# Orchard Wharf regeneration revives London’s riverside with affordable housing and sustainable logistics



Orchard Wharf, a long-vacant riverside site opposite the O2 Arena in London’s Tower Hamlets, has recently secured planning approval for a significant mixed-use redevelopment that promises major benefits for housing, student accommodation, and sustainable logistics. The scheme, designed by Howells for developer Regal London, represents a landmark regeneration project on a 2.3-hectare site that has remained unused for more than two decades.

Central to the development is the delivery of 208 affordable homes, in addition to 1,365 purpose-built student accommodation rooms, catering to the high demand for both affordable living and student housing within the capital. The affordable housing on offer is noteworthy for including a significant proportion of family homes, addressing a critical local need. These residential elements are complemented by plans for improved public realm and landscaping, including new green spaces, play areas, and pedestrian connections to the Thames Path and nearby East India Dock Basin, fostering a vibrant community atmosphere.

A standout feature of the Orchard Wharf redevelopment is the reactivation of the safeguarded wharf, with 7,524 square metres allocated to purpose-built logistics floorspace. Thames Clippers Logistics is set to operate the wharf as a low-carbon river freight hub, reviving the site’s historic relationship with the River Thames and supporting the wider goal of reducing road traffic congestion in London. This freight hub aims to facilitate last-mile logistics by river, offering a sustainable transport corridor that alleviates pressure on the city’s road network and enhances air quality, aligning with London’s overarching environmental ambitions.

The scheme also includes a ground-floor café and community hub, alongside commercial spaces totalling approximately 526 square metres, intended to create vibrant, accessible spaces for residents and the wider public. A new public square at Orchard Place is planned to serve as a community focal point, further integrating the development into the local urban fabric.

The project has garnered support from key stakeholders, including the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, which sees the regeneration as a major step towards activating a long-dormant riverfront asset and contributing positively to the borough’s housing and environmental targets. The Greater London Authority also played a role early on, agreeing to a Planning Performance Agreement in 2020 to facilitate officer and consultant involvement throughout the application process, underscoring the strategic importance of the site.

Ultimately, the Orchard Wharf regeneration seeks to create a sustainable, integrated riverside community that balances residential, student, logistics, and public uses. By consolidating affordable homes, student beds, and a low-carbon freight hub on a single site, the scheme aims to revitalise a neglected part of London’s riverside while tackling some of the capital’s pressing urban challenges, from housing shortages to sustainable transport.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/howells-wins-approval-for-mixed-residential-and-riverside-logistics-scheme-at-orchard-wharf/5138129.article), [[4]](https://www.howells.uk/press/orchard-wharf)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/howells-wins-approval-for-mixed-residential-and-riverside-logistics-scheme-at-orchard-wharf/5138129.article), [[2]](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/News_events/2025/September/Landmark-regeneration-scheme-for-London%27s-riverfront-approved.aspx), [[3]](https://www.regal.co.uk/project/orchard-wharf/), [[5]](https://orchardwharfproposals.co.uk/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/howells-wins-approval-for-mixed-residential-and-riverside-logistics-scheme-at-orchard-wharf/5138129.article), [[4]](https://www.howells.uk/press/orchard-wharf), [[5]](https://orchardwharfproposals.co.uk/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/howells-wins-approval-for-mixed-residential-and-riverside-logistics-scheme-at-orchard-wharf/5138129.article), [[2]](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/News_events/2025/September/Landmark-regeneration-scheme-for-London%27s-riverfront-approved.aspx), [[5]](https://orchardwharfproposals.co.uk/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/howells-wins-approval-for-mixed-residential-and-riverside-logistics-scheme-at-orchard-wharf/5138129.article), [[3]](https://www.regal.co.uk/project/orchard-wharf/), [[5]](https://orchardwharfproposals.co.uk/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[2]](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/News_events/2025/September/Landmark-regeneration-scheme-for-London%27s-riverfront-approved.aspx), [[6]](https://www.london.gov.uk/decisions/add2429-orchard-wharf-tower-hamlets-planning-performance-agreement)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/howells-wins-approval-for-mixed-residential-and-riverside-logistics-scheme-at-orchard-wharf/5138129.article), [[4]](https://www.howells.uk/press/orchard-wharf), [[5]](https://orchardwharfproposals.co.uk/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/howells-wins-approval-for-mixed-residential-and-riverside-logistics-scheme-at-orchard-wharf/5138129.article> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/News_events/2025/September/Landmark-regeneration-scheme-for-London%27s-riverfront-approved.aspx> - The London Borough of Tower Hamlets has approved a major regeneration scheme for Orchard Wharf, a safeguarded wharf that has been vacant since the 1990s. The development will deliver hundreds of affordable homes and purpose-built student accommodation, as well as bringing the wharf back into active use for waterborne freight. The scheme includes 208 affordable homes, 1,365 purpose-built student bedspaces, 526 sqm of commercial space, and new public realm, landscaping, and pedestrian access to the Thames. ([towerhamlets.gov.uk](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/News_events/2025/September/Landmark-regeneration-scheme-for-London%27s-riverfront-approved.aspx?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.regal.co.uk/project/orchard-wharf/> - Regal London has submitted a planning application for the mixed-use Orchard Wharf development in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The proposals for the 2.35-hectare site comprise a 7,524 sqm safeguarded wharf and logistics centre, 208 affordable homes (equivalent to 35% affordable housing), and 1,365 purpose-built student accommodation beds. The development also includes a ground floor café and community hub, 7,400 sqm of new open space including play areas, landscaped gardens for residents, and open space for everyone to enjoy. ([regal.co.uk](https://www.regal.co.uk/project/orchard-wharf/?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.howells.uk/press/orchard-wharf> - Howells is collaborating with Regal London on a groundbreaking co-location project at Orchard Wharf in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The development will provide homes for around 2,000 people and serve as a logistics hub for river-borne freight, reinstating the area’s historic relationship with the Thames and fostering a vibrant and sustainable community. The proposals include a 7,524 sqm logistics wharf, 208 affordable homes, and 1,365 student beds, with community space provided within the ground floor, in addition to enhanced landscape and pedestrian connections to the Thames path and East India Dock Basin. ([howells.uk](https://www.howells.uk/press/orchard-wharf?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://orchardwharfproposals.co.uk/> - Regal London has submitted a planning application for the mixed-use redevelopment of Orchard Wharf, E14. The key principles of the scheme include reactivating the safeguarded wharf into a last-mile logistics wharf, delivering 208 affordable homes (including a significant proportion of family homes), providing 1,365 student beds to help meet unmet demand, improving air quality by reducing road movement in transporting goods along the River Thames, introducing significant greening to the site, and creating a new public square at Orchard Place, complemented by community and retail space. ([orchardwharfproposals.co.uk](https://orchardwharfproposals.co.uk/?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.london.gov.uk/decisions/add2429-orchard-wharf-tower-hamlets-planning-performance-agreement> - In February 2020, the Mayor of London agreed to a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) for the Orchard Wharf scheme, with a cost of £40,000 exclusive of VAT. The PPA is intended to cover Greater London Authority (GLA) officer and consultant costs associated with the planning application process. The Orchard Wharf development is a significant mixed-use project in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, involving the regeneration of a safeguarded wharf site. ([london.gov.uk](https://www.london.gov.uk/decisions/add2429-orchard-wharf-tower-hamlets-planning-performance-agreement?utm_source=openai))