

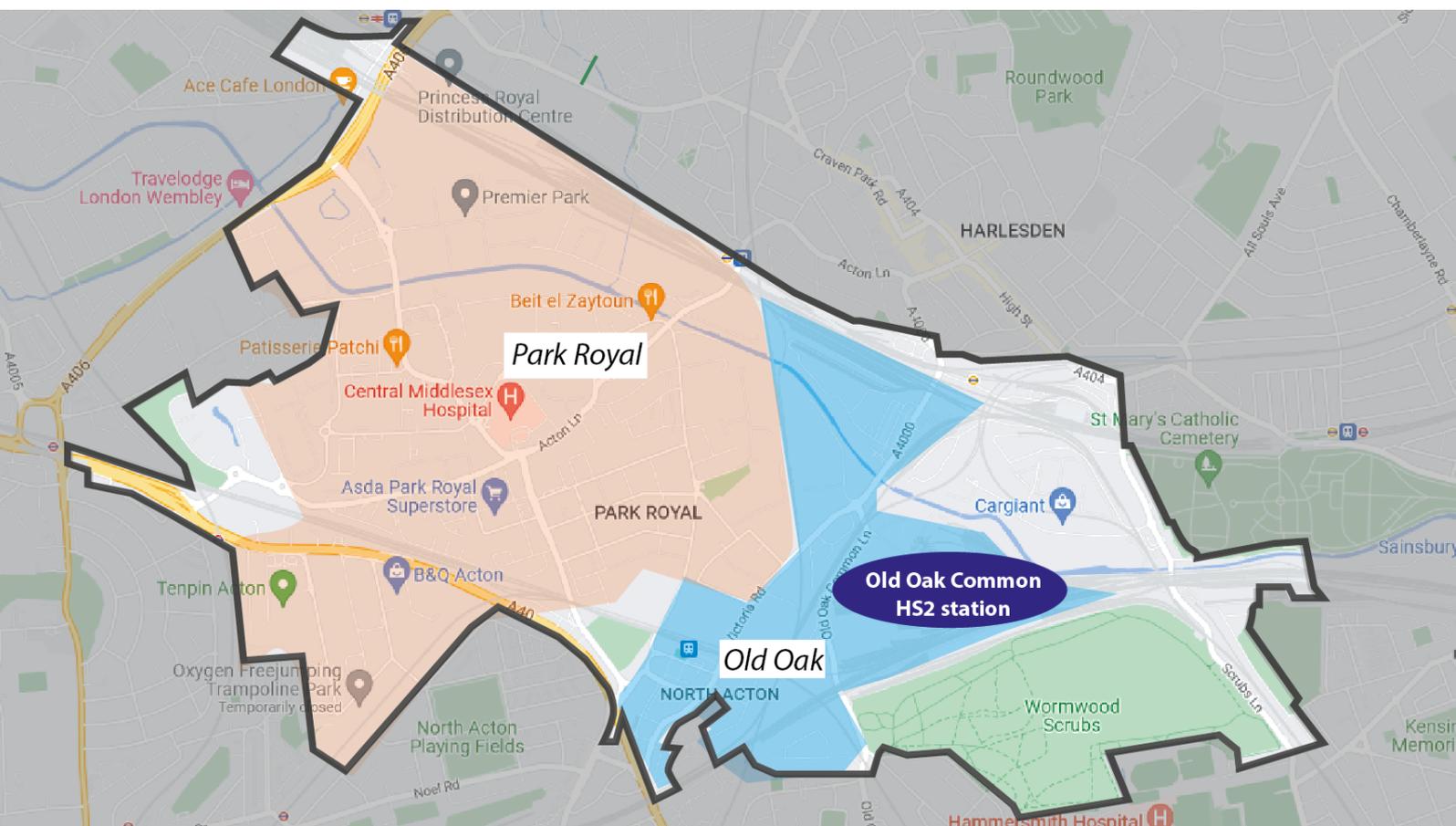
# Old Oak and Park Royal – towards active travel?

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Updated June 2024

## Executive summary

- The Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC) is signed up to the London mayor's sustainable transport targets and the need to increase active travel. Achieving this involves addressing 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.
- There are specific infrastructure projects with relatively modest costings that are especially vital for facilitating active travel in the Old Oak and Park Royal (OP) area. These include a set of protected cycle lanes as shown in OPDC plans. Such infrastructure delivery requires more funding from developer contributions, central government and/or London agencies.
- As it stands, both the planned western and eastern access routes to the new HS2 station at Old Oak Common will not meet current active travel standards.
- Establishing detailed plans for active travel infrastructure is needed to aid more effective planning, collaboration and accountability.
- Establishing a single steering group involving OPDC, local authorities and TfL would enable integration of plans for enabling active travel within the OP regeneration project; as could seeking London-wide mandates of support for cross-borough schemes.
- Additionally, developments within the OP area so far show the need for national infrastructure legislation, such as for HS2, to give local authorities the right to make adjustments where, nationally or regionally, active travel standards have increased.

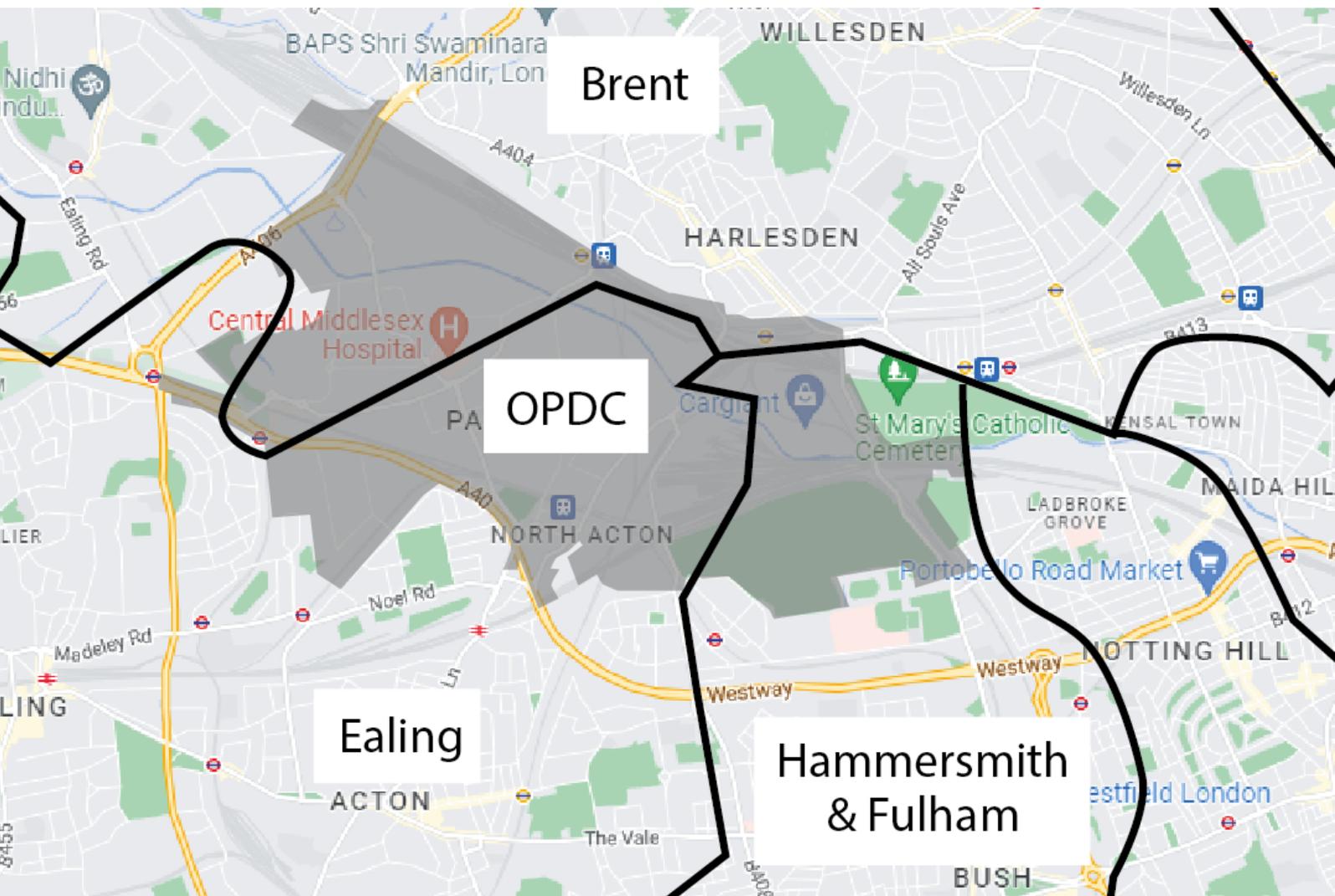


## Background

The new Old Oak Common station, where Crossrail will meet HS2, along with neighbouring Park Royal is the site of a major 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 some of these were delegated to Ealing for a period of time). OPDC are not, however, a highways authority for most roads in the Old Oak and Park Royal (OP) 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 funding shortfall, which was estimated at £153 million in 2021.

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 has been estimated at £27m (approximately 2% 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 in active travel infrastructure, and for local planning policy to stipulate active travel requirements as a mechanism for achieving such early investment.

### ***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, all three OPDC boroughs and TfL.

### ***Active travel plans and designs***

There has been a need for public, detailed designs for active travel upgrades, proposed new routes and related infrastructure (including bridges) within OP to have been produced sooner. This could have helped to prevent problems that have occurred since, such as the western access to Old Oak Common station not complying with current national active travel standards as well as avoiding the current uncertainty about how this station will be accessed from the east. An early focus has the benefit of ensuring road designs are integrated with, and not limited by, future development, as well as improving accountability. The modified local plan was adopted in 2022, providing the opportunity to translate this broad vision into a detailed one. Some developments such as within Old Oak West are at a relatively early stage hence there is still time to confirm detailed plans for some key routes within OP.

### ***Cross-borough cycle lanes***

TfL are promoting plans for a cross-London cycle route going through OP into central London (CFR 23). However, implementation of planned routes has been impeded by strong opposition in Kensington & Chelsea and Brent councils. 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

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