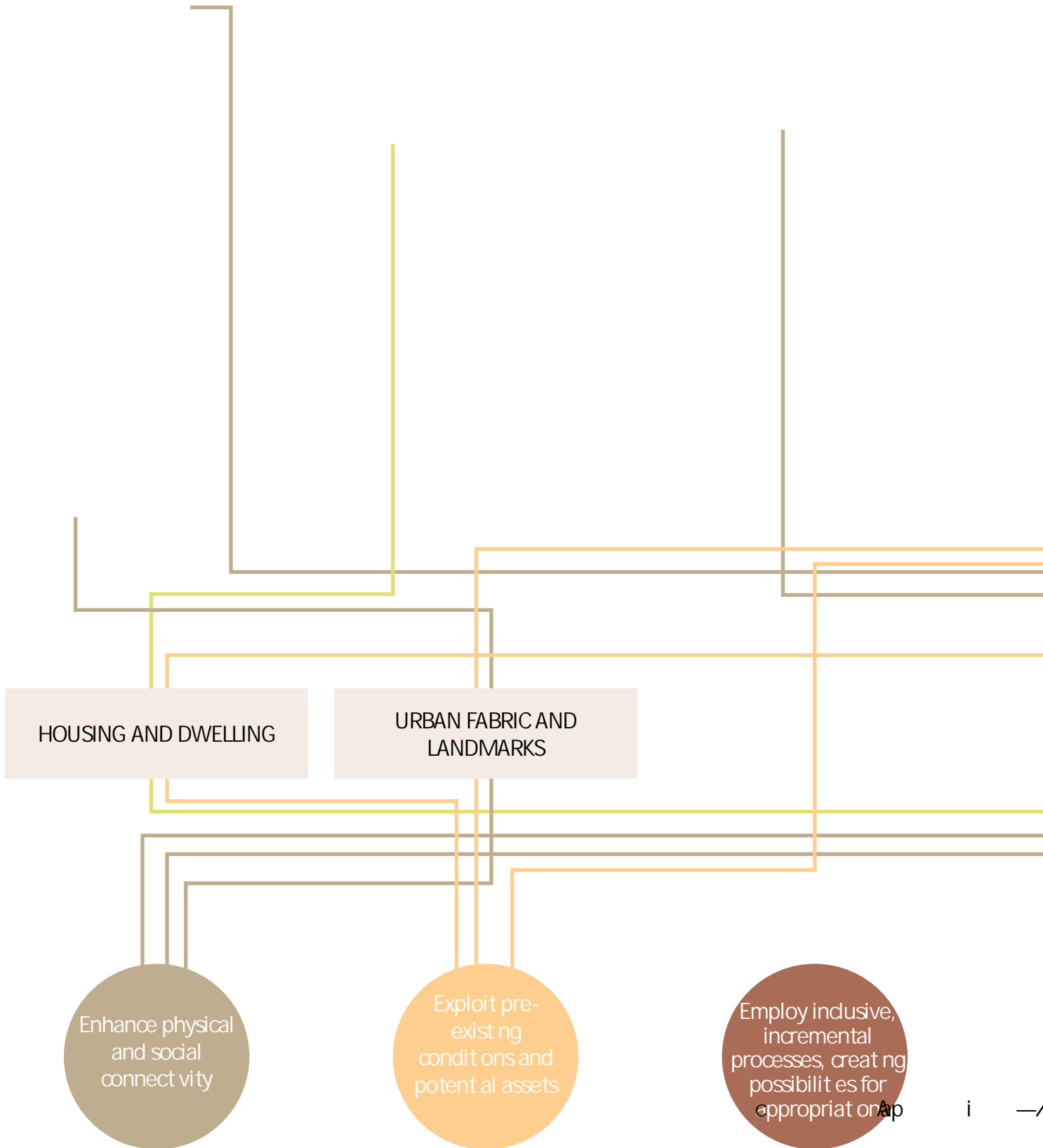
WEAKNESSES

- Priority of industrial development over housing and social development
- Prioritization of motor vehicles limiting pedestrian mobility
- Priority of external public
- Cultural and language barriers
- High unemployment and poverty
- General perception of London as too disorganized
- Sense of remoteness and little sense of safety
- Noise and visual pollution
- Lack of planning and disjointed historical developments
- Limited exploitation of Thames and brownfield sites
- Albert
- Housing
- Lack of and entertainment and infrastructures in some areas

THREATS

- Commercial prioritization
- Transport prioritization
- Relation between macro and micro scale
- Rising land values/rents
- Fences and
- Unemployment
- Expansion of the airport
- Exclusion
- New developments
- Lack of funding
- Flood risk





After a thorough review of the six urban analysis reports and conducting a SWOT analysis, we concluded that there were three areas that needed to be addressed directly through our design response – issues of connectivity, both physical and social; a enlivening of the area’s everyday life; and redirecting the focus of the regeneration itself on the locality to make it a place that was desirable to live and visit. As such our principles and guidelines drew from these challenges – the area’s multiple endaves needed to be bridged, connectivity vastly improved and opportunities created for social interaction; interventions should address the area’s liveliness and livelihood; and they should tap the area’s potential – found materially in unused resources such as abandoned buildings and, most importantly, the river – to generate a sense of identity and ownership.



Enable public appropriation through flexible design.

Encourage temporary reuse of empty buildings.

PRINCIPLES



GUIDELINES

Support urban (cultural, cultural, economic and social)



Balance between public and private spaces.



Emphasize the importance of the economic dynamics.



Emphasize the importance of the developments with the public realm area.



Involve all stakeholders in the



Involve all stakeholders in the process, propose ideas and express needs.



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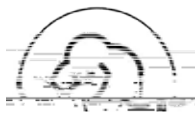
Promote social encounters with



Promote social encounters with residents of the area.



STRATEGIES



The eastern Royal Docks, now an interrupted sequence of nodes, will

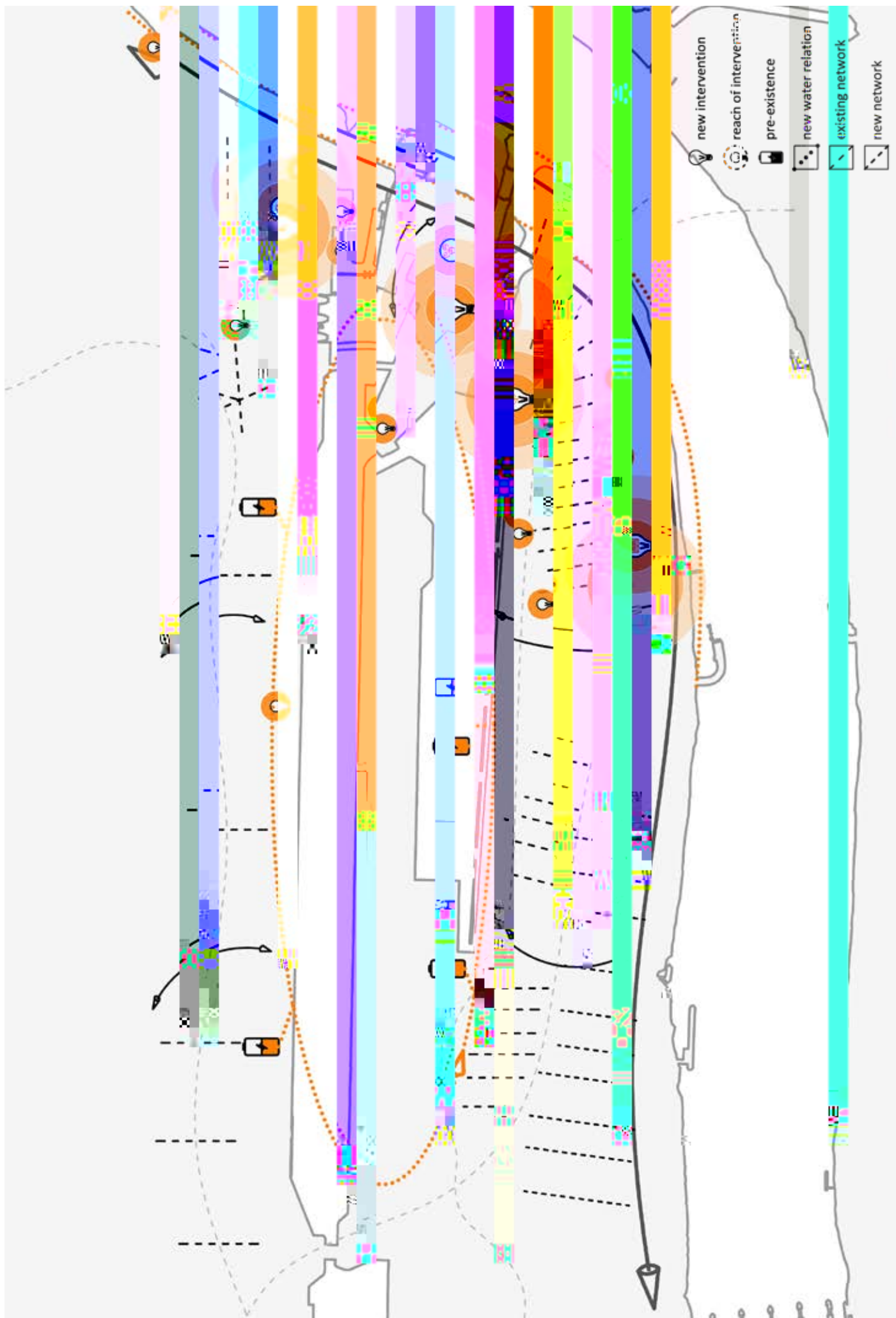
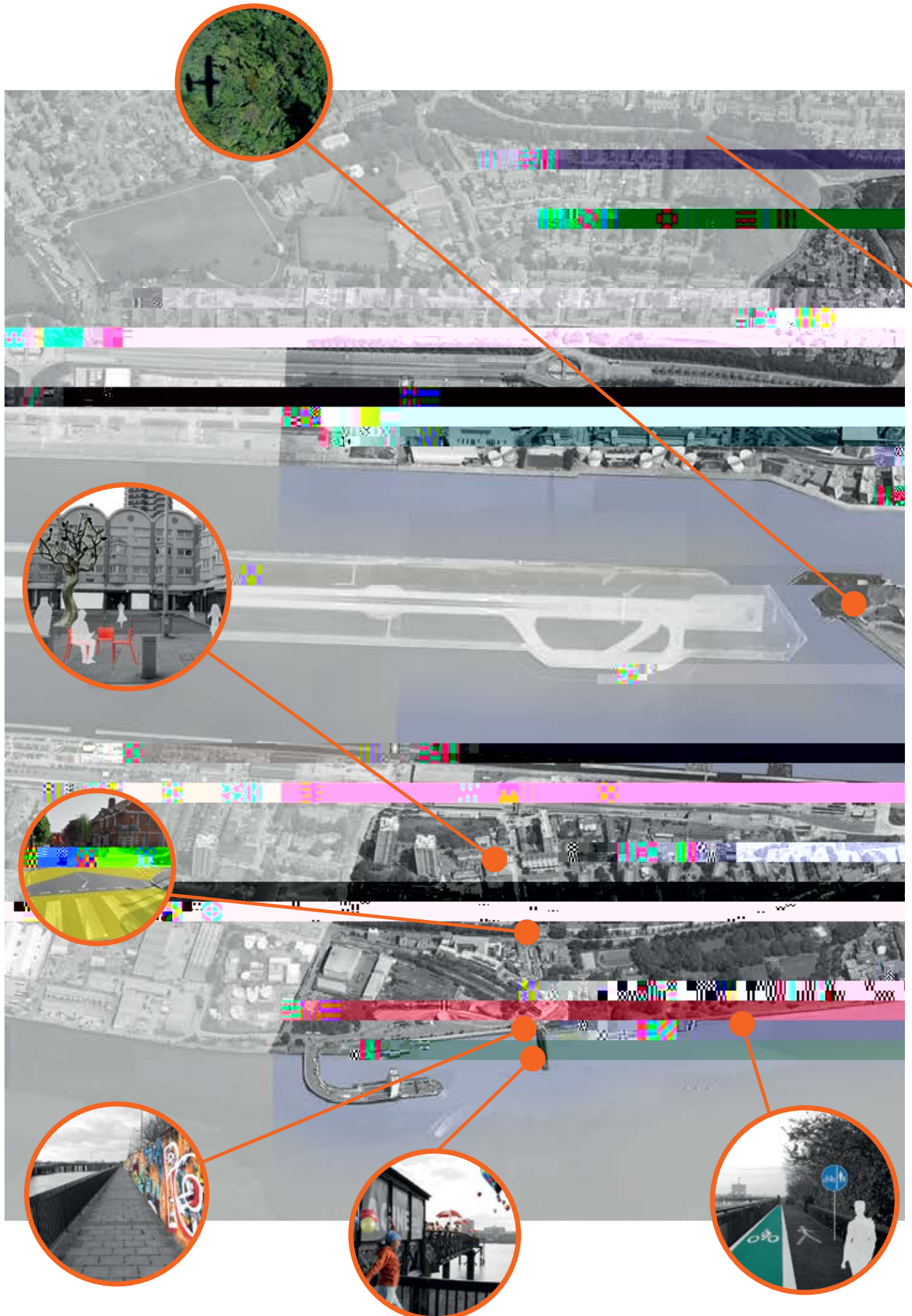
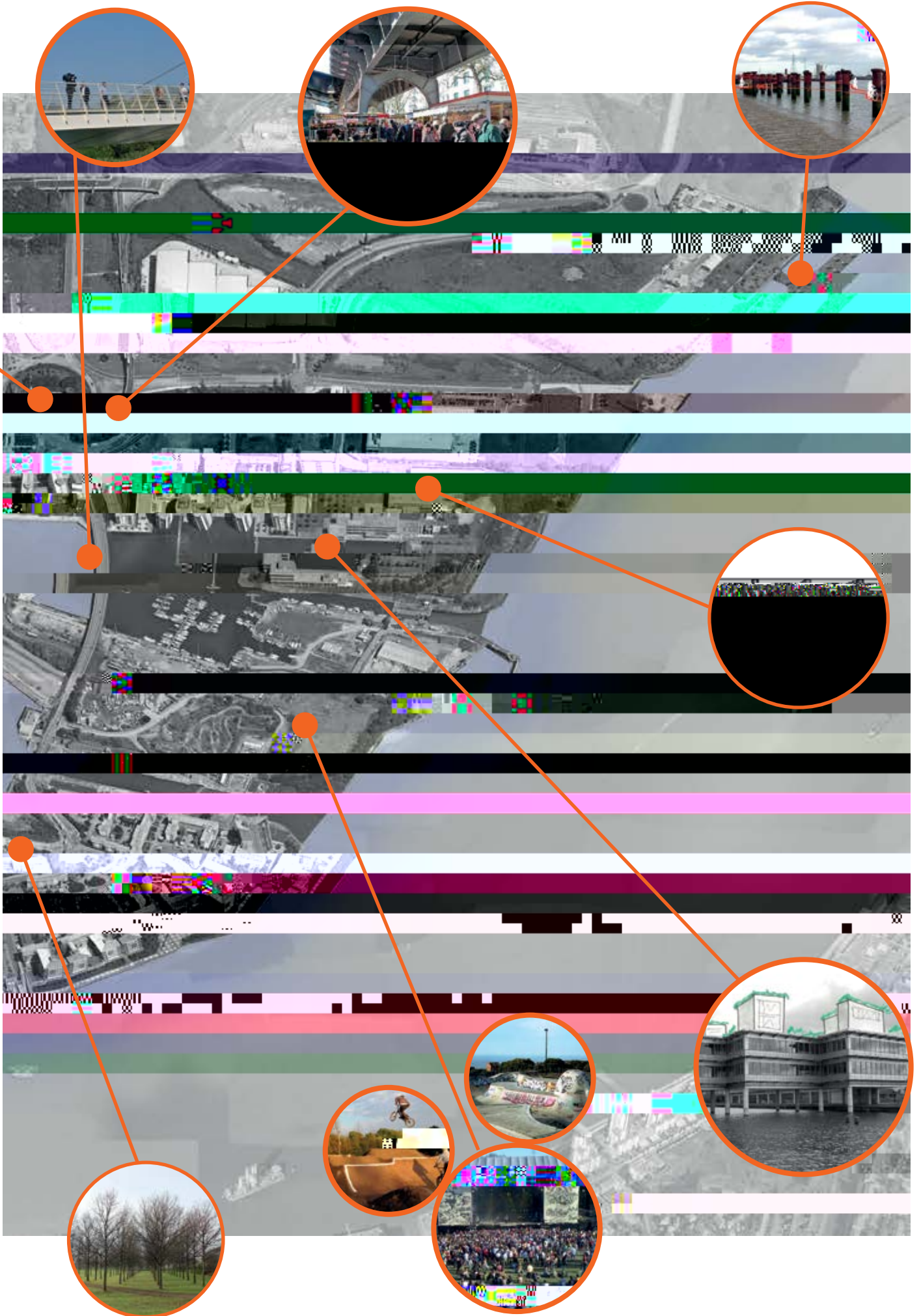


Figure 23. Vision map





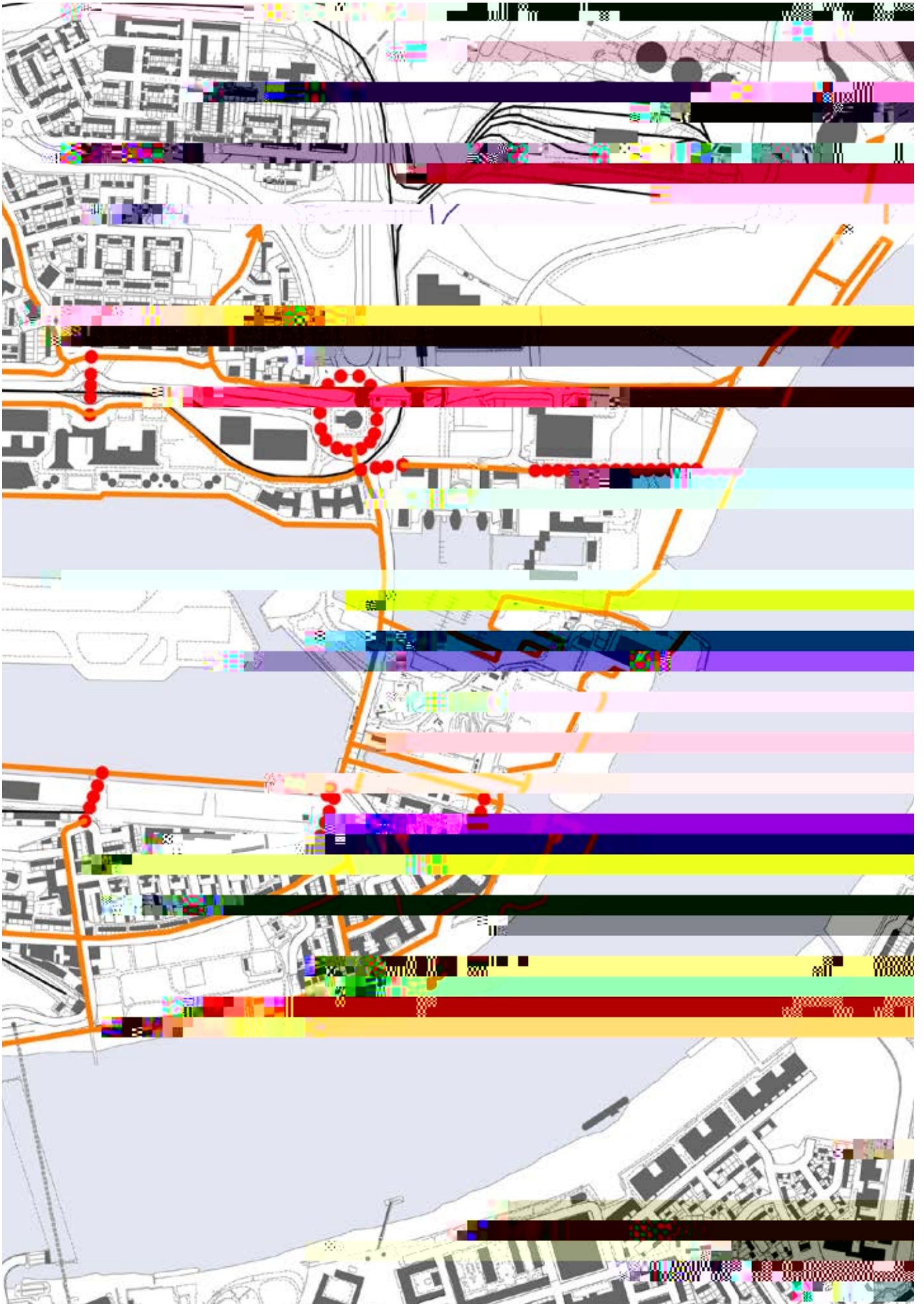
This design response is comprised of four themes: Connectivity; Re-engaging North Woolwich; Re-vitalising Albert Island; and Re-activating Beckton. We have organised our interventions by taking into account the time scale of regeneration, dividing them into short-, medium- and long-term phases, in order to ensure an incremental process of change at the micro, meso and macro scales. The interventions touch on all principles in direct and indirect ways, and are organised geographically, starting in North Woolwich, through Albert Island, to Beckton.

However, we are starting with connectivity, our first and most important overarching aim, that addresses the area at a macro scale. This theme will be built on considerably, proposing to improve the pedestrian and bicycle network to generate a human-scale integration for the local area.

One of the eastern Royal Docks' greatest challenges is connectivity and legibility at the local level. This series of interventions aims to redress the balance between the car and the pedestrian; between the large-scale infrastructure such as the DLR, Crossrail, the airport and the North Circular, and the locality. The river is used as the principle orienting landmark for eastern Royal Docks as a whole. The interventions aim to re-dimension the city at human-scale through the improvement of pre-existing structures and with the creation of new strategic connections. Other smaller, more local connectivity-driven interventions will be discussed in the other three sections.



Figure 25. Connectivity map: network of existing infrastructure to improve and proposed strategic connections



Though North Woolwich has several significant landmarks – Pier Parade Square, the Royal Victoria Gardens, the riverfront, and several heritage buildings – poor pedestrian connectivity and further disruption caused by traffic along Albert Road and the Crossrail has negatively impacted the area's sociality. We have focused on micro-level strategies that can be scaled up through their interconnectivity, aiming to re-engage the local residents with the area, fostering a sense of ownership and participation. In Pier Parade Square, now a sterile grey space, we will employ a landmark sculpture to help a sense of identity, introduce movable furniture to allow users appropriate the space (Whyte 1980). Further appropriation will be possible on the north side of North Woolwich. A new Thames Path and re-use of the North Woolwich Station and pier will create a destination while referencing the area's heritage and re-orienting the area towards the river. We utilize other empty space to create a community garden, adding ecological value and involving locals in an engaging place-making activity.



- install movable furniture and green landscaping to Pier Parade Square
- install central landmark to Pier Parade Square
- promote policy of allowing for a short-term rental policy for empty shopfronts to encourage locals to try out business ideas
- enlist community infrastructure to set up pocket garden in the empty land sitting at the southern end of Woolwich Manor Way Bridge
- open the riverfront promenade from North Woolwich through to Albert Island
- invite street artists to decorate wall that borders the Thames Path; keep open for evolution
- strengthen pier and turn into viewing point with cafe kiosk
- build the Pocket Park, using recycled materials from the local area to build the beds
- reconnect North Woolwich Station to Royal Victoria Gardens
- install panes of plexiglass into the brick wall on the Thames for more open viewing
- clear the industrial land on the northern side of North Woolwich facing the airport to create opportunity for appropriation

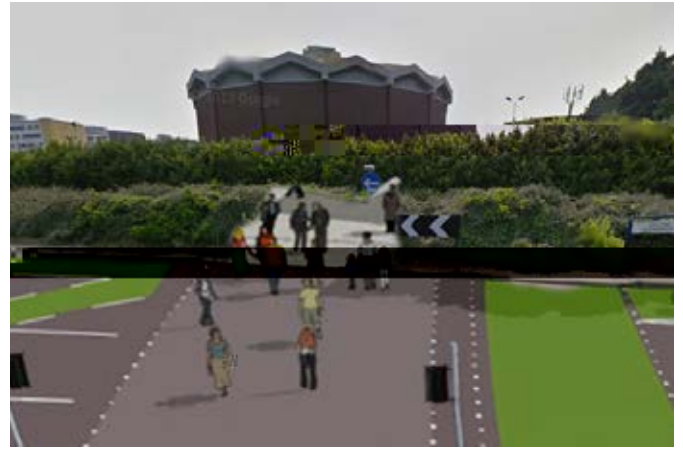


Albert Island – empty, neglected, mysterious – already has something of an appropriated space, the BMX park, which provides an interesting entry point for the further expansion of a sports and leisure profile for the space. Our strategy aims to transform Albert Island into a flexible place that permits further appropriation by local residents, UEL students and visitors from elsewhere. Continuing the theme of sports already present with the BMX and the marina, the existing architectural

and the way these elements are experienced

The southwestern area of Beckton will serve to pull people in from the inland of the Royal Docks while actively dialoguing with the River Thames. New mixed-tenure housing will run towards the river; while the former IVAX building will be converted (and perhaps vertically expanded) to increase the student housing stock. The Thames Path will continue to curve around; bicycle paths will connect to the river along Atlantic Avenue, connecting the waterfront to the rest of Beckton. A weekly market located under the DLR can provide opportunities for local residents for social and economic interaction.

Our most provocative intervention is the conversion of a factory into a



benefit

BECKTON INTERVENTION MAP



Through our analysis, we found the eastern Royal Docks – comprised of North Woolwich, Albert Island and Beckton—to feel in many ways like a large left over. Cut off by large infrastructure projects, with poor interconnections, a shifting population, and a complicated land ownership structure, it has been unable to gain



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