

# Walthamstow Wetlands

## Previous state

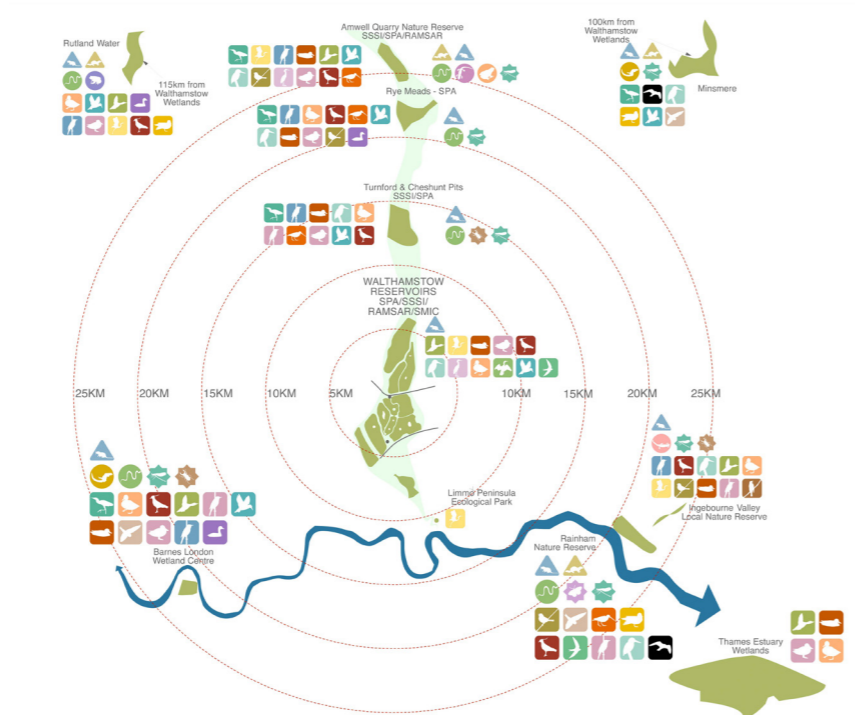
Located in London's Lea Valley, Walthamstow Reservoirs are typical of the post-industrial landscape patchwork of green space and infrastructure that characterise the valley. A relative vacuum, with limited public access for their 150 year history, the reservoirs have a unique engineered landscape structure; industrial heritage and ecological value becoming a place apart - strikingly remote both physically and mentally from the dense urban populations of Tottenham and Walthamstow that they sit between.

The Lea Valley and River Lea National Park is a finger of green belt that connects the countryside of Hertfordshire with the River Thames. Access to the green belt has long been a burning issue, however the lea valley because of its location in the heart of the metropolis should be accessible. Walthamstow reservoirs, although within the green belt, was defensive and did not encourage open access. One of the early discussions between partners and stakeholders focused around how to create a shift in behaviour and change in the way the site was used. A keep out culture on the periphery of the site needed to become a come in and welcome statement. This welcome however needed to be conditional to safeguard operations and ecology.

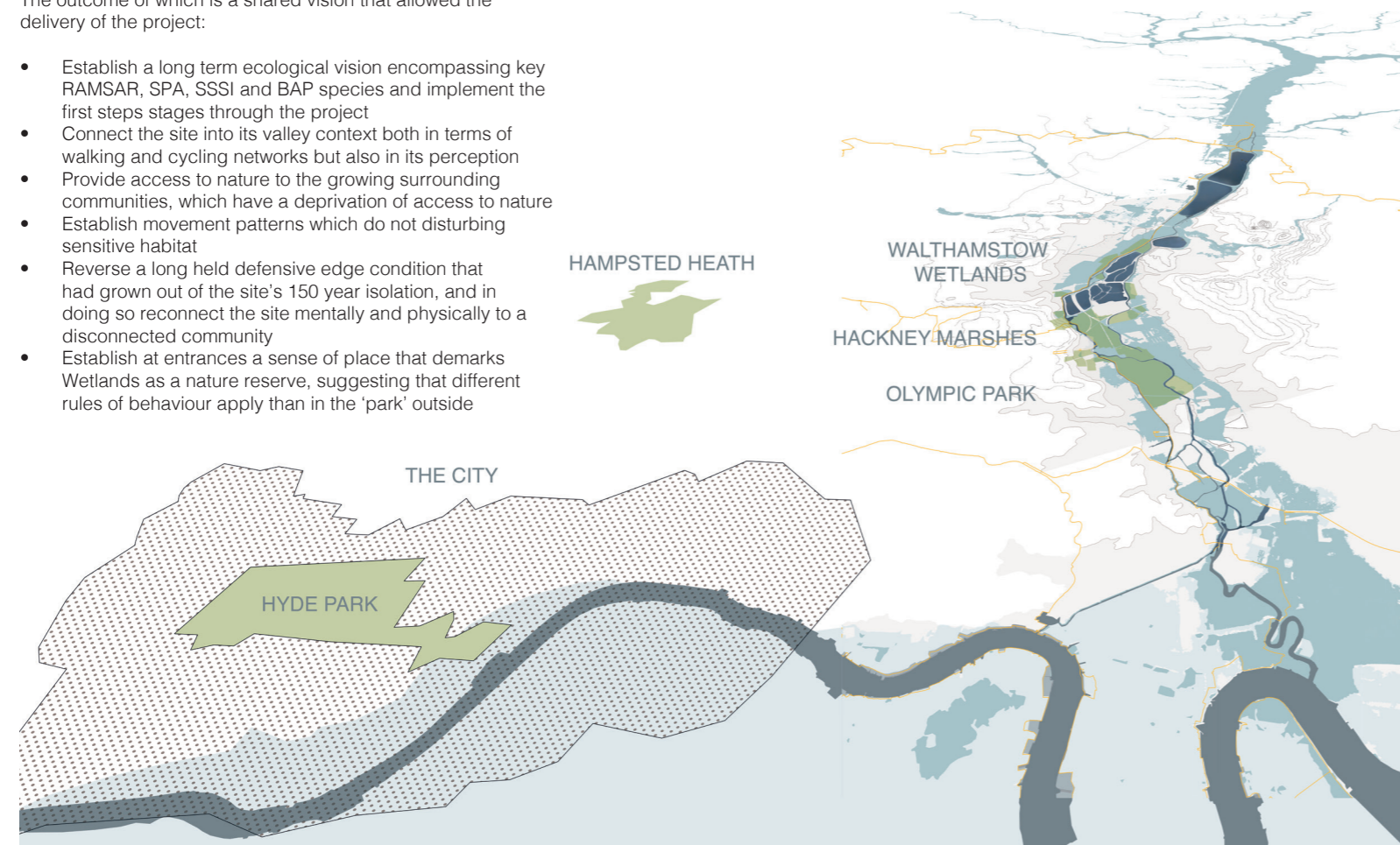
## Aim of the intervention - a cultural shift from private to public

The vision, of stitching Walthamstow Reservoirs back into its valley context and opening as Walthamstow Wetlands – a nature reserve with free public access, was a step change for the site and those involved. It required an iterative process of design and engagement with the complex stakeholder group. The outcome of which is a shared vision that allowed the delivery of the project:

- Establish a long term ecological vision encompassing key RAMSAR, SPA, SSSI and BAP species and implement the first steps stages through the project
- Connect the site into its valley context both in terms of walking and cycling networks but also in its perception
- Provide access to nature to the growing surrounding communities, which have a deprivation of access to nature
- Establish movement patterns which do not disturbing sensitive habitat
- Reverse a long held defensive edge condition that had grown out of the site's 150 year isolation, and in doing so reconnect the site mentally and physically to a disconnected community
- Establish at entrances a sense of place that demarks Wetlands as a nature reserve, suggesting that different rules of behaviour apply than in the 'park' outside



Key bird species of Wetlands and surrounding reserves



The Lea Valley, the River Thames, London city centre and wider significant green spaces



Engineered landscape of the reservoirs



A view north across the Coppermill Stream and Victorian Reservoir 1 to the Engine House



Nearby Tottenham Hale and Blackhorse Road are undergoing significant population growth