

# Old Oak and Park Royal – towards active travel?

Dr Jan Gerhards, Dr Dan Greenwood and Prof. Rachel Aldred, University of Westminster (Dec 2023)

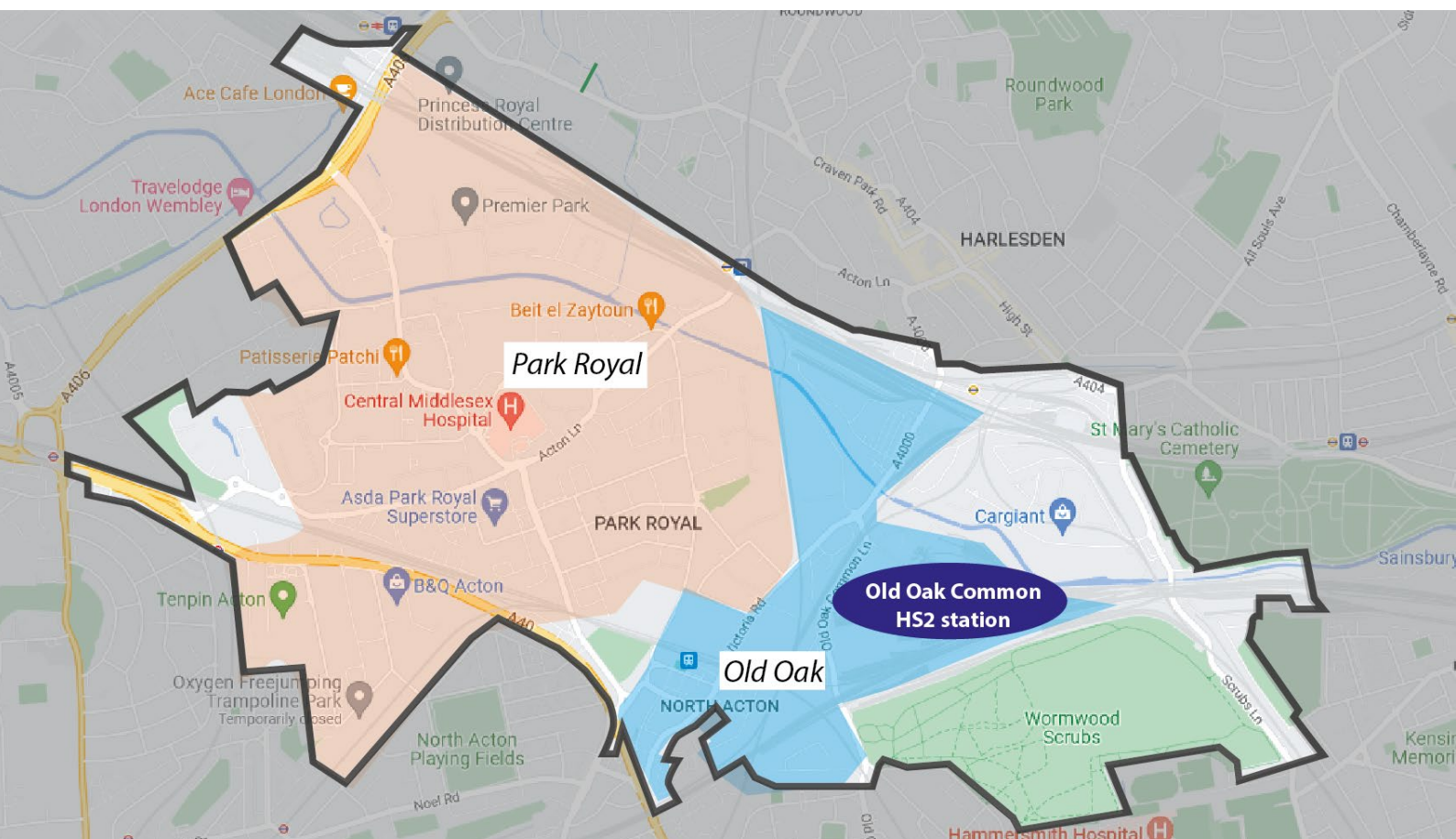
## Summary Report

The full-length version of this report is available from:

<https://blog.westminster.ac.uk/ata/projects/opdcproject/>

## Executive summary

- The Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC) is committed to the London mayor's sustainable transport targets and the need to enable active travel. Achieving this involves several challenges, including a lack of early funding; fragmented control of planning and highways across OPDC and three boroughs; and more generally, the need for extensive collaboration across a large range of stakeholders.
- This research highlights OPDC's general need for more funding for active travel infrastructure from central government or London agencies. Specific projects with relatively modest costings are identified that are especially vital for facilitating active travel.
- Governance integration would be improved by establishing a single infrastructure steering group including OPDC and local authorities; publishing detailed infrastructure plans to ensure effective planning, collaboration and accountability; and seeking London-wide mandates of support for cross-borough schemes.
- Additionally, local authorities should have discretion to make reasonable adjustments to national infrastructure plans, such as HS2, to ensure that their implementation reflects the latest standards and best practice for active travel measures.

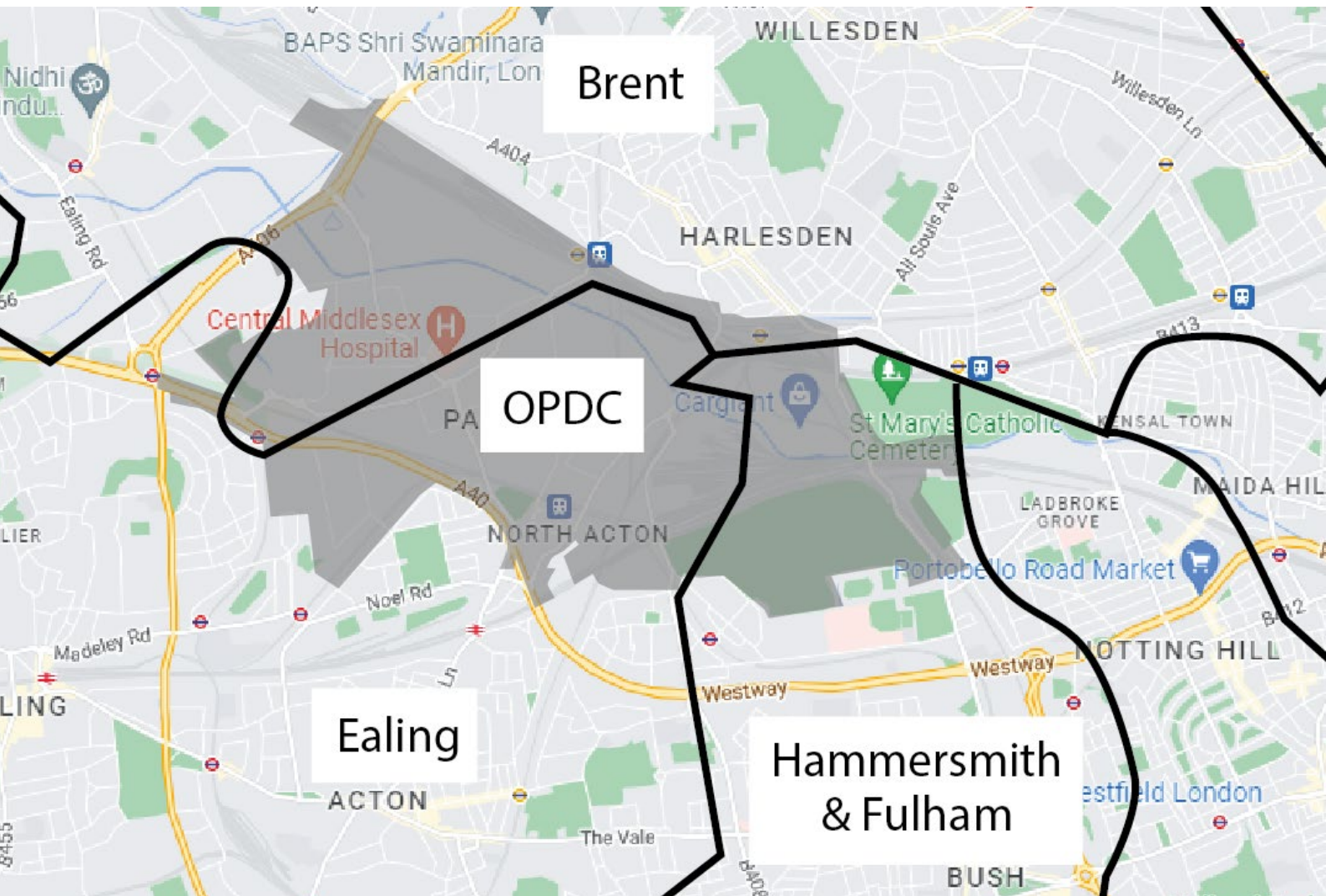


## Background

The new Old Oak station, where Crossrail will meet HS2, along with neighbouring Park Royal is the site of Europe’s largest regeneration project. The target for Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC), established in 2015 by the London Mayor, is for 20,000 new homes and 36,000 new jobs on the 650-hectare site by 2038. OPDC, who have a central role in planning and managing this development, is committed to the Mayor’s target that 80% of journeys in London will be via sustainable transport by 2041 (GLA, 2018). Enabling increased active travel, including cycling and walking, is vital to achieving this target.

## Governance within OPDC

The OPDC area straddles three local authorities: the boroughs of Hammersmith and Fulham (H&F), Ealing, and Brent. The OPDC board includes council leaders from the three host boroughs. As a development corporation, OPDC have the power to create a unified local plan for the area. They work in partnership with the public and private sector to develop land and attract investment, and also have development control powers (although these have been delegated to Ealing for much of the Ealing area). OPDC are not, however, highways authorities for most roads in the OPDC area: control over highways remains with local authorities. This arms-length separation means organisations must work together effectively if they are to deliver active travel infrastructure throughout the area.





## Challenges for active travel

Enabling active travel in the OPDC area involves several challenges. This is an industrial area lacking in active travel infrastructure and with many heavy goods vehicles passing through. There are some busy, difficult junctions, including the A40 crossing. Parts of the area have relatively poor public transport accessibility and early transport modelling found that roads were already at capacity (OPDC, 2016).



## Regeneration so far

Over 7000 homes are either built or in the planning pipeline within the OPDC area, including high density developments at North Acton, Scrubs Lane and Oaklands Rise near the future HS2 station. However, the streets within OPDC remain largely unchanged. The OPDC infrastructure plan faces a funding gap of £153 million (7% of the £1.3 billion total budget).

## Key findings and recommendations

### *Funding and the timing of infrastructure investments*

Support from government and/or London agencies is needed to address OPDC's estimated funding shortfall of £153 million.

This research identifies a series of works required in OPDC, including upgrades to key roads with potential for protected cycle lanes, improved walking routes and other infrastructure. This would make a significant difference for active travel. While the overall cost of these measures is £22m (just 1% of the OPDC infrastructure plan total), OPDC currently lack funds for these works, which look set to have a 20-year time frame.

Currently, residential property developments are being completed before such basic investments in highways and the public realm are made, including in areas with poor public transport accessibility. Hence opportunities to ensure that new residents take up sustainable travel habits as they move in are in danger of being missed. There is a need for Section 106 agreements to prioritise early funding for such investments.

### *Working with highways authorities and other stakeholders*

One potential limitation of development corporations is their separation from highways authorities, and the latter's associated powers and expertise. OPDC have established positive working relationships with borough councils. However, collaboration has sometimes been sub-optimal. Some specialist borough officers, including expert cycling teams and engineers, have little engagement with OPDC on their plans. This could be addressed through a single infrastructure steering group including representatives from OPDC and all three OPDC boroughs.

### *Active travel plans and designs*

There are currently no public, detailed designs for active travel upgrades for most of the existing main routes throughout OPDC, nor for proposed new routes and related infrastructure including bridges. With the modified local plan now approved, there is now an opportunity to translate this broad vision into a detailed one. An early focus has the benefit of ensuring road designs are integrated with, and not limited by, future development, as well as improving accountability.

### *Cross-borough cycle lanes*

TFL are promoting plans for a cross-London cycle route going through the OPDC area into central London (CFR 23). However, implementation of planned routes has been impeded, especially by strong opposition in Kensington & Chelsea. Such community opposition often gains traction by focusing on the details of a scheme. One way of addressing this kind of opposition would be to seek a London-wide mandate of support in principle for cross-borough schemes before plans for detailed implementation are finalised.

### *Community engagement*

As OPDC's work progresses, local opposition to active travel schemes could become increasingly important. There has already been vocal opposition to access improvements and enhanced pedestrian and cycle routes through Wormwood Scrubs Park. Engagement with local citizens, as well as local expertise, in the design of schemes can encourage their public acceptance. Providing citizens with the evidence supporting decisions is a helpful part of this process. Enabling local councillors to engage with experts (such as council officers or TfL staff) can also help them to discuss residents' concerns.

### *Legislation for national infrastructure*

Local experts are dissatisfied with some features of the plans for the new HS2 station which were specified in legislation for this national infrastructure project. Plans for the station forecourt, finalised in 2018, assumed that the adjoining highway would have no separated cycle lane. In such cases, local authorities should have discretion to make reasonable adjustments to such national infrastructure plans to ensure that their implementation reflects the latest standards and best practice.

## **Contact**

If you have any questions or feedback about this report, please write to Dr Dan Greenwood:  
**d.greenwood2@westminster.ac.uk**

The full report is available from: <https://blog.westminster.ac.uk/ata/projects/opdcproject/>