

# Table of Contents

Thames Gateway Researcher . . . . . 1  
Lamma land grab - Olympics strike again in east London . . . . . 1  
The Thames Gateway: here be monsters . . . . . 2  
Thames Gateway.... welcome to the future? . . . . . **9**



# Thames Gateway Researcher

This pod is a collection of material on the development of the so-called Thames Gateway, which Mute is aiming to publish some articles about in our next issue (June 06).

'They had sailed from Deptford, from Greenwich, from Erith – the adventurers and the settlers; kings' ships and the ships of men on 'Change; captains, admirals, the dark "interlopers" of the Eastern trade, and the commissioned "generals" of East India fleets. ...

"And this also," said Marlow suddenly, "has been [will be] one of the dark places of the earth."

– Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness.

## Lammas land grab - Olympics strike again in east London

originally posted on the excellent Libcom.org, from the local paper:

SECRET plans to hand over protected green space in Leyton to allotment holders from Hackney are being hatched by Waltham Forest Council and Olympic developers.

Furious local people learned about the scheme only last week though discussions began in October.

Marsh Lane playing fields were singled out by the London Development Agency (LDA) as a prospective site to relocate Eastway allotments from Waterden Road, Hackney, which fall within the 2012 Olympic site.

The fields around Marsh Lane are known as Lammas land, green space held in trust for the public by the council, and a condition attached to the stewardship of this land is that it cannot be fenced in and people must be free to roam there.

The council and the LDA, which is Mayor Ken Livingstone's development wing, confirmed that discussions over the land were under way.

A spokesman for Waltham Forest Council said: "The council is expecting to receive a planning application from the LDA temporarily to relocate allotments currently situated in the Olympic Park. A site near Marsh Lane is being considered but negotiations are continuing.

"The expectation is that the allotments will be reprovided back within the Olympic Park after the games have taken place and the park remodelled for its legacy purposes."

Now councillors, residents of Marsh Lane and Lammas supporters are angry and are demanding a full explanation.

John Spears, a resident of nearby Manor Road and chairman of Waltham Forest Allotment Holders, said: "This is a ludicrous situation. The LDA is planning to take around one third of the open space at Marsh Lane.

"This an attempted land grab by the LDA without any prior consultation with the public."

Cllr Bob Sullivan, who spoke at a meeting of the Friends of Marsh Lane on Monday, said: "Nobody seems to know anything about this.

"We've not heard a sound from anyone yet since the ideas were first put to the allotment holders in Hackney last October.

"What they are suggesting is horrendous. It is not going to be temporary and the land is not suitable for allotments.

"It's full of rubble from the Second World War.

"This is common land. It should be regenerated as a green open space for the people of Waltham Forest as part of the Olympic package, not given away."

from Leyton Guardian

## **The Thames Gateway: here be monsters**

By Jonathan Glancey

Bit dated now but still pertinent to TG monstrosity-in-the-offing (as Joseph Conrad would say)  
b

The Thames Gateway: here be monsters

John Prescott and Tony Blair see it as the perfect solution - release the pressure on a rapidly growing London by expanding eastwards. But, as Jonathan Glancey discovered travelling down the Thames from the capital, there are few reasons to relocate to this cockney Siberia. And what will happen to all the eels and yellowhammers?

Wednesday October 29, 2003

The Guardian

The following correction was printed in the Guardian's Corrections and Clarifications column, Monday November 3 2003

In the piece below we said that Great Expectations was published in 1841. That was roughly the end of the period Dickens was writing about, but the serialised book actually came out in 1860-61.

Scrap metal. Dredged aggregates. Woodpulp. Granulated slag. Bitumen. Fertilisers. Crude oil. This unlovely litany of raw, stinking stuff is loaded and unloaded each working day at the 56 landing stages of the Port of London stretched along the river Thames from Cringle Wharf to Canvey Island. Ships of the Deutsche Afrika and Hamsa Star lines, ferries bringing Fords from Zeebrugge, barges brimming with London's prodigious waste, 50,000-tonne tankers crewed by Filipinos and registered in improbable Pacific rim ports, are just part of the roll-call of the 14,000 vessels bearing 50m tonnes of cargo that will have plied their muscular trade along the Thames by the end of the year. The Thames has never been busier.

This, though, is not the river most Londoners or visitors to the capital know, nor one that many would choose to live along. East of Tower Bridge and the mayor of London's Norman Foster-designed eyrie, the Thames is neither sweet, nor does it flow softly even though you can fish for salmon in its brown, tidal waters, catch whelks and, at Canvey Island, disturb one of the breeding grounds of Dover sole. The ships that ply these wind-whipped waters rarely sail west of Woolwich. Oil tankers are

turned at Barking Creek. Cruise ships moor alongside the listed terminal at Tilbury.

East of the Thames Barrier, between the south shores of Essex and the north coast of Kent, lies an all but foreign land. A tract of marshes, mists, rip tides, rubbish tips, freighters, sinking buildings, the world's largest sugarcane refinery, reeking sewage and rotting hulks left over from the Napoleonic wars and D-Day, interspersed, like some hastily edited film, with sporadic tower blocks, remote pubs, and hippy encampments. Here, if anywhere on the map of England, be monsters. This nether world is the unlikely setting for John Prescott and Tony Blair's multi-billion pound Thames Gateway, a brave new world of 200,000 or so homes designed to provide "affordable housing" to "key workers" in "sustainable communities". It is very probably the biggest building development Britain has ever known. There are great plans for it. And yet, as I discovered on long day's trekking on foot, by bike, car, bus, boat and train, no plan in action. While the government and its ambitious quangos bark and bray about this promised land, housebuilders and developers are drowning the area in a tide of gimcrack housing, banal shopping malls and US-style business parks. This is where the huge number of economic migrants to London and the south east, as well as indigenous teachers, nurses, and ambulance, bus and tube drivers are meant to live.

History, though, tells us that few people have settled here. Neither ancient Brits nor Romans. Precious few Elizabethans. A smattering of retired 18th-century sea captains. A sprinkling of paddle-steaming Victorians who developed Thameside villages such as Gravesend into Sunday resorts for airless Londoners. An outfall during the 20th century of the working classes who decamped from the slums of east London and complained of loneliness and the quiet. Thamesmead, 70s Thameside estate strewn alongside the Crossness sewage works was never going to rival St Tropez, or even Letchworth. This cockney Siberia remains the all but out-of-bounds landscape framed forever by Charles Dickens: "Ours was the marsh country ... the low leaden line beyond, was the river ... the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing, was the sea ... the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry, was Pip." The opening of *Great Expectations*, published in 1841, when the eastern Thames was home to prison hulks where prisoners held in chains died in droves of "marsh fever".

The bricks and mortar of Thames Gateway are being put down on every virgin marsh, new arterial roads and bridges have been built. All this is premised on the belief that by 2016 the population of greater London will have risen from 7.4 million to 8.1 million. An incoming population the size of Leeds will need to be housed somewhere in the south east. "The germ of it," says Sir Peter Hall, professor of planning at the Bartlett School of Architecture, "was an article by Martin Simmons, a planner with the GLC, in *The Planner* in 1987. It was all about the impact of the Channel Tunnel. The high-speed railway, calling at Ebbsfleet and Stratford in Kent and Essex, could act a generator along its length for new housing, employment and so on. Here was an opportunity to reverse the development of London from west to east. On

March 25 1991, Michael Heseltine, then at the Department of the Environment, held a press conference to announce the birth of the East Thames Corridor. I was appointed special adviser on strategic planning." Hall, one of the Thames Gateway's founding fathers, is keenly aware of the dangers of building so much so quickly along the river today. "It's true," he says, "that few people have ever lived here, the winds are cold, there are floodplains and polluted land. And, there have been devastating floods." As at Canvey Island on January 31 1953, when heavy rain combined with a surge tide caused the Thames to crash over inadequate sea walls. Fifty nine people died. Half a million cubic yards of clay, 350,000 concrete blocks, 2,000 tons of sheet steel and five miles of old London tram tracks were needed to raise the level of the sea wall. Fifty years on, water levels are rising.

"And, of course," says Hall, "the land is sinking. In fact, the whole of south-east England is sinking. But, the East Thames Corridor or Thames Gateway has long seemed to be a case of 'win-win' in planning terms. It allows London to expand without stirring up nimby sensitivities in the affluent west."

Few west Londoners would sail east to set up home. And who could blame them? At Barking Reach, one of the first of the new Thames Gateway estates, endorsed by the office of the deputy prime minister, gabled cul-de-sac houses are set, unhappily, under a triumphal march of electricity pylons. Ugly new buses lurk at an unceremonial estate entrance strewn with supermarket litter. Recently arrived East African immigrants wait patiently in the damp and cold. No tube train for these Gateway people. No Docklands Light Railway station. Not a hint of a tram. No river bus. None of these for some years yet. Not even a view of the river.

The smell of sewage wafts across the estate. "Bound to," says captain Gordon Dickens, harbourmaster (lower) of the Port of London Authority, Gravesend, as we churn along Barking Reach on board the launch Benfleet. "The prevailing wind along the Thames is westerly, carrying the smell of sewage, oil, sugar and so on away to the sea. But, when an easterly blows, the stink from the Crossness sewage plant blows across Barking Reach."

When Prescott and Blair ventured east along the Thames in blazing August (the temperature peaking out at a record 38.1C at Gravesend), they did so by helicopter. Roads here are exceptionally busy, while public transport is sparse, and will continue to be so while the government expects private enterprise to build costly schemes such as Crossrail - the proposed mainline connecting east and west London and the home counties - without help from the Treasury.

"Barking Reach ... oh, it's a disaster, all right," says Hall, "so not what should happen, so very depressing." Disastrous Barking Reach is just the tip of a slag heap of grim new housing. Without a glint of imagination, and nothing like a plan, thousands of asinine new homes are being built at breakneck speed in every direction. Cabe - the government's commission for architecture and the built environment - refers to award-winning developments such as Lacuna in West Malling, Kent and Abode in Harlow, Essex, but although better than the average

executive estate, these are only "good" because the others are so bad. Seen from a helicopter on a sunny day, Thames Gateway might well look like some dream-like prairie manifestly destined to be built on to improve the lot of hard-pressed south-easterners. Down on the ground, it looks a lot different. I am advised against walking across Rainham Marshes. These badlands have been turned into a range of artificial hills. Complete rubbish. Literally. Their composition is hundreds of thousands of tons of London refuse. Methane flames from burners dug into these artificial hills; the gas is released to stop the marshes from blowing up. Because so much of the river is unfit for human habitation, it is a haven for the rest of creation. Eels. Water voles. Dragonflies. Birds as diverse as wigeon, cormorant, little grebe, merlin, corn bunting and yellowhammer. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds says there are something like 120 species of bird for whom this marsh and meadowland is home.

This is also where proposals have been made to build a new London airport. This would generate jobs, shops and homes, while, presumably, disaffected locals could sell their homes to developers. But are these new developments in Essex and Kent really the "sustainable communities" promised by government?

At the River Cafe, Barking, I leaf through *Housing for a Compact City*, a document from the mayor of London's architecture and urbanism unit, chaired by Richard Rogers. "Even in central London," says Rogers, "we are still building at an average density of 78 dwellings per hectare," which is not very dense at all, he argues, when compared to the handsome and much sought after areas of Notting Hill, Belgravia, Bloomsbury and Barnsbury, where densities are in the region of 200. It is this kind of density, coupled with good design, well planted and tended streets, parks and city gardens that allows central and much of west London to be coveted. It is also this density that encourages an efficient use of public transport. And saves old, outlying meadows and marshes from being devoured by the kind of subtopian sprawl the Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas calls "Junkspace".

Junkspace, he says, spells the end of the Enlightenment, and its rebirth as a low-grade purgatory. Junkspace "substitutes accumulation for hierarchy, addition for composition. It is overripe and undernourishing at the same time... Junkspace is like being condemned to a perpetual jacuzzi with millions of your best friends." Only by confronting this absurdity, Koolhaas believes, might we overcome it.

Will we? Government, GLA and quangos all talk of the need to plan ahead. "If delivering [housing] fast becomes our only goal," says Ken Livingstone, "we risk repeating past errors and building unpopular and alienating estates, rather than sustainable urban communities."

## **Thames Gateway.... welcome to the future?**

By Dave Amis

Restructuring the labour force, flexibility, privatisation, all the familiar. TG as social engineering... good explanation of the various partnerships too.

Thames Gateway.... welcome to the future?

Dave Amis, 23 January 2005

The Thames Gateway regeneration project is presented as a response to the long term post-industrial decline of the lower Thames from the former docklands of east London down to Southend-on-Sea and the Medway Towns. There has been much discussion on the environmental impact of the regeneration scheme. What this article is intended to do is start the process of discussing what impact the Thames Gateway will have on working class people in the region.

The region covered by the Thames Gateway initiatives encompasses a sizeable chunk of inner London, thousands of acres of brownfield land formerly occupied by heavy industry, discrete urban conurbations such as the Medway towns and Southend-on-Sea as well as many square miles of open farmland and deserted marshes. The proposed regeneration takes many forms, ranging from Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott's plans for hundreds of thousands of new homes, through to zoned areas attracting different kinds of commercial development and arts events celebrating the culture of areas such as Thurrock.

There is an element in the plans of simply providing overflow housing from London in the expectation that a significant percentage of the new residents will be commuting back into London for work. However, new housing is only part of the story - a significant amount of new commercial development is also mooted for the area. All of these developments are going to have an impact on working class people who live there.

One of the most striking things about the Thames Gateway is the veritable alphabet soup of partnerships and agencies that are involved in the work of planning the future of the area. An explanation of how these relate to each other is given in the box/sidebar. There are so many and their connections to each other so complicated, that some sort of explanation is needed, and that is what is set out in the box/sidebar

To any outside observer the result is a muddle. But what is clear is that none of the partnerships is democratically accountable to the people living in the area in any direct or meaningful sense. Local authorities and county councils are involved in some of these partnerships but any major tasks tend to fall under the remit of the Urban Development Corporations (UDCs) who are not subject to any democratic accountability.

Since working class people living in the Thames gateway have minimal input into the regeneration process, it begs the question - who is intended to benefit from the development in the Thames Gateway? The fact that there is little in the way of direct democratic accountability over the process of regeneration signals that the interests of business are being given precedence over those of people living in the region.

This is an area that in parts has been badly hit by the closure of the upper docks and the disappearance of industries such as cement and paper manufacturing, as well as the scaling down of oil refining. The end of these traditional heavy industries has left behind a manual working class population, that in some ways is struggling to accommodate to the now rapid pace of change in the region. As a result, there are significant areas of social and economic deprivation in the Thames Gateway region.

Another that needs answering is whether the various initiatives associated with the Thames Gateway will address the needs of the working class in the region, or is it a huge social experiment with one of the aims being to at least partially replace and tame that class? Will the proposed economic developments draw this class back into the world of full time, secure and relatively well paid work or will they serve to further marginalise them, as new people and skills are drawn into the area?

Looking at the various plans and 'vision statements' for the area does start to offer some clues as to how the planners see the economy of the area shaping up in the future. One example is Thames Gateway - South Essex: A Vision For The Future. In this vision, different areas are scheduled for various kinds of development that in many ways, seem to reflect existing labour market potential.

Looking at Thurrock shows how this works. With the M25 going through the region connecting with other major roads plus the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, Thurrock is being mooted as a transport and logistics hub as stated in the vision document:

"\* to support a sustainable European logistics industry, underpinned by a multi-modal transport system, and supported by a centre of excellence for the wider community"

"\* to develop a world port at Shell Haven and Tilbury, connecting London and South Essex to Europe and the world's trading centres." [1]

Essentially it's an enhancement of Thurrock's long-standing role as a port and home to numerous transport depots, but with a much higher level of investment in infrastructure to keep the goods moving in and out. All the plan does is seal Thurrock's role in shipping goods in and out as well as in storage and wholesale retail distribution. As well as moving the goods in and out, there is the task of selling them in a retail environment with the complimentary shopping malls of Lakeside and Bluewater at either end of the Dartford Tunnel playing a major role in the region's economy. Inevitably, in the context of the contemporary labour market, the kind of employment on offer will be tending towards the flexible 24/7 end of the spectrum.

Basildon has been mooted as a 'business centre' in the vision statement:

"\* to make Basildon and Castle Point the centre of business excellence in South Essex supported by excellent infrastructure, skills, training and education, and quality business environments and facilities"

"\* to develop a leading business support centre in Basildon to serve all of South Essex, both new and existing businesses" [1]

This is highly unlikely to be a location for corporate headquarters but almost certain to be back office, call centre and support centre orientated; again the offer is of 24/7 employment, which will be non-unionised and subject to contracts of employment that demand 'flexibility,' In short, Basildon is earmarked as a location for white collar factories, employing a workforce living with the disciplining and restraining fear that their jobs will end up being outsourced abroad if they don't perform, regardless of the time of the day or the day of the week.

In Kent, one of the main areas for planned regeneration is the area spanning Dartford and Gravesend, incorporating the upmarket Bluewater shopping mall and the new Channel Tunnel Rail Link station at Ebbsfleet. The construction of 25,000 new homes and the creation of 35,000 new jobs has been mooted for the area.

Travelling towards Kent over the Dartford River Crossing reveals the dramatic changes that have already occurred. What was once a run down area with derelict cement works and abandoned quarries now features hotels, business parks and Bluewater which as well being a shopping mall is an entertainment complex to boot. Gone are the manual jobs in the cement works and paper mills to be replaced by a demand for hotel and catering staff plus sales and retail staff at every level. The triumph

of the service sector over heavy industry is the hallmark of the area.

Understandably, very few people would voluntarily choose the arduous and often unpleasant calling of working in a cement works. But do the new jobs coming into the region offer any improvement? Sure, workers are not subject to backbreaking work or the ever present risk of industrial disease from polluting manufacturing processes. However, much of the work on offer is not a direct replacement for the jobs that were lost - they offer a completely different experience which requires a new type of worker. Much of it is service sector work which often involves anti-social hours but requires the worker to put on a happy face for the customer regardless.

The planning agencies seem to be intent on creating a new non-unionised working class slaving away at all hours of the day and night in call centres, shopping malls, freight depots and warehouses. What is less clear is how they see the old unionised manufacturing working class fitting into their future vision. The jobs will certainly be coming back to the region but many of them will come at a price. That price will be total flexibility, working anti-social hours and disrupted family lives. This will in many instances be backed up by a culture of short term contracts and temporary employment. The trick for the boosters of Thames Gateway will be to get the existing manual working class to sign up to the emerging employment culture and at the same time persuading other workers in the region that a flexible attitude to work is the way forward for them.

As if these changes weren't enough, in addition to the inevitable stress induced by having to endure a flexible 24/7 work culture there will be the added burden of trying to keep the roof over your head in a situation where housing provision is becoming increasingly precarious. With Basildon starting the process of 'consultation' over handing its housing stock over to Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) and housing associations and Thurrock considering doing the same, secure affordable social housing provided by the council is looking to be a thing of the past. ALMO and housing association controlled social housing generally means higher rents and less security.

At a time when employment is becoming less secure and there is a demonstrable need for affordable and secure social housing, many people will find the rug is being pulled from under their feet. The fear induced by having to keep up the rent to a landlord offering little in the way of flexibility for those hitting hard times - or paying off the mortgage on one of the many thousands of 'affordable' private sector homes that Prescott is proposing - will act as a major disincentive for anyone wanting to kick out at the privations of the 24/7 employment culture that is set to invade the region. The combination of a squeeze on social housing, tougher terms and conditions for those who can secure it and the numerous 'flexible' employment opportunities that are coming our way will serve as an attempt to keep the working class in the region tamed.

Although it may seem odd to be discussing a regional regeneration programme on the IWCA site, in many ways what is happening in the region is a snapshot of how the working class will be evolving. Underneath all the hype about bringing life back to what was a run down post industrial area, is an implicit agenda of social engineering aimed at delivering a pliant, flexible, atomised and tame working class for an emerging 24/7 logistics, retail and service economy. In a political climate where the neo-liberal economic outlook is viewed as the natural backdrop to our lives, the discussion is about delivering the workforce that will accept it as so. This is why in many respects, the Thames Gateway regeneration is a massive social experiment in delivering that compliant, flexible workforce.

Of course, no planning agency is going to present the likely outcome of a regeneration programme in such stark terms. A key feature of any promotion of a regeneration plan is a lot of meaningless buzzwords and phrases which are designed to induce a warm glow of optimism but which fail to spell out what will happen to whom and why. Another key feature of any major regeneration programme is

the lack of any meaningful democratic accountability. A situation that isn't helped by all the major parties having signed up to the neo-liberal economic consensus. They will all take pretty much the same managerial technocratic approach to regeneration. They all share a similarly bleak vision of working class life in the future.

Welcome to that future - the Thames Gateway....

## References

[1] Thames Gateway South Essex - A vision for the Future. Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership.

Explaining the alphabet soup ...

Three Thames Gateway Partnerships have been set up to work closely with local authorities, the Greater London Authority (GLA), the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and other 'stakeholders' in the region to promote regeneration of the area. The three Partnerships are as follows:  
Thames Gateway London Partnership;  
Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership;  
Thames Gateway Kent Partnership.

The three Partnerships are co-ordinated by the Thames Gateway Strategic Partnership (TGSP), chaired by a Government Minister. The TGSP has developed a strategy for the area which includes identifying key growth areas, capacity for each area, existing transport issues and future demand for transport. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) provides a planning executive, the Thames Gateway Strategic Executive (TGSE), to assist the TGSP and co-ordinate the efforts of the Government agencies involved.

Central to the project are the (TGSE) and the (TGSP). Both of these sit within the (ODPM). The latter is chaired by Lord Rooker, an ODPM Minister, and includes Government departments and other agencies, such as The Housing Corporation and English Partnerships. Beneath these central bodies sit three regional partnerships, covering the areas of London, Essex and Kent that fall into the Gateway area.

In many locations, such as North Kent Thameside, Medway and Swale, local authorities work with the (RDA), English Partnerships and other bodies. In a few locations, the Government has taken responsibility from local authorities and set up a Unitary Development Corporation (UDC). UDCs have powers of compulsory purchase. These UDCs are to be brought forward in East London and in Thurrock.

n/a